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School of Business and Management

Master's Degree in International Marketing Management

MASTER'S THESIS

Personal Brand Engagement in B2C Social Media Marketing in the
Music Industry

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines personal brand engagement in the context of social media marketing in the music industry. While brand engagement has seen a growing interest in research, engagement related to a personal brand is still relatively new to the scientific field. This study aims to find how content marketing, brand trust & loyalty and establishing a social media community affect personal brand engagement. The research is done in the context of the music industry where creating long term engagement around a brand community can be seen as one of the most important tools for survival for an independent contemporary musician.

The empirical research is conducted as a cross-case examination between two case artists utilizing data extracted from their social media profiles. The nature of the study is qualitative and explorative, since the research phenomenon is new. The findings from the empirical research indicate that there is positive correlation between personal brand engagement and strategic content marketing efforts combined with the nurturing of a social media community. The study contributes to existing literature on personal brand by showcasing a basis for creating personal brand engagement and introducing topics suitable for further research on the different interconnected drivers of personal brand engagement.

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä tutkielma keskittyy henkilöbrändin sitouttamiseen sosiaalisen median markkinointikeinoin musiikkialan kontekstissa. Brändin sitouttamista on tutkittu kasvavin määrin, mutta henkilöbrändin sitouttamiseen liittyvä tutkimus on vielä toistaiseksi uutta tieteelliselle kentälle. Tämä tutkimus pyrkii löytämään miten sisältömarkkinointi, brändiluottamus & brändiuskollisuus sekä sosiaalisen median yhteisön luominen vaikuttavat henkilöbrändin sitouttamiseen. Tutkimus toteutetaan musiikkialan kontekstissa, jossa pitkän aikavälin sitouttaminen brändiyhteisön ympärille voidaan nähdä yhtenä tärkeimmistä työkaluista itsenäisesti toimivalle musiikkiartistille. Empiirinen tutkimusosio toteutettiin monitapaustutkimuksena tutkimalla ja vertailemalla kahden musiikkiartistin sosiaalisen median profiileista tilastoitua dataa. Tutkimuksen luonne on laadullinen ja exploratiivinen, sillä tutkittava ilmiö on suhteellisen uusi. Tutkimuksen löydökset osoittavat, että henkilöbrändin sitouttamisen ja sisältömarkkinointiin yhdistetyn brändiyhteisön välillä on positiivinen korrelaatio. Tutkimus edistää nykyistä tutkimuskenttää esittelemällä lähtökohdat henkilöbrändin sitouttamisen rakentamiselle, ja avaa lisäksi potentiaalisia jatkotutkimusaiheita henkilöbrändin sitouttamisen yhdistyneisiin ajureihin.

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Finally, to quote one of the biggest leadership mentors in my life, Michael G. Scott:

"Sometimes I'll start a sentence and I don't even know where it's going. I just hope I find it along the way."

My sentence was long, and perhaps at times a bit confusing, but as I've finished it I can confidently say that it got my message across. I'm ready to start the next one now.

Lappeenranta, 15.8.2018

Miki Puittinen

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The importance of a personal brand has seen a steady increase during recent years thanks to the rise of multiple social media platforms (Tarnovskaya 2017). With the growth of these platforms, working professionals have joined the branding efforts that were traditionally only executed by companies and organizations. A personal brand offers a way for individuals to differentiate themselves from their peers and to highlight their expertise alongside their chosen attributes and skills. Without personal branding efforts, the individual gives the branding power to someone else, and in these situations the results may differ from what the individual would have wanted to represent (Kaputa 2005, p. 8; Labrecque et al. 2015).

While personal brand has seen more and more research as these platforms have grown, engagement with a personal brand is still a relatively unexplored topic. It can be argued that this is likely due to the fact that traditionally creating brand engagement is seen as a strategic action taken by a company or an organization, while a personal brand is still more of an ambiguous effort when it comes to its objectives (Labrecque et al. 2015; Tarnovskaya 2017). Personal brand engagement can be defined as the target audience's involvement with the personal brand and its content across the platforms that are being utilized.

To create and measure this engagement, the personal brand itself has to be well-defined and consistent across the platforms being utilized, and since this brand identity is not always as clear as in the case of an organization or a company the aspect of engagement is often overlooked (Labrecque et al. 2015; Tarnovskaya 2017).

For a musical artist, utilizing social media platforms is an important way to leverage their content across a wider, global audience in a cost-efficient way. This is especially true for independent artists that are not backed up by the power of worldwide record

labels. To pursue growth and brand recognition on these platforms, creating engagement with the published content is one of the biggest opportunities that artists have to devote time and effort into. Thanks to digitalization, the music industry is constantly changing and the power balance of independent artists versus the largest record labels is slowly shifting. Understanding the power behind an artist's personal brand and how this brand's value is created through engagement is an intriguing topic, and even though the phenomenon has piqued the interest of the biggest companies in the world, it still hasn't been academically researched accordingly.

The theoretical background of this thesis is based on the existing research in personal brand and brand engagement. The majority of the existing research about brand engagement is from the perspective of a company, which is why it will be utilized alongside the research done on personal branding (Birgit 2016; Hollebeek et al. 2014). The focus of the existing research on personal brand is most often related to the personal brand of an individual with a professional career instead of an artist or a musician (Kaputa 2005; Labrecque et al. 2011). While many of the factors concerning personal brand are similar in both of these contexts, there are some key differences that this thesis hopes to discover. While the context of the music industry is utilized, this thesis also aims to discover findings that could apply into personal brand engagement in other industries as well.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives of the Study

Since personal brand engagement is still a relatively new research topic, the aim of this thesis is to understand this phenomenon by utilizing previous research on brand engagement from the company's perspective, and research about the personal brand of an individual. By combining these factors, this thesis aims to identify the main drivers behind creating engagement with a personal brand.

More specifically, the personal brand engagement that is researched in this thesis is confined into the context of B2C social media marketing in the music industry. By utilizing previous research concerning social media marketing, key issues and factors for brand engagement are identified. These factors are brought into the context of the

music industry to create arguments for personal brand engagement in that specific context, but the overall drivers of personal brand engagement are also considered in the findings and final discussion.

For the empirical section of this thesis, two contemporary case artists are researched as the subjects. To ensure an amount of data that makes the research process viable, qualitative research is combined with quantifiable metrics extracted from the social media profiles of these artists.

This thesis aims to answer the following research question:

How to create personal brand engagement in B2C social media marketing in the music industry?

Alongside this question, three additional sub-research questions are identified. These sub-questions relate to the drivers of personal brand engagement, and how each of them affect personal brand engagement. Content marketing is identified as the first driver because content is utilized heavily when creating a social media presence. Brand trust and brand loyalty are important when building long term engagement, which is why they are chosen as the second driver. The final driver of brand engagement selected in this thesis is the establishment of a social media community, which is chosen for its correlation with content marketing and brand engagement.

The sub-questions are as follows:

- 1. How does content marketing affect personal brand engagement?*
- 2. How do brand trust & brand loyalty affect personal brand engagement?*
- 3. How does the establishment of a social media community affect personal brand engagement?*

1.3 Literature Review

The literature referenced in this thesis is based around the topics of personal brand, brand engagement, B2C social media marketing and social media communities. Since the focal point of this study is personal brand, the main focus is in the previous literature combining personal brand and brand engagement.

Personal brand surfaced as a self-improvement and consultant topic in the 1990s (Peters 1997). Most of the recent studies have focused on branding in social media (Labrecque et al. 2011; Shepherd 2005; Tarnovskaya 2017), but in many cases the related research is focused on the brand from the side of companies and organizations. In the recent years, the topic has seen a steady increase of research as Web 2.0, Web 3.0 and different social media platforms have become more and more important in the context of a professional career (Tarnovskaya 2017). Personal brand remains an interesting research topic as it is considered to be an important way to differentiate oneself in the professional employment field. While a large amount of the existing research focuses on these motivations behind creating a personal brand, this thesis aims to research the effects of personal branding in creating engagement (Kaputa 2005; Labrecque et al. 2011; Shepherd 2005).

Brand engagement is a topic that has not been researched as much as personal brand has. However, the growing usage of different social media platforms has created various ways for brands to engage with their audience, which has created more interest for related research. Even more so than in the case of personal brand, the majority of this research focuses on the brand of an organization or a company (Erdoğan et al. 2016; Hollebeek et al. 2016; Solem 2016).

Combining the concepts of personal brand and engagement is a relatively new topic in research. Because of this, research on engagement is still focused on the side of the companies instead of the brand of an individual. It can be argued that this has happened because the branding efforts of an organization or a company are generally more strategic and goal-oriented than the branding actions of an individual (Labrecque et al. 2015; Tarnovskaya 2017).

Alongside personal brand engagement, social media community engagement is also a topic that is referenced in this thesis. Community engagement in social media has usually been researched from the point of view of building trust in the brand, and again the focus has been in the brand of a company instead of an individual (Habibi et al. 2014; Saboo 2015; Senadheera et al. 2015).

In the context of the music industry, branding itself is a very new research topic. Combined with engagement, the research is virtually nonexistent. While the brand of a musical artist can be examined with a similar perspective as a brand of a company depending on the type of image the artist is trying to create, the comparison can also be drawn into the personal brand of an individual. By focusing on the latter, this thesis offers a way to broaden the view of personal brand in this context.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical research of this study combines two main topics: personal brand and social media communities. These main topics are chosen on the basis of the research questions. For personal brand, the subtopics are selected according to their relevancy regarding the creation of brand engagement. This is why personal brand is studied by dividing it into brand definition, brand trust & loyalty and brand engagement. Social media communities are a broad topic, which is why only the key aspects related to creating personal brand engagement are selected. This is why social media communities are researched by looking into identifying the audience, content marketing, and community management.

As seen in figure 1, The theoretical framework of this thesis starts from the drivers of personal brand engagement. This research starts with defining of the personal brand. With a clear understanding of the brand message and how it is going to be conveyed, a target audience can be identified arguably in a more successful way. The social media community aspect of the study will be introduced after the personal brand chapter, but in a practical sense its formation begins rapidly after the definition of the brand.

After the brand has been defined and the audience has been identified, content marketing is introduced as a way to start building the brand and the social media community around it. To understand the effectiveness of content marketing, brand trust & loyalty are analyzed. Finally to tie the social media community aspect of this research into the brand engagement itself, community management theories are discussed.

By utilizing these different concepts regarding personal brand and social media communities, the aim of this framework is to find answers for the established research questions of this thesis. This means that the context of brand engagement and how it can be created is the point of view that will be carried throughout the theoretical research of this paper. The overall context of the music industry will also be incorporated into this framework, although supporting research will be more indirect in that case.



Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

1.5 Definitions and Delimitations

In this thesis, the theoretical research is limited into personal brand engagement combined with some aspects of social media marketing. Since social media itself is such a broad topic, it is limited to the perspective of community management and content marketing. Community management was chosen as a focus because of its relevancy to long term brand engagement on social media platforms. Content

marketing is examined for this similar reason, since the created content is a large part of successful brand engagement. This marketing approach is also limited to the context of B2C marketing because of the target audience.

To further limit the scope of this study, personal brand engagement is studied within the context of the music industry. Since personal brand engagement itself is a relatively new topic, the research is done on a more general scale with an explorative focus. After this, the theoretical findings are applied to the specific industry to potentially create viable answers to the research questions.

The gathered data is primarily limited to the social media platform Instagram to ensure condensed results that can be applied into the context of the music industry. A qualitative approach is selected to improve comprehension regarding personal brand engagement. This approach will incorporate some quantitative aspects, but the focus is mainly on analyzing the results in a qualitative manner.

The sample size of the results is small, which is why the results of this thesis cannot be directly generalized. The main focus is to understand personal brand engagement in the context of the music industry, but some of the results might create interesting topics for further research about personal brand in other industries as well.

The most important concepts in this thesis are personal brand, brand trust & loyalty, brand engagement and social media community. The definitions for these concepts are as follows:

Personal brand or personal branding is a technique of marketing oneself as a brand. Personal branding involves personalized profiles and the content that people share on them (Tarnovskaya 2017). Websites and blogs are also sometimes utilized in personal branding. The key idea behind personal brand according to Tom Peters (1997), the originator of the term is that it is a "sign of distinction" that everyone has. In the era of social media, another critical aspect is that if you're not branding yourself, others will do it for you (Kaputa 2005).

Brand trust can be defined as the consumers' trust on the brand based on the reliability and integrity of that brand's actions (Moorman et al. 1993; Pintado et al. 2017).

Brand loyalty can be likened to the definition of behavioral loyalty by Jakoby and Kyner (1973, 1-9): "a consumer's behavioral response to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently over time" (Yoshida et al. 2018).

Brand engagement can be defined as the customer's or target audience's involvement with the brand and its content across different platforms and touch points. Regarding the customer, brand engagement can also be defined as the "level of cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions" (Hollebeek 2011; Hollebeek et al. 2014).

Social media community is characterized as a community created on a social media platform with the focus of interaction between the brand and the customers, and also between the customers themselves. Established brand identity, integrity and two-way communication are the cornerstones of a social media community (Davis et al. 2014).

From these definitions, a new definition for Personal brand engagement can be created. **Personal brand engagement** is the target audience's involvement with the personal brand and its content across the platforms that are being utilized. In practice, personal brand engagement can include reactions to created content online, but also outside the social media platforms depending on the industry and the type of personal brand.

1.6 Research Methodology

Since this study aims to provide understanding regarding personal brand engagement, a qualitative approach is selected. The marketing actions measured on social media are tied into the relationships between the audience and the artists

which is why a qualitative and explorative approach is suitable for the goals of this research (Cetină et al. 2014).

In addition, basic quantitative metrics are utilized to support the qualitative analysis. In depth quantitative analysis is not utilized in this thesis since the phenomenon is new and available data is scarce.

Since the main research problem and its context have not seen previous extensive studies, this thesis aims to spark potential topics for future research through an explorative approach.

1.7 Structure of the Study

This thesis is structured in a way that first Personal brand engagement is approached through a theoretical background. Previous research done on brands, brand engagement and related marketing topics are presented and utilized in the context of B2C social media marketing in the music industry.

After establishing the theoretical background for the research, the methodology of this thesis is outlined combined with the means of data collections and their respective limitations. Fourth chapter includes the analysis and results of the research regarding the case artists.

Finally the fifth chapter concludes the thesis with discussion and conclusions. The final theoretical contributions and implications are outlined alongside their limitations. Topics for potential further research are also presented.

2. PERSONAL BRAND ENGAGEMENT IN B2C SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

2.1 Personal Brand Engagement

Personal brand surfaced as a self-improvement and consultant topic in the 1990s (Peters 1997). While the topic has gained steady interest especially with the rise of Web 2.0, Web 3.0 and different social media platforms (Tarnovskaya 2017), personal brand and its functions like personal brand engagement are still relatively new to research. In the recent years, the topic itself has piqued the interest of research especially in the context of the professional employment field. Brand engagement has seen limited research in the context of a personal brand, but it can be argued that a majority of the research done on organizational brand engagement is still applicable to the context of this thesis (Erdoğan et al. 2016; Hollebeek et al. 2016; Solem 2016).

In this chapter, personal brand engagement is approached by first looking into the identity of the brand, and how this identity is defined. This is followed by the theoretical background regarding brand trust & loyalty, and finally brand engagement. Through a clearly defined identity, the personal brand is more equipped to create brand trust and loyalty, which in turn will increase the engagement of the personal brand.

2.1.1 Brand Definition and Brand Identity

This subchapter discusses the definition of a brand identity as a basis for the success of the brand. The interplay of a brand identity and the target audience is also considered. With a well-defined brand identity, brand management is able to meet the long term goals of the personal brand.

To fully capitalize on the advantages of a strong brand, the entity behind the brand has to be able to define what their brand is, and what are the values that it

represents. Creation of an identity has been a central topic in many areas of marketing theory (Black & Veloutsou 2017). The identity of a brand has to be defined before the entity can begin to build long-lasting brand recognition and trust. Brand itself has many definitions: Paul Feldwick (2002) stated it is "simply a collection of perceptions in the mind of a consumer"; Adamson (2008, 109) talked about "the personality of the company", and Kotler & Keller (2012, 263) explained brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". Kornum et al. (2017) stated that the creation of the brand's identity is "a set of social processes where relevant stakeholders enact their own identity and simultaneously co-create the brand". Hollis (2010, 9) expanded some of these definitions by talking about the idea that these definitions usually identified brands as a collection of perceptions inside the consumers heads. Hollis argued that this way of defining brand is lacking; the mental associations also have to inspire the consumers to choose the product over other alternatives. A collection of perceptions, even with differentiation isn't worth a huge marketing investment if the consumers are not willing to buy the product.

For a personal brand, buying the product can obviously vary depending on the different fields where that brand is applied and utilized. In this context, it is important to note that a successful "sale" of the personal brand can be highly case-dependent; even more so than in traditional marketing. Since the personal brand of an individual requires different angles of consideration, it is perhaps even more important for an individual than a company to understand what they want to communicate with their brand, and what are the exact values that their brand stands for to be authentic and to create desired relationships and resolutions with the target audience. Similarly to the brands of companies, these values stem from the persons history, culture, core competencies and vision (Balmer 2001; Kapferer 2012; Törmälä & Gyrd-Jones 2017). The key issue here is that even though brand associations are subjective, and perhaps even more subjective when it comes to personal brand, there still needs to be a collective understanding beneath those perceptions (Hollis 2010, 12-14). This identity has to be shared amongst all stakeholders for the brand to be successful (Dean et al. 2016). This collective understanding is build upon cultural values of the individuals, which is why Hollis (2010, 13) arrived at this amended definition for

brand: "A brand consists of a set of enduring and shared perceptions in the minds of consumers. The stronger, more coherent and motivating those perceptions are, the more likely they will be to influence purchase decisions and add value to a business." If the brand cannot have this collective, culturally driven perception amongst its audience, then the identity of the personal brand has not been defined and conveyed correctly by the individual behind it.

Since a brand derives its value from a creating a strong relationship with consumers (Hollis 2010, 7), this consumer perspective has to be taken into consideration when the individual is defining their personal brand. As much as the personal brand is centered around the individual, in the end it is the audiences perception that truly makes the brand what it is and either supports the identified values or breaks them down into an ambiguous mix. This is why a personal brand should be approached the same way that a company brand when creating content or presenting the brand in any way to an audience (Adamson 2008, 108-109). The preferred reaction in many cases should not be "what", which is a transaction. A reaction of "who" is where the relationship can start to be build, and for a successful personal brand authentic relationships are the basis of everything (Adamson 2008, 108-109). For an individual, defining their own values and credibility and conveying these correctly in these relationships is where personal brand equity can start to be build (Kotler & Keller 2012, 265).

Defining a brand successfully takes time, which is why exposure to the audiences reactions is important (Hollis 2010, 16). It is important to understand that in the continuous process of brand definition the audience outside of the targeted group can also support the process with valuable information; even though these individuals are not the target audience, they still perceive brands from a similar cultural drive; bringing it back to the definition by Hollis. Pickton & Broderick (2005, 242-244) argue that a brand can be identified as "communication at a distance with many target audiences", and while this point-of-view takes into consideration only the target audiences, it is important to notice that just like a company brand, a personal brand can and will find an audience outside of their targeting as well. For a personal brand, the value in these interactions is to understand how the brand is seen from outside the target audience. If the entity behind the brand only focuses on the target

audience, they might miss some initial reactions and details that have turned away some potential consumers. By looking at these interactions, as well as the interactions and reactions of the intended audience the brand can be defined and shaped to better reflect the values and goals that the person behind it wants to represent. You do not want to just look into the aspects that are functional about the branding; you also have to pay attention to the emotional aspects which are often referred to as emotional branding (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 244). This is especially true for personal branding, where interactions are more intimate and often based on individual relationships.

When considering a personal brand's identity, the vision and aim of the brand is a particularly important factor. Alongside values and general competency, the vision behind the brand is what gives purpose to everything related to utilizing the brand in marketing (Kapferer 2008, 172; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 242-247). A general basis for this vision has to be set even in personal branding to make sure that the marketing actions taken actually serve a conjoining purpose.

For a personal brand, an identity is easier to define since it usually does not have the challenge of expanding and diversifying into multiple products/brands; at least not in a conventional way where they would be highly separated from the starting point. Even though the identity of a personal brand is easier to define, it is still difficult to diversify from competitors especially in industries where each targeted customer has highly-individualized wants and needs (Kapferer 2008, 172-174). For example, a personal brand of a highly-educated knowledge worker can be easily defined by the individual to suit his personal values and vision, and also the general ideals in the industry they are trying to find a position in, but the specific needs of each potential employer still need be considered and this consideration needs to happen in this definition phase for the brand to truly reflect the individual and their goals authentically. Törmälä and Gyrd-Jones (2017) reflect on a similar idea in their research by stating that "brand identity is not a stable core emanating from inside the company but develops over time through a reciprocal sensemaking and dynamic interactions between company and the key external stakeholders in its context".

Personal brand, or brand itself has not been studied intensively in the context of the music industry. However it is easy to understand that in the music industry, defining a clear brand is even more relevant than it already is in many other areas of business. Most, if not all of the marketing efforts take place in social media, where unfocused marketing will drown in all of the digital distortion and noise. This is especially true for independent artists that operate outside of the budgets of the bigger record labels; for their personal brands to be successful, their brands have to be well defined to reflect their identity so that the following steps in building brand engagement can be achieved. In many cases, defining brand identity is considered to be the first step in the brand establishment process, and for traditional companies this should happen even before the company is established (Bresciani & Eppler 2010; Rode & Vallaster 2005; Törmälä & Gyrd-Jones 2017). A clear identity helps the person behind the brand position themselves against their competition; it helps them understand who the brand is for, what is the reason for the brands existence and who the brand is competing against (Kapferer 2008,175-176). This idea of understanding competition by understanding yourself helps the marketer understand how they can define their target audience and then differentiate themselves and their content from their competition. It also helps them to fulfill their audiences wants and needs while building and nurturing the relationships necessary for brand engagement.

High competitiveness is something that defines the music industry, as seen in many other fields of entertainment (Essing et al. 2017). Because the ease of music production increases daily thanks to advancements in technology, the "noise" and competition in an already competitive industry accelerates rapidly (Essing et al. 2017). Streaming technologies have given many independent artists a way to earn a living cost-effectively without the backing of a major record label, but they have also taken away a large percentage of earnings that selling physical records used to create for the artists. The shift from printing physical CDs into streaming has given many opportunities to independent artists that were previously unavailable, but at the same time the sheer volume of competition has increased heavily.

Combined with the general amount of daily digital distractions in the lives of the most of the western world (Taneja et al. 2015), a strong brand is a prerequisite for a musician to even consider supporting themselves with their art and becoming

successful financially. A brand identity has to be defined well before any other pieces of marketing and promotion can be planned.

2.2.2 Brand Trust and Loyalty

After establishing the brand's identity, the entity behind the brand can start to create brand trust and loyalty. This subchapter discusses the connectivity of the different brand factors, and establishes the effect of brand trust & loyalty regarding brand value.

For a brand identity to create value over long-term, building brand trust and brand loyalty is required. Brand trust can be defined as the willingness of an average customer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its purpose (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001; Molinillo et al. 2017). Generally this willingness can be seen contributing directly into increased brand performance and brand loyalty, which are desirable goals for both long-term and short-term brand management (Molinillo et al. 2017). Laroche et al. (2012) showcased these value creating connections in their study of social media based brand communities. In that study, it is argued that the brand trust is created through close, continuous relationships with the audience, which is an extension of the principles of brand definition and identity (Laroche et al. 2012). Thus, it can be argued that brand trust plays an intermediary, connecting role between brand identity and brand loyalty (Laroche et al. 2011). This means that brand trust can actually be perceived in a mediator role, in which its purpose is to build brand loyalty that brand management is aiming for in most of the situations (Laroche et al. 2011).

In their research on brand communities and building brand trust, Habibi et al. (2014) came to the interesting conclusion that out of the four tested consumer relationships (brand, product, company & other consumer), three out of four influenced brand trust positively. Additionally, the context of social media was found to boost the effectiveness of building brand trust by providing a rich communication context (Habibi et al. 2014). In their research, a similar mediatory role to Laroche et al. (2011) was found for brand engagement between the community elements and

brand trust. Recent research on brand trust and loyalty can be understood to consider the role of brand trust or loyalty in various different parts of the brand management equation; what is important is to understand that the connectivity between these parts is clearly present, and they have a strong influence on each other.

The fourth consumer relationship, the relationship between a consumer and other consumers was actually found to affect brand trust negatively (Habibi et al. 2014). In the context of social media and brand communities, this result is alarming, since interaction between different consumers is a key factor of brand communities. This was explained in the research by the lack of structure or hierarchy causing disbelief of information shared between consumers (Habibi et al. 2014). Another obstacle was the empowerment of consumers created by social media; the connectivity between consumers gives them power compared to the brand, which increases the demands that an average consumer assumes (Habibi et al. 2014 ; Molinillo et al. 2017). One way to minimize the negative effects on brand trust is to facilitate and encourage discussion instead of disrupting it (Habibi et al. 2014). These results might not be able to be generalized for various different situations, but the main idea behind them stands; when building brand trust, the clarity, openness and authenticity of the brand identity itself should be kept in mind.

Brand loyalty is often considered as a vital part of marketing research (Molinillo et al. 2017; Nguyen et al. 2011). Like suggested previously, brand loyalty can be considered to be a more long-term result of successful brand trust (Habibi et al. 2014; McAlexander et al. 2003). One definition for brand loyalty comes from Oliver (1999, 34): "brand loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (Molinillo et al. 2017). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) argue that by defining brand loyalty this way, the two different aspects of loyalty often described in previous studies are emphasized: the behavioral aspect, and the attitudinal aspect (Molinillo et al. 2017). For both brand loyalty and brand trust, it was found that being overly active in brand communication and efforts could negatively affect them (Molinillo et al. 2017).

Research into personal brand trust and brand loyalty is severely limited. It can be argued that for a personal brand, brand trust and brand loyalty play a slightly different role than for a brand of a company. Similar principles apply, but at the same time the relationships might be build upon a different basis depending on the type of an audience the personal brand is trying gain attention from. For a knowledge worker, the approach for personal brand trust can differ considerably from an artist trying to build relationships with consumers. Still, the principle of a brand being a promise between a company and a customer (Kapferer 2008, 187-188) is the cornerstone for trust. Delivering this brand experience for a personal brand relates back to the themes and ideas behind the brand itself, and whether the identity has been correctly identified and conveyed. Again, the interconnectivity between the different parts of the brand equation can be seen. Light & Morgan (1994, 11) argued that loyalty is the asset, not the brand itself and without the loyalty of the customers, a brand is basically just a trademark (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 260). Research like this showcases that for a brand, loyalty is much more the end goal compared to awareness, recognition or even trust, and this applies to personal brand as well especially in a commercial context.

Digital technology has made almost everything brand-related transparent (Kapferer 2008, 188-189) and for a personal brand this is just as relevant. If the entity behind the brand conveys distracting and interfering messages on different platforms, it will most often be noticed diluting the strength and brevity of the personal brand. This leads to a situation where trust is difficult to build, which in turn limits the ability of the brand to create loyalty with its customers through its relationships.

The harmful effect of conflicting brand messages is especially potent in social media, where negative comments and messages have five times the effect of positive ones (Corstjens et al. 2012; Habibi et al. 2014; Powers et al. 2012). Even a small negative backlash against a personal brand, or content conflicting with the defined brand identity can have destructive effects on the ability of a personal brand to form trust. Part of this process is understanding that creating effective mass appeal is difficult; even for a personal brand, narrowing and specifying their target audience can yield stronger results in establishing trust and eventually loyalty (Hollis 2010, 165-166).

Consistency between the message and the target audience can generally be seen to create stronger long-term relationships for a brand (Hollis 2010, 166). By understanding the motivations created by the underlying culture, whether its narrow (e.g. IT business executives in a certain area) or wide (e.g. middle-aged country music fans over the world), personal brand can be managed to keep its brand promise while strengthening their identity and brand loyalty from the perspective of this audience (Balmer 2001; Hollis 2010, 166-168; Kapferer 2012; Törmälä & Gyrd-Jones 2017). A brand promise, derived from its identity, is the building block for personal brand trust and loyalty, but scalability for multiple audiences can be very difficult for a personal brand. This is why defining a powerful identity can become cumbersome; for a personal brand, trust and loyalty often require intense adaptability alongside their standard metrics.

For a musical artist, most of the recent research can be applied to create a basis of understanding on how to approach building brand trust and brand loyalty. Similarly to brand identity, especially independent artists will pursue most of their brand trust and loyalty on social media. Differentiation is key to stand out, but at the same time the message has to be consistent and value adding for the customer (Hollis 2010, 179-181). Understanding the main competition and their brand promise will also help when creating this consistency of trust (Kapferer 2008,175-176). The "voice of the customer" is something that can be interpreted from the experiences of competitors, and then integrated into the brand message of the personal brand (Kotler & Keller 2012, 163-164). For a musician this can either apply to the brand in the early phase of the content (the music itself) or in later stages (the visual brand, content marketing) but either way dissecting the success and failure of competitors can provide valuable information on how to improve trust and loyalty through social media.

For a musician, the value of a personal brand comes from the loyalty of the fans; if strong loyalty is achieved and the consumers are interested in both the musical content of the artist and the personal brand as well, this interest can be leveraged into successful business outside of the immediate musical product. Because of the digital disruption (Essing et al. 2017), musicians are dependent on multiple sources of income; selling and streaming music is not enough to make a living any more. This

is where the value of a strong personal brand loyalty shines, since artists can leverage this brand across multiple areas of business; sponsorship deals, merchandise, affiliate marketing and so forth. It can be argued that for some musical genres, a strong personal brand is at least as important as the musical content of the artist, if not more important. The reason for this is the vast volume of competition, which makes it increasingly difficult to stand out (Essing et al. 2017). Whether the personal brand is actually even more important than the musical content is related to the preferences of the target audience, again reinforcing the case for the connection between the brand identity, trust & loyalty and the target audience.

While social media is indeed the most important tool for an independent musicians personal brand, multiple touch points and local presence can augment the results greatly similarly to company brands (Hollis 2010, 180-181). Locally and offline created brand awareness helps the artist to reinforce brand trust and loyalty (Laroche et al. 2012; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 260) . This is often achieved by touring cities and festivals where the presence of the target audience can be estimated to be high.

2.2.3 Brand Engagement

This subchapter discusses brand engagement through brand identity, brand trust and brand loyalty. Through the previously outlined research, brand engagement is approached as an integral part of the brand's overall success. This subchapter also considers how brand engagement affects other parts of the brand equation.

As a concept, brand engagement is very important in the marketing literature since it is heavily connected to brand equity or the value of the brand (Pitt et al. 2018). Pitt et al. (2018) and Keller (2012, 289-305) point out that this equity is often driven by the consumers association with the brand's attributes and features, which in turn leads to the engagement with the brand. Most of the research into brand engagement has a focus on the engagement of customers in the B2C segment (Pitt et al. 2018).

Although the literature on brand loyalty suggests building long-term relationships, some of the research done on brand engagement actually implies that while

customer participation and engagement have positive effects on loyalty, these effects might not have a long-term impact without consistent nurturing of these relationships (Apenes & Birgit 2016; Kapferer 2008, 187-190). Brand engagement research is still in its early stages, and the technological nature of the field increases the speed in which the subject matter transforms rapidly (France et al. 2016).

Pitt et al. (2018) state that thanks to social media's rise, brand engagement has changed a lot in the recent years. The nature of various social media platforms has enabled customers to engage with brands in a myriad of ways that were previously impossible (Berthon et al. 2012; Kietzmann et al. 2011; Pitt et al. 2018). One benefit of the rise of social media is that there is more data available when it comes to the customer journey; this data enables more relevant tracking and quantifying, which in turn benefits brand management decisions by enabling the measurement of engagement (Adamson 2008, 122-124). On the other hand, constantly evolving social media alongside the other existing technological outlets for brands increase the difficulty in understanding exactly what are the contact points where the customers attention is reached and where engagement happens (Adamson 122-124). The whole notion of digital disruption (Essing et al. 2017) and the short term-effectiveness of brand engagement (Apenes & Birgit 2016; Kapferer 2008, 187-190) play into the narrative that creating meaningful engagement that can be proven to succeed long-term is difficult, and it requires complex efforts and understanding from brand management. Again, the interconnectivity of understanding the identity of the brand alongside the customers preferences and the customer journey plays a key role in successful brand engagement (Adamson 2008, 124).

Research shows that a strong brand is a valuable asset for a company in both attracting new customers and retaining the old ones (Hollis 2010, 68-69). In customer retention, creating meaningful long-term engagement provides the brand a way to succeed through increased brand loyalty (Hollis 2010, 69-70). Stronger brand engagement has other additional benefits as well; it can help the entity behind the brand with product development and cost reduction, and it is often source of competitive advantage especially in industries where the usage of social media is prominent (Hollis 2010, 69-70; Pitt et al. 2018).

For a personal brand, it can be argued that strong brand engagement is a potent source for competitive advantage; in many industries (especially if the target audience is other individuals as customers) loyalty based brand engagement enables the brand to leverage their following into more successful affiliate marketing or sponsorship deals. Strong engagement can also benefit the personal brand by creating more awareness inside the target audience (Benjamin 2012). Affiliate marketing is most often pursued by fashion-related companies, and depending on their target audience multiple types of personal brands might be utilized in these marketing efforts (Benjamin 2012). Strong brand loyalty and engagement that can be proven will help personal brands succeed in these partnerships (Benjamin 2012; Hollis 2010, 69).

Habibi et al. (2014) argue that brand engagement can actually be seen as one of the biggest goals of social media presence for companies (Hanna et al. 2011), and this same thought could apply to personal brand as well. The type and volume of engagement is highly dependent on the type of individual; for personal brand, this means that it is important to consider how typical engagement could be detected and measured inside the target audience of the brand (Habibi et al. 2014; Hanna et al. 2011). If the person is only in the beginning of establishing their brand, one of the first actions could be a research into the competition as suggested while defining the personal brand's identity (Kapferer 2008,175-176). A stronger presence of social media and the communities build around it give the personal brand potential power without necessary advertising costs; one such way to increase engagement and brand loyalty is the use of content marketing strategies (Hollis 2010, 74-75; Schivinski et al. 2016). For a personal brand targeting customers inside the corporate world (e.g. executives in IT-business looking to hire), the same principle applies; credibility and desirability can be build through higher engagement with the personal brand that can be measured and proven.

For personal brands targeting consumers (e.g. artists), the value of engagement can be easier to attain since a tighter community can be build compared to larger brands with multiple products. If the brand identity is strong and it is suitable for the wants and needs of the target audience, engagement can be build to reflect upon a more condense brand message instead of diluting the personal brand across a wider

spectrum. For strong personal brand engagement the rules of a global brand apply; if the brand that is being build is aiming to be global, the brand identity and target audience are harder to define, which in turn lessen the amount of brand engagement and brand loyalty (Hollis 2010, 78-81). This is why multiple touch points and local presence are important even for a personal brand; they can help improve the results of engagement similarly to brand loyalty (Hollis 2010, 180-181).

As mentioned previously, the high volume of competition in the music industry requires artists to have strong brand recognition (Taneja et al. 2015) and to increase that recognition, engagement is a helpful tool. With strategic actions towards personal brand engagement, the musician can create awareness inside their target audience through mutual connections with the existing audience (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 258-260). The engagement of this existing audience will provide exposure within their social networks which is the desired effect if the audience has been defined successfully. This way a personal brand can ensure that their marketing efforts can find the right audience, and are not wasted in the plethora of other social media content. It is important to notice that attention needs to be paid to the type of engagement within the existing customers as well as the potential new ones; any type of negative attention will find its way to the target audience through these mutual networks as well, and its effects are usually more drastic than those of positive reactions and engagement (Corstjens et al. 2012; Habibi et al. 2014; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 258-261; Powers et al. 2012).

Because brand loyalty is such an important concept for a musical artist and positive engagement is directly related to increased loyalty (Habibi et al. 2014), creating personal brand engagement should be one of the biggest goals for a marketer behind a musician's personal brand. Because the effects of brand engagement are more reliable for a short-term basis (Apenes & Birgit 2016; Kapferer 2008, 187-190) it is important for the entity behind the brand to create this engagement through campaigns that are strategically planned over longer periods of time. For a personal brand in the music industry, clear strategic marketing plans have to be framed; otherwise the engagement created can diminish quickly, which in turn affects brand loyalty and customer retention negatively. Because most, if not all of these marketing efforts for a musician's brand take place on social media and the product is often 100

% digital, these negative effects can be stronger than for more traditional brands offering tangible products (Essing et al. 2017). However, with consistent brand engagement, the brand can actually decrease the harmful effect of the negative interactions between community members (Habibi et al. 2014). Brand engagement is actually one of the few ways to minimize the negative effects of customer-to-customer relationships (Habibi et al. 2014), which play an important part in the growth of a musician's brand equity. Similarly to brand identity, brand trust and brand loyalty, identifying the target audience and their behavioral tendencies is required to successfully create personal brand engagement (Schivinski et al. 2016). Through this, a sense of connection to the brand can be achieved for the customers leading into brand communities (Kotler & Keller 2012, 275-276).

2.2 Building a Community Around a Personal Brand in Social Media

To create stronger engagement, a personal brand can move towards establishing a brand community. This is often done by the means of different social media platforms depending on the target audience of the personal brand. While community management and social media engagement have previously been researched in the context of company brands, most of the theories are applicable in the context of a personal brand as well (Habibi et al. 2014; Saboo 2015; Senadheera et al. 2015).

To understand how strong personal brand engagement is build, this chapter firstly focuses on identifying the target audience of the brand. After this, content marketing theory is discussed as a building block for the brand community on social media. Finally, the management of a social media community is discussed in general terms and in the research context of this thesis.

2.2.1 Identifying the Audience (Targeting)

In this subchapter the importance of identifying the target audience for a brand is underlined. Segmentation and specific targeting (e.g. influencers) is briefly touched

upon. Targeting is connected to the previous discussion regarding the overall brand engagement and brand success.

Pickton & Broderick (2005, 10) state that "Identifying target audiences is fundamental to good marketing communications". A large part of a brand's effectiveness can be relayed back to its capability to identify its target audience, their behavior and their preferences. Instead of traditional mass marketing, the modern diversity of customers requires specific and highly personalized customization based on the wants and needs of these customers (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 373-374). Fripp (2011) outlines multiple important questions to consider when defining these wants and needs. While its important to understand who the potential client is, it is also vital to know why they would be interested in the brand's offerings. In addition to this, the angle of approach has to be considered too, often referred to as positioning (Fripp 2011). Research regarding targeting in the context of a personal brand is very limited, but it can be argued that similar principles apply especially for personal brands targeting a commercial audience. With successful targeting, the brand identity can be connected with the target audience through the establishment of brand trust, brand engagement and brand loyalty (; Habibi et al. 2014; Kotler & Keller 2012, 275-276).

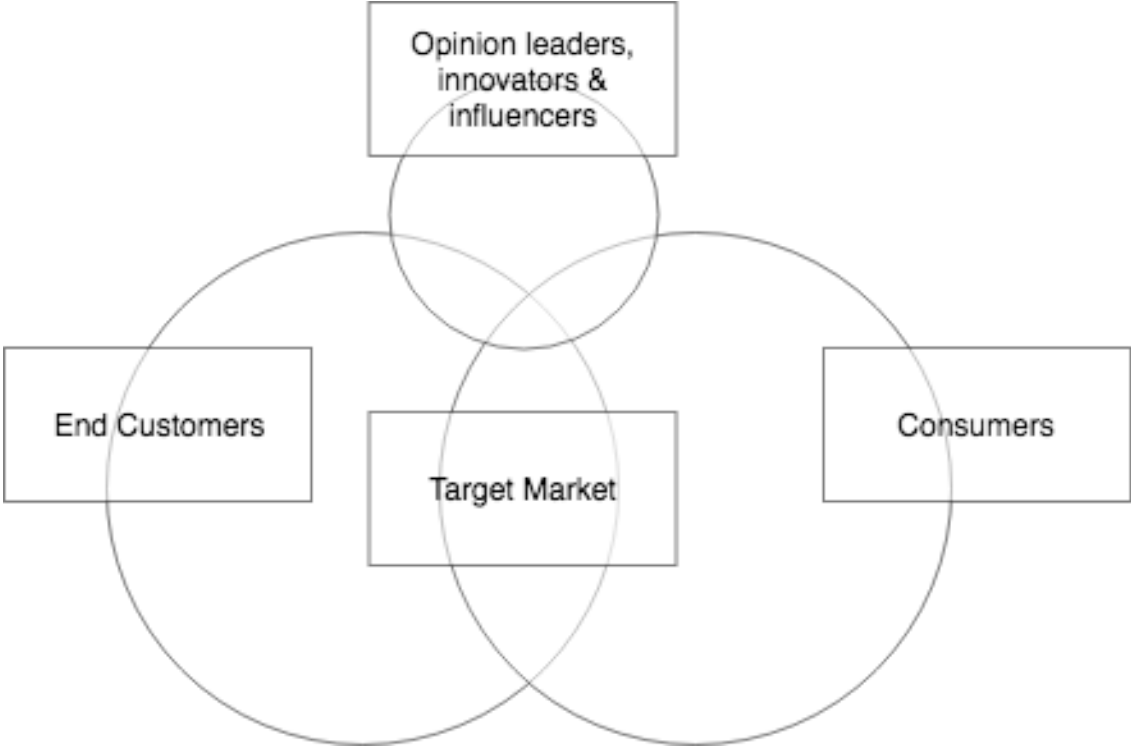


Figure 2. Target audience members (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 11, modified)

Pickton and Broderick described the target audience members by dividing them into multiple parts of the population (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 10-11). In figure 2, a simplified version of this diagram can be seen. Pickton and Broderick (2005, 10-11) define customers as "the people who buy goods and services", and consumers as "the people who literally use or consumer the goods or services". Traditional targeting considers only these aspects, but especially in the context of social media understanding the value of opinion leaders or influencers cannot be overstated (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 10-11). Influencers are an especially potent way of soliciting the brand message forward, and if the influencers are chosen correctly through them the brand can reach a large volume of the target audience (Bevilacqua et al. 2013; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 9-11). To correctly identify suitable influencers to further the brand's goals, brand management has to have a strong grasp on their own identity, their audience, and their competition.

While the target market lies in the intersection of end customers, consumers and influencers, some of the marketing efforts could still be targeted outside of this group if brand management identifies suitable entities that could advance the brand's goals (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 10-11). When this identification process is handled with care, brand management has better capabilities of selecting the target audience that they should be pursuing. While for a major part the target audience is formed of groups with similarities, it can also include specific individuals, members of the media or other influencers if their reach can be seen as beneficial for the brand (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 10-11). When targeting like this is utilized, it is important to remember that overall brand message has to be consistent; with multiple outlets and layers of influencers the possibility of mixed messages becomes higher, which will affect brand engagement and loyalty negatively (Corstjens et al. 2012; Habibi et al. 2014; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 258-261; Powers et al. 2012).

The realization that customers are not alike has lead marketing efforts into channels where the brand message can be personalized and targeted more efficiently (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 373-374). Social media is a potent tool for personal brand since the utilization of different platforms can give a personal brand manager the possibility of intricate targeting (Micu et al. 2017). While information like demographics and

location serve as the basis for social media targeting for a personal brand, understanding behavioral aspects of the target audience can be argued to be even more valuable (Micu et al. 2017). For a personal brand serving commercial customers, understanding the behavior of potential target groups can help develop the brand message and content marketing strategies that would create desired results. For a knowledge worker's personal brand targeting employers, behavioral targeting can establish awareness when the personal brand appears on the right platforms with the right message.

Arguably, a personal brand can often find success by targeting influencers and other opinion leaders within the same industry. Many of these influencers are also personal brands, and gaining their attention can lead into attention from their social follower base with similar desired tendencies (Bevilacqua et al. 2013). In these situations, the initial targeting can also happen outside the connection point referenced in figure 2 (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 11). Finding suitable influencers or even the touch points where the personal brand can be successful is a complex task, but if the brand identity has been strongly established it is possible (Adamson 2008, 238-240; Kotler & Keller 2012, 265). While digital era has given marketing more potential information to discover, the empowerment of consumers through social media has also made successful targeting an increasingly complex task (Adamson 2008, 239; Essing et al. 2017; Taneja et al. 2015). A personal brand might be able to find a target audience, but finding a target audience that the brand can reach and connect with through engagement is difficult especially for a musician (Essing et al. 2017; Taneja et al. 2015).

For a musician's personal brand, targeting can be build upon the understanding of competition within a similar genre. The majority of a musician's targeting will include consumers fitting into an established profile that matches the brand identity (Kapferer 2008, 172; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 242-247). Within the music industry, and especially because the brand presence of an independent musician is formed in social media it is also important to consider the value of opinion leaders and influencers. Artists with a similar following to the desired target audience, music blogs, or tastemakers are all a valid way to both fine tune the targeting of the personal brand, but also be a part of the target audience as well. In some cases they

can be a target of larger scale content marketing efforts and other means of building brand awareness or engagement. Sometimes even brand collaboration can be considered to target the audience of these influencers. The more outlined these collaborations are, the bigger the possibility of mutual benefits and cost effectiveness is (Schultz 2011). Brand collaboration between musicians or music-related influencers can manifest through social media content with a short-term focus, or even through longer strategic partnerships. Often artists collaborate through musical releases to expand the reach within their target audience.

In some cases, targeting for personal musical brands can actually shift towards B2B instead of the traditional B2C-sector. Oh and Park (2012) researched the Korean entertainment industry marketing and argued that there is a shift from the consumer audience towards a social media dependent B2B-model. Targeting social media channels and company brands that have already gathered a highly specified audience for themselves is argued to be the current trend in entertainment industry marketing (Oh & Park 2012). Oh & Park (2012) further expanded that this shift from B2C audience into B2B will continue developing in the entertainment industry as power is consolidated through competition into the major streaming and distribution services (Essing et al. 2017). According to this research, it can be argued that for an independent artist, a big focus on music industry targeting is finding suitable influencers and existing communities. This is especially applicable if their brand is in the start-up phase without a large established community. This way, the independent musician can pull in potential consumers and begin establishing their own brand equity through engagement with content marketing and eventually social media community management.

2.2.2 Content Marketing

This subchapter discusses content marketing as the basis for creating brand engagement on social media. This chapter also provides justification as to why content marketing works especially well in the context of a musician executing their marketing operations on social media platforms.

Rowley (2008) defines content marketing, or digital content marketing as "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements profitably in the context of digital content, or bit-based objects distributed through electronic channels". Content marketing can also be defined as a "marketing program that centers on creating, publishing, and distributing content for your target audience -- usually online -- the goal of which is to attract new customers" (Hubspot 2015). Whatever definition is utilized, the major themes of content marketing are most often clearly visible. For B2B-brands, social media networks, visual content, blogs, guides, e-books and webinars are often utilized (Hubspot 2015). For B2C-brands newsletters, articles, visual content, and mobile applications are some of the tools that are usually a part of content marketing (PR Newswire 2015).

The main goals of content marketing are to teach, inform, entertain and guide the customer forward in their purchasing process (Murthy 2011). When planning and developing content marketing, the brand has to understand their own goals and metrics regarding the conversion rates of different content marketing actions. The final goal of content marketing is often to get the customer interested in the offerings of the brand instead of competitors. Thus when developing content marketing, it is vital to understand at which point of the process should the client be guided towards a purchase decision (or a similar conversion).

For brands, an important part of content marketing is creating long-term relationships with the customers. A well-defined content strategy can enable brand management to start building communities around their content, which in turn will boost the engagement rate of the brand. When a brand develops these customer relationships the focus is often on gaining the attention of new customers while simultaneously improving the relationship with its existing customers (Condrón 2014). To gain the attention of new customers or visitors, the brand has create brand awareness (Condrón 2014). For the existing audience, the focus is on brand loyalty, trust and engagement (Condrón 2014). For content marketing to be beneficial, the content has to fulfill customer needs and create positive experiences with the brand (Skinner 2016). If this is achieved, then the customer is more likely to feel that the content was useful and is more likely to return to its provider, the brand (Skinner 2016). This is

why Rose and Pulizzi (2011) argue that alongside brand recognition, the main goals of content marketing should include lead conversion and lead nurturing, customer service and increasing the number of passionate followers of the brand.

Content marketing can also act as a concrete basis on which upon the brand can measure different marketing metrics regarding its loyalty, trust and engagement amongst other identified key metrics like generated leads (Gagnon 2014). This measurability can be improved over time when the brand management achieves better understanding about the metrics required for their marketing goals (Tikkanen & Frösén 2011, 94). The measurability of content marketing gives the entity behind the brand a better chance of perceiving the Return of Investment in marketing, which in turn improves the ability of the brand to build their strategy upon more precise marketing data.

To create interesting and effective content, the brand has to understand their target audience and their preferences as specifically as possible. For the content to be engaging, it has to be build upon these preferences that were previously identified during targeting (Johnson 2013). If the created content is not specific enough, it will not activate the engagement of the target audience or the individuals outside of it (Johnson 2013). A part of this process is also understanding what are the suitable content types that work for the target audience; while newsletters and guides might work for a B2B IT-brand, a musical artist's audience will probably be reached more effectively with different types of content (Johnson 2013). When planning and creating content for a brand, Korosec (2012) suggests assuming the mindset of a publisher. This means that the content releases of the brand are clearly defined and measured over time (Korosec 2012). If the individual pieces of content are specified within the overall marketing strategies while they are being created, the customer journey will be more effective and effortless (Johnson 2013). In situations where the brand is trying to create engagement, long-term relationships and social media communities it is important to understand the effect and role of the potential customers when creating the content. The role of the customers is important because the value of the brand is highly volatile on digital platforms (McCarthy et al. 2013).

As a part of the rise of the social media platforms (Pitt et al. 2018), visual content is a big part of the overall marketing communications. It is often shorter and more easily understood, and it doesn't even necessarily require a shared language between the brand and the recipient (Manic 2015). Visual content is also shared more often than traditional content, and it is remembered and recognized by the recipients more easily (Manic 2015). Videos, photos and infographics give the brand a better chance to reach the curiosity of the target audience, and also engage them to be a part of the brand's community through their content marketing (Manic 2015). An added benefit of visual content is that the brand is seen as more humane, which is very important for a personal brand trying to build long-term relationships (Manic 2015).

Research into content marketing strategies for a personal brand is relatively scarce (Tarnovskaya 2017; Young 2013). However, it can be argued that research done on content marketing and overall brand engagement is applicable in the context of a personal brand as well. Most of the available academic research supports the marketing theory that branding products and services can be applied to branding humans as well (Tarnovskaya 2017). Similarly to a brand with a B2B audience, a personal brand can structure their overall brand strategy over the measurability of content marketing (Gagnon 2014; Murthy 2011). Through carefully planned branded content utilizing social media, Tarnovskaya (2017) argues that personal brands can be competitive and successful even in industries where powerful multinational companies usually dominate (e.g. entertainment).

While the phenomenon of a personal brand is suggested to be more complex than the brand of a traditional company (Khedher 2015; Nolan 2015; Tarnovskaya 2017), the basics of content marketing theory are definitely applicable. Understanding and fulfilling the needs of the target audience (e.g. industry executives, fans of a certain genre, music industry influencers) has to be at the core of a personal brand's content marketing alongside the long-term marketing goal of a certain type of conversion. For a professional workers' personal brand, conversion might be a successfully build and nurtured relationship that leads into an improved career offering. For a musician, the conversion might be a record sale or a stream through a funnel of content marketing guiding the audience towards the music. Either way, for content marketing to be strategic and efficient, brand management has to understand both of these

perspectives; what does the audience want from the content, and what does the brand need to get in exchange for that content leading into a relationship (Khedher 2015).

As established previously, most of an independent musician's marketing efforts arguably take place on social media (Essing et al. 2017). To utilize different social media platforms effectively, all of the platforms and their audiences have to be approached in a personalized manner (Johnson 2013). However there needs to be an overarching content strategy over all of the platforms so that the brand message still stays intact (Johnson 2013). Visual content is a great way solidify the image of the brand, and in the case of a musician much of the visual content can be edited to be used on multiple platforms (Manic 2015). This makes visual content a cost-effective type of content for a musician's personal brand. To ensure that this visual content works towards the brand's strategic goal the measured conversion can be similar on all of the platforms; a successful sale or a stream of the music. On social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Youtube or Snapchat, guiding the customer towards music streaming is very intuitive for both the customer and the personal brand (Tarnovskaya 2017). On these platforms, the same visual content like pictures or short videos can be easily utilized for the personal brand's strategy with minimal editing between the platforms, which makes the personalization of the content regarding the platforms simple.

With a strategic approach to content marketing, a personal brand can achieve its marketing goals cost-effectively and avoid the negative aspects of social media like its strong effect on brand volatility and the multiplying effect of negative engagement (Corstjens et al. 2012; Habibi et al. 2014; McCarthy et al. 2013; Powers et al. 2012). When the content marketing of a personal brand is strategic and it focuses on brand awareness and brand loyalty that are measured and improved constantly, brand management can start building a social media community amplifying personal brand engagement over long-term (Condron 2014; Johnson 2013; Manic 2015).

2.2.3 Community Management (Social Media Community)

This subchapter concludes the overall brand engagement discussion by arguing how turning content marketing into a social media community enhances the engagement of the personal brand. Previous theoretical findings are also tied into the social media community aspect.

A Social media community can be characterized as a community created on a social media platform with the focus of interaction between the brand and the customers, and also between the customers themselves (Davis et al. 2014). Established brand identity, integrity and two-way communication are the cornerstones of a social media community (Davis et al. 2014). Habibi et al. (2014) state that "social media is an ideal environment for building brand communities". Like most brand engagement related concepts, the research related to brand communities is limited (Habibi et al. 2014). It can be argued that the reason for this is the relatively new nature of online brand communities, and the rapidly evolving state of social media platforms.

Brand trust and brand loyalty are amplified through social media brand communities (Habibi et al. 2014). A strategically run social media community offers the brand a better chance of creating and controlling brand engagement, which in turn gives the brand an opportunity to build long-term relationships with their customers (Kapferer 2008, 216-217). A well-run social media community gives the brand more insight into their customers, and it makes the brand more enticing for potential customers that come into contact with its content marketing on social media (Habibi et al. 2014; Pickton & Broderick 2005 , 265-268). The data collected this way enables the brand to fine-tune their content marketing to create more engagement, loyalty and in the end more of the desired conversions (Habibi et al. 2014; Davis et al. 2014).

One key aspect of an established brand community is the co-creation of content and brand community identity (Black & Veloutsou 2017). When the interaction inside the community is strong enough, the empowerment of consumers increases and the followers of brand may believe that they own the brand together instead of the brand's creator (Cova & White 2010; Black & Veloutsou 2017). Through this mutual

belief of ownership, the brand community's identity starts to mold according to its participants, especially the thought leaders inside the brand community (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Davis et al 2014; Habibi et al. 2014). This co-creation can also take place in the content itself. In many brand communities the members of the community create different types of content that is then shared on social media platforms utilized by the community. Discussion, visual content, blog texts and even organized gatherings are some of the ways that this community-driven content comes into realization (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Davis et al. 2014). Content created and shared by the community is a great way to enhance the brand engagement, but the drawback is that because of consumer empowerment, this content and its potentially harmful effects to the brand become difficult to control (Davis et al. 2014).

While a brand community's advantages are often easier to highlight, the negative sides of the community have to be considered as well. If the brand community can't be monitored and run according to the brand's identity, the brand is in risk of losing brand equity and brand engagement (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Corstjens et al. 2012; McCarthy et al. 2013). Consumer empowerment is stronger when the audience is unified through the brand, and the bigger the community grows the more likely it is to face social media backlash even on a daily basis (Corstjens et al. 2012; McCarthy et al. 2013). Since the effect of negative engagement is multiplied in social media, the brand community has to be managed with strong guidelines and precision (Corstjens et al. 2012; Habibi et al. 2014; McCarthy et al. 2013; Powers et al. 2012). In social media, the effects can be drastic in a short period of time, which is why brand management has to be ready to react to both positive and negative engagement in a swift manner (Corstjens et al 2012; Habibi et al. 2014). It can be argued that one of the biggest responsibilities and challenges for a brand community's manager is to distance themselves from the engagement negatively affecting the brand, while simultaneously maintaining the inclusiveness and values of the brand. To achieve this, brand management has to have a clearly defined understanding of their brand identity, their target audience, and the guidelines by which they want to run their brand community and its co-creation. As can be seen, a functioning brand community is the successor of defined and organized actions regarding brand identity, brand message, brand trust, brand loyalty, brand engagement and content marketing (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Davis et al. 2014; Habibi et al. 2014).

In the context of a personal brand, social media communities offer a variety of benefits and disadvantages similarly to their traditional brand counterparts (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Corstjens et al. 2012; McCarthy et al. 2013). As the research done by Habibi et al. (2014) points out, brand community relationships (excluding the consumer-consumer relationship) enhance brand trust thus creating stronger engagement. Stronger engagement leads into stronger relationships within the brand community, which is arguably one of the biggest objectives for a personal brand (Habibi et al. 2014). Well defined community management helps the entity behind the personal brand reinforce the volume of trust and loyalty while keeping the harmful effects of these social media communities at bay (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Corstjens et al. 2012; Habibi et al. 2014). For a personal brand, community management can either be very different from traditional B2C brands, or it can be virtually similar depending on the target audience of the brand and the goals set for the brand itself.

A personal brand's social media community can be build upon content marketing in a similar way to company brands. While the content may differ depending on the target recipients, co-creation is still something that even personal brands should aspire towards (Black & Veloutsou 2017). For a personal brand, the co-creation of content can include industry discussion within the brand's extended network, visual content, infographics and even long-form content similarly to its company counterparts. Again, the content that the community is build around is strictly related to the brand identity and the target audience.

The co-creation of a personal brand's identity is affected by the audience in a similar manner as for the traditional company brands (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Cova & White 2010). Consumer empowerment still plays a role, which is why it is important for the personal brand management to be able to distance themselves from any negative behavior inside the community (Corstjens et al 2012; Habibi et al. 2014). Enforcing the negative effects and reactions can be more difficult, especially in cases where the audience includes opinion leaders within the industry. Discussion sparked by the personal brand can pull the brand's image into association with the conversation even though the brand itself did not necessarily support the opinions. Either way, negative effects on the brand image can happen for even smaller personal brands

targeting industry executives. On social media, the negative effects travel fast even outside the boundaries of the community (Corstjens et al. 2012; Powers et al. 2012). Habibi et al. (2014) emphasize caution for the interactions and relationships that customers create within the community; these interactions can arguably create more negative results than positives for the personal brand. Finding scientific proof on how personal brands can minimize these effects is basically nonexistent, which makes the task at hand very complex (Habibi et al. 2014). Because of this, sustaining a consistent personal brand that conveys its exact identity and values to its audience (and the individuals outside that audience) requires strategic planning, strong effort and persistent resources.

Habibi et al. (2014) point out that there is often an existing gap between what the goals for the social media community are, and what is actually being measured. In many cases goals like enhanced trust, loyalty and market insights are paired with the number of visitors, active users and posts (Habibi et al. 2014). Measuring the goals of a community are definitely a complex task since there is still little scientific evidence to support that decision-making, but the focus of intelligent marketing actions should still be in finding the correct metrics that accurately portray what the personal brand is trying to achieve.

For an independent musician's personal brand, social media communities are the backbone of building an engaged audience. While the industry itself is heavily flooded by a large volume of artists and their social media content, strong brand communities offer musicians a chance to reach their own following amidst all the other digital confusion and offerings (Essing et al. 2017; Oh & Park 2012). An engaging brand is also very important in reaching other members of the target audience outside the brands current relationships; in the modern music industry content marketing and viral content will often reach the audience before the music itself (Essing et al. 2017). An engaged community creates constant brand awareness for the musician on social media, where even a daily presence is often needed to achieve visibility (Black & Veloutsou 2017; Davis et al. 2014). For an independent artist, focus on marketing efforts should take a majority share of the available time, but this is often not a sustainable strategy since there are many other necessary parts of the equation that the musician has to handle to keep delivering content. This

is where a strong brand community truly shines; even if the artist themselves is not able to create engaging social media content for their audience multiple times a day, the community will keep itself afloat with the co-creation of content (Davis et al. 2014). In many ways, an engaged audience will become a part of the brand and its marketing (Black & Veloutsou 2017).

For a musician's brand community, co-created content will often take form as discussion that is either sparked by the audience or the brand itself, visual content (tour videos, meet & greet pictures) and other shared material regarding the artist. A major aspect of the community is always the audience's relationship with the brand, which is why majority of the shared community content are documentations of experiences between the musician and their audience. In many ways, social media platforms give the audience more opportunities to connect with the artist through the community in a simple, everyday manner (Matthews 2016). This is especially important for a musician because the personal brand of an artist is harder to connect with in the offline world compared to company brands that can have a tangible presence in multiple locations (Matthews 2016). Building a strong social media based brand community is arguably one of the most necessary goals that a musician has to achieve in order to have a long-lasting career in the modern music industry.

2.3 Theoretical Findings Summary

Through the theoretical research it can be argued that the basis for successful engagement is to first understand how the personal brand should be defined. This definition should be strictly tied into the person behind the brand so that true authenticity can be achieved. Brand value is created in collaboration with the audience; this is why authenticity is important. With authenticity and clarity regarding the person itself and the message of the brand, a stronger basis for engagement can be build. While different parts of the audience need different types of personalization, everything related to the personal brand has to have a collective overarching understanding. Otherwise the brand message gets diluted. With a consciously defined brand identity, a personal brand has a better chance of understanding their target audience. It is worth noting that even for a musician, this target audience may

include or even consists of businesses and organizations instead of consumers; through these established music channels and influencers, a wider and already defined audience can often be reached.

Personal brand trust and loyalty can be seen as the long-term resolutions of successful brand marketing actions. When the brand promise is delivered to its audience consistently the musician's personal brand often sees stronger engagement. When the engagement rates grow through the trust that is build, a musician has a stronger basis for building a community around their brand. This is very important especially for independent artists since a major part of their commercial success as a musician comes from merchandise and other ways of leveraging their brand value (e.g. brand collaborations, affiliate marketing).

Successfully targeted content marketing is a cost-effective way to strengthen the relationship between the audience and the brand, which is why it is very suitable for an independent musician. Consistent content marketing also helps the brand avoid the negative reactions and associations on social media. Content marketing itself serves as a basis for a social media community, which should be the end goal of an independent musician starting to establish their brand. A strong community improves personal brand engagement which allows the musician to benefit commercially from their audience across various platforms while strengthening their long-term relationships with that audience.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of the study. The aim of this study is to understand and comprehend personal brand engagement in the research context and to provide means to perceive, measure and enhance personal brand engagement through actions related to content marketing and the establishment of a social media community. The qualitative and explorative nature of this research is outlined, and the means of data collection regarding the case artists on the social media platform Instagram are presented.

3.1 Methodology

Since the aim of this study is to understand how personal brand engagement can be created, this research is based on qualitative methods. The relationships between the artists and their audience are approached from a marketing perspective, which is why qualitative analysis is a very suitable choice for this thesis (Cetină et al. 2014). While quantitative methods are useful in gauging engagement and other related metrics, the phenomenon studied is new which is why in-depth metrics are difficult to provide.

Because the research topic has not seen a large amount of previous studies, the nature of this study is explorative. While the main research question relates to finding ways to create personal brand engagement, another outcome is to spark potential topics for future research. Many of these ideas for further research will be related to the sub-factors of brand engagement. While this study utilizes qualitative methods, future research can incorporate quantitative analysis if more numerical data is available regarding the topics of those studies.

This study is carried out as a case study. A case study is described as a research method that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context", which makes it suitable selection for the goals of this research (Yin 2009). Two artists that have a similar following and position in the industry are

selected as the cases. One of these artist clearly utilizes content marketing and community management to boost engagement, while the other creates content for their audience on a less structured basis. Benchmarking these two artists and their relationships with their audience gives this research a way to examine engagement through a qualitative lens.

The context of musical industry is important for the research which is why the cases are selected from within this industry. The platform under research (Instagram) does not offer means to extract a large amount of data for this research, which is why the explorative and qualitative approach is utilized. The amount of engagement can be examined through basic metrics for engagement and qualitative analysis of the reactions between the case artists and their audience. Since the research is confined within Instagram, the metrics presented will be supported by analyzing the audience reactions and their development.

The sub-questions of this thesis are the following:

- 1. How does content marketing affect personal brand engagement?*
- 2. How do brand trust & brand loyalty affect personal brand engagement?*
- 3. How does the establishment of a social media community affect personal brand engagement?*

The first question will be approached through case comparison between the two artists in a similar position. One of them utilizes structured content marketing on Instagram, while the other one does not. The effect of content marketing on personal brand engagement is measured through quantifiable reactions (likes, comments, utilization of branded hashtags) to create a baseline understanding for the individual cases. These metrics are then combined with the analysis of the comments themselves to create qualitative perceptions regarding the engagement. While the results found are not generalizable, it enables the research of personal brand engagement in the context of commercially successful independent musicians.

Sub-research question 2 considers the effect of brand trust and brand loyalty on personal brand engagement. Meaningful data is difficult to gather from this industry with the means available for this research, which is why this sub-question serves more as an explorative beginning for possible future research. Through the limited means available trust and loyalty are measured through returning visitors and overall comment-based analysis.

Sub-research question 3 considers the effect of a social media community on personal brand engagement. Similarly to question 1, the two different artists are compared through quantifiable reactions and content analysis of the audience relationships. The aim is to understand how the community aspect of the other artists relates to engagement compared to the benchmark artist that has not established a social media community. By recognizing the focal points of social media community establishment, this section of the study hopes to also find which aspects of a social media community can be seen having the most effect on brand engagement.

The purpose of this methodological approach is to create deeper understanding towards personal brand engagement in the context of music industry. Social media marketing is also part of the context that will be considered when analyzing the collected data qualitatively.

Qualitative methods utilized in this thesis create results that can be used as a basis when planning additional research into the new research phenomenon of personal brand engagement. While the amount of data and the respective research methods do not necessarily allow the generalization of the results into different industries, they serve as tools to begin understanding personal brand engagement and the different factors related to it on social media platforms. While the research is executed on Instagram, observations pointed out in this thesis can provide helpful touch points onto similar social media platforms regarding brand engagement.

The research of this thesis aims to provide ways to understand personal brand engagement on social media, and also ways to measure this engagement through the different components underlined in the sub-questions. Comparisons between the two case artists serve as a basis for this understanding. The results can be utilized to

recognize suitable practices for creating engagement through content marketing & social media communities. Combined with the theoretical findings, this thesis aims to both provide information on how personal brand engagement is created and how this could be researched in the future with more data and a more specific topics related to the different factors of engagement. In addition, some of the findings may also be applied to personal brand engagement in other industries as well, at least as a starting point for additional research.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this thesis is collected from the Instagram profiles of the two case artists. Instagram allows the extraction of likes, comments, hashtags and video views, which will serve as the basis for tracking engagement for this research. To gain a sense of engagement over time, a time period of 3 months was selected for these case studies. Instagram metrics for the case artists were tracked between May 2018 and July 2018.

This data is then sorted and categorized with few different metrics. Likes per post, comments per post, and views per video post were determined for both case artists. Since larger amounts of suitable data is not available on Instagram, these quantifiable metrics would be utilized in support for the qualitative analysis of the case artists.

Content marketing is firstly analyzed through the overall timeline and visual presentation that the case artists utilize on their profiles. This analysis is then expanded into the captions that the artists create, and whether these demonstrate a relationship between content marketing and engagement. The analysis of engagement is heavily based on the metrics regarding reactions (likes, comments & views), but also on the nature of these reactions. This is why comments of the audience are analyzed from the perspective of all the research questions.

Since brand loyalty and brand trust are difficult to measure especially in a situation where the research is conducted in a shorter time frame and without inclusive access

to the data of the subjects, loyalty will be researched through comment analysis. Returning visitors are difficult to track in the context of this research because of the limited data, but the research aims to find indicators of loyalty from the collected data.

The social media community aspect will be researched through captions, the utilization of hashtags and audience reactions. For this research question, the focus of data collection is on the interaction between the case artists and their audience. From the collected data, captions and comments that indicate correlation between a brand community and audience engagement are then analyzed further.

The amount of data collected for this thesis and the time frame of this research indicate that the results of this research cannot be generalized for the overall music industry. Furthermore, since two case artists are compared instead of having a situation where content marketing and building a social media community would be tracked from their establishment, the results generated serve a more explorative purpose. The results of this research can then be seen as an introductory research into the new topic of personal brand engagement, and through these results this thesis aims to generate interesting and relevant topics for future studies.

4. CASE COMPARISON OF ARTIST PERSONAL BRAND ENGAGEMENT

This chapter includes the research done on the two case artists, and the comparisons and observations that are drawn from this research. First, the case artists are profiled accompanied by the relevant metrics. Then engagement data extracted from their Instagram profiles is presented. After this, the personal brand engagement of both case artists is researched from the perspective of content marketing. Following content marketing, brand loyalty and brand trust are taken into consideration. A look into the effect of establishing a social media community concludes the research. Throughout this chapter the interconnectivity of all the drivers regarding engagement discovered in previous research is taken into consideration.

4.1 Case Artist Descriptions and Metrics

The first case artist (case 1) under examination is Vinylz, a multiple platinum-certified musician located in New York. Vinylz has worked with multiple mainstream hip hop musicians and has many songs that have charted on Billboard, which is why researching his personal brand is suitable for the scope of this thesis. Vinylz has over 103 000 Instagram followers, but he does not follow a strict content marketing approach regarding his profile. Vinylz posts consistently, but his posts are more focused on sharing news about upcoming tracks or other viral content instead of focusing on his own brand message.

The second case artist (case 2) utilized as a comparison is Trench Lord B, a platinum-certified musician from Atlanta, Georgia. Trench Lord B is an established producer in the hip hop industry, and he has a similar track record to Vinylz regarding high profile artists and charting songs. Trench Lord B has accumulated over 140 000 Instagram followers, and his timeline and posts clearly indicate a strategic approach to the platform. Trench Lord B was selected as a comparison for Vinylz for a few reasons; their relevancy as an artist is approximately similar based on their

accolades, they have a similar target audience and they have a different type of approach regarding their social media marketing and respective communities.

Trench Lord B has a stronger focus on video content, and a clear consistency on the type of brand message he attempts to deliver to his audience. He also seemingly has a plan to create engagement through comments and discussion that he facilitates with his captions and overall interaction.

Table 1: Case 2 (Trench Lord B) Instagram Engagement Data

Trenchlordb						
Posts	Likes	Views	Comments	Hashtags used	Tags	
2.May	2603		134	5	1	
2.May	6205	79 426	421	5	1	
5.May	2004		72	5	1	
8.May	2471		94	5	1	
9.May	6317	70 111	395	5	1	
11.May	1968		55	0	0	
15.May	1991		98	5	1	
16.May	7433	90 241	561	5	4	
18.May	1694		90	5	2	
23.May	1861		123	5	2	
23.May	6363	74 650	592	5	1	
25.May	3023		294	5	1	
28.May	2156		215	5	1	
31.May	4481	63 621	246	5	0	
1.Jun	1651		285	5	1	
4.Jun	1477		140	5	1	
7.Jun	6694	64 932	950	0	0	
11.Jun	2163		301	0	1	
13.Jun	2558		331	0	0	
15.Jun	5439	53 582	618	0	0	
18.Jun	2159		263	0	0	
20.Jun	2988		101	0	0	
22.Jun	5127	47 812	468	0	0	
25.Jun	1887		102	0	0	
27.Jun	2372		128	0	0	
29.Jun	5864	44 581	785	0	0	
2.Jul	2318		202	0	0	
4.Jul	2461		125	0	0	
6.Jul	4114	54 230	280	0	0	
9.Jul	2579		156	0	0	
11.Jul	3080		228	1	1	
13.Jul	4945	59 195	312	0	1	
16.Jul	3302		173	0	1	
18.Jul	3062		297	5	0	
20.Jul	4980	60 568	271	5	1	
23.Jul	1997		65	1	2	
25.Jul	2319		88	0	2	
26.Jul	4586	59 094	660	5	0	
29.Jul	3235		154	5	0	
Average	3434,026	63 234,076	278,794872	2,487179487	0,717949	
Pic AVG	2273,296		159,777			
Video AVG	5580,615		504,538			

Table 1 showcases the basic metrics available on Instagram regarding engagement. A green field indicates video content (views are only trackable for videos). For Case 2, The most notable observations are the consistency of engagement (amount of average comments, amount of average video views) and the difference between the amount of average reactions (likes & comments) for video content compared to pictures. Based on the average views and comments, video-based content marketing seems to create consistent results for case 2.

Table 2: Case 1 (Vinylz) Instagram Engagement Data

Vinylz							
Posts	Likes	Views	Comments	Hashtags used	Tags		
10.May	311	4187	20	0	1		
10.May	1142		50	0	1		
12.May	2511		48	0	1		
13.May	1237	not available	53	1	0		
16.May	2163		68	0	2		
21.May	789	8003	28	0	1		
23.May	822		33	5	1		
25.May	1210	7267	51	1	3		
25.May	1317	not available	51	1	3		
28.May	3139	26 297	317	1	0		
31.May	2673	16 540	189	0	4		
14.Jun	2908		56	0	1		
17.Jun	3141		121	0	5		
17.Jun	1340		44	1	4		
21.Jun	3660		244	0	0		
22.Jun	4755	not available	347	0	1		
26.Jun	1516	8773	50	0	1		
26.Jun	3157		149	0	0		
29.Jun	2632		54	0	1		
2.Jul	5634	125 328	270	1	0		
4.Jul	4526		253	0	0		
8.Jul	1687		57	0	1		
15.Jul	1620	14 739	111	0	2		
Average	2343,043	26 391,75	115,826087	0,47826087	1,434783		
		12 258	(without outlier)				
Pic AVG	2474,083		98,083				
Video AVG	2200,09		135,182				

For case 1, videos still provide more average reactions than pictures, but the difference is smaller which might indicate that the content strategy behind case 1 videos is not as suitable for the audience compared to case 2. Furthermore, the data shows greater inconsistency and variance than case 1. If the outlier video results (July 2nd Vinylz shared a viral video not part of his own brand or creation) are

removed, the amount of views generated is fairly low. The inconsistency of the reactions might indicate that the brand message lacks clarity, which in turn does not engage the audience to return to this content constantly. For case 2, the argument of more returning visitors could be made based on the numerical data alone, but the comment analysis further supports this observation.

4.2 Effect of Content Marketing on Personal Brand Engagement

When analyzing the differences of content marketing for the two cases on Instagram, the first step is to look at the visual themes of the content posted on the respective profiles of the case artists. Instagram is a platform based on visual content, and previous research indicates that visual content is one of the most effective ways to reach the attention of the target audience and to generate engagement.

The profile for case artist 1 lacks visual structure, and their posts are seemingly more random regarding the use of colors, structure and content theme itself. Case 2 has a clear content strategy regarding their profile. This can be seen from an overarching color theme, and the content of the posts. Almost every single post has a similar setting (music studio), framing and lighting and it features the person behind the brand constantly. Case 2 also utilizes a schedule where they post a certain amount of pictures and videos in a specific order; this makes the timeline appear more professionally curated.

While case 1 mainly focuses on promoting their new releases or supporting peers, case 2 focuses their content to providing value and driving engagement. Case 2 utilizes Instagram captions in a highly strategic manner; with every post, they share music production tips, or overall help regarding music industry. This is an attempt to provide value to the audience, and when it is combined with a call-to-action (usually asking the audience for their opinion or support via commenting on the post) it creates more engagement for case 2. When this strategy is applied consistently on every post in their overall schedule, the brand message becomes more clear to the audience. It is much more easier to understand the personal brand identity of case 2

than case 1 because they have a clearly defined content strategy that constantly supports their brand message.

Since the first thing that the audience sees when approaching the brand on Instagram is their overall visual clarity, it can be argued that a strategic approach to visual content is the building block for personal brand engagement. After the overall visual structure, the value of the content regarding the needs of the target audience should be prioritized. Case 2 does this well with their captions-based guidance, where the content focuses on providing value to the customers and engaging the customers in discussion with the brand.

For case 1, the audience might have difficulties grasping the overall brand identity based on the content posted on Instagram. Since the visual content does not seem to have a strategic and interconnected approach, it is arguably harder for the audience to establish a relationship with the personal brand. Case 1 utilized short form captions that are usually only a sentence or two long. Most often these captions are related to promoting a release, or in the case of shared viral content they are a short commentary on that specific post. This approach, combined with the comment section analysis indicate that case 1 does not manage to convey their brand message to their audience with clarity. The lack of strategic effort to create engagement is visible on the data extracted from Instagram when it is compared to case 2.

"@iamcardib "Be Careful" Video Out Now"

(Case 1 Caption. Posted on 21.5, Short video preview)

"New @G_Eazy "Over Me produced by Vinylz x @cubatz @allenritter #TheVault"

(Case 1 Caption. Posted on 25.5. Short audio preview)

These example captions from case 1 showcase the general theme, or the lack of thereof for case 1 content marketing. The captions are not designed to spark interaction, and since the visual content lacks cohesion alongside these captions the brand identity and brand message is not delivered to the audience. This makes

engagement very difficult to create and predict, as the variance of the case 1 reaction data suggests.

For case 2, the message is conveyed much more clearly through strategic content marketing. Case 2 has defined their content to suit the needs of their potential audience by offering music production tips alongside previews of new music on their video content. When the artist gives the audience a glimpse of the creative process, it can be argued that the audience has a stronger positive reaction to the content marketing delivered to them. Case 2 posts these videos and pictures consistently, and the overall message and content stays within a similar theme in each of their post. This way, the audience knows what to expect from the brand. The captions for these videos are short inspirational tips or guidelines that the target audience can take into consideration quite easily. The artist then encourages their audience to comment on something specific or post a certain emote or word if they agree with his message; creating engagement and a larger reach with his current and potential target consumers.

"Always keep the finished song (not beat) in mind. Producers, when you find yourself wrecking your brain for that one last sound remember, that sound could be the artist. Type (Facts) in the comments if you agree"

(Case 2 Caption. Posted on 7.6, Video content)

"Yep.. this is the main reason I can never make 5 minute beats Lol. There's always at least 30 minutes of being an artist that happens. Producers, if this is you during your Cookups let me know in the comments below! Oh, for my writers.. I think the word I'm building a hook around is "Always". Pen your version in the comments below too. Lets go CRAZY! #musicproducer #songwriter #artist #flstudio #nativeinstruments"

(Case 2 Caption. Posted on 26.7, Video content)

These captions from case 2 exemplify the strategic content marketing approach. The longer captions focus on giving context to the video content, while at the same time offering additional value to the audience through small and helpful tips. Case 2 always utilized some sort of a CTA in their posts; most often this CTA is there to engage the audience in discussion with the brand and each other in the comment

section, as the example captions showcase. Even though there is a more relaxed feel to the captions than what for example a larger corporate brand would usually have, the strategic goals for the captions are still visible.

These efforts seem successful for case 2 based on the qualitative analysis of the profiles and their comment sections. The reaction data extracted seems to support this observation. Even though the case artists are in a somewhat similar position in the industry, the average video views are much higher for case 2 (63 234) than for case 1 (26 391, or 12 258 without the high outlier observation). While the higher average view count might indicate a multitude of potential reasons like better targeting or better utilization of the complex Instagram algorithms, the argument for stronger engagement specifically created by content marketing can be made when this is combined with other reaction data. The audience for case 2 seems to stay and watch videos even though they are longer, and they also engage with the content by commenting on these videos. Both average comments and average likes are much higher for case 2 (504 comments, 5580 likes) than for case 1 (135 comments, 2200 likes). Based on the differences between the strategic captions and the visual clarity of the two personal brands, an argument can be made for content marketing to create consistent engagement when the brand message matches with the audience, and when engagement is one of the main goals for that content marketing strategy.

Based on the limited quantitative analysis and the overall qualitative nature of this research, it can be argued that a well-defined content marketing strategy has very a strong positive correlation with personal brand engagement. The data extracted from Instagram showcases that for the subjects of this research content marketing boosts engagement and it can be created consistently over time, while the lack of a content marketing strategy creates more inconsistent results and possibly less returning visitors. The combination of a strong visual brand and content that is regular in its form seems to create better engagement when the content strategy has taken the wants and needs of the target audience into consideration. Based on the consistently high amount of comments, the video strategy combined with captions that have a CTA seem to generate strong engagement that is sustainable, and the lower variance might indicate that case 2 sees more returning visitors thanks to their content marketing strategy.

As a conclusion, content marketing for a personal brand is a suitable tool to create stronger engagement. With engagement as a specific goal, CTAs combined with interesting and helpful content spark interaction between the personal brand and their audience. It can be argued that the clarity of the brand's visual identity is also important, as it relates to the emotional reactions that the audience has when interacting with the brand. Maintaining and guiding these emotional reactions through content marketing is especially important when the personal brand aims to create consistent engagement through long-term relationships based on brand trust & brand loyalty.

4.3 Effect of Brand Trust and Loyalty on Personal Brand Engagement

Since returning visitor data is not available for the case artists in this research, brand trust and loyalty are approached with a qualitative analysis of the case artists' Instagram content and the comment sections of their posts. By evaluating the audience reactions in text form, some general observations can be made regarding their perceived trust and loyalty for the personal brands.

As established while researching content marketing, case 1 does not pursue engagement strategically with their videos, pictures or post captions. They also do not engage in discussion with their audience, missing out on genuine interaction with the fan base. When this lack of interactivity is combined with the lack of content marketing strategy for the personal brand in case 1, trust and loyalty become harder to generate. Arguably this happens because the visitors of the page have a harder time grasping what the artist's brand is about, and what type of values they represent over time. As seen in previous visual content research, without cohesion the audience has more difficulty identifying with the brand, and when engagement is often regarded as an ongoing process in the music industry case 1 will have a harder time creating long-lasting relationships. The lack of strategic efforts regarding loyalty creates a situation where consistent engagement is harder to establish for case 1, which is backed by the high variance of the engagement metrics.

For case 2, the situation is different. Case 2 has a clear brand message, and their content marketing constantly conveys that they are interested in helping the audience by providing useful content to them on a regular basis. The visual consistency of the profile gives case 2 more authenticity, and the audience will have an easier time interpreting and identifying with the personal brand.

"What's up my family! I want to share a quick 808/Kick tip with my production newbies. I already know your drip runneth over lol, but here's a way to further drench your drum patterns. After copying the notes of your 808 over to your kick, sprinkle in a few extra kick notes to construct a different, yet complementary pattern. Don't be afraid to experiment with the velocity of those new notes. Remember, sauce has no ceiling. - Lord

Drop me a (fist emoji) if you found this helpful and tag a fellow producer"
(Case 2 Caption. Posted on 29.6, Video content)

"Having a strong "Reason Why" will always be a quick fix for a lack of motivation. If your a little low in the tank.. it may be time to check your "Why". Drop a (check emoji) and share the number one reason for chasing your goal each day in the comments below. Love family! #motivate #stayfocused #Ambition #Achieve #FLStudio"
(Case 2 Caption. Posted on 2.5, Video content)

As seen in these captions and their accompanied video content, case 2 focuses on providing value and empowerment to their audience. Since all of their content follows a similar structure with consistency, it can be argued that their audience is more inclined to trust the brand and develop loyalty with it. Consumers that have previously benefitted from the content and had an initial positive reaction with the personal brand are more inclined to return to case 2's content, creating more engagement. This consistency of engagement also helps case 2 have more visibility with the complex Instagram algorithm. Although returning visitor data is not available, it can be argued that the consistency of video views and comments indicates that a large part of the audience has developed loyalty and is consistently engaging with the personal brand.

Since case 2 engages and interacts with the audience constantly with a focus on helping them, new and returning visitors will have a precedent of additional value gained by their engagement. This means that the audience can see that if they engage with the personal brand, their efforts will be noticed and they will get to interact with the personal brand directly in the comment section. Even though the comments are usually short, case 2 makes consistent effort in all of their posts to answer questions and continue the interaction and engagement that they started with their content and the accompanying captions.

Established loyalty is further supported by the comments of the audience themselves. While most of the comments are shorter acknowledgements as it is typical on a platform like Instagram, case 2 is able to create a significant amount of longer discussions on their posts. For the content of case 1, these types of comments are a rare commodity. The comments that case 2 is able to generate from the audience indicate that the content has delivered on the brand promise, and the audience is satisfied with it. When the content marketing strategy utilizes a consistent post schedule and the audience gets what they want from the brand, their trust and loyalty will grow over time. Since multiple audience members constantly spend time to write longer comments and engage in discussion with the personal brand on a short form platform like Instagram, it can be argued that case 2 has build loyalty and that loyalty directly affects their engagement rates over time.

"Usually I never comment on blogs but your message is so convincing that I never stop myself to say something about it. You're doing a great job, keep it up."

(Case 2. Audience comment)

"Just started looking at your page and you seem to be always dropping facts"

(Case 2. Audience comment)

"Inspirational as always. Love to see you supporting the ones who are yet to shine and giving knowledge"

(Case 2. Audience comment)

During the time span of the research all of the posts by case 2 had created a notable amount of similar reactions that indicated trust and loyalty regarding their personal brand. Through their content marketing strategy, it seems that case 2 artist has been able to create trust regarding their personal brand, and over time this has developed into loyal audience members which in turn have created more engagement for the personal brand. This cycle repeats itself when a similar content strategy is applied and both new and returning visitors witness the brand image and that they can expect to receive even more value if they participate in the personal brand by engaging. This is something that case 1 is not able to create with their content consistently as seen by their comment sections, which is the biggest difference between these two brands when it comes the comment analysis. Accompanied by the limited engagement metrics, this supports the argument that the personal brand engagement of case 2 has benefitted from brand trust and loyalty created by their marketing efforts.

Metrics to accurately and reliably measure brand trust and brand loyalty are almost nonexistent, and often these measurement tactics are very case dependent. Tracking returning visitors would be an useful tool to gauge loyalty, but this data was not available for this exploratory research. However an argument can be made that loyalty and trust have been created more successfully for case 2 when the engagement metrics are compared to the theoretical findings regarding brand trust and brand loyalty. The consistent reaction averages and views with lower variance can be seen supporting the observation that the audience has found its way back to the content more often than in the case comparison 1.

The qualitative comment analysis seems to support this observation, and when the final engagement is traced back to the content strategy applied by case 2 it can be argued that their marketing strategy has established trust and loyalty that has lead into stronger engagement. To more accurately measure the level of this trust and its effect, returning visitor data and a higher sample size of engagement data should be utilized. Since a musical artists' commercial success is highly dependent on brand loyalty especially if their marketing is focused on social media, these findings offer an interesting theme for further research.

While the results regarding personal brand trust and loyalty can not be generalized, they do seem to indicate that there is positive correlation between establishing brand trust & loyalty and consistent long term engagement. Through this observation and the theoretical connectivity between loyalty and engagement there is an incentive to research the topic further. By focusing on researching returning visitors and their engagement rates and by utilizing multiple case personal brands stronger and more reliable findings could be generated.

4.4 Effect of a Social Media Community on Personal Brand Engagement

As indicated by previous research, establishing a social media community is very important for musical artists when pursuing growth and commercial success. Through a community, brand loyalty can be improved over time and the content can be more easily provided to the specifically intended audience. The community aspect of the case artists' Instagram profiles is analyzed in the context of the personal brand engagement, which means that other results generated by the social media community were not the focus of this research.

For case 1, a lack of strategic efforts regarding a social media community can be identified. While an Instagram profile itself can be seen as a platform for a community, the marketing actions of case 1 do not focus on establishing the community further. Post captions are not utilized to strengthen the relationships between the brand and the audience, or between the audience members themselves, and the case artist does not seem to focus on building an environment that would nourish community engagement. The lack of visual cohesion or content marketing strategy also creates a situation where a potential consumer has a more difficult time identifying themselves with the brand, thus lessening the chance that they would participate in building brand value through participation in the community.

The case artist 1 does not engage the audience in their comment section, or acknowledge their presence in a regular manner. As mentioned in the content marketing analysis, the lack of overall cohesion creates a diluted brand image, which

in turn can arguably be seen as less enticing for the followers to engage with and spent time on. Case 1 does not make the audience feel seen or incorporate their content to their page, which would be an ideal way to enhance and reward community activity. This in turn can be seen as a partial reason for the lesser engagement metrics compared to case 2. Since content marketing, brand trust and brand loyalty are deeply interconnected as seen in previous research, it can be argued that the overall combination of these elements is the reason that case 1 does not seem to be able to create consistent engagement comparable to case 2. To determine more exact metrics and reasoning behind this observation, engagement metrics and the different functions under research should be isolated and examined on multiple social media platforms with a larger sample size.

Case 2 has clearly considered establishing a social media community as a vital part of their social media strategy. Every single post that case 2 creates has multiple indicators of developing and nurturing the relationship between the brand and their audience. There is a clear focus on addressing the audience directly, and the brand message and identity are cultivated to create value that is boosted when the audience engages and takes part in the community.

Most notably, case artist 2 acknowledges and shares a lot of the community created content. To keep his personal brand page visually cohesive, this content is shared on an additional community page (under the Instagram handle @cook_gang). On this secondary profile, the focus is entirely on audience interaction and sharing community content. Posts made on this account acknowledge the audience and create positive relationships between the community members, which is very important for the overall mutually created brand identity. The secondary channel offers a consistent way for the audience to connect with each other and the brand, and it also offers a way for case 2 to benefit from audience created content without sacrificing their own brand image on their personal brand page. Case 2 utilizes the existence of this secondary channel often in their posts, referencing to their audience with the title "Cook Gang". A mutually shared community name is an effort to improve the possibility for the audience to identify with the brand and as a part of the overall community.

While the personal brand is somewhat visible on the community page and the case artists engages with the audience there, a slight separation can be seen from the primary personal brand. Since the focus of this research is on the exact personal brand of the case artists, this secondary channel is not researched further during this thesis.

Alongside interaction and the overall consistency of the content, the actual post captions are one of the main drivers for the establishment of the social media community for case 2. All of the posts are written with the audience engagement in mind, and they seem to have been crafted to generate feelings of togetherness and community through the specific words the case artist has chosen to utilize. The audience is often addressed directly, and they are called to participate in the discussion and community regularly thanks to the encouraging captions. Case 2 also encourages their followers to invite other like-minded consumers into the discussion as can be seen in the following caption example.

"Hi-Hats supply so much of the bounce. What I like to do to enhance their effect, is something I call 'Split Vibe'. As an example: You know how you guys click in the (lower note) hi-hats to compliment the main ones right? Well in (Sauce Pockets).. I'll choose a few 'Percs' to replace some of those lower hats. When played all together, it results in a more interesting and dynamic beat.

Drop a (hat emoji) and tag a producer who may find this information useful"

(Case 2 Caption. Posted on 15.6, Video content)

Directly addressing the audience with every post and choosing to use words like "family", "gang", and other similar community related terms help solidify the brand message and identity of case 2. The audience can see that the artist is interested in sharing their platform with them, and providing valuable content and interaction to them if they choose to participate into the community that the case artist has established.

Case 2 then expands the process started with the content and the captions by taking part into the discussion regularly. Instead of a few odd replies here and there, case 2 participates into the discussion consistently and clearly aims to create personal

connections and relationships with their audience. Even on a short form platform like Instagram, case 2 engages the audience into longer discussion with multiple replies, either acknowledging the content created by the audience, being thankful for their attention, or even answering questions related to the music industry and music production. The two-way interaction generated sets a precedent for further audience involvement, and encourages the audience to help each other as well utilizing the community of the personal brand.

"Maybe I can help. What's the issue?"

(Case 2 comment by the artist. Offering help to an audience member's problem)

"What do you struggle with as far as the kick drum goes?"

(Case 2 comment by the artist. Offering help to a music production related question)

"Thanks! I don't strive or base the vibe on a set number. I layer it until it sounds dope to me. Sometimes that's 2 sounds, sometimes it's 6 or 7."

(Case 2 comment by the artist. Offering help to a music production related question)

By being constantly present and interacting with their audience, case 2 creates a community where the audience members have a rare chance to gain behind-the-scenes info related to the music industry. Although many artists document their life and work on various social media platforms, the community aspect is often forgotten as the levels of interaction between the community and the artist and the community members themselves is usually low. Case 2 clearly focuses their content strategy into offering deeper interaction through being involved with the audience. Arguably this is something that separates the case 2 personal brand from multiple competitors such as case 1.

This observation is backed up by the reaction data gathered from Instagram. Especially the videos where the community-building efforts are done with even larger focus, case 2 manages to create a larger volume of engagement (views, comments, likes) more reliably than case 1. Previous research supports the notion of connectivity between brand trust & loyalty, content marketing and social media communities, but useful and reliable metrics are still difficult to create especially on a

constantly changing platform like Instagram. This is why it can be argued that many research topics with a similar focus have to serve a more exploratory purpose, or aim to generate new metrics with the help of data from other platforms to gauge the effect of these factors on personal brand engagement.

However based on the qualitative analysis of the personal brand's content, captions, interaction and their audience reactions there is a strong indication that establishing a social media community does affect personal brand engagement in a positive way. The metrics support this observation, but perhaps most importantly through the comment and caption analysis it can be seen that the audience is actually engaged with the personal brand and their community. Views, likes and the amount of comments only serve as a base metric to understand the levels of engagement, but the quality and true nature of the interactions is where the engagement actually lies. This is especially true for the musicians that have identified creating long-term relationships with their community as the biggest goal of their social media marketing efforts.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on the different drivers of brand engagement and how they can be utilized to improve personal brand engagement in the context of the music industry. This chapter concludes the research by showcasing the theoretical contributions and findings of the thesis. Future research topics sparked by this research are also discussed.

With the explorative nature of this thesis in mind, the main findings relate to the interconnected relationships between the drivers associated with personal brand engagement. Content marketing, brand trust & loyalty and the establishment of a social media community all work in unison when creating consistent personal brand engagement over time. Depending on the specific marketing goals of the musician, some of these drivers may see a stronger focus, but efficiently sustainable long-term engagement arguably requires the focus to be on all of them.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions and Implications

This subchapter presents the theoretical contributions and implications of this thesis. The discussion is divided into the three sub-research questions followed by the main research question.

5.1.1 SRQ1: How Does Content Marketing Affect Personal Brand Engagement?

Content marketing was found to be the basis of consistent brand engagement, and the lack of a content marketing structure was found to be detrimental to engaging the audience with the brand. According to previous research and the findings of this thesis, a consistent visual theme is one of the most important parts of successful content marketing. This is especially true on the platform researched on this thesis, Instagram.

The visual consistency of a personal brand should be considered as a key focus for content marketing because it is a large part of the brand message cohesion, especially on visual platforms which most social media platforms can be categorized as. For the case artists under examination, visual consistency alongside post schedules seemed to be a dividing factor regarding engagement metrics. Since content marketing can be seen as the basis for brand engagement for a musical artist, the lack of this consistency was found to be detrimental to engagement. A strategic approach to visual content and overall brand consistency as demonstrated by case 2 can arguably be seen as a requirement for strong engagement values on social media, but not necessarily as something that alone creates that engagement.

The visual brand identity established was found to help guide the audiences emotional reactions to the content, and through these efforts long term relationships could be build consistently. For the content marketing to work as intended, the content has to focus on providing value and encouraging engagement instead of pure promotion. Interestingly as seen by the case artist comparisons, even long-form captions can be observed to create engagement on a short-form platform like Instagram if the accompanying content is valuable to the consumers.

As content marketing theory suggests, providing this value to the audience through content works best when it can simultaneously grab the attention of new visitors while nurturing the existing relationships. When this is tied to the social media community aspect, and the personal brand consistently showcases that by engaging with the content the audience gets even more value (as seen in case 2), new visitors are more inclined to engage with the personal brand. When the content marketing and the personal brand image can be matched to the target audience, the results show that engagement is more consistent and sustainable over long term.

5.1.2 SRQ2: How Do Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty Affect Personal Brand Engagement?

For brand trust & loyalty, exact metrics are difficult to establish especially on Instagram. However the findings indicate that interaction with the audience is very

important; as seen in the results, this is a clear difference between the two case artists. Through comments, discussion and captions that focus on being interactive and encouraging related to engagement case 2 is able to build a more loyal follower base. To achieve loyalty by first creating brand trust, the brand message has to be immediately clear to the target audience. This is very important for a musical artist, and the findings arguably show that more clarity related to the personal brand allows more loyalty to be developed over time. If creating personal brand loyalty is not a strategic goal, the audience will be less inclined to return to the content created by the brand. This means that the personal brand has to consider brand loyalty through all of their marketing actions, especially in the context of the music industry.

According to the findings, involving the audience into the brand is a key component to stronger personal brand engagement. Long-term loyalty can be directly seen as longer discussions and more comments related to the content. When the audience is acknowledged for these efforts (as in case 2), these audience reactions encourage new visitors to eventually take part into the same community cycle. However, since previous research suggests that the interaction between consumers (a key part of social media communities) affects brand trust & brand loyalty negatively, the personal brand has to take active measures to monitor their audience. Facilitating and encouraging discussion instead of disrupting it can be seen as an effective way to minimize these effects, while at the same time distancing the personal brand enough from the audience and the community content to avoid confusion regarding the brand image.

Since brand trust & loyalty are difficult to measure reliably, more research is clearly needed. Because brand loyalty is extremely important for a musical artists' (or artists' of any type) commercial success, developing accurate metrics or other related themes are very interesting topics for further research.

5.1.3 SRQ3: How Does the Establishment of a Social Media Community Affect Personal Brand Engagement?

As supported by previous research and the findings of this thesis, a social media community can be seen as a way to control the audience and guide them towards more engagement while simultaneously providing them value and empowerment. To establish a social media community that enhances personal brand engagement over time, consistent actions are needed. This can be seen in the comparison of the two case artists, as the lack of strategic community efforts clearly contributes to the overall engagement levels and their consistency for case 1. For case 2, the community management can be seen guiding and boosting engagement with the personal brand through different levels of community interaction. A worthwhile observation is that case 2 also encourages interaction between audience members inside his community, which is an underutilized tactic at least in the context of the music industry. Participating in the different discussions, whether they are started by the personal brand or not, is also found to be an effective way to further boost engagement and demonstrate the value of engagement from the customers' point of view. Captions with CTAs that encourage engagement with the content are also a way that a personal brand can continuously create and maintain engagement if the accompanying content itself is effective enough.

Social media platforms like Instagram also allow personal brands to let the audience participate in the brand via created content. Sharing and acknowledging this content works as a key part of the community structure for case 2, and through these efforts it can be argued that the audience feels more heard on a consistent basis, again leading into stronger personal brand engagement. Case 2 also demonstrates that while they are focusing on sharing community created content, they are able to do so while simultaneously creating enough distance between that content and the personal brand. This way the brand message does not get diluted, and they are able to maintain the visual theme and cohesion of the brand page. This is something that multiple artists that share community content can often struggle with, which in turn may lead into no noticeable growth in engagement.

From the results it can also be extracted that making the audience feel like it is a part of a real community is important. Demonstrating value created by engaging with the community works best when the community's identity is clear. This can often be achieved through specific language and word selection in captions that highlights communal feelings and a shared purpose. By naming the community and constantly referring to it as something that exists as a shared entity between the personal brand and their audience, the personal brand will often see stronger engagement results over time. This will also enable stronger growth since the community can then be seen as something that is desirable to be a part of by new visitors.

A strategically run community enables the brand to create engagement and value through long-term relationships. When the personal brand considers the audience as a co-creator of the brand's identity like previous research suggests, they have a higher potential to actually build and strengthen these relationships. If the brand is then distanced from the negative brand effects of social media interactions and community content while still upholding consistent interaction they are well ahead of most of their competition. In the music industry, a loyal community can be the most important and valuable asset that the personal brand has.

5.1.4 MRQ: How to Create Personal Brand Engagement in B2C Social Media Marketing in the Music Industry?

Previous research indicates that creating brand engagement should not be seen as a short-term goal; it should be based upon building long-term relationships that are constantly nurtured if the personal brand hopes to see consistent engagement results. To nurture these relationships, content marketing should be utilized.

As seen in the findings of this thesis, a personal brand should create content that is tailored to the specific audience with engagement as one of the main goals of this content. When a personal brand is trying to create engagement, the focus should be on providing value instead of promotional content. This is another reason why previous research supports the argument that content marketing is very suitable for creating engagement, since it is based on providing value to the target audience.

When this content is consistent throughout the social media platforms utilized, it is shaped to encourage engagement, and the personal brand showcases additional value that the audience will gain if they engage with the content, then the brand is well on its way towards long-term engagement.

When the content strategy is framed successfully, the personal brand should then focus on creating a social media community around the personal brand and its content marketing. While involving the audience into the co-creation is key, it should be noted that the brand has to be able to maintain a strong brand identity through this process. Even when sharing or interacting with community created content, a personal brand has to be able to distance themselves enough from that content to maintain a cohesive brand message.

When a clear brand message, content marketing, and the establishment of a social media community are combined with consistent interaction, the personal brand will arguably create long-term relationships that lead into personal brand loyalty. This loyalty then leads into personal brand engagement that is more reliable and has less variance in the results compared to short-term engagement building actions. Thus it can be argued that personal brand loyalty could be seen as an end goal for engagement. When all the other aspects before it are executed correctly and there is a strong focus on nurturing engagement, a loyal audience will keep engaging with the brand consistently. Especially for an independent musician the value of a personal brand is very much tied into brand loyalty, and engagement focused marketing strategies are a way to achieve and maintain the loyalty-building audience relationships over time.

5.2 Limitations and Further Research

The research phenomenon under examination in this thesis is relatively new for overall brand-related research, but for a personal brand similar research is virtually nonexistent. Since the scientific field has not yet developed reliable advanced metrics for gauging brand engagement and its multiple factors, the results of this thesis can be seen more as an introduction to the topic and the further research concerning

personal brand engagement. While the results of this research cannot be generalized for the music industry or any related fields, they serve as an overall initiation on how personal brand engagement has been created efficiently and which marketing actions this engagement usually ties into.

The explorative nature of this thesis combined with the case comparison analysis enabled the development of multiple suitable topics for future research. Since previous research on this exact topic is not prevalent in the scientific field, research regarding the subtopics related to personal brand engagement had to be utilized. Through these topics, a stronger consensus could be developed regarding to what are the most suitable marketing actions for creating personal brand engagement. This in turn lead to multiple discoveries regarding suitable research topics, both for the overall theme of this thesis and the subthemes that were more specific for the different underlying sections of creating brand engagement.

To conduct a similar research on a larger and a more reliable scale, multiple platforms could be utilized to see how the different aspects of social media sites (amount of visual emphasis, long-form vs. short-form etc.) affect personal brand engagement. With multiple platforms and possibly a larger amount of case personal brands, deeper quantitative analysis could be utilized more efficiently while still researching engagement with some qualitative methods. Another possible way to approach personal brand engagement would be a deeper focus into content marketing. The effect of content marketing regarding engagement could be observed by looking into a case before and after it has started utilizing strategic content marketing that focuses on building engagement. The case brand's engagement metrics and overall brand could be analyzed over a longer time period, and if this study would be conducted for multiple case brands at the same time it could generate more reliable results regarding the level of effect content marketing has on personal brand engagement.

Another suitable topic for future research would be focusing on the community aspect of personal brand engagement. Habibi et al. (2014) found that consumer-to-consumer relationships actually affect brand trust negatively. Since these relationships are a key part of a social media community, a future research could

delve into how a personal brand can distance itself from these negative effects of a social media community while simultaneously maintaining consistent interaction and brand engagement.

Since previous research has also found that especially in the music industry, there is a trend towards B2B targeting for artists to find specified audiences and communities (Oh & Park 2012), a study could be executed regarding the engagement metrics of an audience generated through these targeting channels compared to the engagement of an audience created by content marketing. Similarly, influencer and thought leader targeting in the context of different industries could provide valuable results regarding engagement created through multiple means. Another layer of these studies could be to examine how brand trust and loyalty are affected when the audience is found through B2B targeting or influencer targeting instead of content marketing or other more traditional means.

As mentioned in the thesis, brand trust and brand loyalty are a key part of personal brand engagement, but reliable metrics to measure these factors have not been established yet. Future research regarding the relationship between engagement, brand trust and brand loyalty should focus on developing metrics through isolated research on case brands via multiple platforms, utilizing a larger sample size. These stronger metrics could be developed around returning visitor data, which is one of the few current means to observe brand loyalty. With a larger sample size, returning visitor data could be combined into engagement metrics for these returning visitors. This data could be analyzed with quantitative analysis to observe differences between the engagement data of returning visitors and the general audience's engagement to arrive at a more reliable consensus regarding the relationship between personal brand loyalty and personal brand engagement.

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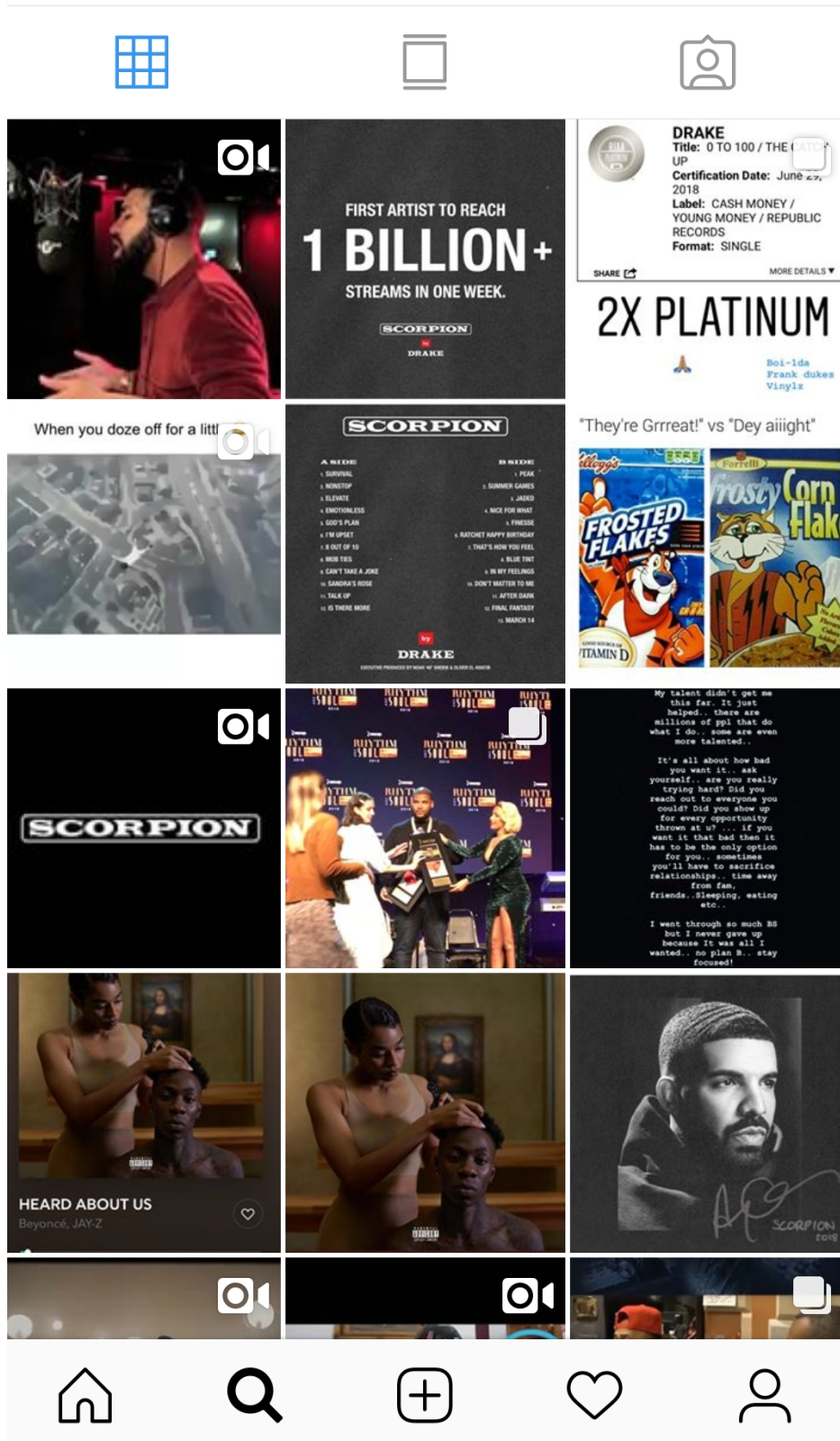
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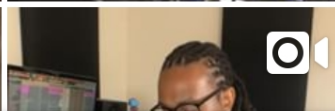
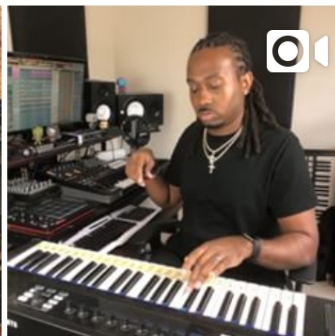
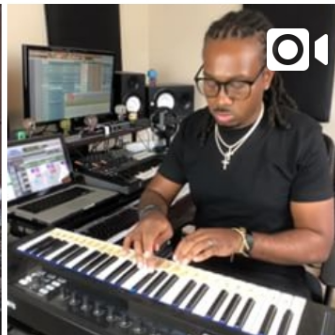
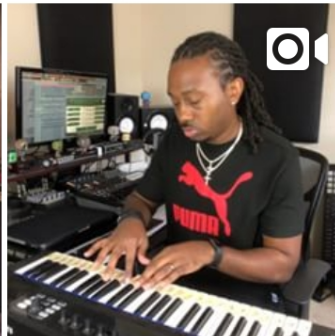
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Visual Theme of the Case Artist (Case 1, Instagram)



APPENDIX 2. Visual Theme of the Case Artist (Case 2, Instagram)



APPENDIX 3. Visual Theme of the Case Artist (Case 2 Community Profile, Instagram)

