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The Brand Within – Exploring the Impact of Human Brands on Consumer Engagement

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"There are going to be people along the way who will try to undercut your success or take credit for your accomplishments or your fame. But if you just focus on the work and you don't let those people sidetrack you, someday, when you get where you're going, you will look around and you will know that it was you, and the people who love you, who put you there. And that will be the greatest feeling in the world."

- Taylor Swift

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Abstract

The concept of human brands has gained increasing attention in marketing literature, particularly in the context of social media, where public figures such as celebrities and influencers strategically position themselves as brands. Despite this growing relevance, there is still a theoretical gap regarding the factors that drive consumer engagement with human brands and the behavioural outcomes of these relationships.

This dissertation aims to identify the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement with human brands, focusing on perceived authenticity, relatability, and narrative as key drivers, as well as their effects on loyalty, advocacy, and purchase intention. In addition, the study examines the moderating role of the need to belong.

A quantitative research design was adopted, using an online survey completed by 403 participants aged between 18 and 44, all of whom identified as Taylor Swift fans. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS software.

The findings show that relatability and narrative exert a positive and significant influence on engagement, while perceived authenticity does not present a direct effect but operates indirectly through relatability. Engagement was found to positively influence loyalty, advocacy, and purchase intention. However, the need to belong revealed a negative moderating effect, weakening the relationship between engagement and these behavioural outcomes.

This study contributes to the literature on human brands by providing empirical evidence of the ambivalent role of the need to belong and by reinforcing the importance of relatability and narrative in building emotional connections with audiences. From a managerial perspective, it offers practical insights for marketers and human brands on how to strengthen and sustain consumer relationships in digital environments.

Keywords: Human Brands; Consumer Engagement; Authenticity; Narrative; Relatability; Need to Belong; Taylor Swift

Resumo

O conceito de Human Brand tem vindo a ganhar destaque na literatura de marketing, sobretudo no contexto das redes sociais, onde figuras públicas como celebridades e influenciadores se posicionam estrategicamente como marcas. No entanto, ainda existe uma lacuna teórica relativamente aos fatores que motivam o envolvimento (engagement) do consumidor com estas marcas humanas e às consequências comportamentais dessa ligação.

O presente estudo teve como objetivo identificar os antecedentes e os consequentes do consumer engagement com human brands, analisando em particular o papel da autenticidade percebida, da identificabilidade (relatability) e da narrativa como fatores determinantes, bem como os efeitos sobre a lealdade, a defesa ativa (advocacy) e a intenção de compra. Adicionalmente, investigou-se o impacto da necessidade de pertença (Need to Belong) enquanto variável moderadora.

A investigação adotou uma abordagem quantitativa, recorrendo a um questionário online aplicado a 403 participantes, com idades entre 18 e 44 anos, todos identificados como fãs de Taylor Swift. Os dados foram analisados com recurso ao modelo de equações estruturais de mínimos quadrados parciais (PLS-SEM), através do software SmartPLS.

Os resultados revelaram que a identificabilidade e a narrativa exercem efeitos positivos e significativos sobre o engagement, enquanto a autenticidade percebida não apresentou impacto direto, mas revelou um efeito indireto mediado pela identificabilidade. Confirmou-se também que o engagement influencia positivamente a lealdade, a defesa da marca e a intenção de compra. Contudo, a necessidade de pertença apresentou um efeito moderador negativo, reduzindo a força da relação entre o envolvimento e os comportamentos analisados.

Este estudo contribui para a literatura sobre human brands, introduzindo evidência empírica acerca do papel ambivalente da necessidade de pertença e reforçando a importância da narrativa e da identificabilidade na construção de laços emocionais com o público. Do ponto de vista prático, oferece insights valiosos para profissionais de marketing e marcas humanas sobre a forma como podem reforçar e sustentar relações com os seus seguidores em contextos digitais.

Palavras-chave: Human Brands; Consumer Engagement; Autenticidade; Narrativa; Identificabilidade; Need to Belong; Taylor Swift

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of human brands has gained prominence in marketing and communication, especially with the rise of social networks and digital influence (Ki et al., 2020). This phenomenon reflects a significant change in how consumers connect with public personalities, forming emotional bonds that affect their purchasing behaviour. The importance of authenticity in building personal brands has also been widely discussed, suggesting that the perception of authenticity is a crucial factor in consumer loyalty (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016).

Osorio et al., (2023) define a 'human brand' as an entity that incorporates both a person and a commercialised brand, where the individual and the brand are referred to using the same naming convention. They support the thesis of Thomson, (2006), who defines a human brand as individuals, usually celebrities, who are seen by consumers as brands.

Loroz and Braig (2015) go further and define a 'human brand' as a public figure whose persona, name or likeness is strategically marketed to establish a personal and meaningful connection with consumers. They also argue that connections to human brands are formed in a similar way to interpersonal relationships, emphasising the importance of emotional involvement in cultivating consumer engagement that transcends conventional brand associations.

A notable example of this phenomenon can be seen in the case of Taylor Swift. Named Time magazine's Person of the Year for 2023, Swift has significantly influenced the global economy, so much so that her impact has been summarised in the term 'Swiftonomics'. Her ability to establish authentic connections with her fans exemplifies the considerable power and relevance of the human-centred brand in contemporary society (Lansky, 2023).

This influence is further underscored by her recent album The Tortured Poets Department, which debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, marking her 14th chart-topping album. With 2.61 million equivalent album units earned in its first week, including record vinyl sales of 859,000, Swift's success illustrates how human brands can drive significant economic impact while fostering deep emotional ties and engagement with consumers (Dailey, 2024).

The term consumer engagement is used to describe a process that is interactive, dynamic, and co-created (Hollebeek et al., 2014). This concept is not exclusive to the moment of sale but rather encompasses the entirety of the customer journey. Fernandes and Inverneiro, (2021) defined digital customer engagement practices as online manifestations of consumers' engagement with the brand. This encompasses consumers' thoughts and feelings about a brand, including the amount of energy, effort, and time they invest in using it.

Despite the expansion of literature about human brands, this remains a field in which theories are still relatively new (Osorio et al., 2023). While consumer engagement with celebrities and influencers has been extensively researched, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all celebrities or influencers attain the status of a Human Brand (Khamis et al., 2017). Research that is specifically focused on consumer engagement with human brands - that is to say, individuals who are strategically positioned and perceived as brands - remains limited. This requires a deeper exploration of how human brands, as distinct entities that directly influence consumer motivation and behaviour (Levesque & Pons, 2020) can be better understood.

In this sense, a significant theoretical gap exists, so the objective of this study is to address this lacuna by contributing to research on the interaction between consumers and human brands, an area that has received little attention from the scientific community. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the factors that motivate consumer engagement with human brands on social networks and the way this engagement can be influenced by the specific characteristics of these individuals as brands. To this end, the primary research question guiding this study is as follows:

Q1: What factors drive consumer engagement with human brands on social media platforms?

Q2: What are the behavioural consequences of consumer engagement with human brands on social media platforms?

To empirically address these objectives, this dissertation focuses on the case of the artist Taylor Swift, a prominent human brand with a highly engaged global fanbase. A quantitative methodology was adopted, based on an online survey of her fans, with data analysed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

Beyond this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the literature on human brands and consumer engagement. Chapter 3 presents the empirical study, including the conceptual model, hypotheses, methodology, and data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the findings, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and avenues for future research.

2. Literature Review

The chapter begins by defining the concept of human brands, distinguishing it from similar concepts such as personal branding and influencer branding. The following discussion will explore the origins and theoretical evolution of the term, with an emphasis on its hybrid nature – between individual and brand – and its growing relevance in digital environments.

In the following section, the role of three antecedents of engagement with human brands is analysed. The antecedents under consideration are authenticity, relatability and narrative. The final section of this study analyses the main outcomes of engagement, namely loyalty, advocacy and positive word-of-mouth. This section highlights the contribution of these outcomes to the strengthening of the emotional bond between the consumer and the personal brand.

2.1. Human Brands

2.1.1. Definition and Evolution of Human Brands

As posited by Kotler and Keller, (2006) a brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination thereof, which is intended to identify the goods or services of a particular seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of their competitors. This supports the assertion made by Kapferer, (2017) that a brand is not simply a product, but rather the essence of the product, encompassing its meaning and direction, and defining its identity over time and in a specific context.

The concept of a "human brand" was initially introduced by Thomson, (2006), who defined it as individuals, typically celebrities, who are perceived by consumers as brands. This notion was subsequently elaborated upon by Erz and Heeris Christensen, (2018), who delineated human brands as prominent or emerging personas that are the focus of interpersonal or inter-organizational marketing communications.

Recently Osorio et al., (2023) defined a 'human brand' as an entity that incorporates both a person and a commercialized brand, in which the individual and the brand are referred to using the same naming convention.

The extant literature demonstrates that, in contradistinction to traditional brands, which are

predicated on products or services, human brands are intrinsically linked to personal identity, thereby fostering emotional connections with the public through the perception of authenticity and the ability to relate.

2.1.2. Differentiating Personal, Influencers and Human Brands

Despite clear similarities in how they engage audiences, personal brands, influencer brands, and human brands represent distinct concepts positioned along an evolutionary continuum of individual branding (Osorio et al., 2020).

Personal Brand

A personal brand refers to the strategic cultivation of a distinctive image, grounded in a unique set of attributes, aiming to achieve competitive advantages with specific audiences such as employers, clients, or professional networks (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Kotler & Keller, 2006). Typically, individuals manage their personal brands independently, emphasising personal traits through distinctive narratives, without significant external influence (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

Influencer Brand

Occupying a midway point on the continuum, influencer brands describe individuals who leverage digital platforms to grow their audience and establish authority within their field (Osorio et al., 2020). This stage is marked by the strategic use of authenticity, entertainment, and aspirational elements to build deeper emotional bonds with followers. Monetisation, often through partnerships and collaborations, becomes a key feature at this point.

The Transformation Process Toward a Human Brand

The transition into a human brand is not automatic; rather, it is a selective and conscious process. According to Erz and Heeris Christensen (2018), and Osorio et al. (2020), it begins when individuals envision a desirable future self and recognise the growth and potential of their brand. At this stage, the individual moves beyond self-promotion and engages in the co-creation of their brand identity with various stakeholders (Preece & Kerrigan, 2015). A human brand emerges as the fusion of the person and a commercialised persona, requiring more complex brand management practices, akin to those used for traditional product brands (Fournier & Eckhardt,

2019).

Matilda Djerf's journey exemplifies this transformation. Initially, she crafted her personal brand by sharing her lifestyle and aesthetic sensibility on Instagram. As her influence grew, she transitioned into an influencer brand, capitalising on her growing audience. Eventually, she evolved into a human brand by founding Djerf Avenue, a fashion label that embodies her values and identity beyond her personal image. This move allowed her to establish an autonomous brand with its own loyal customer base (Noyen, 2022).

2.1.3. Key Characteristics of Human Brands

As posited by Eng and Jarvis, (2020), human brands are distinguished by their unique attributes, which differentiates them from traditional brand concepts. These conclusions align with the theses put forward by preceding scholars, as discussed in various sections of this present dissertation.

The distinguishing characteristics of human brands, as outlined by Osorio et al., (2023), include authenticity and relatability, concepts previously explored by Thomson, (2006). Additionally, Eng and Jarvis, (2020) emphasize the role of narratives in human brands, underpinned by the Narrative Transport Theory.

Authenticity

Authenticity, in general terms, refers to how genuine or true something appears to be. In the context of branding, it's about whether consumers believe that a brand is being honest - true to its values, consistent in its communication, and aligned with what it claims to stand for (Fournier & Eckhardt, 2019). This perception can strongly influence how much people trust and connect with a brand.

When applied to human brands, this concept is imbued with a heightened sense of personal authenticity. The focus has shifted from mere messaging or consistency to a more comprehensive consideration of the individual behind the brand. Osorio et al., (2023) propose a definition of authenticity in human brands as the extent to which a public figure appears genuine, transparent and emotionally sincere. This phenomenon facilitates the establishment of authentic emotional connections between audiences and the public figure, often fostering a transition from admiration to loyalty.

Moulard et al., (2015) also found that celebrities perceived as authentic tend to be viewed as more trustworthy and easier to relate to. Kowalczyk and Pounders, (2016) state that authenticity, particularly in the context of social media, serves as a pivotal factor in the emotional attachment of audiences to human brands.

The literature distinguishes between ontological and perceived authenticity. The latter is more relevant from the consumer's perspective (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), people are motivated by relationships that fulfil their need for autonomy, competence, and attachment - conditions that are often met by public figures who are perceived as authentic.

A clear example is Taylor Swift. Her fans often describe feeling a personal connection to her because of the way she openly shares her life through music. Albums like *Red* or *folklore* explore her personal experiences with vulnerability and detail, which helps listeners see her as more than a performer - but as someone whose stories echo their own (Khanal, 2024).

Relatability

In recent studies, relatability has been understood as how emotionally accessible a person appears to their audience. In the case of human brands, this means being seen as someone the public can connect with - someone who feels familiar, approachable, and even a bit like themselves (Malik et al., 2023).

Thomson, (2006) explored how relatability enhances parasocial relationships, where consumers feel a close, one-way connection with the human brand, and concluded that when a human brand satisfies the psychological needs of autonomy - feeling free to express oneself, relatedness feeling close - and, to some extent, competence - feeling effective and capable, these elements strengthen these parasocial connections. The study therefore shows that human brands thrive by creating emotional connections with their audiences, often through shared experiences or vulnerability.

Olivia Rodrigo, another example of a human brand, portrays this quality through her deeply confessional songwriting and raw emotional honesty. Her debut album, *SOUR*, captures universal themes of heartbreak, insecurity and coming of age in a way that resonates powerfully with young

listeners. Tracks such as *Driver's License* and *Traitor* have become hymns to heartbreak and self-discovery, creating a deep sense of shared experience among fans (Snapes, 2023).

Narrative Transportation

The utilisation of narratives constitutes a highly efficacious strategy in the establishment of human brands, enabling the public to become emotionally engaged with the personal journey, whether real or fictional, of the public figure (Aaker, 1997). This phenomenon can be explained by the Narrative Transportation Theory (Green & Brock, 2000), which suggests that becoming engrossed in narratives leads to an increased acceptance of messages and a strengthening of emotional bonds.

Eng and Jarvis, (2020) argue that by following the trajectory of a public figure, consumers build an involvement similar to that of an interpersonal relationship. Narratives are known to inform, but also to structure the public's perception and memory, facilitating identification and loyalty.

Eng and Jarvis, (2020) argue that when consumers are transported into a narrative world, they experience a heightened sense of emotional closeness and identification with the human brand, as if they were participating in an interpersonal relationship. This process is particularly effective for human brands because it creates a space in which consumers perceive the brand's personal or professional journey as relatable and emotionally impactful. By fostering these immersive experiences, narrative becomes not only a means of communication, but also a fundamental mechanism for building peer-to-peer relationships and connecting with consumers.

Taylor Swift exemplifies this concept, as her music and public persona closely follow the principles outlined by the authors. Her albums, particularly *folklore* and *evermore*, function as narratives that tell personal and fictional stories. A clear example of this is seen in Swift's *evermore*, where her accounts of heartbreak and self-discovery foster strong identification among fans (Shaw, 2021).

Furthermore, Swift's ability to construct detailed fictional worlds in *folklore*, inspired by themes such as love triangles, loss and introspection, demonstrates how storytelling can transport audiences into deeply immersive experiences, in line with Green and Brock, (2000) framework.

These narratives not only captivate, but also resonate emotionally with listeners, fostering a strong sense of identification and loyalty. Eng and Jarvis, (2020) note that this type of immersive narrative

strengthens the human brand, elevating figures such as Taylor Swift or Olivia Rodrigo, as mentioned, from mere artists to reliable sources of inspiration and connection for their audiences.

2.2. Consumer Engagement

2.2.1. Definition and Evolution of Consumer Engagement

The concept of consumer engagement has gained prominence in recent years, as the relationship between consumers and brands has evolved to become more interactive and emotional (Dessart, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2022). However, despite the growing academic attention, a universal consensus on the definition of engagement remains elusive. Indeed, the concept is understood in different ways depending on the context and the author.

Engagement is typically characterised as a multifaceted construct, incorporating cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. It is manifested through interactions and the emotional bond between the consumer and the brand (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Table 1 provides a synopsis of the evolution of the primary definitions of consumer engagement across different periods:

Table 1 - Evolution of Consumer Engagement Definitions (2005–2022)

Year	Author	Definition
2005	Vivek et al.	Consumer engagement beyond purchase, based on active participation with the brand.
2012	Brodie et al.	Consumer engagement as a psychological state occurring during interactive, co-creative experiences with a brand in service relationships.
2014	Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie	A state of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activation during brand interactions.
2017	Dessart	A dynamic process of interaction between consumers and brands, leading to relational outcomes.
2019	Dolan, Conduit, Frethey-Bentham et al.	Consumer behaviours on social media that create value for brands and communities.

2022	Hollebeek, Sharma, Pandey et al.	A set of co-creative, emotional, and relational behaviours mediated by technology.

Source: Own Elaboration

Despite the proposal of numerous theoretical frameworks, a broad consensus has emerged regarding the identification of three fundamental components: cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

The ***cognitive dimension*** refers to the consumer's attention and mental interest in the brand, manifested through the active search for information and the processing of marketing messages (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

The ***emotional dimension*** refers to the positive affective responses generated in interactions with the brand, such as enthusiasm, joy and a sense of belonging (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

The ***behavioural dimension*** encompasses the concrete actions that consumers take in response to the emotional and cognitive connection, such as sharing, commenting, making recommendations or creating content (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021).

These dimensions must not be considered in isolation, but as interconnected components of a dynamic process that characterises the brand-consumer relationship.

2.2.2. Role of Digital Media in Consumer Engagement

The advent of digital media has revolutionised the way consumers interact with brands, thereby enabling unprecedented levels of personalisation, participation and advocacy (Dessart, 2017; Dolan et al., 2019).

Social networks have facilitated the expression of consumer engagement through actions such as likes, comments and shares, thereby strengthening emotional ties and fostering the development of communities around brands (Barger et al., 2016).

However, the digital environment also poses challenges, including the risk of cognitive overload due to content saturation (Hollebeek et al., 2022). To mitigate this phenomenon, it is essential that brands adopt authentic and engaging communication strategies capable of generating real emotional value for consumers.

The following section will provide practical examples to illustrate these strategies:

In the promotion of her album *Midnights*, Taylor Swift initiated the *Midnights Mayhem With Me* project on the social media platform *TikTok*. This initiative involved the interactive promotion of album tracks, with the intention of generating anticipation among fans (Kemp, 2022).

Hailey Bieber, the proprietor of *Rhode Skin*, has successfully employed a strategy of leveraging her personal brand to promote the company's products. A notable example of this is the Lip Case, a product designed to be utilised in a spontaneous manner by consumers in their daily lives. The product's functionality, which allows users to capture images of themselves in mirrors using their mobile phones, has effectively transformed the Lip Case into a tool for personal expression and self-documentation (Diner, 2024).

The cases under consideration demonstrate the importance of engagement as a strategic tool for building brand value in the contemporary digital environment.

2.2.3. Consequents of Consumer Engagement

The conclusion of the initial interaction does not signify the termination of consumer engagement with a brand. Conversely, it functions as a pivotal element in shaping subsequent behaviours that are conducive to the brand's long-term interests, particularly in terms of fostering loyalty, generating active advocacy, and eliciting spontaneous recommendations (Dessart, 2017; Dolan et al., 2019).

Brand loyalty constitutes one of the primary outcomes of engagement, manifesting as a pronounced propensity among consumers to perpetuate their relationship with the brand over time, even in the presence of competitive alternatives (Hollebeek et al., 2014). It has been demonstrated that highly engaged consumers develop an emotional bond that transcends simple transactional satisfaction, resulting in a consistent preference and greater lifetime value for the brand.

The literature identifies a distinction between attitudinal loyalty which is defined as affective commitment, admiration, identification, and behavioural loyalty defined by concrete actions such as following, interacting or buying recommended products (Dugar & Chamola, 2021). It is argued that human brands that are particularly effective in this regard cultivate both dimensions through authenticity, coherence and symbolic proximity.

A case study in this regard is Taylor Swift. Her fanbase has demonstrated a willingness to follow her through various stages of her career, to support her creative decisions, to purchase multiple versions of the same album and to defend the artist in the face of criticism. This dedication is further evidenced by the widespread repurchase of her re-recorded *Taylor's Version* albums, even when fans already owned the original versions, as a way of supporting her artistic autonomy (McIntyre, 2024). These behaviours are indicative of a profound and long-standing loyalty on the part of the fans. This affiliation is reinforced by content that sustains the sense of community and belonging.

Another salient effect is that of brand advocacy, that can be defined as the proactive behaviour of spontaneously promoting the brand to third parties, whether through recommendations, public advocacy or positive content sharing (Dolan et al., 2019). Advocacy may manifest in the form of narrative sharing, affirmative commentary, the creation of fan content, or the defence of the figure in online discourse.

This phenomenon is associated with the construct of brand evangelism, whereby the consumer assumes the role of a 'voluntary ambassador' (Barger et al., 2016). The motivation for such behaviour is frequently rooted in an profound emotional connection with the individual in question.

The *Taylor Swift - The Eras Tour* campaign illustrates the concept of brand advocacy in the context of human brands. Long before the beginning of the tour, a significant number of fans began to create and share promotional content, including videos of emotional reactions, purchasing tickets, and tutorials on themed outfits for each of the artist's *eras*. This involvement was not directly encouraged by the artist or her team but rather, reflects an intrinsic motivation on the part of the fans to amplify the artist's visibility. This kind of behaviour demonstrates how deep engagement can evolve into authentic advocacy, where consumers become voluntary ambassadors for the human brand (Chow, 2023).

Lastly, one of the main behavioural consequences of engagement with human brands is purchase intention. As Tran and Strutton, (2014) demonstrated, consumers are significantly more likely to buy products endorsed by public figures if they perceive them as authentic and feel emotionally connected to them. This idea is reinforced by the fact that the emotional and parasocial relationships developed with human brands not only lead to loyalty and brand advocacy, but also translate into concrete consumer behaviour.

In the context of human brands, purchase intention is not solely motivated by functional or utilitarian factors as it often arises from symbolic and emotional alignment with the public figure. Consumers are more inclined to purchase products that reflect the identity, values, or aesthetics of the human brand they admire. This behaviour stems from a desire to emulate or support the public figure or to reinforce one's own self-image through symbolic association (Tran & Strutton, 2014).

A perfect example of this phenomenon is Taylor Swift's re-recordings of her albums, known as *Taylor's Version*. Even though they already owned the original albums, many fans chose to purchase the re-recorded versions as a way of directly supporting the singer's artistic autonomy and rejecting her previous record contracts (Willman, 2023). This behaviour transcends economic rationality, demonstrating how emotional engagement can manifest as conscious, symbolic, and repeated purchase intentions, driven by affective and identitarian factors.

It is evident that engagement assumes a pivotal role in not only sustaining the brand-consumer relationship, but also in expanding and consolidating the brand by mobilising its own consumers.

2.3. The role of consumers' needs to belong on engagement with human brands

The relationship between consumers and human brands is often explained through symbolic attributes such as authenticity, identifiability and narrative (Eng & Jarvis, 2020; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016; Thomson, 2006). However, it is important to note that individual consumer variables also play a determining role in the intensity and quality of these symbolic connections. One of these variables is the need to belong, which is understood as a fundamental human motivation to form and maintain positive and lasting social relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

As stated by Aw and Labrecque, (2020), consumers with elevated levels of need to belong are more prone to engaging in parasocial interactions with celebrities. These interactions are defined as one-sided relationships characterised by the individual experiencing intimacy and closeness with the public figure, despite the absence of reciprocity. The phenomenon is exacerbated by social networks, which provide frequent and personalised channels of communication, thereby increasing feelings of closeness and realism in the relationship (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014).

The study reveals that the need to belong acts as a moderator on two central levels: it intensifies the impact of social media interaction on the development of parasocial interactions, and it reinforces the influence of celebrity attachment on the perceived attractiveness of the promoted brand. In summary, for individuals with a high need to belong, interactions are more effective in generating emotional bonds with public figures. Furthermore, the meaning transferred from these figures to brands is more intense.

Furthermore, consumers with a high need to belong have been shown to engage in the process of anthropomorphising brands associated with celebrities, attributing human characteristics to them (Puzakova et al., 2009). This facilitates identification and emotional involvement. This process of anthropomorphisation enables the brand to function as a relational substitute, thereby addressing unmet social and emotional needs in everyday life (Greenwood & Long, 2011).

In this context, the need to belong is no longer merely an individual characteristic but rather, it assumes the role of an explanatory lens, illuminating the reasons why certain consumers exhibit heightened engagement with human brands. Individuals with a greater need to belong have been shown to form deeper parasocial bonds (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Ilicic & Webster, 2011) and to evaluate brands associated with figures they identify with more positively (Ilicic & Webster, 2011), contributing to stronger purchase intentions.

A prime example of this phenomenon is the relationship between Taylor Swift and her fans. The artist adopts a highly personalised and interactive approach to communication, demonstrated by events such as the *Secret Sessions*, in which she invites a select group of fans to listen to her albums in advance. These initiatives serve to reinforce the perception of intimacy, recognition and belonging, thereby consolidating emotional bonds that are often described by fans as *imagined friendships* (Lewis, 2014).

3. Empirical Study

The present chapter is dedicated to the empirical study, the initial phase of which involved the formulation of objectives, research questions and hypotheses. The introduction of the conceptual model is predicated on SOR theory, with a subsequent description of the population and methodology adopted. Finally, the details of the measurement scales, questionnaire structure, and pre-test and distribution procedures are provided.

3.1. Objective and Research Questions

As previously referenced, Human Brands are assuming a progressively significant role in consumers' interactions with brands on social media. This phenomenon, which combines personal characteristics with branding strategies, represents a relatively recent approach that has not yet been explored in the literature. Despite the existence of studies addressing topics such as authenticity or the role of narrative, a lack of research has been identified concerning the factors that truly motivate engagement with this type of brand (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021; Loroz & Braig, 2015).

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the antecedents and consequences of engagement with Human Brands. To achieve this, the empirical focus was placed on the artist Taylor Swift, a prominent human brand with a highly engaged global fanbase. This analysis seeks to fill a relevant theoretical gap and make practical contributions to the management of Human Brands in the digital environment.

In this context, the following research questions were defined:

Q1: What factors drive consumer engagement with human brands on social media platforms?
Q2: What are the behavioural consequences of consumer engagement with human brands on social media platforms?

3.2. Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses

Following on from the research questions previously stated, the conceptual model of this study is presented, which seeks to analyse the antecedents and consequences of engagement with Human Brands in the context of social networks. The model is based on Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, which has been widely applied to the study of consumer behaviour, particularly in digital contexts (Fernandes & Oliveira, 2024; Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016).

According to this theory, stimuli (S), in this case perceived attributes of human brands, trigger internal reactions (O) in the organism, which translate into the three dimensions of engagement. These reactions lead to observable behavioural responses (R), such as brand loyalty or the intention to recommend, which reflect the degree of consumer involvement and commitment.

In this study, three stimuli were considered: perceived authenticity, relatability and the narrative associated with the Human Brand. Authenticity is defined as the perceived coherence, truth and transparency of the public figure, and is a central element in establishing emotional bonds (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016; Osorio et al., 2023). The concept of relatability, as elucidated by Malik et al. (2023) and Thomson (2006), pertains to the consumer's capacity to discern commonalities with the Human Brand, perceiving it as proximate, authentic, and analogous to their own identity. This enhanced sense of relatability has been demonstrated to foster the development of parasocial relationships. Consequently, the narrative alludes to the act of storytelling that accompanies the construction of the Human Brand, and is responsible for emotionally engaging followers by facilitating their connection with shared experiences and values (Eng & Jarvis, 2020).

The intervening variable in this model is engagement, which represents the organism (O) and is characterised as a multidimensional psychological state. Engagement is theorised to possess a cognitive dimension, associated with the consumer's attention and curiosity about the actions of the Human Brand; an affective dimension, reflecting emotions such as empathy, admiration or enthusiasm; and a behavioural dimension, evidenced by concrete actions such as likes, comments, shares or content creation (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

With regard to behavioural responses (R), the model analyses two outcomes: the intention to recommend, also known as advocacy, and loyalty to the Human Brand. The former refers to the consumer's predisposition to spontaneously recommend the personal brand to others, while the

latter relates to the intention to maintain a prolonged and consistent relationship with the Human Brand over time (Dessart, 2017).

Based on this conceptual framework, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The perceived authenticity of the Human Brand positively influences consumer engagement.
H2: The ability to identify with the Human Brand positively influences consumer engagement.
H3: The narrative power of the Human Brand positively influences consumer engagement.
H4: Engagement with the Human Brand positively influences the intention to recommend (advocacy).
H5: Engagement with the Human Brand positively influences consumer loyalty.
H6: Engagement with the Human Brand positively influences the purchase intention of products associated with the Human Brand.

In addition to the direct relationships established between engagement and behavioural outcomes, it is pertinent to introduce a moderating variable to help explain variations in the intensity of these effects.

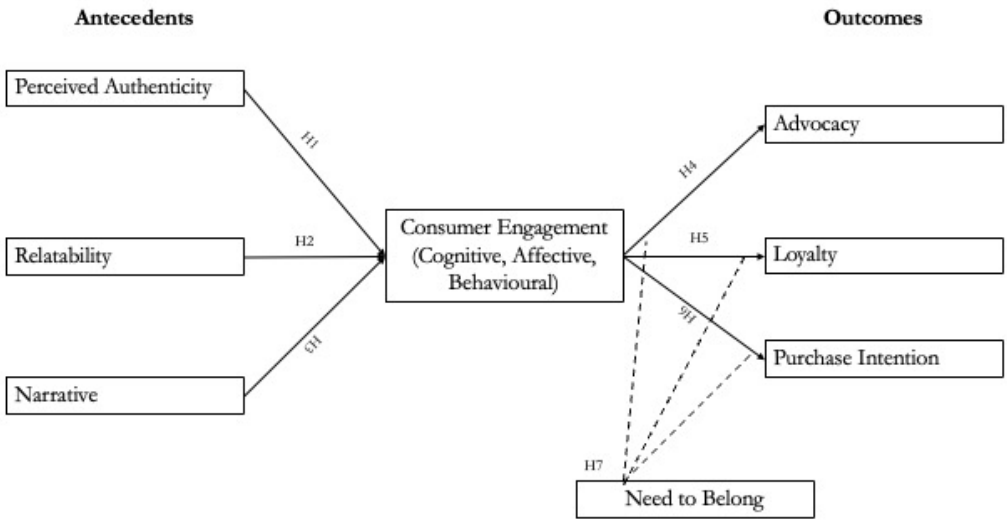
Based on the literature, the 'Need to Belong' variable was therefore included as a moderator, given its relevance to the formation of parasocial bonds and emotional involvement with Human Brands (Aw & Labrecque, 2020).

This approach enables us to investigate whether engagement has a stronger impact on loyalty, advocacy and purchase intention among individuals with a greater need to belong.

H7a: The need to belong moderates the relationship between engagement with the Human Brand and loyalty, with this relationship being stronger in individuals with a greater need to belong.
H7b: The need to belong moderates the relationship between engagement with the Human Brand and advocacy, with this relationship being stronger in individuals with a greater need to belong.
H7c: The need to belong moderates the relationship between engagement with the Human Brand and purchase intention, with this relationship being stronger in individuals with a greater need to belong.

The graphic representation of the conceptual model is shown in Figure 1, highlighting the relationship between symbolic stimuli (S), engagement as an organism (O) and the resulting behaviours (R) following the application of SOR Theory.

Figure 1 - Conceptual Model



Source: Own Elaboration

3.3. Methodological Approach

This study adopts a quantitative methodology to empirically test the conceptual model developed based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory. This approach enables causal relationships between variables to be analysed using statistical methods, thereby ensuring the objectivity and generalisability of the results.

Data will be collected using an online questionnaire built on the Google Forms platform. This indirect, non-documentary observation technique was chosen because it enables quick, economical and effective dissemination, particularly among digitally active audiences, such as individuals who engage with human brands.

The age group between 18 and 44 was selected for the study because it constitutes the majority of Taylor Swift's fan base (Dellatto, 2023), which consists primarily of millennials (Generation Y) and members of Generation Z. These generations are particularly active in digital environments and

are known for their propensity to form parasocial relationships with public figures, thus rendering them the most relevant target for this study. Also, Millennials grew up with the artist and have followed her career from the beginning, while the *Taylor's Version* re-recordings had a strong impact on Generation Z, revitalising interest in her work and fostering new emotional connections with her narrative and public image (Dellatto, 2023).

Non-probability convenience sampling will be used to consider ease of access to participants, efficiency in collecting a considerable volume of responses, and suitability for exploratory studies in digital environments (Bhardwaj, 2019). The questionnaire will be shared via social media and online communities, particularly fan forums where active followers of the artist are present.

This methodological design seeks to align the objectives of the study with the means of data collection, thereby enabling robust analysis of the interactions between consumers and human brands.

3.4. Data Collection

3.4.1. Measurement scales for variables in the conceptual model

In order to ensure the credibility of the study, the questionnaire (Appendix 1) was based on scientific scales previously studied and approved by various authors.

However, some minor changes were made to adapt them to the context and objective of the study. The perceived authenticity scales were adapted from Moulard et al. (2015), and the relatability scales were based on the work of Malik et al. (2023) and Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016). The narrative dimension was developed based on studies by Green and Brock (2000), and Eng and Jarvis (2020). The three engagement dimensions - cognitive, affective, and behavioural - were adapted from the paper by Fernandes and Inverneiro (2021). The loyalty and advocacy scales were based on the model proposed by Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012), adapted for the celebrity context and the purchase intention scales were based on the work of Dodds et al. (1991). The need to belong variable, used as a moderator, was adopted from the scale developed by Aw and Labrecque (2020).

For each of the variables, in order to guarantee the consistency and coherence of the study, three measurement items were used.

Table 2 - Measurement scales for the variables under study

Variables	Scales	Author
Perceived Authenticity	PA1. Taylor Swift seems real to me; PA2. Taylor Swift has something about her that makes her stand out; PA3. Taylor Swift is known for being honest;	Moulard et al. (2015)
Relatability	R1. Taylor Swift speaks my language; R2. Taylor Swift represents me; R3. Taylor Swift says something true and deep about who I am as a person;	Malik et al. (2023); Kowalczyk & Pounders, (2016)
Narrative	N1. I feel like I follow Taylor Swift's journey as if it was a story; N2. I can easily imagine the moments in Taylor Swift's life as they are portrayed in her songs; N3. When I see content about Taylor Swift, I get drawn into her story.	Green & Brock (2000); Eng & Jarvis (2020)
Cognitive Engagement	CE1. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I get carried away; CE2. Time flies when I am interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community; CE3. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I forget everything else;	Fernandes & Inverneiro (2021)
Affective Engagement	AE1. I feel enthusiastic while interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community; AE2. I get pleasure from interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	Fernandes & Inverneiro (2021)

	AE3. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I feel happy;	
Behavioural Engagement	BE1. I share, comment or 'like' content about Taylor Swift and her community. BE2. I seek ideas or information about Taylor Swift from her fan community. BE3. I ask questions and seek help from Taylor Swift's fan community.	Fernandes & Inverneiro (2021)
Loyalty	L1. I choose to support Taylor Swift because I know she's the best artist for me. L2. I will continue to support Taylor Swift the next time she releases music or goes on tour. L3. I intend to continue supporting Taylor Swift in the future.	Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012)
Advocacy	A1. I like to recommend Taylor Swift to other people; A2. I love to talk about the positives of Taylor Swift with people I know; A3. I try to convince other people to listen to Taylor Swift;	Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012)
Purchase Intention	PI1. I'm very likely to buy products related to Taylor Swift. PI2. I would consider buying merchandise, music or tickets related to Taylor Swift. PI3. I'd buy something related to Taylor Swift at the next opportunity.	Dodds et al. (1991)
Need to Belong	NB1. I do not like being alone NB2. I try hard to stay in touch with my friends NB3. need others to accept me"	Aw & Labrecque (2020)

Source: Own Elaboration

3.4.2. Questionnaire Structure

After defining the variables and their respective measurement scales, the online questionnaire, titled *The Way I Loved Her: Exploring Fan Relationships with Taylor Swift*, was created. Developed in English using the Google Forms platform, the questionnaire began with a brief introduction presenting the study's objectives, participation criteria, estimated duration, and guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality of the collected data.

To ensure participant eligibility, two filter questions were included at the beginning: the first asked if the respondent was a Taylor Swift fan and the second asked for their age. Only those aged 18-44 were permitted to continue. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were then asked to indicate how long they had been Taylor Swift fans. This information was considered relevant for future segmented analyses. Those who did not fulfil the prerequisites were directed to a final section where they were informed that they did not meet the eligibility criteria, but thanked for their participation.

Following the screening, eligible participants were asked to respond to a set of statements organised into different sections. Each section corresponded to a theoretical variable in the conceptual model (e.g. perceived authenticity, engagement and loyalty), and the statements were evaluated using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The statements were presented in a random order to minimise response bias.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to answer a series of sociodemographic questions relating to gender, level of education, and professional situation, as well as a personality trait scale focusing on the 'Need to Belong' variable, which was used as a moderator in this study.

Please note that all questions in the questionnaire were mandatory and closed in order to guarantee the completeness of the data and facilitate its statistical processing in the next phase of the research.

3.4.3. Pre-testing and Distribution of the Questionnaire

After constructing the questionnaire, a pre-test was carried out to verify the clarity, suitability and functionality of the data collection instrument prior to its final implementation. The pre-test

involved 10 young adults with different characteristics in terms of age, gender, level of education and digital habits, all belonging to the age group defined as the target population and who identified themselves as Taylor Swift fans.

These participants were asked to evaluate various aspects of the questionnaire, including its length, the quantity and clarity of the questions, and the general structure of the instrument. They were also asked to assess the relevance and comprehensibility of the instructions and statements presented. This process identified potential ambiguities, redundancies or unclear wording.

Based on the comments collected, minor corrections were made to the wording and order of the questions to improve their clarity and coherence. Overall, participants found the questionnaire intuitive, well-structured, appealing and quick to complete.

Once the suggested improvements had been implemented, the final version of the questionnaire was distributed via social media, specifically Instagram and Facebook, focusing on pages and groups where the artist's fans are active. The questionnaire was available online between 22 and 30 July 2025.

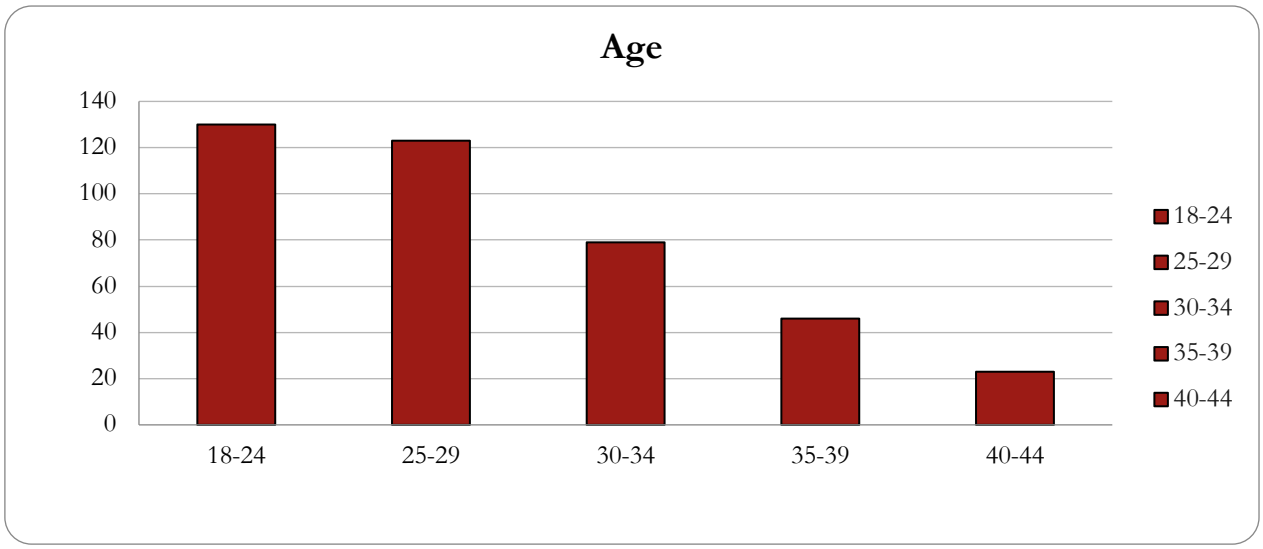
3.5. Data Analysis

After the questionnaire was distributed, the primary data was analysed and processed. Firstly, the data was exported to Microsoft Excel. Of the 493 responses obtained, those that did not meet the requirements defined in the filter questions were eliminated, resulting in 403 valid responses. Microsoft Excel was then used to characterise the sample and carry out a descriptive analysis of the variables in the conceptual model. Finally, in order to validate the measurement model and the structural model, SmartPLS software was used, and the data were tested according to the Partial Least Squares Model.

3.5.1. Sample characterisation

As shown in Graph 1, this study's sample consisted of 403 participants aged between 18 and 44. The largest age group was 18–24 year olds (32.26%), followed by 25–29 year olds (30.52%) and 30–34 year olds (19.60%). The remaining respondents were aged between 35 and 39 (11.41%) or between 40 and 44 (5.71%).

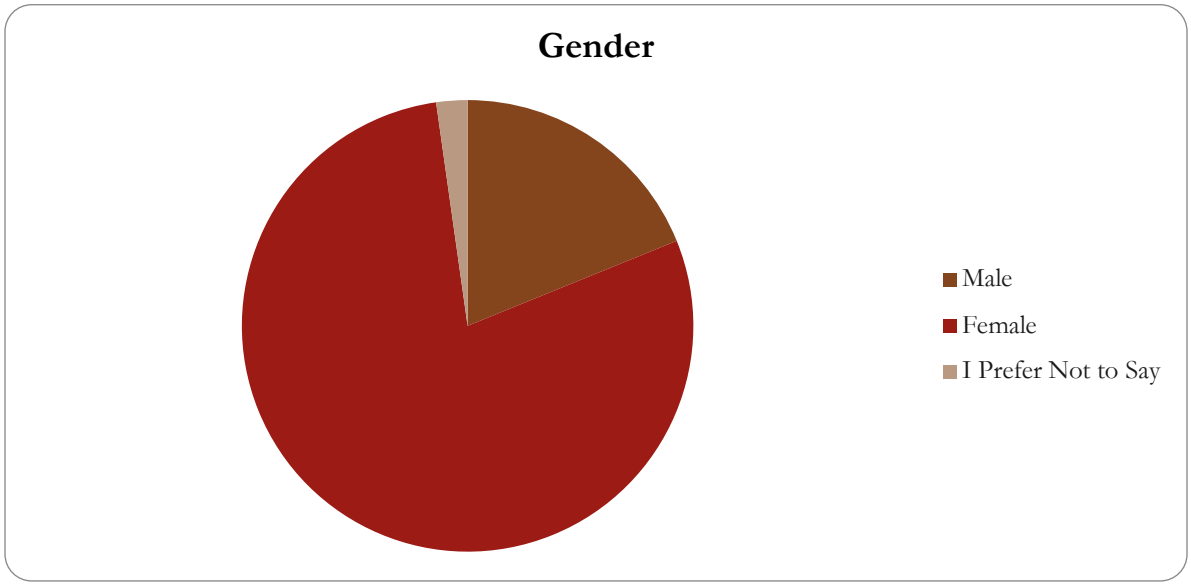
Graph 1 - Respondents' Age



Source: Own elaboration using Microsoft Excel

As can be seen in Graph 2, in terms of gender, the majority of participants identified as female (78.91%), 18.86% identified as male, and 2.23% did not specify.

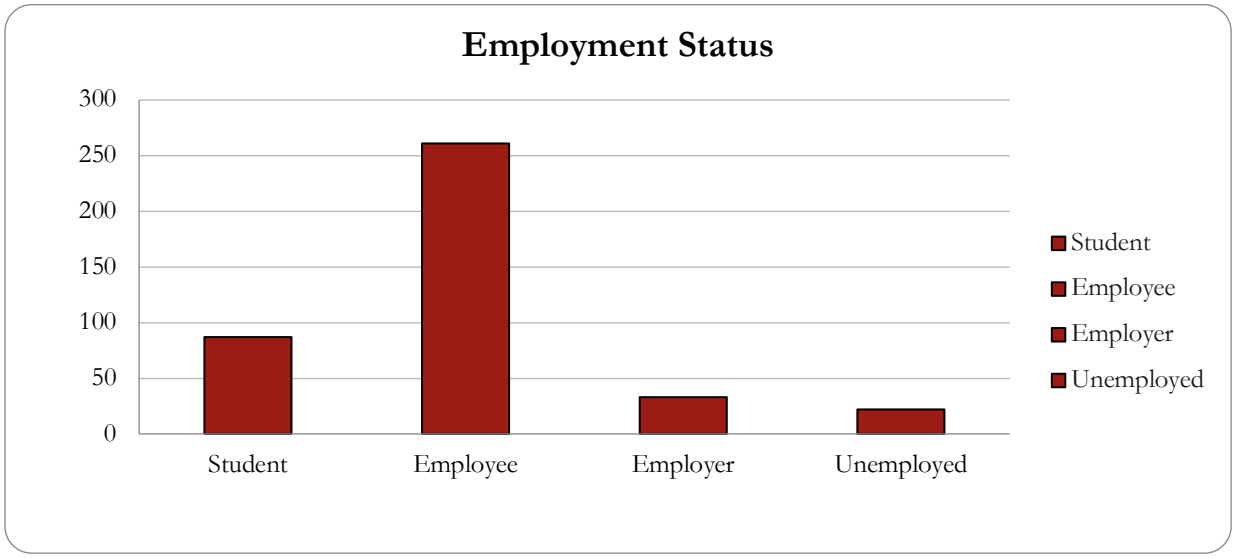
Graph 2 - Respondents' Gender



Source: Own elaboration using Microsoft Excel

As per seen in Graph 3, in relation to their professional circumstances, the majority of respondents were employed (64.76%), with students comprising the second largest group (21.59%). A smaller percentage declared themselves as employers (8.19%) and unemployed (5.46%).

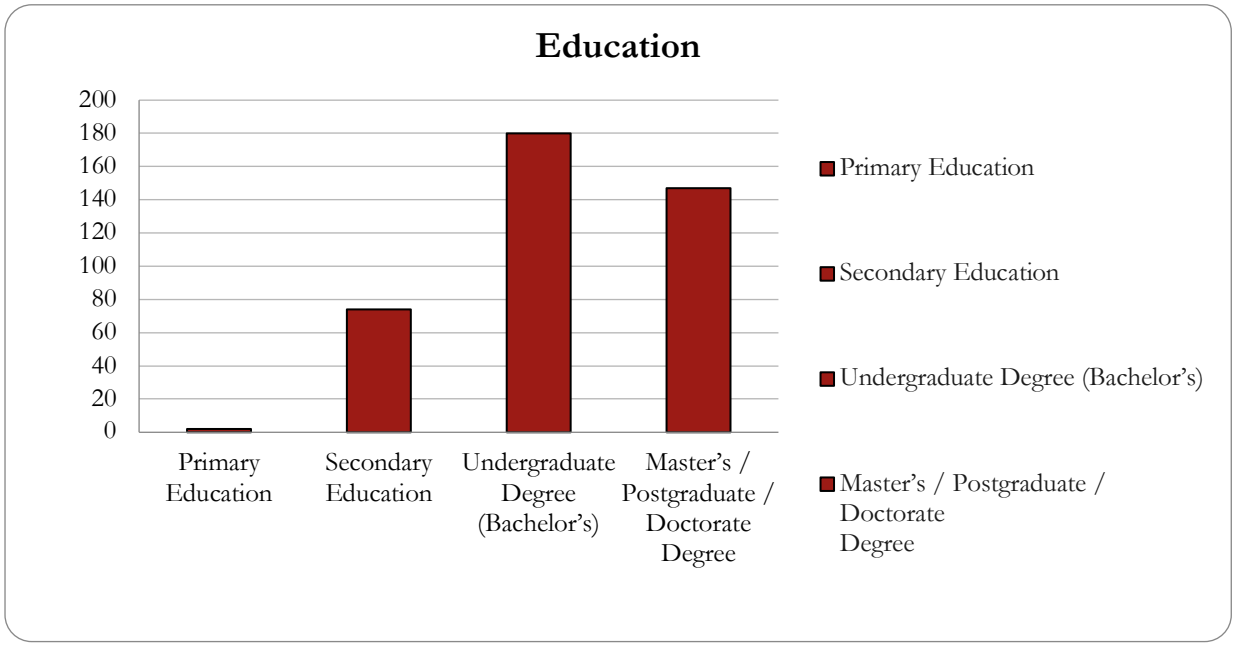
Graph 3 - Professional status of respondents, in absolute terms



Source: Own elaboration using Microsoft Excel

With regards to the level of education attained by the participants, as observed in Graph 4, the majority (44.67%) have obtained a bachelor's degree, with a significant proportion (36.48%) having attained a master's, postgraduate or doctorate degree. The remaining respondents have secondary education (18.36%), and the number with only basic education (0.50%) is negligible.

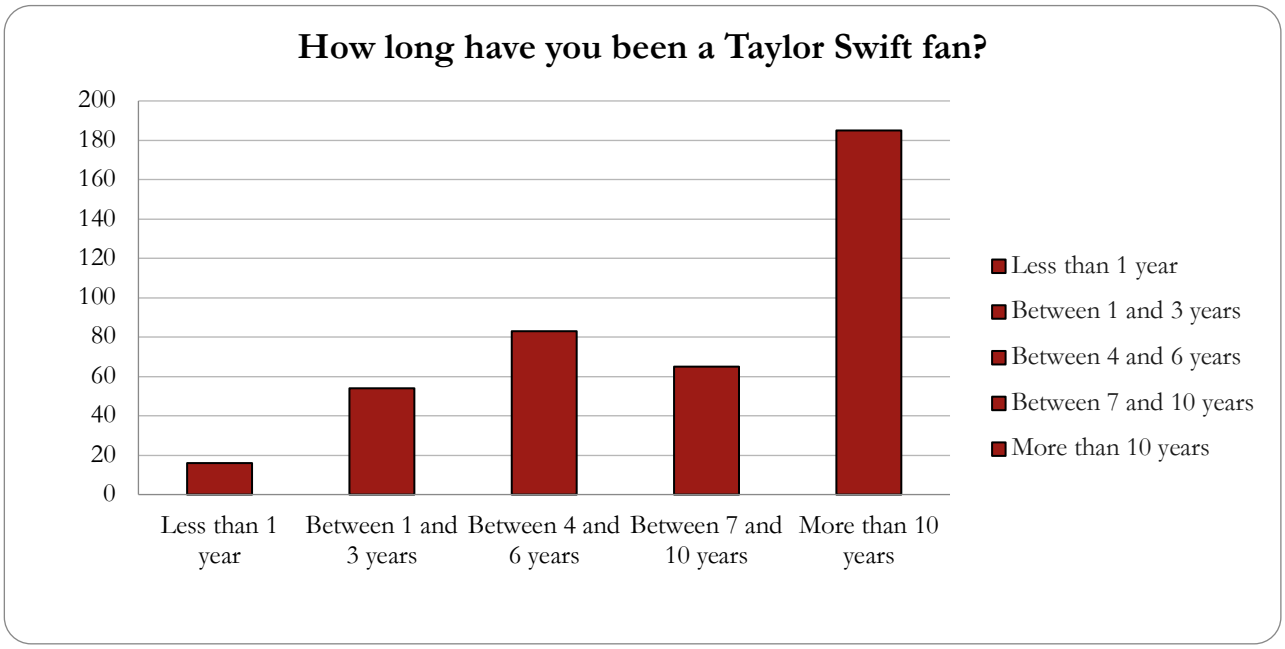
Graph 4 - Respondents' level of literacy, in absolute terms



Source: Own elaboration using Microsoft Excel

Lastly, in relation to the participants' affiliation with the human brand under scrutiny, Taylor Swift, and as we can observe in Graph 5, a significant proportion (45.91%) of the respondents professed to have been admirers for a period exceeding a decade. This was followed by those who had been following the artist for between 4 and 6 years (20.60%), between 7 and 10 years (16.13%), between 1 and 3 years (13.40%), and finally, the most recent fans, with less than 1 year of following (3.97%).

Graph 5 - Duration of respondents' connection with Taylor Swift



Source: Own elaboration using Microsoft Excel

3.5.2. Descriptive analysis of the variables in the conceptual model

A descriptive analysis of the sample was conducted, with measures of central tendency and dispersion, namely the mean and standard deviation, being utilised in the process. The mean was utilised as it is the most common measure of centrality when analysing continuous variables, thus enabling the assessment of the respondents' degree of agreement with the presented statements.

Consequently, the standard deviation was utilised to ascertain the extent of dispersion of the responses around the mean, thereby facilitating the interpretation of the consistency of the participants' perceptions (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). As previously stated, the assessment of all items was conducted utilising a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 denotes 'strongly disagree' and 7 denotes 'strongly agree'.

Table 3 - Descriptive statistics for the scales of the conceptual model variables

Variables	Scales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perceived Authenticity	PA1. Taylor Swift seems real to me;	6,26	1,162
	PA2. Taylor Swift has something about her that makes her stand out;	6,44	1,085
	PA3. Taylor Swift is known for being honest;	6,13	1,189
Relatability	R1. Taylor Swift speaks my language;	5,89	1,386
	R2. Taylor Swift represents me;	5,49	1,563
	R3. Taylor Swift says something true and deep about who I am as a person;	5,84	1,317
Narrative	N1. I feel like I follow Taylor Swift's journey as if it was a story;	5,87	1,459
	N2. I can easily imagine the moments in Taylor Swift's life as they are portrayed in her songs;	5,99	1,265
	N3. When I see content about Taylor Swift, I get drawn into her story;	6,04	1,278
Cognitive Engagement	CE1. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I get carried away;	4,43	1,937
	CE2. Time flies when I am interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	4,56	1,850
	CE3. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I forget everything else;	4,20	1,950

Affective Engagement	AE1. I feel enthusiastic while interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	5,34	1,618
	AE2. I get pleasure from interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	5,55	1,510
	AE3. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I feel happy;	5,29	1,650
Behavioural Engagement	BE1. I share, comment or 'like' content about Taylor Swift and her community;	5,81	1,546
	BE2. I seek ideas or information about Taylor Swift from her fan community;	5,13	1,747
	BE3. I ask questions and seek help from Taylor Swift's fan community;	4,18	1,959
Loyalty	L1. I choose to support Taylor Swift because I know she's the best artist for me;	5,80	1,675
	L2. I will continue to support Taylor Swift the next time she releases music or goes on tour;	6,47	1,157
	L3. I intend to continue supporting Taylor Swift in the future;	6,46	1,117
Advocacy	A1. I like to recommend Taylor Swift to other people;	5,89	1,543
	A2. I love to talk about the positives of Taylor Swift with people I know;	6,05	1,350
	A3. I try to convince other people to listen to Taylor Swift;	5,64	1,625

Purchase Intention	PI1. I'm very likely to buy products related to Taylor Swift;	6,04	1,454
	PI2. I would consider buying merchandise, music or tickets related to Taylor Swift;	6,38	1,223
	PI3. I'd buy something related to Taylor Swift at the next opportunity;	5,57	1,734
Need to Belong	NB1. I do not like being alone;	3,98	1,734
	NB2. I try hard to stay in touch with my friends;	5,33	1,497
	NB3. I need others to accept me.	4,54	1,791

Source: Own Elaboration using Microsoft Excel

The data presented generally demonstrates high averages for the majority of the variables, indicating a strong level of agreement among respondents with the statements. The mean values range from 3.98 to 6.47, while the standard deviations vary between 1.085 and 1.959.

With regard to the antecedents, the Perceived Authenticity variable demonstrates notably elevated values, with means ranging from 6.13 to 6.44, and comparatively diminished standard deviations (between 1.085 and 1.189). This signifies a remarkably favourable and consistent perception of Taylor Swift's authenticity. In a similar vein, the Narrative variable demonstrated elevated means ranging from 5.87 to 6.04, accompanied by standard deviations between 1.265 and 1.459, signifying substantial consensus among respondents. The Relatability variable, despite exhibiting a marginally lower mean (5.49 to 5.89), persists in signifying a robust identification with the public figure, albeit with considerable dispersion in the responses (standard deviations up to 1.563).

Concerning the dimensions of engagement, the affective dimension demonstrates the highest mean values (5.29 to 5.55), accompanied by moderate standard deviations (1.510 to 1.650), signifying enthusiasm and positive emotions during interaction with the fan community. The behavioural dimension demonstrates some variation between the items, with means ranging from 4.18 to 5.81. Notably, item 'BE3' exhibits the lowest mean and the highest standard deviation

(1.959), suggesting heightened variability in the respondents' active engagement within the community. Conversely, the cognitive dimension exhibited the lowest means (ranging from 4.20 to 4.56) and the highest standard deviations of the entire questionnaire (ranging from 1.850 to 1.950). This finding indicates a substantial degree of variability in the respondents' cognitive engagement with the brand.

In relation to the outcomes, the Loyalty variable is noteworthy, with means ranging from 5.80 to 6.47, with item 'L2' exhibiting the highest value across the entire analysis (mean = 6.47). The standard deviations in this variable are also low (between 1.117 and 1.675), which serves to confirm the strong intention to continue supporting the artist. The Advocacy variable also demonstrates robust results (mean between 5.64 and 6.05), although with some dispersion in 'A3' (1.625). As for Purchase Intention, the averages were between 5.57 and 6.38, with the item 'PI2' standing out as having the highest value (average = 6.38) and the lowest standard deviation of the variable (1.223), which shows a strong predisposition to purchase products associated with the human brand.

Finally, with regard to the Need to Belong variable, the results are more heterogeneous. The mean values range from 3.98 to 5.33, with 'NB1' exhibiting the lowest mean value and the highest standard deviation (1.734). This indicates a lower degree of agreement and increased variability within this specific dimension of the sample. This finding suggests that the concept of belonging may not be universally applicable to all respondents, thereby underscoring the importance of incorporating individual differences into subsequent analyses.

3.5.3. Validation of the measurement model

In order to verify the quality and reliability of the measurement model, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) model, available in the SmartPLS software, was utilised. In recent years, PLS-SEM has been extensively utilised in various investigations, particularly when the objective is to identify the determining factors for the success and competitive advantage of certain constructs (Hair et al., 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2021). This statistical method facilitates an in-depth analysis of the cause-effect relationships between independent and dependent latent variables (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

In the present study, the PLS Algorithm test was performed, obtaining the values of external loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The external loadings provided a framework for evaluating the contribution of each item to the

construction of the respective latent variables. The remaining indicators were utilised to assess the validity and reliability of the scales employed. Furthermore, the bootstrapping test was performed in order to determine the t-values, thereby enabling an assessment of the degree of statistical significance of each parameter.

Table 4 - Measurement scales and validity and reliability parameters

Measurement Item	Outer Load-ings	t-values	Cronbach 's Alpha	CR	AVE
Perceived Authenticity			0,854	0,911	0,774
PA1. Taylor Swift seems real to me;	0,899	46,354			
PA2. Taylor Swift has something about her that makes her stand out;	0,840	25,763			
PA3. Taylor Swift is known for being honest;	0,899	54,180			
Relatability			0,825	0,896	0,742
R1. Taylor Swift speaks my language;	0,775	19,783			
R2. Taylor Swift represents me;	0,908	105,017			
R3. Taylor Swift says something true and deep about who I am as a person;	0,895	60,928			
Narrative			0,844	0,905	0,762
N1. I feel like I follow Taylor Swift's journey as if it was a story;	0,904	56,821			
N2. I can easily imagine the moments in Taylor Swift's life as they are portrayed in her songs;	0,811	23,214			

N3. When I see content about Taylor Swift, I get drawn into her story;	0,900	89,932			
Consumer Engagement **Cognitive Engagement**			0,953	0,960	0,726
CE1. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I get carried away;	0,843	49,239			
CE2. Time flies when I am interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	0,899	77,608			
CE3. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I forget everything else;	0,817	47,608			
Affective Engagement					
AE1. I feel enthusiastic while interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	0,918	100,137			
AE2. I get pleasure from interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community;	0,845	52,878			
AE3. When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I feel happy;	0,920	104,011			
Behavioural Engagement					
BE1. I share, comment or 'like' content about Taylor Swift and her community;	0,766	32,986			
BE2. I seek ideas or information about Taylor Swift from her fan community;	0,845	43,044			

BE3. I ask questions and seek help from Taylor Swift's fan community;	0,816	48,540			
Loyalty			0,913	0,945	0,851
L1. I choose to support Taylor Swift because I know she's the best artist for me;	0,891	74,526			
L2. I will continue to support Taylor Swift the next time she releases music or goes on tour;	0,939	83,953			
L3. I intend to continue supporting Taylor Swift in the future;	0,937	82,632			
Advocacy			0,910	0,944	0,849
A1. I like to recommend Taylor Swift to other people;	0,948	127,458			
A2. I love to talk about the positives of Taylor Swift with people I know;	0,879	50,800			
A3. I try to convince other people to listen to Taylor Swift;	0,935	121,541			
Purchase Intention			0,900	0,938	0,834
PI1. I'm very likely to buy products related to Taylor Swift;	0,953	126,527			
PI2. I would consider buying merchandise, music or tickets related to Taylor Swift;	0,875	41,926			
PI3. I'd buy something related to Taylor Swift at	0,910	84,254			

the next opportunity;					
Need to Belong			0,666	0,817	0,598
NB1. I do not like being alone;	0,781	19,363			
NB2. I try hard to stay in touch with my friends;	0,731	11,633			
NB3. I need others to accept me.	0,806	21,668			

Source: Own elaboration based on SmartPLS

As illustrated in Table 4, the external loadings of all items exceed 0.7, ranging from 0.731 to 0.953, thereby demonstrating a robust and clearly defined relationship between the measurement items and their latent variables (Hair et al., 2011). Consequently, all items were retained within the model.

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) are used to demonstrate the internal consistency of the variables. According to (Hair et al., 2022) values above 0.7 are considered to be good, while values below 0.6 are indicative of limited reliability. In the present study, all variables had values above 0.7, with most exceeding 0.8, thus confirming a high internal consistency of the conceptual model.

As for the t-values, these assume values substantially higher than the threshold of 1.96 for a significance level of 5%, ranging from 11.633 to 127.458. This finding serves to confirm the hypothesis that all measurement items are statistically significant for the variance of the respective latent variables.

Finally, to ensure convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was analysed, with values of 0.5 or greater being indicative of convergent validity (Sarstedt et al., 2021). In the present study, the AVE values range from 0.598 to 0.851, thereby confirming that all variables explain in excess of 50% of the variance of their items, thus ensuring the convergent validity of the model.

Subsequently, discriminant validity was assessed in order to verify whether there was adequate distinction between the variables in the model. Discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) - as shown on the diagonal of Table 5 - is greater

than the correlations between the constructs, as shown off the diagonal (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5 - Discriminant validity according to Fornell-Larcker

	PA	R	N	CE	L	A	PI	NB
PA	0,88							
R	0,751	0,861						
N	0,817	0,742	0,873					
CE	0,602	0,662	0,652	0,682				
L	0,713	0,657	0,66	0,6	0,923			
A	0,63	0,607	0,649	0,603	0,82	0,921		
PI	0,672	0,617	0,626	0,583	0,881	0,783	0,913	
NB	0,266	0,23	0,283	0,255	0,281	0,32	0,262	0,774

Source: Own elaboration based on SmartPLS

As shown in Table 5, all values on the diagonal (ranging from 0.774 to 0.923) are higher than the corresponding values in the rows and columns below that diagonal. This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with any other construct. Consequently, discriminant validity is demonstrated in the model.

Table 6 - Variance inflation factor (VIF)

Variable	VIF
Perceived Authenticity	3,497
Relatability	2,590
Narrative	3,384
Consumer Engagement	1,127
Need to Belong	1,083

Source: Own Elaboration

Based on Table 6, it was concluded that the three variables could be maintained in the measurement model since there were no indications of multicollinearity issues. The VIF values obtained were 3.497 for perceived authenticity, 2.590 for relatability, and 3.384 for narrative. All of these values are below the critical limit of 5, which indicates that the variables are not highly

correlated in a way that could compromise the validity of the model.

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the measurement model is both valid and reliable.

3.5.4. Structural Model Validation

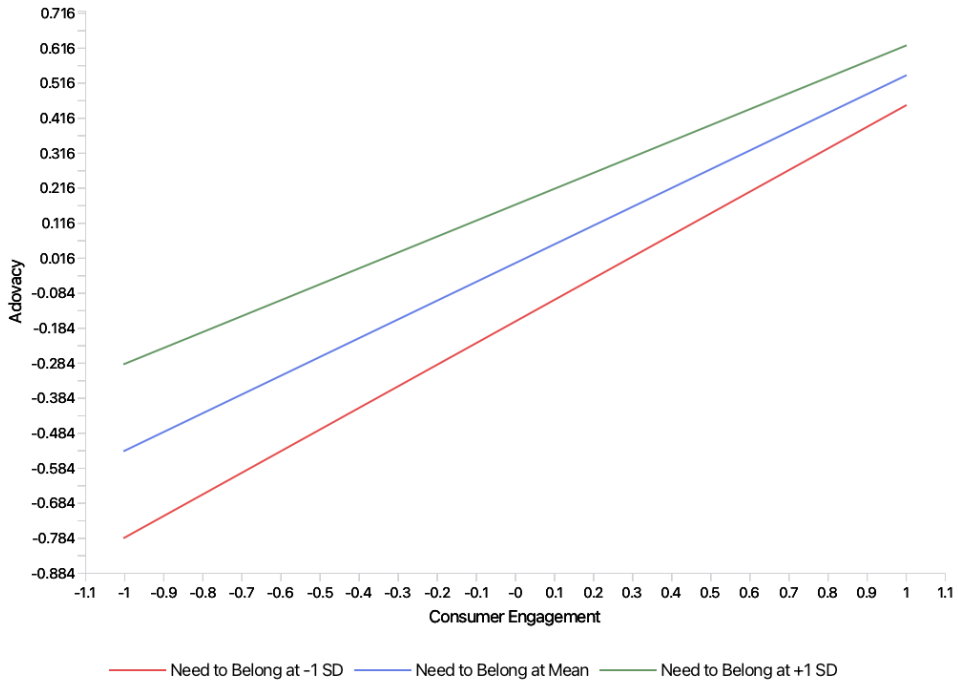
Once the measurement model has been validated, the subsequent step is to verify the structural model by analysing the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. This enables us to ascertain the extent to which the model elucidates the relationship between each variable. In order to validate the model in an appropriate manner, it is essential to check the structural coefficients (β), the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the t-values (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014). The PLS algorithm and bootstrapping procedure were utilised to extract the data.

Structural coefficients are indicative of hypothesised relationships between two variables and vary between -1 and 1: the closer to 1, the stronger and more positive the relationship, and the closer to -1, the stronger and more negative (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014). As demonstrated in Figure 2, within the antecedents block, only relatability (β = 0.384; t = 6.090) and narrative (β = 0.335; t = 3.971) have been found to exert positive and statistically significant effects on consumer engagement. Conversely, perceived authenticity (β = 0.040; t = 0.558) exhibited a residual and non-significant effect.

Concerning outcomes, it has been demonstrated that consumer engagement exerts a robust and positive direct influence on advocacy (β = 0.536; t = 11.618), loyalty (β = 0.530; t = 11.509), and purchase intention (β = 0.526; t = 12.037). However, the moderating effect of Need to Belong on these three paths must also be considered. The findings reveal statistically significant negative interactions in the domains of advocacy (β = -0.081; t = 2.020), loyalty (β = -0.137; t = 2.512), and purchase intention (β = -0.099; t = 2.009). In substantive terms, this means that higher levels of the need to belong reduce the strength of the relationship between engagement and each outcome.

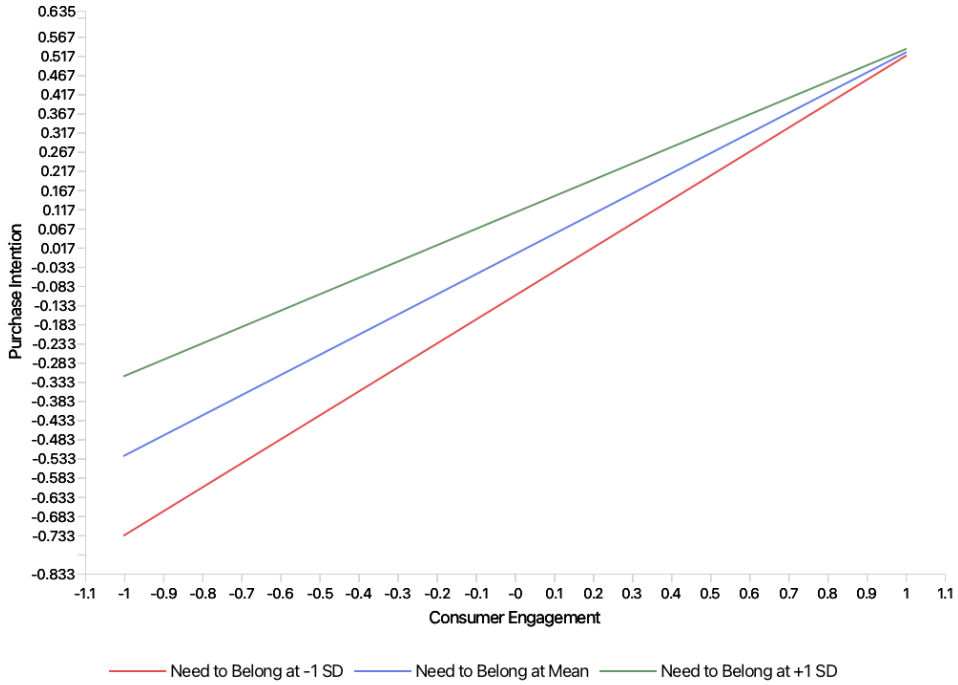
Although the direct effect of engagement remains positive and robust, it is less effective in producing advocacy, loyalty and purchase intention when the need to belong is high. This pattern is illustrated in Figures 2, 3 and 4, which present the simple slope plots for the moderating role of Need to Belong on the relationship between consumer engagement and advocacy, purchase intention, and loyalty, respectively.

Figure 2 - Moderating effect of Need to Belong on the relationship between Consumer Engagement and Advocacy



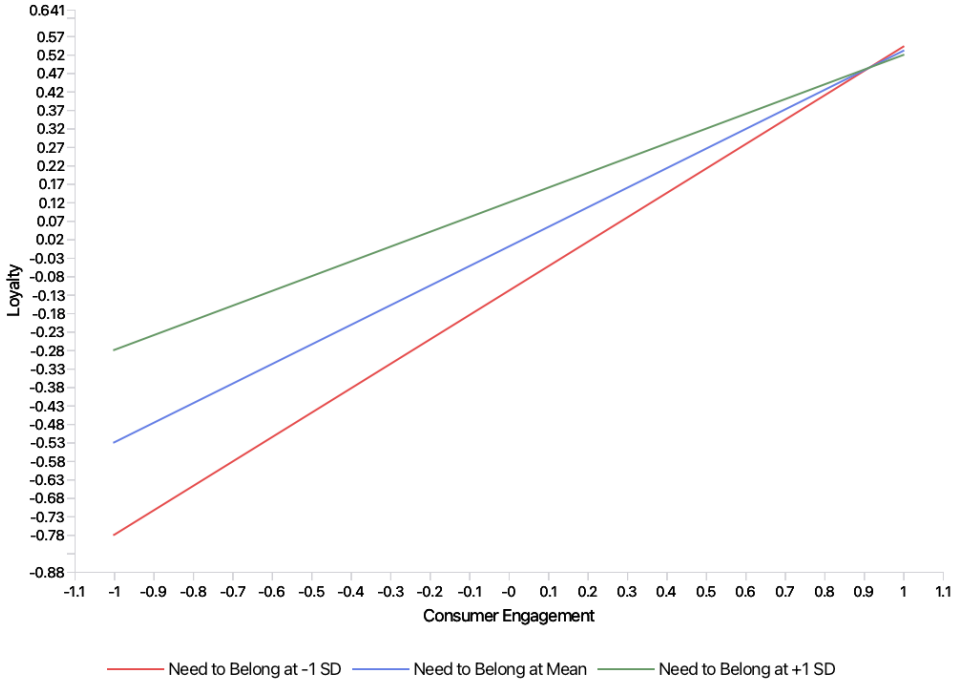
Source: SmartPLS

Figure 3 - Moderating effect of Need to Belong on the relationship between Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intention



Source: SmartPLS

Figure 4 - Moderating effect of Need to Belong on the relationship between Consumer Engagement and Loyalty

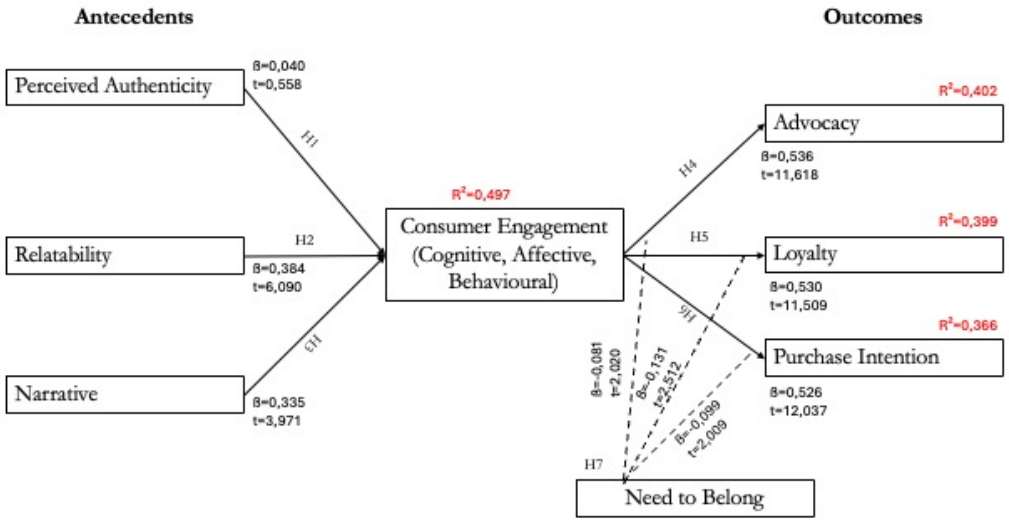


Source: SmartPLS

However, it is insufficient to analyse the structural coefficients in isolation - the statistical significance of the relationships must also be assessed. As previously referenced, for a significance level of 5%, t-values greater than 1.96 are required (Hair et al., 2011). It is evident that all reported paths, whether direct or interactive, have t-values exceeding this threshold, thereby substantiating the statistical validity of the estimated effects.

In relation to Pearson's coefficient of determination (R^2), for the model to be considered acceptable, it is essential that it accounts for a minimum of 19% of the variance of the endogenous variables (Chin & Marcoulides, 1998). In the present model, all R^2 values exceed this threshold, with the model explaining 49.7% of the variance in Consumer Engagement, 40.2% of Advocacy, 39.9% of Loyalty, and 36.6% of Purchase Intention, thus demonstrating a satisfactory explanatory power on a global scale.

Figure 5 - Structural Model Results

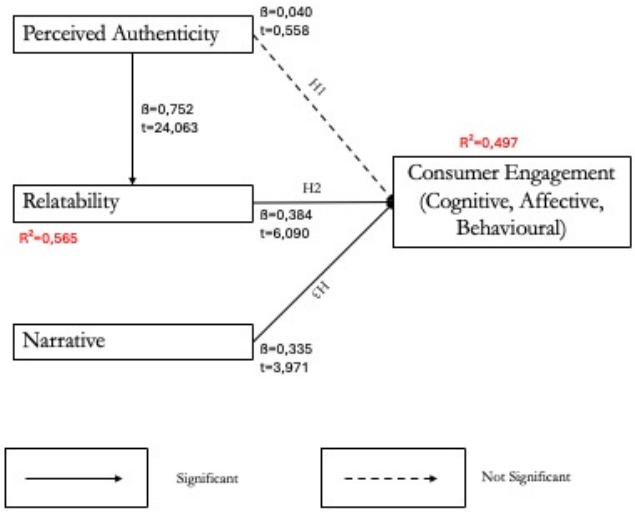


Source: Own elaboration based on SmartPLS

Since H1 was unexpectedly not supported, an additional analysis was carried out to test the indirect role of perceived authenticity in consumer engagement, mediated by relatability. As shown in Figure 3, the perception of authenticity was found not to have a significant direct effect on engagement ($\beta = 0.040$; $t = 0.558 < 1.96$). However, introducing the relationship between perceived authenticity and relatability ($\beta = 0.752$; $t = 24.063$) revealed that authenticity has an indirect impact, as relatability positively influences engagement ($\beta = 0.384$; $t = 6.090$). This confirms that perceived authenticity contributes to engagement indirectly, through consumers' ability to identify with the human brand.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, in the analysed context, the perception of authenticity only translates into engagement when accompanied by feelings of identification on the part of the consumer.

Figure 6 - Validation of the structural model, with the mediating variable Relatability



Source: Own elaboration based on SmartPLS

Since relationships between consumers and brands, particularly human brands, tend to strengthen and evolve over time, it was considered relevant to test whether the length of time that consumers had been connected to the artist influenced the results of the model.

For this reason, a multigroup analysis (MGA) was conducted to evaluate potential differences in the model outcomes according to respondents' length of connection to the artist. For this purpose, the respondents were divided into two groups: Group 1 comprised fans who had been fans for less than 10 years (218 respondents), and Group 2 comprised fans who had been fans for more than 10 years (185 respondents).

The analysis was performed using the Parametric Test, which compares the path coefficients of the two groups. As shown in Table 7, no statistically significant differences were found between the groups, since all *p*-values are considerably above the threshold of 0.05.

Table 7 - Multigroup Analysis

Relation	Difference (G1–G2)	t value	p value
Consumer Engagement → Adovacy	0,102	1,224	0,222
Consumer Engagement → Loyalty	0,077	0,889	0,375

Consumer Engagement → Purchase Intention	0,054	0,624	0,533
Narrative → Consumer Engagement	0,063	0,382	0,703
Perceived Authenticity → Consumer Engagement	-0,15	1,051	0,294
Relatability → Consumer Engagement	0,066	0,525	0,6

Source: Own Elaboration

The findings suggest that the structural relationships of the model are not significantly impacted by the longueur of the fans' connection to the artist. In other words, the strength of the effects of consumer engagement on advocacy, loyalty, and purchase intention remains consistent regardless of the duration of fans' engagement with Taylor Swift, i.e. whether they have been following her for less or more than a decade. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model is valid and applicable to all fans, regardless of how long they have been following the artist.

3.6. Discussion of Results

Following a careful consideration of the data analysis carried out and the research hypotheses previously formulated, it is concluded that all hypotheses were validated, except for H1 and H7, which did not present sufficient statistical evidence for confirmation. In this chapter, the results obtained will be discussed, with the relationships that proved to be significant being analysed and the possible reasons for the non-confirmation of H1 and H7 being reflected upon.

Table 8 - Summary of the validity of research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Validation
H1: The perceived authenticity of the Human Brand positively influences consumer engagement.	Unconfirmed
H2: The ability to identify with the Human Brand positively influences consumer engagement.	Confirmed
H3: The narrative power of the Human Brand positively influences consumer engagement.	Confirmed
H4: Engagement with the Human Brand positively influences the intention to recommend (advocacy).	Confirmed

H5: Engagement with the Human Brand positively influences consumer loyalty.	Confirmed
H6: Engagement with the Human Brand positively influences the purchase intention of products associated with the Human Brand.	Confirmed
H7: The need to belong moderates the relationship between engagement with the Human Brand and (a) loyalty, (b) advocacy and (c) purchase intention, with these relationships being stronger in individuals with a greater need to belong.	Unconfirmed

Source: Own Elaboration

Drawing upon the findings of recent literature on human brands and engagement, several authors have emphasised the significance of symbolic attributes, such as authenticity, identification, and narrative, in fostering emotional connections with the public (Sarstedt et al., 2021). In the present study, the analysis revealed that, of the three antecedents considered, relatability (H2) and narrative (H3) had positive and statistically significant effects on engagement, while perceived authenticity (H1) did not show any relevant influence.

Contrary to the findings of previous studies (Moulard et al., 2015; Osorio et al., 2023), the perception of authenticity (H1) did not demonstrate a significant direct influence on engagement. One hypothesis that may account for the observed outcomes is that, in the case of Taylor Swift, the levels of authenticity were already exceptionally high and homogeneous among respondents, thereby limiting its explanatory capacity. Nevertheless, an indirect effect was found, mediated by relatability: the more authentic the figure was perceived to be, the greater the sense of identification, which in turn enhanced engagement. This finding provides a more nuanced interpretation of the existing literature on the subject, suggesting that authenticity becomes a more significant concept when it is translated into symbolic proximity and personal identification.

Thereby, relatability and narrative transportation are identified as the two main antecedents of engagement, thus corroborating the research of authors such as Malik et al. (2023), Thomson (2006) and Green and Brock (2000). The concept of relatability has been shown to reinforce parasocial relationships by allowing consumers to recognise themselves in the values and experiences of the human brand. Narratives, meanwhile, have been demonstrated to create immersive stories that promote emotional closeness and deepen the connection to the brand. In the case of Taylor Swift, the consistency and depth of her musical narratives, combined with the storytelling of her career, seem to generate a greater connection than the simple perception of authenticity.

Concerning the outcomes, the results corroborated the hypotheses H4, H5, and H6: engagement positively influences advocacy, loyalty, and purchase intention. These findings are consistent with those of previous research (Dessart, 2017; Dolan et al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2014) and serve to reinforce the strategic importance of nurturing meaningful interactions with the public. The consistency of the results across the three dimensions suggests that engagement functions as a central mechanism in transforming emotional connections into brand-favourable behaviours. Moreover, multigroup analysis confirmed that the strength of these relationships remains consistent regardless of the duration of fans' connection to the artist, thereby reinforcing the robustness and generalisation of these results.

However, the most unexpected and relevant finding of this study was the confirmation of negative effects of Need to Belong as a moderating variable (H7a, H7b, H7c). Contrary to the findings reported in the extant literature (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Ilicic & Webster, 2011), higher levels of need to belong diminished the strength of the relationship between engagement and the three consequences analysed.

The interpretation of these results can be understood in light of the various contributions already referenced in the literature review. In Baumeister and Leary (1995) theoretical framework, the concept of the 'Need to Belong' is introduced as a fundamental human motivation, which is defined as the establishment and maintenance of positive and lasting social relationships. However, in circumstances where this need is particularly pronounced, individuals have been observed to seek multiple sources of connection, rather than confining themselves to a single bond. In addition to this, Chung and Cho (2017), and Labrecque (2014) highlight that social media significantly increases opportunities for interaction, enabling individuals to participate in a variety of communities simultaneously. This combination has the potential to result in a dispersion of attention and a reduction in involvement, thereby diminishing the intensity of behaviours directed specifically at the human brand.

Furthermore, Aw and Labrecque (2020) research highlights that the need to belong can amplify the impact of social media interactions, with this effect often being oriented towards ensuring social inclusion and acceptance. Similarly, Ilicic and Webster (2011) findings indicated that consumer attachment to celebrities serves to reinforce attitudes towards the endorsed brand.

However, it was also observed that, in situations involving multiple endorsements, a high level of celebrity attachment can, in some cases, reduce purchase intention, suggesting that the context of the endorsement influences how this attachment translates into consumer behaviour.

On the other hand, individuals who are highly sensitive to social approval may reveal greater vulnerability to normative pressures and group tendencies, and may quickly change their preferences in the face of new cultural or social references. This suggests that, even in the presence of high levels of engagement, the behavioural connection to the human brand may weaken when other figures or trends with greater social relevance emerge.

Ultimately, Greenwood and Long (2011) seminal study demonstrated that the process of anthropomorphising brands in association with prominent figures can function as a relational substitute, thereby serving as a crucial social link that compensates for unmet needs for belonging. However, it should be noted that the focus of this link is not invariably centred on the brand figure, and may, on occasion, shift towards the fan community. As Thomson (2006) asserts, parasocial relationships are characterised by a sense of belonging to the group rather than to the central figure, thereby diminishing the significance attributed to behaviours directly associated with the human brand.

In synthesis, the findings indicate that, while engagement exerts a substantial influence on behavioural outcomes, an overarching need to belong can function as a factor that disperses rather than strengthens these relationships. Consequently, in contrast to the prevailing perspective in extant literature, the Need to Belong has the capacity to diminish the conversion of engagement into loyalty and advocacy behaviours, at least in certain contexts.

On a theoretical level, this study partially confirms previous models on consumer brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014) and incorporates contributions applied to the context of human brands (Eng & Jarvis, 2020) but it also introduces an important insight: not all individual attributes traditionally considered to be drivers of brand relationships have a universal positive effect. In practical terms, this suggests that engagement strategies aimed at audiences with a high Need to Belong should include mechanisms for continuous reinforcement and personalisation, in order to prevent the bond with the brand from dispersing.

4. Conclusion

This last chapter provides a synthesis of the research's key points, the theoretical and managerial implications, a discussion of the study's limitations and areas for future research.

4.1. General Considerations

Human Brands have assumed a significant role in marketing literature in recent years, particularly within the context of social media. The strategic positioning of artists, celebrities and influencers as brands has emerged as a significant phenomenon, profoundly impacting the relationship between consumers and public figures. Despite the growth of research in this area, there were still gaps regarding the factors that drive consumer engagement and its behavioural consequences.

The present study aimed to address this need by analysing the antecedents and outcomes of consumer engagement with Human Brands, as well as the moderating role of the need to belong. To this end, an online survey was administered to 403 fans of the artist Taylor Swift, aged between 18 and 44, and the data was analysed using PLS-SEM.

To understand the role of human brands in fostering consumer engagement, this study aimed to answer the research questions defined at the outset. The initial question, "What factors motivate consumer engagement with human brands on social media?" was addressed by analysing three key antecedents: perceived authenticity, relatability, and narrative transportation.

The findings indicated that relatability and narrative exerted a substantial and favourable influence on engagement, while authenticity did not demonstrate a direct impact. This finding stands in contrast to the findings of previous studies that identified authenticity as a critical factor in the establishment of connections with celebrities and personal brands (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016; Moulard et al., 2015). The present study suggests that, within the context of human brands, authenticity only translates into engagement when consumers feel identification with the figure in question.

The evidence of an indirect effect of authenticity, mediated by identifiability, reinforces this idea and contributes to a more refined reading of the literature on human brands (Eng & Jarvis, 2020; Osorio et al., 2023).

The second research question, "What are the behavioural consequences of consumer engagement with human brands?" was also clarified by the results. Engagement has been demonstrated to exert a significant positive influence on loyalty, advocacy, and purchase intention, as evidenced by existing studies focusing on engagement with traditional brands (Dessart, 2017; Dolan et al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

This finding extends the validity of these results to the domain of human brands, confirming that the emotional and cognitive bonds established with these figures translate into consistent behaviours of support, recommendation and purchase intention.

A further notable finding is that the multigroup analysis demonstrated that these effects do not vary considerably depending on the duration of the connection with the artist, suggesting that the strength of the relationship between engagement and outcomes remains stable over time.

The introduction of the variable need to belong as a moderator has added an interesting new dimension to the research. The findings indicated that, in contrast to the hypothesis that higher levels of this need would reinforce positive relationships between engagement and behaviours, the results demonstrated that such levels actually tended to weaken these relationships. This finding stands in opposition to earlier empirical evidence that indicated an increased propensity for parasocial bonding in individuals with a greater need for belonging (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Ilicic & Webster, 2011), suggesting that, under certain circumstances, this trait can result in the dispersal of attention across multiple communities, consequently diminishing the behavioural impact of engagement with a particular human brand.

4.2. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on branding. While the majority of this literature focuses on commercial brands, it has not yet delved deeply into the area of human brands (Osorio et al., 2023). The distinguishing characteristics of these brands are rooted in symbolic attributes, including authenticity, relatability, and narrative, which significantly vary from the functional underpinnings of traditional brands. By empirically analysing these dimensions, this study contributes to the identification of the gap in the existing literature, thereby reinforcing the specificity of human brands as an object of academic study.

Moreover, the dissertation contributes to the academic discourse on consumer engagement by developing empirical evidence on the nomological framework (Dessart, 2017; Dolan et al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2022), applied to human brands, integrating antecedents, outcomes, and a moderating variable. The findings enable the extension of certain established conclusions regarding engagement outcomes, such as loyalty, advocacy, and purchase intention, to this brand typology. In addition, the results advance the existing literature by providing quantitative validation of antecedents that had previously been conceptualised.

Another relevant contribution lies in the analysis of the need to belong, which, contrary to expectations, proved to weaken the relationship between engagement and behaviour. This finding stands in contrast to the conclusions previously drawn in other contexts, suggesting the potential for further exploration into the role of this individual characteristic (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Ilicic & Webster, 2011).

From a practical point of view, the results provide clear guidelines for the management of human brands, especially for artists and celebrities. The study emphasises the significance of constructing coherent and engaging narratives that can engender emotional identification among supporters. It asserts that authenticity alone is insufficient to ensure engagement, underscoring the necessity for narratives to be crafted with strategic intent. Furthermore, the study confirms that fan engagement is associated with concrete behaviours of loyalty and active advocacy, thereby reinforcing the need for proximity strategies that promote lasting relationships.

Finally, the results of the study indicate that individuals with a high need for belonging may seek to extend their connections across a variety of communities. This may necessitate a greater effort towards personalisation and the continuous reinforcement of the relationship, in order to avoid the weakening of the bond with the brand.

4.3. Limitations and Future Research

Firstly, the sample population was convenience-based and consisted exclusively of self-identified Taylor Swift fans aged between 18 and 44. This limitation restricts the possibility of generalising the results, since the behaviours observed may not be replicated in audiences of other age groups, cultural contexts or in connection with other human brands. It is suggested that future research could therefore broaden the scope of analysis to include different types of human brands, in sectors such as sport, fashion or cinema, as well as to different age groups.

Secondly, the proposed model integrated only three antecedents: authenticity, relatability and the narrative transportation. Despite their centrality to the existing literature on the subject, these factors do not cover all the possible influences on engagement. Further exploration of factors such as credibility, expertise and attractiveness is recommended in subsequent studies. This would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the nomological network of engagement with human brands.

A further limitation is attributed to the methodological approach that has been adopted. The present study was based on a quantitative and cross-sectional approach, analysed using PLS-SEM. This approach ensured statistical robustness, however, it did not allow for an in-depth understanding of the subjective and emotional dimensions of the relationship between consumers and human brands. Future research could benefit from the use of mixed methodologies, combining surveys with in-depth interviews or ethnographic methods, in order to gain insight into the qualitative nuances that are not revealed by quantitative data alone.

Finally, it is important to note that the analysis focused solely on the music sector, which limits the understanding of the model's applicability to other domains. Consequently, it will be pertinent to assess its validity across diverse contexts and on various digital platforms, including TikTok or Twitter, as these platforms' unique interaction logics may influence the formation of engagement in disparate ways.

In synthesis, these limitations do not invalidate the study's contributions but rather, they pave the way for further research that can consolidate and expand upon the results presented in this study.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

The Way I Loved Her: Exploring Fan Relationships with Taylor Swift

Hello!

My name is Pedro Coelho and this questionnaire is part of my Master's dissertation in Marketing at the School of Economics and Management, University of Porto (FEP).

This study aims to better understand how people relate to Taylor Swift and how they engage with her and her content.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. There are no right or wrong answers, and you may stop answering the questionnaire at any time. It takes approximately 7 minutes to complete, and the data collected will be used exclusively for academic purposes, with full confidentiality.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at up202303145@up.pt.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Note: When you submit this form, no personal data such as your name or email address will be collected automatically unless you provide it voluntarily.

Filter Question

Are you a Taylor Swift fan? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Filter Question

How old are you? *

- ◯ Under 18
- ◯ 18–24
- ◯ 25–29
- ◯ 30–34
- ◯ 35–39
- ◯ 40–44
- ◯ Over 44

How long have you been a Taylor Swift fan? *

- ◯ Less than 1 year
- ◯ Between 1 and 3 years
- ◯ Between 4 and 6 years
- ◯ Between 7 and 10 years
- ◯ More than 10 years

How would you describe your relationship with Taylor Swift?

Thinking about Taylor Swift, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). *

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat Disagree	4 - Neutral	5 - Somewhat Agree	6 - Agree	S
Taylor Swift "speaks" my language.	○	○	○	○	○	○	
I can easily imagine the moments in Taylor Swift's life as they are portrayed in her songs.	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Taylor Swift has something about her that makes her stand out.	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Taylor Swift says something true and deep about who I am as a person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	

When I see content about Taylor Swift, I get drawn into her story.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Taylor Swift is known for being honest.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel like I follow Taylor Swift's journey as if it was a story.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Taylor Swift seems real to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Taylor Swift represent me.	○	○	○	○	○	○

How would you describe your relationship with Taylor Swift?

Thinking about Taylor Swift, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). *

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat Disagree	4 - Neutral	5 - Somewhat Agree	6 - Agree
I get pleasure from interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share, comment or 'like' content about Taylor Swift and her community.	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I forget everything else.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel enthusiastic while interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community.	○	○	○	○	○	○

I ask questions and seek help from Taylor Swift's fan community.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Time flies when I am interacting with Taylor Swift and her fan community.	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I feel happy.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I seek ideas or information about Taylor Swift from her fan community.	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I interact with Taylor Swift and her fan community, I get carried away.	○	○	○	○	○	○

How would you describe your relationship with Taylor Swift?

Thinking about Taylor Swift, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). *

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat Disagree	4 - Neutral	5 - Somewhat Agree	6 - Agree
I love to talk about the positives of Taylor Swift with people I know.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would consider buying merchandise, music or tickets related to Taylor Swift.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I intend to continue supporting Taylor Swift in the future.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I try to convince other people to listen to Taylor Swift.	○	○	○	○	○	○

I will continue to support Taylor Swift the next time she releases music or goes on tour.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm very likely to buy products related to Taylor Swift.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I choose to support Taylor Swift because I know she's the best artist for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like to recommend Taylor Swift to other people.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'd buy something related to Taylor Swift at the next opportunity.	○	○	○	○	○	○

My Profile

Just to finish, please answer a few questions about your personality and demographics.

It won't take long, and your answers will help us better understand the profile of the participants.

As always, your responses are anonymous and confidential.

*

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat Disagree	4 - Neutral	5 - Somewhat Agree	6 - Agree	7 - Stron Agr
I do not like being alone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I try hard to stay in touch with my friends	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I need others to accept me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Gender *

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ I Prefer Not To Say

Please indicate your highest level of education completed *

- ◯ Primary Education
- ◯ Secondary Education
- ◯ Undergraduate Degree (Bachelor's)
- ◯ Master's / Postgraduate / Doctorate Degree

Employment status *

- ◯ Student
- ◯ Employee
- ◯ Employer
- ◯ Unemployed

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