

MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

MAKING FANS GO “GAGA”: INTIMACY, IDENTITY AND BRAND BUILDING
THROUGH TWITTER

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Abstract

While the use of digital platforms has harmed some aspects of the music industry, it has also created new opportunities for artists to prosper in terms of marketing, branding, communication and to ultimately become cultural entrepreneurs. Twitter in particular is a social networking service (SNS) that is ideal for studying fan celebrity interactions, as it is a safe space for celebrities to market, brand and communicate with fans through strategic discourse in an informal environment. With SNS such as Twitter, fans now have the opportunity to build seemingly intimate relationships with celebrities, becoming co-creators of content. Widely acknowledged for her unparalleled relationships and interactions with fans on Twitter, singer Lady Gaga, has achieved success and long term viability amidst digitalization through her strategic use of online platforms to not only promote and strengthen her brand, but to build intimate relationships with her fans. Lady Gaga exemplifies how the digitalization of the music industry and growth of online platforms drive artists to take on new roles as entrepreneurs, marketers and as conversationalists with fans. As such, this paper presents a review of the extant literature of studies that have explored the connection between celebrity brand building and representation on social media and how fan identification, interaction and intimacy are forged via social media discourse. This is followed by a qualitative discourse analysis of 904 tweets and retweets collected from Lady Gaga's Twitter account from May 31st, 2015 until April 31st, 2016. This analysis serves to develop an understanding of how language is being used actively, persuasively and to isolate patterns in Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse. This includes key terms, phrases and overall frequency of these. In analyzing how Lady Gaga uses strategic discourse on Twitter, we can build a greater understanding of how this social medium is used to build intimacy with fans. From this knowledge, both artists and marketers can emulate this model for effective brand management on social media, particularly on Twitter.

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Introduction

In today’s ever changing entertainment industry, artists who can harness the power of social media can dominate and achieve long term viability in a competitive market. Singer Lady Gaga is well known for being an early adopter of digital social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It has been noted that her “intense engagement with fans through these social media platforms, is unparalleled” (Click, Lee & Holladay, 2013, p. 361). Lady Gaga is also known for her unique messages of empowerment on social media, through which she consistently supports fans and encourages them to embrace their oddities, as she does her own. In return, Lady Gaga’s loyal followers call themselves her “Little Monsters,” and they intimately refer to her as “Mother Monster.” This monster motif was created in reference to Lady Gaga’s second studio album *The Fame Monster*, and her subsequent 2009 to 2010 tour entitled “The Monster Ball.” Although the term Little Monster was created by Lady Gaga, the term Mother Monster, and its associated image of a monster paw, a sign made with the hand up and curled, were both fan creations and taken up by Lady Gaga, as noted by Gellel (2013). The reciprocal relationships that Lady Gaga has with her fans on social media is exactly what “sets her apart from the traditional way of doing business and where traditional businesses can learn the most from her success” (Huba, 2013, p.10). Therefore, with examples such as the fan created “Mother Monster” term in mind, it can be said that Lady Gaga has achieved and maintained success in the music industry through her strategic use of online platforms to not only promote and strengthen her brand, but to build intimate co-creative relationships with fans.

As demonstrated by her record-breaking following on Facebook (61 million as of June 2016) and Twitter (60.5 million as of June 2006), Lady Gaga has cultivated a large and very loyal following for herself online and therefore offline as well. In fact, Click et al. (2013) note that Lady Gaga is “widely recognized as a pioneer for her use of online and social media to publicize her work and connect with fans” (p. 361). In the age of digitalization where pirated music is widely available online, this loyalty can be measured in paid digital downloads. In 2012, Lady Gaga succeeded in having nine of her singles reach the two million mark in paid downloads on iTunes in the United States (Anderson, Reckhenrich & Kupp, 2013). Perhaps this is because when artists build exclusive, intimate relationships with their fans, they become trusted friends who are eager to support an artist they admire. Furthermore, despite having emerged on the pop music scene in 2008, it took only two years for Lady Gaga to become the reigning “Queen of Twitter” when she took over the top spot for “most followed celebrity,” replacing Britney Spears. In a video posted on her Twitter feed on August 21, 2010, Lady Gaga expressed her gratitude by sending a personal message to her fans: “I wanted to thank all my beautiful Little Monsters for following me. Thank you for beginning my reign as Twitter queen.” This intimate message is one of many examples of the close bond and relationships that Lady Gaga shares with her Little Monsters. Her success is in large part due to not only her unparalleled use of social media, but “how it has directly impacted the relationships she has with her fans through heightened fan identification” (Click et al., 2013, p.367). The identification that Lady Gaga has created between herself and her Little Monsters has redefined the fan-celebrity relationship, as the online communications she has with fans feels both very real and reciprocated. Thus, the large, loyal following

and success that Lady Gaga has cultivated for herself on social media, provides a model framework for artists and marketers to emulate for their own success and is worthy of further analysis.

The digitalization of the music industry can be used to describe the “shift in music consumption towards the virtual in every day music practices” (Beer, 2008, p. 223). As the digitalization of this industry now moves into its third decade, the use of digital platforms continues to create new opportunities for artists to prosper in terms of strategic marketing, branding and most importantly, communication. Twitter, in particular, provides an excellent tool for celebrities to market, brand and communicate with fans through strategic discourse. As exemplified by Lady Gaga, the seemingly two-way communication that can occur between a celebrity and his or her fans through Twitter, allows for a two-way relationship to develop, unlike traditional, one-way broadcast media. Thus, Twitter gives celebrities direct access to fans in order to promote their brand in a personal and apparently authentic manner. In particular, the “mass intimacy” (Anderson et al., 2013) that Lady Gaga creates and maintains with her fans on Twitter is key to her success in the digital age, because her fans are active consumers of her material as well as co-creators of content and branding. Therefore, Lady Gaga is a prime example of how the digitalization of the music industry and growth of online platforms drive artists to take on new roles as entrepreneurs, marketers and as conversationalists with fans.

Many of the areas of research discussed here are fairly limited as most of these concepts are new and developing. As such, there is little academic research on how social media can be harnessed in terms of business in the music industry. Until recently, record

labels had very limited knowledge about their customers (Salo, Lankinen & Mantymaki, 2013). Moreover, there is scant research on celebrity brand and identity through social media, as most research on the topic involves only the celebrity endorsement of a brand. Therefore, further analysis of a music industry success with a strong fan base and strong personal brand on social media such as Lady Gaga, can be used to provide additional insight about the celebrity as the brand rather than endorsing a brand, and how strong fan identification contributes to this. Furthermore, the social media literature is still developing, thus, “there has been no theoretical agreement in the social media literature” (Johns & English, 2015, p. 26). That is to say, we are just beginning to understand to how social media is used for marketing communications as well how it is used by celebrities to represent their brand image.

Prior to addressing the research questions, it is important to identify and clarify the terms that will be discussed throughout this work in a basic sense, namely the key terms: identity, intimacy, and branding or brand.

Identity: “The characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2016). In a social media context, one’s identity can be understood as the sum of information that an individual posts by himself/herself or by others. This includes information that individuals use to validate their identity online to all information posted by them in order to communicate and interact with others in online environments (Aresta, Pedro, Santos & Moreira, 2015).

Intimacy: “Close familiarly or friendship” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2016). In a social media context, intimacy is created when there is a mutually valid feeling of knowing another, and when a sense of closeness and familiarity is established between users (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). In this instance, “intimacy is practised by posting personal pictures and videos, and sharing personal information” (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p.148).

Branding or Brand: “A particular identity or image regarded as an asset” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2016). In terms of social media, one’s brand image or identity is what they choose to identify and associate themselves and/or their enterprise with. “It allows a brand to increase awareness, brand liking, promote customer engagement and loyalty, as well as inspire customer word-of-mouth communication and drive sales” (Ashley & Tuten, 2014, p. 27).

With these definitions in mind, I aim to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between brand, identity and intimacy by addressing the following research questions:

RQ 1. *How does Lady Gaga reinforce and represent her brand on Twitter?*

RQ 2. *Specifically, how does Lady Gaga use discourse on Twitter in order to build intimacy with her fans and co-create an identity for her personal brand?*

In analyzing how Lady Gaga uses strategic discourse on Twitter, we can build a greater understanding of how or if this platform can be used to build intimacy with fans. From

this knowledge, other promoters can emulate this model for effective brand personification. Therefore, this review of literature will focus on studies that have explored the connection between celebrity brand building and representation on social media and how fan identification, interaction and intimacy contribute to this.

Literature Review

Digitalization

As the world increasingly turns towards digitalization, many industries are coming to terms with how to adapt accordingly to new revenue models. Morris (2014), who studied the growing use of new media for music marketing and creation, notes that this is especially the case in cultural industries where “social media and online distribution have occasioned a re-thinking of how artists, authors, and musicians go about the business of their art” (Morris, 2014, p. 273). Salo et al.’s (2013) research on social media and artist marketing notes that therefore, the music industry has been one of the fastest to adopt the new marketing channels and media now available. Although there are still some aspects of the industry that are not virtual, the majority of music consumption, marketing and selling are now online, thus creating new business models (Morris, 2014). This is advantageous because social networking services (SNS) such as Facebook or Twitter for instance, allow for the same publicity, if not better than that of traditional concert posters, videos, interviews, demos, and radio on which artists heavily depend. In fact, the widespread reach that social media enabled through networks of social influence, allows for users to participate in current conversations and dialogues online and “in real life” offline as well.

When referring to the phenomenon that is social media, it is important to note that several different terms are used in relation to social media and are in fact overlapping. Salo et al., (2013) note that these terms include: “Social Internet, Web 2.0 and Virtual Community” (p. 24). These terms correspond with Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2002) definition of virtual communities “as mediated social spaces in the digital environment” (p. 3). More generally, social media involve content that is user generated and enable two-way interaction, as well as content production, sharing and interaction (Salo et al., 2013). In their 2011 study and data collection of 300 tweets, Gruzd, Wellman and Takhteyev assert that Twitter is thus a form of social media and SNS because it is both broad and narrow cast for users tapping into social networks and broadcast for its users. Furthermore, it is also a microblogging network in that it allows users to subscribe to other accounts as long as their Twitter feed is public.

Although Twitter was founded in 2006, the public started to take notice of it in 2007 and finally in 2009, it grew exponentially and garnered attention from both the public and media (Gruzd et al., 2011). Twitter is primarily known for its unique functionality, as it enables its users to send and have access to brief, 140 character long messages to followers known as “tweets.” Participants on Twitter can use the “@user” indicator to refer to a specific user or to address them. They can also directly message each other through “@replies.” Tweets can be “liked” by fellow users and topics are addressed using (#) hashtags or keywords (Boyd, Golder & Lotan, 2010). In addition to @replies and hashtags, Twitter also allows its users to “retweet.” Retweeting is a common practice on Twitter whereby a Tweet is copied and preceded with an “RT” indicator while also addressing the original author with the “@” symbol. Dissimilar from

“liking” a Tweet, when a user retweets another user’s message, it will then appear on his or her Twitter feed. Therefore, as Boyd et al. (2010) note, in copying and rebroadcasting a message through a retweet, participants do so more methodically and often “have to think explicitly about who follows their tweets” (p.7). In other words, Twitter users are highly cognizant of what they retweet in an effort to maintain their audience and to appeal to them in the form of likes and retweets.

Morris (2014) further notes, that on Twitter, “SNS’s reciprocation from the person being followed is not required” (p. 277). Thus, users can choose to “follow” another’s Twitter stream while having their own group of “followers,” yet reciprocity is not expected. This is what Stever and Lawson (2013), note has made Twitter particularly unique from a celebrity point of view because fans can send tweets to a celebrity without the celebrity having to grant access to their content. Furthermore, a celebrity can choose to reply to a fan’s message without fans knowing if their messages are being read. Therefore, Twitter allows for celebrities to engage in optional two-way discourse whereby they are gatekeepers to their communications; opening and closing gates at their choosing. Stever and Lawson (2013) conclude, that in this way, Twitter offers a safer form of celebrity interaction with fans that can be both two-way and one-way at the celebrity’s discretion.

With the popularity of social media amongst celebrities and fans alike, the music industry is using the vast amount of information available about fans through such online platforms. As a result, artists and labels are now using social media as a tool for promotion, marketing, and managing relationships with customers. Morris (2014), who studied the changing roles of artists and fans with the increasing integration of social

media, notes that this has created a new business model that allows fans to take on new roles as they engage dynamically more with cultural content and contribute to that content. Whether it be through artists directly contacting their fans for help to create and market their content, or more passively participating via their consumption of content, fans are constantly working and are an integral part of an artist's branding and marketing mechanism. Thus, as Morris (2014) argues, social media allow artists to interact with and have direct contact with their fans, bringing about the growth of "co-creative relationships" between artists and fans (p. 275). Although this concept is not new, online platforms now allow such relationships to be formed with greater ease. This increase in "cultural entrepreneurship," allows for musicians to use social media to distribute, produce, market themselves and to become "cultural entrepreneurs" (Morris, 2014, p. 274). The term cultural entrepreneurship, defines "artists who undertake cultural production primarily for exposure's sake and for purposes of networking" (Morris, 2014, p. 275). Therefore, in the wake of digitalization, musicians are becoming business minded entrepreneurs and social forces who take advantage of the benefits that digitalization has afforded (Morris, 2014). Morris's research is furthered by Scott (2012), who indicates that this increase in cultural entrepreneurship allows for the co-creator process to take place as fans have more opportunity to consume and engage with an artist and their content on social media.

Additionally, with increasing digitalization and use of online platforms, also comes what Corona (2013) describes as "the pressures of hypermodernity" (p. 726). Hypermodernity refers to "an accelerated state of Western capitalism characterized by the culture of the fastest and the ever more: more profitability, more performance, more

flexibility, more innovation” (Corona, 2013, p. 725-726). The instantaneous nature of social media fuels hypermodernity. This is because anything can be instantly texted, tweeted, posted on YouTube or any SNS for that matter. As a result, it has now become an industry standard for artists to be active on social media. In fact, fans expect to be interacted with and to be provided with constant updates on artists’ activities (Click et al., 2013). Now more than ever, as the speed of cultural exchange has greatly increased, the dissemination of a celebrity’s work and his or her image becomes integral to their career success (Corona, 2013). Artists are having to respond to the growing pressures of hypermodernity with their presence offline but most importantly, online. Corona (2013), who looked at Lady Gaga’s cultural presence in response to hypermodern pressures, suggests that Lady Gaga is an example of an artist who does just that. His research finds that Lady Gaga’s production of the memorable and celebration of the freakish in both her image and messaging “highlights the degree to which the pop spectacle has been affected by a period of unprecedented connectivity among consumers and cultural producers” (Corona, 2013, p. 725).

Fan identification

In their study on social media and celebrity relationships, Click et al., (2013) find that with the prevalence of celebrity and fan interaction on online platforms, it is important to look at the formation of para-social relationships. They conclude that new media encourage para-social relationships to develop amongst audience members. Para-social interaction is defined as “the unreciprocated interaction between individuals of differing status and knowledge of one another” (Stever & Lawson, 2013). In other words, celebrities have para-social interactions and relationships with fans because celebrities

are well known to their fans, however fans are little known, if at all, to celebrities. This is particularly the case on Twitter because fans can directly contact celebrities by using hashtags and the @reply function without having to be “followed” by the celebrity. This then allows for fans and any member of the public to communicate and to potentially build intimate relationships with celebrities. However, Stever and Lawson (2013) further note that although fans may receive the occasional reply from celebrities, they still have limited access to them which thus deems the relationship “para-social.” For instance, a fan does not have access to the celebrity beyond the capabilities of Twitter i.e. through the @reply function and direct message function if the celebrity follows them back. Further increasing the illusion of para-social interaction on social media is the fact that celebrities can reveal personal information and such that would not be typically shared on any other media platform. The access fans have to celebrities and the seemingly personal information they share, can offer fans the illusion that they have a face-to-face relationship with a celebrity. This corresponds with Click et al.’s (2013) belief that para-social or “imaginary relationships” are encouraged by the music industry and that industry experts engage in techniques to “invite but virtually force this kind of identification” (p. 362). Although considered “imaginary,” Caughey (1984) notes that these relationships are very important as they can impact individuals in real life on both the individual and social level extending from “self-reflection to the adoption of prosocial values and behaviours” (p. 66-67).

Fan identification is further discussed by Ashley and Tuten (2013), who use self-expansion theory to explain how fans communicate with a celebrity because of their perceived similarity in values and para-social relationships. As such, a brand can greatly

suffer if fans sense the relationship is unreciprocated or if the brand does something that is not in line with the fan's identity (Ashley & Tuten, 2013). Thus, when fans communicate with a celebrity via para-social interactions and determine that their values correspond, this makes fans feel as if they identify with a celebrity (Ashley & Tuten, 2013). Identification with a celebrity is a process whereby a fan "develops emotional and patterned behaviours, including intense and repeated media consumption, collecting and fantasizing" (Click et al., 2013, p. 362). Eventually the identification deepens, and a fan will start to adopt and integrate a celebrity's attitudes and behaviours into their own life (Click et al., 2013). Furthermore, social identity can be defined as "the psychological state conferring a shared or collective representation of one being part of some virtual community" (Salo et al., 2013, p. 25). Salo et al. (2013), argue that users within virtual communities start to feel a strong sense of belonging to the group, and form strong emotional bonds that reinforce their social identity on an individual level but also within the group as a whole.

Social media in particular can act as virtual communities that allow celebrities to interact with and ultimately create a deeper sense of intimacy and identification with and among fans (Click et al., 2013). Many celebrities create and maintain this sense of intimacy by sharing seemingly personal information on social media (Click et al., 2013). Twitter for instance, allows celebrities to share their work and provide a behind the scenes look at their personal life. Drawing on Erving Goffman, Click et al. (2013) suggest "social media heighten perceived access to private, backstage behavior and therefore create a greater sense of intimacy and authenticity" (p. 366). Credibility of a celebrity's image is also discussed by Tolson (2001), who adds that this perceived backstage access

enhances credibility and thus increases intimacy. Intimacy is also created by celebrities through their selective use of language, cultural references to increase their reach, and by publicly addressing their fans and their creative work, otherwise known as fan art (Click et al., 2013). These premeditated actions and constructed view of a celebrity's private life appear genuine and personal, thus, as Johns and English (2015) agree, they enhance credibility and therefore increase intimacy with fans as well. This concept is defined by Click et al. as an "aura of realness that makes celebrities seem more accessible, approachable, and likable" (2013, p. 366). Therefore, unlike traditional media which provides a highly regulated celebrity image, social media allow celebrities to appear more down to earth, and even ordinary despite their extraordinary influence or talent (Click et al., 2013).

Twitter, in particular is a SNS where "personal disclosure and intimacy are normative" (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p. 149). This is because "tweets tend to be phatic in nature and serve a social function, reinforcing connections and maintaining social bonds" (Marwick & Boyd, 2010, p. 118). Therefore, as noted by Kaplan and Haenlein, (2012) in their analysis of Britney Spears's social media accounts, if an account were written by someone other than the celebrity, it would make it's content valueless to fans.

Furthermore, a study of celebrity social media activity by Stever and Lawson (2013), finds that Twitter gives fans the impression that they are directly communicating with celebrities, thus, helping to establish the impression that they know them intimately.

However, they note that the relationship is still considered para-social because although Twitter is used by celebrities to reach out to their fans, fans still have the same limited access to them as they have always had. Therefore, the relationship cannot be considered

entirely two-way; the reciprocity that Twitter elicits only makes it *appear* as if the communication is two-way when in fact it is only rarely so. This then allows for more intimate fan-celebrity relationships that were previously unable to develop through traditional media (Click et al., 2013). As a result, Twitter is used by many researchers to learn more about para-social interaction.

In Stever and Lawson's (2013) study, they develop codes using a Grounded Theory approach and key word codes. They then analyse and code celebrity tweets in order to understand the ways in which celebrities use Twitter to communicate with the public. As a result of their study, they further conclude that celebrities who are active on Twitter do in fact have serious, meaningful dialogue that impacts participants and allows for a deeper understanding of their fans. Additionally, in their 2014 study, Ashley and Tuten explore the fan-celebrity relationships Lady Gaga has with her "Little Monsters" in order to determine how and why social media enhance their fan identification. As a result of this study, they find that in order for a celebrity to have and build meaningful relationships with fans on social media, their content must cater to their fans.

Branding strategy

The past decade has seen a rise in celebrity, this is partially because consumers are now increasingly exposed to them through digital media (Kowalczyk & Royne, 2013). As such, promoters have leveraged consumer's preoccupation with celebrities and the strong emotional bonds they have with them. What has developed as a result is the growth of what media outlets have dubbed the "celebrity brand." For instance, in their study of celebrity worship and branding, Kowalczyk and Royne (2013) describe how both "*Forbes* and *The Washington Post* have referred to celebrities such as Tiger Woods

as more than just a person but as a brand name” (p. 211). Kowalczyk and Royne (2013) continue to define celebrity brand as the “clearly defined personality and reputation of a well-known or famous person, who professionally labels, manages, and promotes him or herself to consumers and other stakeholders for the purpose of commercially leveraging this unique image” (Kowalczyk & Royne, 2013, p. 212). Thus, in an ever competitive entertainment industry, many celebrities and artists have now developed their personal brand in order to become their own enterprise and ultimately achieve long-term viability (Kowalczyk & Royne, 2013). Similarly, the *American Marketing Association* defines the term brand as “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (Kowalczyk & Royne, 2013, p. 212). Therefore, just as branded products can be marketed and managed, so too can people. With this definition in mind, it is also important to look at the growth of the “lifestyle brand.” This is because para-social relationships are a part of one’s lifestyle and what people choose to identify with in terms of branding. Jung and Merlin (2003) define this as “a product or service that provides consumers with an emotional attachment to an identifiable lifestyle” (p. 40). Corporations and even celebrities turn to lifestyle branding because of the financial stability it provides by forging long-term, emotional bonds with consumers (Jung & Merlin 2003).

In terms of digital branding, Ashley and Tuten (2014) find that social media are first and foremost outlets for branding. This is referred to as social marketing: “the presentation and promotion of a company or product on social media” (Svatošová, 2012, p. 4). Unlike traditional marketing and branding, it indirectly influences and persuades the consumer and their response to their brand” (Svatošová, 2012) via the social

component. Additionally, social marketing is tied to networks and opinions as well as reviews and influencers. Ashley and Tuten (2014) further note, that when social media activities are branded, this not only increases brand awareness and “liking,” but also improves customer engagement and success both on and offline. However, it is also important to note here that in order for branded content to be successful, it must also encompass some form of strategy. Ashley and Tuten refer to these as “creative strategies” and go on to describe this as “designing communications in a way that increases the likelihood it can produce the desired effects in the target audience” (2014, p. 18). Such strategies not only pertain to the execution and messaging of a brand, but most importantly “bridge the gap between what the marketer wants to say and what the consumer needs to hear” (Ashley & Tuten, 2014, p. 18).

In terms of celebrities in particular, when looking at best-selling author of *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006) Elizabeth Grant’s positioning of herself through identity discourses to build her brand on Facebook, Johns and English (2015) find that celebrities can use social media in order to position and strengthen their brand image and celebrity identity. Mangold and Faulds (2009) further this, and agree that although traditional media is still being used to market, social media are increasingly being used because of their advantages to communication between organization and consumer as well as between consumers. This is especially true for SNS such as Twitter, as the service allows for two-way communication between fan and celebrity as well as direct feedback. Therefore, consumers now contribute to shaping brands more than ever before, and this is important because markets have now become hyper-competitive, and as a result, consumers can now be more selective and demanding than ever (Svatošová, 2012). Thus, in order for a

business or brand to succeed in today's market, they must have a deep understanding of their customers and be in constant communication with them. In response to this, many celebrities now avoid using mainstream media (i.e. tabloids and print media), and instead turn to their own social media to send out releases and news to fans in real time. This not only allows for celebrities to keep up with the hyper dissemination of the current media landscape, but it makes fans feel superior and "in the know." In particular, the availability of social media on mobile devices is unique in that it enables constant conversation, updates and direct entry into a user's personal space unlike any other medium. The need for ongoing updates is further satisfied by options such as push notifications. With this, "many people have now developed the habit of being online and connected with others almost permanently" (Vorderer, Krömer & Schneider, 2016, p. 694), which only further amplifies intimacy and immediacy. Twitter for instance, allows for tweets to be posted and read online on computers, smart phones and mobile devices. The variety of methods to access Twitter, thus allows users to have constant updates and to post messages and photos instantly and promptly reply to other users whether at home or remotely (Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

In terms of branding and emotional engagement, Jahn and Kunz (2012) apply uses and gratification theory to the study of consumer interaction on Facebook with brand profiles. Uses and gratification theory looks at mass media from a functionalist perspective and finds that when consumers become increasingly familiar with a brand through social media, their emotional attachment to the brand grows along with it (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Additionally, Jahn and Kunz (2012) find that Facebook posts that create the highest participation amongst consumers were those whose messages were

both functional and hedonic. Ashley and Tuten agree, and note that messages that are functional are thought to be processed rationally, whereas hedonic messages would appeal to the particular psychological characteristics of the target audience (2012).

All in all, unlike traditional media, social media give celebrities the opportunity to provide detailed, intentional, and controlled posts and therefore a controlled brand image to fans in an informal and approachable manner (Johns & English, 2015). This is in contrast to traditional media such as magazines or newspaper articles which would be written from a far less personal perspective and in which the celebrity would have less control over what is written. Content posted is then more likely to resonate with fans, making the connection between the celebrity and their brand more personal. This is important from a marketing standpoint as Johns and English note that marketing research conducted by Universal McCann (2009) suggests that consumers are more likely to trust content delivered via their social networks versus marketers. Therefore, user activity on social media contributes to building credibility for a brand's messaging and to the brand image (Johns & English, 2015).

Methodology

Data Collection

This research seeks to answer the following two questions: How does Lady Gaga reinforce and represent her brand on Twitter? And more specifically, how does Lady Gaga use discourse on Twitter in order to build intimacy with her fans and co-create an identity for her personal brand? In order to effectively answer these research questions, a qualitative discourse analysis was conducted on 904 tweets and retweets collected from Lady Gaga's Twitter account from May 31st, 2015 until April 31st, 2016. Both tweets and

retweets on Lady Gaga's Twitter feed will be looked at. This is because although retweets are not considered "original content" they still appear on the re-tweeter's Twitter feed. Therefore in the case of Lady Gaga, her retweets are a reflection of her Twitter identity and brand as they not only demonstrate affiliation but also serve to spread conversation like tweets.

The initial analysis of 904 tweets and retweets was conducted in order to determine and isolate frequent or repeated keywords, phrases, sentiment, as well as to determine the overall frequency of discourse that emerges in her online dialogue with fans. Lady Gaga sends an average of approximately 75 tweets per month, therefore, in order to obtain a substantial dataset of relevant tweets, it was determined that an eleven-month timeframe was necessary in order to obtain about 900 tweets. Additionally, this eleven-month time frame for data collection was selected as the discourse is the most recent and thus most relevant. Second, this timeframe was selected as it allows for the analysis of a wider range of data without being limited to an album release date, for instance. This is particularly important because Lady Gaga is an artist who is involved in many endeavors beyond music. For instance, she is also an Emmy nominated actress for her role in the popular television series *American Horror Story*.

In order to identify the most frequent themes of discourse, the 904 tweets and retweets were manually read in order to establish patterns in Lady Gaga's conversational discourse with fans. From this, a smaller sample of 75 combined tweets and retweets were then manually selected from the larger pool, on the basis that they serve as prime examples of the most frequent terms and discourse used by Lady Gaga. Additionally, in order to determine the popularity of Lady Gaga's discourse, the 75 sample tweets were

selected based on the number of likes and retweets they had have received. There is no measure of effectiveness, but more so an analysis of the patterns between Lady Gaga and fans and whether such patterns generate conversation. The number of likes and retweets were documented in a column beside each tweet for ease of reference, along with a column for notes.

Analysis of the larger pool of 904 tweets and retweets and the smaller sample of 75 tweets and retweets informed us of three main themes. With this finding, it was determined that the 75 tweets and retweets were to be organized based on their relatedness to the themes: “identity,” “intimacy,” and “empowerment,” as these themes were established as the most prevalent in Lady Gaga’s Twitter discourse. With the themes selected, subthemes relevant to each were also identified. Identification had two subthemes, the first being fan identification. The description for this, based on the review of literature, is as follows: “a process whereby fan develops emotional and patterned behaviors with a celebrity” (Click et al., 2013). The second subtheme for identification was social identity. The description for this subtheme was also based on the review of literature and refers to “the psychological state conferring a shared or collective representation of one being part of a community” (Salo et al., 2013). Finally, empowerment appeared to have two subthemes. The first is empowerment through inspiration. This subtheme included tweets and retweets that appeared to connect fans to sources of inspiration and strength through motivational quotes and words of support, encouragement or bravery. This also included tweets and retweets with an emphasis on values. The second subtheme for empowerment was empowerment through organizations. This subtheme included tweets and retweets that appeared to connect fans

with organizations and important causes supported by Lady Gaga as well affiliating herself with organizations that her fans support as well.

The three main themes were then assigned codes that pertained to each. Different from codes, the themes are the main mechanism behind engaging fans on Twitter, whereas the codes help to identify the themes. The 30 coding categories can be viewed in Tables 1-3. First, these codes were applied in a trial data analysis to the sample of 75 tweets. Then, based on the coding of this smaller sample, these codes were maintained and then applied to the larger sample once this sample was refined. Through a subsequent data analysis of the larger pool of 904 tweets and retweets, only tweets and retweets that pertained to the themes: identity; fan identification, social identity and intimacy as well as empowerment; through strength and through inspiration were coded. This then resulted in a more refined pool of data for coding, thus eliminating all the irrelevant tweets from further analysis. Therefore, from the 904 tweets and retweets, 542 were eliminated, resulting in a refined pool of 362 combined tweets and retweets. All coding of tweets and retweets were recorded and tabulated in an Excel worksheet.

Twitter in particular was chosen as the only medium for analysis because it is the most frequently used social media site by Lady Gaga to interact with her fan base through two-way communication. Twitter is also primarily a text-based medium that will allow for a substantial sample of text to be analyzed alone. However, it has been noted in the data collection if there was a photo in the tweet. This data collection method is ideal because it contributes to a better understanding of the discourse used most frequently by a celebrity and the outcome and response to that discourse from Lady Gaga's fans. For instance, are they re-tweeting or liking such tweets? Most importantly, it allows for the

analysis of how posts are written and if they are effective in building intimacy with her fans and thus contributing to the brand and identity that Lady Gaga's attempts to reinforce through such discourse.

Data Analysis

A discourse analysis was selected as a research method in order to develop an understanding of how language is being used, actively, persuasively, and to isolate patterns in Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse, including key terms and phrases. As this is an area of research where there are no clear precedents, the method chosen for analysis here was carefully selected. A modified version of Grounded Theory Open Coding (Strauss, 1987), was thus used here, as it is commonly used in research where there is no or little existing theory for the area of interest. Similarly, this qualitative method of textual analysis was also used by Stever and Lawson in their (2013) analysis and coding of singer Josh Groban's Twitter account. With Grounded Theory, open coding is used to create keyword codes for a particular set of text along with the creation of categories and subcategories. Furthermore, Grounded Theory Open Coding defines clear steps that must be followed in the data collection, specifically in the early stages. Additionally, in their study, Johns and English (2015) conducted a manual discourse analysis and used theories of identity to examine the ways in which celebrities position themselves to build a brand on social media. Overall, the approach used for this analysis was selected based on the precedents set in previous studies, which suggest that this is a reliable method. Although a textual analysis software application such as NVivo could have proved potentially helpful, manual analysis was chosen as it could be difficult for a

textual analysis application to decipher sentiment and nuance in a tweet or to recognize the meaning behind abbreviated text, for instance

Finally, for the purpose of this research, this discourse analysis is considered qualitative because of the small size of the corpus; 362 tweets. Furthermore, this method of analysis is also considered primarily qualitative as it aims to explore the meanings and intentions behind the text as well as the significance of the context in which the text appears. Additionally, this method of analysis is also deductive as it moves from observations and findings to theory.

Limitations

This study faced a number of limitations. First, the textual analysis software NVivo could not be used as initially planned due to technical issues. Therefore, all tweets were manually coded twice to ensure the utmost accuracy. However, manual coding did prove beneficial as it allowed for a refined pool of data as well as a more intimate analysis of tweets and retweets. This also allowed for easy identification and discarding of irrelevant tweets that would have been missed by software. For example, there were many tweets with reference to the *iHeartRadio Music Festival*. Although this includes the word “heart”, this would not be associated with the coding category “love.” With this in mind, 904 tweets and retweets were on Lady Gaga’s Twitter feed for the given time frame. However, irrelevant tweets were eliminated and the sample was then reduced to a smaller pool of 362 tweets and retweets. Criteria for elimination included: tweets that merely included links to Instagram posts or other related articles and photos, plot reveals and discussions for her show *American Horror Story*, as well as fashion related posts with her red carpet looks for various events and the Met Gala, for instance. Tweets that

did not pertain to the selected themes of identity, intimacy and empowerment and their given coding categories, were eliminated from analysis as they were irrelevant to this study. An additional limitation also included the inability to analyze visual media such as photos included with tweets or linked through Instagram as well as further analysis of emoticons, as it was beyond the scope of this research. Along with this, the analysis of comments on Lady Gaga's Twitter posts were also excluded from this study. As these comments were quite extensive, these as well were beyond the scope of this research. However, in future research, analysis of photos, further analysis of emoticons and of comments associated with posts would provide additional insight and information pertinent to brand building on social media such as Twitter.

Additionally, it must be noted that content posted on Twitter via a celebrity is quite dependent on the activities they engage in throughout the particular time period being looked at. Therefore, a longer timeframe would lend itself to more to decontextualize her discourse, providing a larger variety of Twitter activity less anchored to current issues and events. This would also be useful to gauge longevity of trends seen in Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse or to determine whether they are primarily short term.

Findings and Analysis

This section will present the most relevant codes that were found in a sample of Lady Gaga's Twitter feed from both a large pool of 362 tweets as well as addressing the smaller sample of 75 tweets taken from May 31st 2015 until April 31st 2016. First, themes of identification will be examined, then intimacy, and finally, empowerment both literal and nuanced. These themes are discussed, along with the codes specific to each of them.

Additionally, the given tables provide an overview of the types of codes found in each category.

Identification

Eight codes were identified in both the sample and larger data set for identification. These codes are displayed in Table 1 and 1.2 along with examples for each. All of these codes, both literal and nuanced, work to uphold social identity and fan identification associated with Lady Gaga and work to answer the research questions: How does Lady Gaga reinforce and represent her brand on Twitter? And how does Lady Gaga use discourse on Twitter in order to build intimacy with her fans and co-create an identity for her personal brand?

Table 1. Identification Coding

Category	Code	Code Meaning	No. of Occurrences	%
Identification	1	Fans	9	25%
	2	Happiness/excitement	150	41%
	3	(Little) Monster	29	8%
	4	We/us/our/united/ "you", together, Collective Membership	36	10%
	5	Grateful/Thankfulness/Honored	83	23%
	6	Twitter name with Gaga Reference	36	10%
	7	Identity/Identify	4	1%
	8	Emoticon: Paws	5	1%

Table 1.2. Identification Codes and Examples

Identification	Example
1. The word: "fans"	I saved a piece of birthday cake my fans. You made my 20s worth it all. To spreading love, above all things ♥ (picture included with Tweet).
2. Nuanced and implied	Thanku everyone whose hashtagged #ExcitedForGagaNextAlbum

Identification	Example
Happiness/excitement	I'm excited too. And not a day goes by I take you for granted. My love grows 🌟
3. The word: “(Little) Monster”	Happy New Year Monsters! I will love you for all of eternity! 🐾up https://t.co/wkvAcJ3uF7
4. Collective membership (I, we, us, our)	Coffee w/ monsters outside the Langham. London punk babies lined up celebrating our return to one... https://instagram.com/p/3rBPoFJFLL/
5. Literal and implied “thankfulness”	Thank you for making the 4 year anniversary of Born This Way so special for me. Your online listening... https://instagram.com/p/3DWciXJFMt/
6. Twitter handles with Lady Gaga references	RT @MINILGAGA: @ladygaga The Countess is in Chicago tonight ✍️ https://t.co/uf4KJXWgQU
7. The word: “identity”	This is why my fans are different from other fans. Our bond over life, love, and identity, after it... https://t.co/M2Gk2h4JFo
8. Emoticon: Paws (🐾)	Can't describe how grateful I am to be a performer of this generation thanku for supporting me always. 🐾❤️👤 https://t.co/QQ9WTLjLMI

The data reveals that nuanced or literal (2) happiness/excitement occurred most frequently in Lady Gaga’s discourse, appearing in 41 percent of tweets with (5) thankfulness at 23 percent and (4) collective membership and (6) Twitter handles with Lady Gaga references on par both occurring in ten percent of the tweets. Additionally, the smaller sample also indicated a ranking of codes similar to this larger data set.

With happiness/excitement occurring the most in Lady Gaga’s tweets and retweets in both the smaller sample and larger data set, it is concluded that the vast majority of tweets are positive with nuanced happiness and/or mention the word “happy” or “excited,” for instance. The message and feelings of positivity that Lady Gaga evokes in her tweets and retweets play a key role in her interactions and relationships with fans on Twitter. In fact, upon investigating what motivates people to turn to online communities, research by Gruzdt et al., (2011) concludes that “one of the strongest

motivators of online engagement is the positive emotions that these communities foster” (p. 2). The feeling of happiness/excitement is very evident in Figure 1, for instance.



Figure 1. Example of Happiness

Here Lady Gaga retweets a link to an article in *The Huffington Post* of a “Grandma Going Gaga.” In the article, an elderly women is inspired to dress up in many of Lady Gaga’s famed looks and is photographed in them. The overall feel of the tweet is positive, and this is further confirmed with mention of the word “happy,” along with multiple exclamation points to enhance the feeling of excitement felt by Lady Gaga.

This is also an example of the identification subcategory: fan identification, as the grandma is dressing up as Lady Gaga and in doing so, has developed behaviour in line with Lady Gaga. There are in fact a number of tweets on Lady Gaga’s Twitter feed that fell into the category of identification and showcase fans dressing up as her and dancing to her music with her signature choreography, all of which demonstrate themes of identification with the singer. One retweet by Lady Gaga includes a link to a video of a married couple of self-proclaimed “Monsters” dancing to her well known song “Bad Romance.” Similarly, multiple retweets by Lady Gaga during Halloween or what Little Monsters refer to as “Gagaween,” showcase fans dressing up as Lady Gaga’s character,

The Countess from her show *American Horror Story*, amongst other looks. In acknowledgement of this, Lady Gaga frequently retweets these, but also often includes a message of her approval as demonstrated in Figure 1. This corresponds with what Click et al. (2013) notes, in that Lady Gaga is known for her “extraordinary reciprocity” that is enabled through social media like Twitter. This reciprocity plays a key role in maintaining the strong relationships she holds with her Little Monsters as well as the identification they have with her.

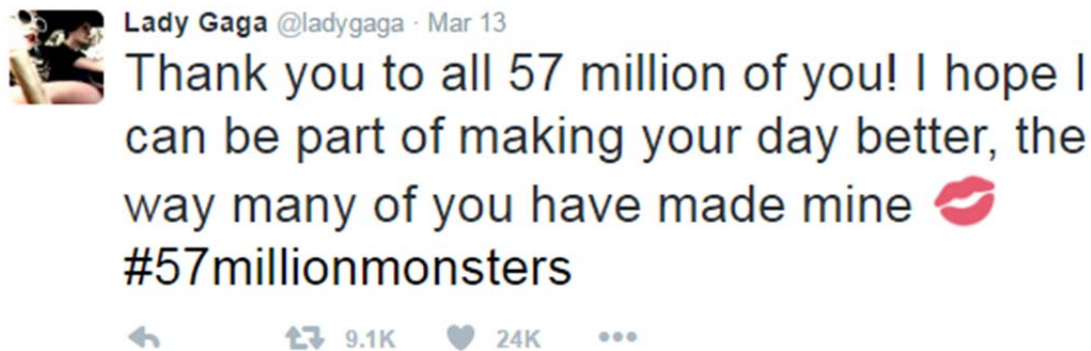


Figure 2. Example of Thankfulness

The second most frequent group of tweets that pertain to identification are ones with themes of thankfulness. Tweets expressing Lady Gaga’s gratitude, were most commonly directed towards her fans. Whether Lady Gaga is directly thanking fans, or indirectly expressing her gratitude, it is quite evident that she prioritizes making fans feel special. Lady Gaga goes out of her way to express that fans play a significant role in her own life, happiness, success. Figure 2 is a prime example of this, particularly as it includes a literal stating of “thankfulness” as well as the word “thank you.” Additionally, the tweet is important in terms of identification because of her use of the word “you” denoting collective membership. Secondly, Lady Gaga is also careful to include a

“Monster” reference via the hashtag: “#57millionmonsters.” As this is the name that Lady Gaga gives to her fans and that they identify with, interestingly enough, there is no need for Lady Gaga to mention the word “fan” or specify who she is referring to — it is a given.



Figure 3. Example of Monster Community

Additionally, ten percent of retweets from Lady Gaga were originally posted by fans who have a Twitter name bearing a Lady Gaga reference. Through analysis of this particular dataset, it was found that the Twitter user @Italianmonster8 is commonly retweeted by Lady Gaga as well as @PacifierGaga. A quick glance at these Twitter accounts confirmed that these users are also self-proclaimed Little Monsters. The fact that these users have a Twitter name with a Lady Gaga reference, not only demonstrates their commitment to Lady Gaga, but also their identification with her along with her brand. This is strong enough that they want to incorporate some part of her into their own

Twitter name, making this visible to others and further building affiliation. Moreover, this confirms their identification and signifies to others that they are a part of Lady Gaga's "Monster" community.

Fan identification is also evident in the use of the term "Monster" or through use of its accompanying paws emoticon (🐾) which frequently appear throughout Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse. An example of this is exhibited in Table 1.2. In Figure 3, the "Monster" theme continues and is further strengthened through language that again detonates collective membership, this time with the word "us." The word "us" acts to unify Lady Gaga with her Monsters, alluding that they are "one" and have a collective identity through their label as "Monsters." However, in this instance they also have a collective goal to support a fellow artist that Lady Gaga confirms is "one of us," being that he is a Monster as well. Thus, there is a shared social identity that is present here. Lady Gaga's Little Monsters have what Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo, describe as social identity within a virtual community. This is when there is a "shared or collective representation of one being part of the same virtual community" (2004, p. 242). This is also an artist that Lady Gaga knows many of her fans will identify with, as Trevor Moran is a singer who has openly struggled with his sexuality and recently came out as gay. Lady Gaga is known for being a strong advocate for the LGBTQ community, as such, many of her fans are a part of this community as well. This corresponds with what Ashley and Tuten (2014), note in their own study which found that in order for celebrities to build meaningful relationships with fans on social media, their content must cater to them in terms of appealing to their identity but also their values and beliefs.

Intimacy

Eight codes were identified in both the smaller sample and large data set that pertained to theme of intimacy. These codes are displayed in Table 2 and 2.1 along with examples for each. All of these codes both literal and implied help to establish and maintain intimacy in Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse and thus the intimate relationships she has with her fans and followers. The theme of intimacy and its given codes work to answer the research questions: How does Lady Gaga reinforce and represent her brand on Twitter? And how does Lady Gaga use discourse on Twitter in order to build intimacy with her fans and co-create an identity for her personal brand?

Table 2. Intimacy Coding

Category	Code	Code Meaning	No. of Occurrences	%
Intimacy	9	Caring	108	30%
	10	Love	70	19%
	11	Meaningful/"means to me"	8	2%
	12	Family	22	6%
	13	Retweet by Lady Gaga	113	31%
	14	Proud	19	5%
	15	Emoticon: Heart	65	17%
	16	Emoticon: Kiss	14	4%

Table 2.1. Intimacy Codes and Examples

Intimacy	Example
9. Literal and implied "caring"	#HappyInternationalWomensDay Women are wise. They teach us that caring for others can be even more important than caring for yourself.
10. The word "love"	"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."... https://www.instagram.com/p/BEmHtx6JFEZ/
11. Literal	RT @KoriPaulSwabey: I wish Gaga knew how much Born This Way

Intimacy	Example
“meaningfulness”	means to me.
12. The word “family”	RT @GagaNetCrew: I'm so proud to be part of this family Gaga + Monsters = in love forever
13. Retweets by Lady Gaga	RT @JuniorMonstter: #Throwback 2010 with a special message from Lady Gaga, the original Twitter Queen! 🙌💎 http://t.co/9vxlAQqioE
14. Literal and nuanced “pride”	I am proud to stand by @NYGovCuomo as he works to end discrimination against the transgender community: https://t.co/0Kq6EitJpq
15. Emoticon: Heart (❤)	I saved a piece of birthday cake my fans. You made my 20s worth it all. To spreading love, above all things. ❤ https://t.co/69Z2JX4ylt
16. Emoticon: Kiss (💋)	"Be Yourself, That's What Makes You Beautiful" 💋, Gaga https://t.co/OvThyvs4e

The data reveals that (13) retweets were most frequent, appearing in 31 percent of tweets. Literal and implied (9) “caring” appeared in 30 percent of tweets and (10) “love” both the word and nuanced love, accounted for 19 percent of tweets. Similarly, the sample indicated similar trends with frequency of codes, however, “caring” had the highest number of occurrences followed by retweets, and “love.”

The love and care that Lady Gaga shows through Twitter for her fans and followers plays a key role in helping her to establish intimate relationships with them and vice versa. Figure 4 demonstrates the lengths that Lady Gaga goes to in order to reciprocate the love, care and support her fans show for her, even beyond social media and into real life. Figure 4 recalls that Lady Gaga had pizza delivered to her fans as they were waiting for her outside of her hotel room. With this, care is implied in that she cares about her fan’s wellbeing and wants to show them this by sending them food as they await her. Lady Gaga then acknowledges and affirms this action by retweeting a fans retelling of it. Marwick and Boyd (2011) agree that one of the ways in which celebrities

create a sense of intimacy, is through the public acknowledgement of fans as demonstrated here by Lady Gaga and the action of retweeting.



Figure 4. Example with Pizza

As indicated in Figure 4, Lady Gaga often demonstrates care in the form of acknowledgement through retweeting. This is additionally seen in Figure 5 where a fan has mentioned Lady Gaga in a tweet, and how much her song “Till it Happens to You” has helped her through bullying. Identification is also present here as the fan implies she can relate to Lady Gaga’s experience through her song. The simple action of Lady Gaga retweeting this provides validation for the user @PacifierGaga, that Lady Gaga does in fact care or cares enough to retweet this and is listening to her plea. Despite Twitter’s use for one-way interaction, Lady Gaga’s frequency to retweet fans makes the experience more intimate as it encourages fans to tweet to Lady Gaga in the hopes that she may retweet their posts as well. The results indicate that 31% of Lady Gaga’s tweets are retweets. This finding confirms that Lady Gaga reads tweets that fans direct to her via the

@reply function. As noted by Morris (2014), the hash tag and @reply functions enabled by Twitter allow for people to be in direct communication with an artist they admire deeply, as is the case here. As Figure 4 demonstrates, this connection allows artists to be seemingly more intimate with their fans. More specifically, this example showcases Lady Gaga as caring and maternal; she is a celebrity that provides for fans and gives back. Further enhancing the intimacy felt in this tweet and in Figure 5, is use of the heart emoticon and the kiss emoticon. Heart emoticons were in fact the most frequently used emoticons in Lady Gaga's tweets and retweets, occurring in 65% of the sample. Derks, Fischer and Bos (2008) argue that, "emoticons help to accentuate or emphasize a tone or meaning during message creation and interpretation" (p. 777). Thus, it can be argued here that Lady Gaga's frequent use of heart emoticons, helps to emphasize intimacy because of the emoticon's association with love.



Figure 5. Example with “Pacifier Gaga”

This analysis found heart emoticons were frequently used to accompany tweets with themes of love, caring and thankfulness. Love was one of the most prevalent themes found pertaining to the category of intimacy and occurred 19 percent of the time. Use of this emoticon particularly helped to establish intimacy with fans whom Lady Gaga does not know “in real life.” It can make fans and followers feel as if they truly know her, and

have a personal connection with her despite in actuality, never having met. This corresponds with the “aura of realness” that Click et al (2013) referred to in their own findings. For example, in Figure 6, a fan mentions Lady Gaga in a tweet, expressing how much the album *Born This Way* means to her as well as professing her love for the singer. The fan mentions love and overall generates a feeling of love and intimacy in her tweet which is accompanied by a high level of intensity in her language use. Lady Gaga then reciprocates these feelings by retweeting and responding to “Emma” that she also loves her in return, creating a seemingly personal connection with her despite not knowing her offline. Figure 6 is an example of what Caughey refers to as a “common and significant” type of para-social interaction whereby a fan displays “intense admirations” for a celebrity despite not knowing them in real life (1984, p. 53). Click et al.’s (2013) study on Little Monsters similarly concludes that the “deep investments Little Monsters have in Lady Gaga have exerted a powerful influence on them, in some cases literally saving their lives.” (p. 373). Thus, it can be said that the intimacy that has been enabled here through social media has allowed fans to more deeply invest in Lady Gaga, generating stronger brand impact.



Figure 6. Example of Interaction with “Emma”

Empowerment

Fourteen codes were identified in both the sample and larger data set that pertained to the theme of empowerment. Sample analysis and coding found the largest number of tweets pertained to empowerment; therefore, more coding categories were produced for empowerment than for intimacy and identity. These coding categories are listed in Table 3 and 3.1 along with examples for each. These codes contribute to the messages of empowerment through organizations and empowerment through inspiration that Lady Gaga evokes in her Twitter discourse. The theme of empowerment and its given codes work to answer the research questions: How does Lady Gaga reinforce and represent her brand on Twitter? And how does Lady Gaga use discourse on Twitter in order to build intimacy with her fans and co-create an identity for her personal brand?

Table 3. Empowerment Coding

Category	Code	Code Meaning	No. of Occurrences	%
Empowerment	17	Peace	15	4%
	18	Inspired/Inspiring	91	25%
	19	Be Yourself/Difference/freak	23	6%
	20	Bravery	35	10%
	21	Strength/Fight/Power(ful)	37	10%
	22	Support	211	58%
	23	Prayer/God/Blessed, Religious Undertones	12	3%
	24	Help/Helped	8	2%
	25	Forgiveness	2	.5%
	26	Sexual Assault	63	17%
	27	LGBTQ Rights/Pride	16	4%
	28	Charity/Charitable Organization or Cause	111	30%
	29	Emoticon: Worm	6	2%
	30	Emoticon: Prayer hands	8	2%

Table 3.1. Empowerment Codes and Examples

Empowerment	Example
17. Literal and nuanced “peace”	Being peaceful in your actions, will help you find peace within. Have a happy and calm day everyone 🌸
18. Literal and nuanced “inspiration”	Donate to @SpecialOlympics! Many of these kids train all year and are incredibly inspiring. Check it out: https://t.co/ZKbZxvVcce
19. Celebrating difference, both literal and nuanced	RT @MarisolMonster: #IamNotJust antisocial. I love to embrace my loneliness and I don't need to go from party to party to prove something
20. Literal and implied “bravery”	RT @HeloiseLamy1: @ladygaga five years ago i was sexually abused and bullied i felt worthless ugly today 2016 i feel braver than ever
21. Literal and implied “strength/fight/power”	“We can't be afraid to fight for our dignity. These are our basic human rights,” - @KeshaRose
22. Literal and implied “support”	What a great charity Operation Smile. We love supporting you and all you do to help suffering... https://t.co/3TP4r9ohPs
23. Literal implied religious references	Happy Easter! time for family dinner. Best cure for a Birthday Hangover. PRAYER. ❤️
24. The word: “help”	@GagaMagazineUK that is so powerful thank u! I believe this song can help so many people with its message that you are not alone in pain.
25. The word: “forgiveness”	Who knows why humanity each year decides in unity to reboot their hearts & each other. A beautiful ritual. Find healing, forgiveness. 2016 🌸
26. Sexual assault	RT @billboard: @LadyGaga & @VP Joe Biden are teaming up to end sexual assault on college campuses https://t.co/kwBKne3ro6 #ItsOnUs
27. LGBTQ-rights/pride	Caitlyn, @Caitlyn_Jenner thanku for being a part of all of our lives & using your platform to change people's minds. http://t.co/bFLjt98m2L
28. Charitable organization or cause	You can't have empathy without pain. Get FREEZING cold so they can feel your warmth. #SpecialOlympics #PolarPlunge
29. Emoticon: Worm (🐛)	Today I will enjoy the gift of life. I will do that and only that. 🌸
30. Emoticon: Prayer Hands (🙏)	#PeopleOverProfit you can #FreeKesha if you #FreeDrLuke Do what is RIGHT not what is better for business 🙏 https://t.co/WPqvZvUyk5

These results indicate that (22) support appears in 58 percent of tweets, however, (28) charitable organization or cause came in second appearing in 30 percent of tweets and (18) inspiration occurred in 25 percent of tweets. Additionally, the sample also indicated a ranking of codes similar to this larger dataset.

Tweets pertaining to the category of (22) “support” both implied and actual, had the highest frequency of all 30 coding categories, occurring in 58% of tweets. Not only does Lady Gaga support fans and fellow artists, but more importantly her support of organizations, charities, and notable initiatives were most prominent. Whether she is tweeting a donation link for her own *Born This Way Foundation*, using hashtags to support mental health awareness, *Operation Smile* or LGBTQ rights at the violent 2015 Istanbul Pride Parade, Lady Gaga empowers through her support of such notable causes.

Figure 7 is the tweet with the second highest number of likes at 89k. Here Lady Gaga shows her support for fellow singer Kesha, who recently went through a high profile sexual assault case with Sony Music and her producer. Additionally, there is also reference to Lady Gaga’s partnership with Vice President Joe Biden, as the two announced via Twitter they are fighting together to put an end to sexual assault on college campuses in the United States. Interestingly, the tweet with the highest number of likes at 110k can be seen in Extract 8 and is also a supportive and inspirational tweet directed at Kesha. As she has openly shared with fans, Lady Gaga herself is a sexual assault survivor and strong advocate for the cause. Therefore, the support she showed to Kesha through her tweets and retweets were extremely well received by fans, but also non-followers. Perhaps accounting for the high number of likes is the fact that a wider audience of non-Lady Gaga fans were following the case and were likely to have found the tweet because

of Lady Gaga's use of the reply function to @Kesharose. Additionally, in total, 17 percent of Lady Gaga's tweets were in relation to sexual assault.

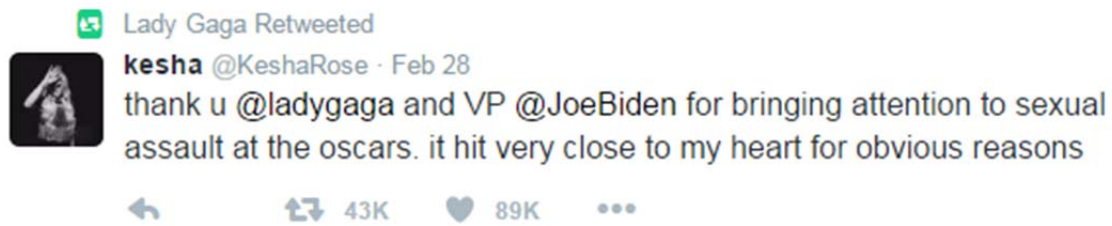


Figure 7. Example of Thanks

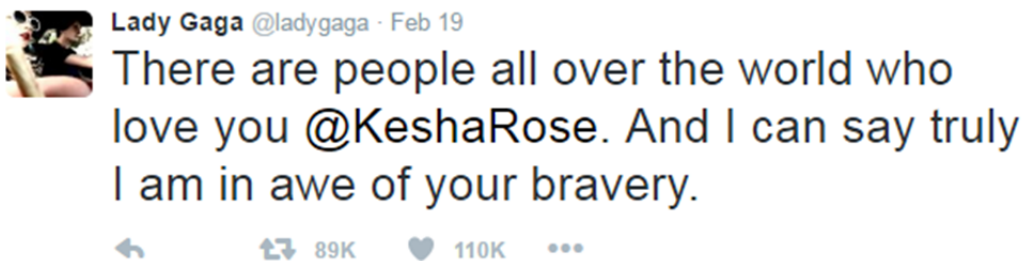


Figure 8. Example of Bravery

Lady Gaga also inspires frequently through tweeting inspirational quotes and provoking thoughts, most of which are her most liked tweets. Promoting bravery and strength are also common in Lady Gaga's tweets, as demonstrated in her most liked tweets to and regarding fellow popstar Kesha. Lady Gaga's inspirational tweets vary from some of her own inspirational words, to famed quotes by the likes of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi as exemplified in Figure 9. Similar to Figure 7, Lady Gaga posted this tweet in the wake of Kesha's sexual assault trial and in response to it. The quote encompasses all of which Lady Gaga stands for and promotes in her tweets; encouraging

bravery, strength and perseverance in times of hardship. The well-known quote and cause attached to it make it a very well received tweet.



Figure 9. Example of Gandhi Quote



Figure 10. Example of Giving back for World Water Day

Figure 10, shows Lady Gaga tweeting about World Water Day. This tweet includes the hashtag associated with the cause (#worldwaterday) as well as a reply to the organization @dropfordrop as a sign of support. Along with this tweet, she also includes a personal photo of herself making a “w” with her hands. Through such tweets, Lady Gaga exhibits one of the key components to psychological empowerment that Zimmerman (1992) calls: the behavioural component. This refers to an individual’s empowered actions that may have an impact on outcomes and can be “achieved through participation with organizations or helping others with their problems” (Li, 2016, p. 50). Furthermore, the awareness and support that Lady Gaga brings to such causes and organizations through mentioning them in her tweets are important, as she knows her fans are not only millennials, but are loyal to her and will likely support anything that she endorses through retweeting or making donations. The tweet in Figure 10 is one of her most liked, with 37k likes and 13k retweets. Thus, with the almost constant empowerment through organizations that she endorses, Lady Gaga encourages fans to be a part of making a difference in their own lives, and in the world around them. As Click et al., (2013) state, when fans identify with a celebrity on a deeper level, as Lady Gaga’s fans do, they eventually “incorporate the celebrity’s values and plans into their own attitudes and behaviours” (p. 363-363). This can account for why Lady Gaga fans are eager to support the organizations and causes that she endorses on Twitter through retweeting and why Lady Gaga’s tweets pertaining to empowerment have the highest number of likes and retweets.

Discussion

The research conducted here had two aims: to determine how Lady Gaga reinforces and represents her brand on Twitter, and to gain an understanding of how she uses discourse on Twitter in order to build intimacy with her fans and co-create an identity for her personal brand. Modified Grounded Theory and open coding were used to identify patterns, key words and sentiment used in Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse in order to gain an understanding of how Lady Gaga builds intimacy with fans on SNS. Modified Grounded Theory with open coding ultimately proved effective as a data analysis method, as it provided an organized and flexible framework where there was little precedent set in previous studies. Overall, the research aims were met as the data collected revealed patterns in terms of topics of discourse, as well as key words and phrases specific to Lady Gaga's tweets and retweets. Coding of Lady Gaga's tweets reveal the strategies used in her Twitter discourse and thus provide a better understanding of the relationship between her brand, identity and intimacy on SNS.

Identification

Tweets signifying or expressing happiness, thankfulness and collective membership are categorized as those expressing identification. In particular, these codes helped to establish identification in terms of fan identification and social identity. Words denoting collective membership such as "our", "we" and "us" were most frequently found in this category. Although "happiness/excitement" and "thankfulness" had the highest percentage of occurrences in this category, these differ from collective membership as they are primarily sentiment based codes. From the results it appears that Lady Gaga is eager to refer to her Monsters as "one" and fans are eager to do the same as

well. This is particularly the case when it comes to Twitter names; for instance, as 10% of tweets retweeted by Lady Gaga come from an account that has a Lady Gaga reference in their name. Sandvoss (2005), who has exclusively studied the psychological relationship between fan and fan objects, agrees with these findings and notes that celebrities contribute to the identity of fans. Furthermore, that the subject of admiration becomes a part of the fan's persona. Similarly, Lady Gaga's fans demonstrate their deep self-identification with her by incorporating some part of her in their Twitter name; whether it is a song lyric, reference or the incorporation of "gaga" with their own name, or even dressing up as her— they are proud to embrace all that Lady Gaga represents. Some examples of this are the Twitter names: @gagamonster96, @GagaNetCrew, @GrlbehndTheAura (a reference to Lady Gaga's song "Aura") and @MarisolMonster for instance. Click et al. (2013) agree with the identification found here, and conclude in their own study on Little Monsters that social media have allowed for the amplification of their already intense identification with Lady Gaga to unfold in more apparent ways. Therefore, Twitter has given Lady Gaga's fans the opportunity to develop the same type of "intense admiration" that Caughey (1984, p. 53) notes, which allows fans to identify easily with a media figure.

Moreover, the so-called "monster motif" that Lady Gaga celebrates is one that, as Corona (2013) argues, plays an enormous role in her branding strategy. This is because it empowers others to "express the monster within them" (p. 738). Furthermore, through identifying fans as Little Monsters, Lady Gaga also gives so called "outcasts" like her or anyone who can identify with the monster motif and its associations, a framework on which to pin their identity. This aligns with Fernback's (1999) definition of a virtual

community—by identifying as Little Monsters fans thus become a part of a “community of meaning characterized by commonalities in values, identity and association” (Soukup, 2006). From a branding perspective, the fact that fans self-identify as Little Monsters and that the monster motif plays such a major role in Lady Gaga’s branding, corresponds with the phenomenon that “consumers help to shape brands” (Svatošová, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, this is a prime example of Morris’s (2014) argument that social media, such as Twitter in this instance, have allowed for “co-creative relationships” to develop between artists and their fans (p. 275).

Further, this analysis of Lady Gaga’s Twitter discourse finds that it is primarily through conversation that Lady Gaga helps fans to establish their identity. The messages of acceptance and empowerment through “otherness” that Lady Gaga endorses, is one that clearly many can and do identify with. This is demonstrated in her fan’s self-identification as Monsters, as well as Lady Gaga’s references to them as a collective through words such as “we”, “us” and “our” as found in her Twitter discourse. Additionally, the monster-specific forms of expression such as the use of the paw emoticon or its associated expression of “paws up” found in Lady Gaga’s Twitter discourse also solidify the feeling of a “virtual community” as per Baym (1995) whereby virtual communities have “conventionalized group specific forms of expression” (p. 152). That is, virtual communities generate shared meaning that help to reinforce a sense of belonging to that society, thus enhancing a sense of collectivity. Unfortunately, it must be noted that the paw emoticon was not used as frequently as presumed, only occurring one percent of the time.

The sense of community that has been addressed here, is particularly interesting to note, as Gruzdt et al. (2011) express in their own research that Twitter was not initially designed as a tool to aid in the development of online communities, but as an online information sharing tool. However, this research finds that Lady Gaga has in fact developed some sense of online community with her followers on Twitter through identification. Additionally, this strong identification with Lady Gaga is important, as it plays a key role in her fan's immense loyalty to her brand beyond that of albums. For instance, although she has not released a pop album since 2013, this analysis found that her fan base is still active on Twitter and conversations are thriving. This demonstrates that albums are secondary to an artist's presence on social media. Strong identification through social media thus enable a long-term commitment to Lady Gaga on the part of fans, which proves to be effective in terms of cultural entrepreneurship as it allows for the type of long term brand viability that Kowalczyk and Royne (2013) note is needed in today's ever competitive music industry. In terms of identity theory, Ashley and Tuten (2014), agree and note that when an individual is committed to a brand they are connected to a set of self-meanings which in turn "produces consistent lines of activities, such as purchase behaviour" (p. 16). Therefore, Lady Gaga's social media strategy on Twitter truly responds to what Corona (2013), calls the pressures of hypermodernity.

Intimacy

Tweets signifying or expressing care and love are categorized as those expressing intimacy. The high number of tweets that Lady Gaga retweeted from others, is telling, in that it is a prevalent means through which she reinforces intimacy with fans on Twitter. Lady Gaga also tends to use retweeting as a way to build relationships with fans, many of

whom are evidently mega fans of the star, with Twitter names including Lady Gaga references as mentioned above. @Italianmonster8 for instance, sends out tweets to Lady Gaga on a frequent basis, and she appears to acknowledge this by retweeting him in return. This speaks to what Morris (2014) states is characteristic of Twitter, in that it “makes celebrities seemingly more accessible than they are on other online mediums” (277). This is true, because as Marwick and Boyd (2011) note, Twitter is quite unlike any other form of social media because of “the perception of direct access to a famous person” (p. 142) through the @reply function and thus its ability to allow anyone to tweet at a celebrity.

This aligns with the results of Stever and Lawson’s (2013) study which finds that Twitter allows for a new form of para-social interaction whereby fans can now become known to celebrities that they follow. This was evident in Lady Gaga’s tweets and retweets, as she not only frequently retweets fans, but often will also include an intimate note or response to fans in those tweets. The relationships that Lady Gaga has built with fans on Twitter therefore resemble the type of para-social relationships that Caughey refers to as “imaginary relationships” (1984, p. 69). This type of para-social interaction was common in Lady Gaga’s Twitter discourse, with many fans tweeting to Lady Gaga as if they have a “seeming face to face relationship” (Click et al., 2013, p. 362) with her. This research echo’s what Click et al. (2013) argue, in that Twitter is a seemingly two-way form of communication, however, this is merely an illusion due to the reciprocity that celebrities show on social media. Therefore, even though interactions may at times be reciprocated by Lady Gaga, Stever and Lawson (2013) argue that the celebrity relationship is still considered para-social because fans do not have full access to the

celebrity. However, despite the para-social relationships evident on Lady Gaga's Twitter feed, she still appears to have serious and meaningful dialogue with fans, as evident in Figure 6, for example. This is the same finding that Stever and Lawson (2013) found to be true in their own analysis of celebrity Twitter accounts.

Despite the evidence of para-social relationships on Lady Gaga's Twitter account, analysis here finds that she does at times stray from what the literature classifies as para-social interaction. This is because there are strong indications in her tweets that she has met with some online fans in person. For instance, tweets with the hashtag #KatyMonster refer to a fan of Lady Gaga's with Down Syndrome who posted a video online dancing to Lady Gaga's songs. Lady Gaga eventually retweets with a message to #KatyMonster on June 17, 2015:

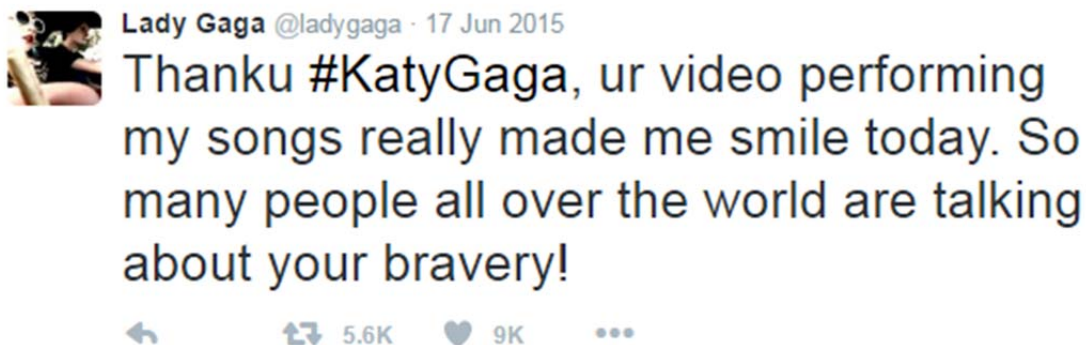


Figure 11. Example of Bravery with #KatyGaga

Lady Gaga then follows this up with another tweet with a link to the video and continues to show her enthusiastic support:



Figure 12. Example of #sendkatietogaga

A month later on July 23, 2015, Lady Gaga then re-tweets a picture of herself and #KatyMonster backstage at her show:



Figure 13. Example of Lady Gaga Meeting Katy Gaga

This example demonstrates that Lady Gaga is deeply invested in going above and beyond for her fans, at times taking the intimate relationships she shares with fans beyond the online realm. This corresponds with Marwick and Boyd's (2011) finding that, celebrities

must “expend emotional labor to maintain a network of affective ties with their followers” (p. 156), even if the emotional labour includes meeting fans in person, as was the case here. Additionally, this is an example of how Lady Gaga maintains constant communication with her fans which, as Corona (2013) notes, is integral in order for any brand to be successful with society’s heightened speed of cultural exchange. This is exemplified in the tweet containing the link to the video of #KatyMonster. This video was initially brought to the attention of Lady Gaga by a well-known fan on Twitter, @PacifierGaga. Lady Gaga then acknowledged this tweet by retweeting it to her fans promptly after being made aware of it.

Lady Gaga also puts forth “emotional labor” in this tweet, through the perception of access to seemingly private, “backstage behaviour” as noted by Goffman in his (1959) work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. This backstage access is quite apparent in Lady Gaga’s tweets as she commonly shares what appears to be personal, and insider information with fans. For instance, when she shares a personal photo with her and her dad on father’s day. Or in her many tweets about her experience of being sexually assaulted. As Lady Gaga has such intimate relationships with her fans, she can allude to such experiences, and her Monsters know exactly what she is referring to. Thus, Lady Gaga fans are encouraged to feel as if they are constantly experiencing Lady Gaga as honest and real, increasing the sense of “truly knowing” celebrities (Click et al., 2013, p. 366; Goffman, 1959).

The so-called “worship” of a celebrity that is evident in Lady Gaga’s fan tweets, plays a key role in marketing through branding on social media (Kowalczyk & Royne, 2013). Banister and Cocker (2014) further this notion and suggest that when people

develop relationships with celebrities similar to friendships this can “create influence in terms of purchase” (p. 66). Thus, the relationships that Lady Gaga has with her fans online creates an attachment that may serve to keep fans loyal to her, whether through purchase of albums or through support as demonstrated on Twitter.

Empowerment

Tweets signifying or expressing “support”, “inspiration” or in reference to charitable organizations or causes are categorized as those expressing empowerment. These codes helped to establish empowerment in terms of subcategories: empowerment through inspiration and empowerment through organizations. Tweets and retweets with nuanced support and mentions of support were the most frequently posted. Lady Gaga frequently shows support for trending topics and hashtags, therefore such tweets gain high levels of exposure, particularly in the form of likes and retweets. As mentioned previously, such tweets receive more likes and tweets than any other category because they are associated with a widely popular cause that she is supporting. In any case, the results show that broadcasting trending hashtags for social causes and organizations is a form of support and social empowerment which evidently plays a large role as a part of Lady Gaga’s platform and brand. Additionally, the finding of nearly constant “calls to empowerment” was somewhat unexpected. However, sample coding concluded that this was a very large part of Lady Gaga’s Twitter discourse and coding of the larger dataset further confirmed this finding. For instance, in the sample data collection, the most retweeted and liked tweets were associated with empowerment. This then allows for ideas and values such as empowerment and support to be associated with Lady Gaga and thus her brand. Marwick and Boyd (2010), note that celebrities in particular are in an ideal

position to broadcast messages related to social action because they are highly followed. Therefore, retweeting is more likely to be successful when the Twitter user has a large network and thus a higher number of people reading the tweet and possibly taking social action themselves.

The popularity of tweets was important to consider in this study in order to establish how fans respond to Lady Gaga’s content. This was particularly critical to account for with tweets and retweets related to empowerment because of the high level of engagement related to this theme. Therefore, follower engagement and popularity of tweets and retweets was measured in terms of likes and retweets. Table 4 documents the top ten most liked tweets on Lady Gaga’s Twitter feed, along with how many retweets they received.

Table 4. Highest “Liked” Tweets

Tweet	No. of Likes	No. of Retweets	Theme(s)
Lady Gaga @ladygaga Feb 19 There are people all over the world who love you @KeshaRose. And I can say truly I am in awe of your bravery.	110k	89k	Empowerment (Through Inspiration)
Lady Gaga Retweeted: kesha @KeshaRose Feb 28 thank u @ladygaga and VP @JoeBiden for bringing attention to sexual assault at the oscars. it hit very close to my heart for obvious reasons	89k	43k	Empowerment (Through Organizations)
Lady Gaga @ladygaga Mar 29 I saved a piece of birthday cake my fans. You made my 20s worth it all. To spreading love, above all things ♥ (picture included with Tweet).	83k	24k	Intimacy
Lady Gaga @ladygaga 26 Jun 2015 #Lovewins over prejudice (includes photo for pride).	43k	35k	Empowerment (Through Organizations)

Tweet	No. of Likes	No. of Retweets	Theme(s)
Lady Gaga @ladygaga Feb 29 After my performance last night I felt a weight lifted. Like I didn't have to hide anymore. #TillItHappensToYou	37k	16k	Intimacy
Lady Gaga @ladygaga Mar 22 Conserve nature's resources so we can all live our best lives. W is for WE CAN HELP #WorldWaterDay @drop4drop (Picture included with Tweet)	37k	13k	Empowerment (Through Organizations)
Lady Gaga @ladygaga 1 Jun 2015 Caitlyn, @Caitlyn_Jenner thanku for being a part of all of our lives & using your platform to change people's minds. (includes photo of Caitlyn Jenner)	35k	20k	Empowerment (Through Organizations and Inspiration)
Lady Gaga @ladygaga Mar 29 Thank you so much EVERYONE for all the beautiful birthday wishes. Feels good to be alive. Grateful for everyday God lets me live to see it.	30k	10k	Intimacy
Lady Gaga @ladygaga Mar 27 Happy Easter! time for family dinner. Best cure for a Birthday Hangover. PRAYER. ❤️	28k	9.7k	Empowerment (Through Inspiration)
Lady Gaga @ladygaga 28 Jun 2015 Istanbul? Who are these "leaders"! Stop attacking innocent happy people who are celebrating this is madness! This is inhumane!	26k	23k	Empowerment (Through Organizations)

The most liked tweet, seen in Figure 8, had 110k likes and 89k retweets, additionally the second most liked tweet had 89k likes and 43k retweets. Compared to the third most liked tweet under the category of intimacy, this had 83k likes and 24k retweets. These results are telling because they show that perhaps people are more careful with what they retweet as opposed to what they “like,” because this tweet in a sense becomes a part of their own Twitter, and their Twitter identity as it is displayed on their feed for followers to see. Marwick and Boyd (2010), agree and note in their research on

retweeting that what people choose to retweet on Twitter is directly associated with their goals in terms of “self-promotion, supporting conversation and building community” (p. 7). Therefore, Twitter users retweet more sparingly than they “like.” This idea is exemplified in Lady Gaga’s most liked tweet associated with empowerment as she shows support for Kesha through her sexual assault ordeal. This is a cause that many people and celebrities alike chose to be a part of, support, and be associated with. In this instance, support for this cause also allows for people liking the tweet to not necessarily be associated with Lady Gaga, but more so an important cause. Similarly, the second most liked tweet was also associated with Kesha, and is a response from Kesha to Lady Gaga that Lady Gaga consequently retweeted. Along with this, tweets related to sexual assault had the fourth highest number of occurrences in the empowerment category with 17% of tweets related to this. Therefore, it can be said that Lady Gaga is dedicated to supporting the conversation on Twitter surrounding sexual assault, and her followers appear to be eager to support this conversation as well, through retweeting. Again, as this was a trending topic at the time it was ideal for Lady Gaga to contribute to the dialogue surrounding this and thus gain a high number of likes and retweets for tweets related to this topic.

Strength and bravery, both implicit and literal, were also quite prominent in Lady Gaga’s Twitter discourse and strongly contribute to her messages of empowerment. Figure 8, provides an example of such language as it not only shows support for a fellow musician and friend; Kesha, but it also uses the word “bravery” as well as nuanced strength and love. The importance of identification must be noted here as this is something that Li (2016) argues is “a key motive for online engagement” (p. 56). He

continues that an individual's influence and power can be exerted through social media. This is quite evident in Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse as she uses her power and influence to engage others in important social causes and to gain their support for such causes. Influence in this case can be measured by retweets, and given that Lady Gaga has the highest number of retweets for tweets associated with empowerment, it can be concluded that there is a high level of influence here. The finding of high levels of empowerment are similar to Click et al.'s findings in regards to Lady Gaga and her Little Monsters, as their study finds that her relationship with her fans is largely built on her messages of empowerment (2013). Furthermore, that these messages of empowerment are ones that clearly resonate with fans and followers as they are the most liked and retweeted tweets.

Another factor to include when considering the high number of likes and retweets received for tweets of empowerment, is that fact that the vast majority of Lady Gaga's fans are millennials. This can contribute to the high level of reciprocation that her empowerment tweets receive via likes and retweets because as Paulin, Ferguson, Jost, and Fallu note, "millennials have a desire to make the world a better place by turning to social media to pool their resources and promote their favorite causes" (2013, p. 336). Furthermore, as a result of this, millennials are far more engaged in charitable causes and organizations than other generations (Paulin et al., 2013). Paulin et al., also conclude that millennials use social media as their primary mode of information gathering and sharing (2013). This may also account for why tweets with themes of empowerment show evidence of highly positive reception by Lady Gaga's Twitter following in the form of likes and retweets. This corresponds with Ashley and Tuten (2014) who argue that when

it comes to a brand “information must be relevant to the consumer if you want the consumer to engage with the brand in self-relevant relevant ways” (p. 16). With this, it is evident that Lady Gaga has a well-informed understanding of what resonates with her fans and followers.

An additional new and unexpected finding in this category was the presence of tweets with religious undertones as well as the use of the “prayer hands” emoticon. Although these did not occur as often as other categories under the realm of empowerment, this data is still relevant as this is content that Lady Gaga chooses to embrace as a part of her identity and therefore branding on social media. Despite their occurrences, tweets including religious undertones only accounted for a mere 5% of tweets and retweets. These tweets included mentions of the words “god”, “bless”, and “prayer” for instance. An example of this is shown in Figure 14.

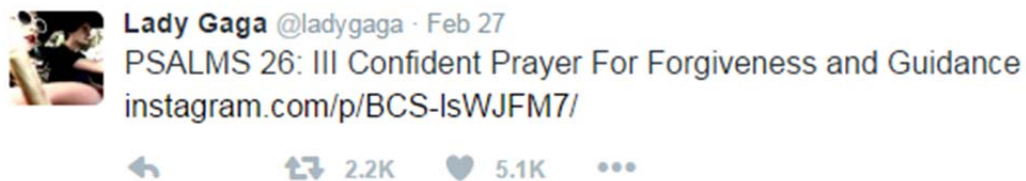


Figure 14. Example of Lady Gaga Quoting Psalms 26

Unfortunately, Lady Gaga’s tweets with strictly religious undertones are not as well received as other tweets within the category of empowerment. The tweet in Figure 14 for example, only received 5.1k likes, whereas most tweets in the category of empowerment received over 10k likes. This tweet includes a quote from the Bible and a

link to an Instagram photo of the Bible excerpt she is reading. Along with this, the tweet includes the words “prayer” and “forgiveness” and comes across as quite peaceful. These are ideals that Lady Gaga tends to promote in her empowerment discourse on Twitter. As has been noted throughout, many of Lady Gaga’s fans identify with her and her experiences. Moreover, Gellel (2013), who studied the elements of spirituality that Lady Gaga embodies, argues that her use of spiritual and religious language goes hand-in-hand with the search for meaning and for the self. Gellel (2013) further states that this is because such language reflects emotions and concepts that are difficult to express in words. This perhaps also accounts for her use of the “prayer hands” emoticon that she uses to accompany her tweets with religious undertones. Finally, Gellel (2013) also notes that Lady Gaga’s education in the Catholic school system and her Roman Catholic upbringing perhaps contribute to this as well: “her schooling years were fundamental in forging her character and for further equipping her with a symbolic repertoire... but also for the construction of self” (2013, p. 218).

In general, from the results it is evident that Lady Gaga fits Morris’s (2014) definition of a “cultural entrepreneur.” Through her strategic use of social media, Lady Gaga is thus taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by digitalization. However, analysis of Lady Gaga’s social media discourse has demonstrated that she does not necessarily use SNS as a marketing mechanism to drive sales, but more so as a tool to connect with fans and thus forge intimate, meaningful relationships with them. This corresponds with what the literature discussed, as Tolson (2001) note that the trust and credibility that are fostered through intimacy and constant communication with fans, greatly contribute to a brand’s success. In doing so, Lady Gaga can potentially foster

long-term loyalty to her brand because fans are still actively conversing with her on social media despite lulls in her musical output. This echoes Click et al.'s (2013) findings, which concluded that Little Monsters differentiate themselves from mere consumers of Lady Gaga's content because unlike the typical fan, they are, and want to be engaged in all aspects of her persona. Furthermore, as discussed in the findings, with the frequency of intimacy and therefore "backstage behaviour" (Goffman, 1984) that Lady Gaga fosters and embraces on Twitter, she encourages such engagement and ultimately strong identification with herself and her brand. The intimacy afforded by constant communication with fans on social media, also allows for Lady Gaga to have a deep understanding of her fans and she can thus cater to their needs through content that is relevant to them. Additionally, through the findings it is evident that Lady Gaga specifically reinforces and represents her brand on Twitter through discourse with strong themes of identity, intimacy and through messages of empowerment. Through building intimate relationships and co-creating an identity with her Little Monsters on Twitter, she is thus not only able to provide content that is tailored to their needs and wants, but most importantly, the ultimate form of loyalty to herself and to her brand is established.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of digital platforms in the music industry has created a wealth of opportunity for artists to prosper in terms of marketing, branding and communication and to ultimately become cultural entrepreneurs. Twitter in particular is a SNS that is ideal for studying fan celebrity interactions as it is a safe space for celebrities to market, brand and communicate with fans through strategic discourse in an informal environment. With SNS such as Twitter, fans now have the opportunity to build

seemingly intimate relationships with celebrities, becoming co-creators of content. Widely acknowledged for her unparalleled relationships and interactions with fans on Twitter, this study provides an overview of singer Lady Gaga's Twitter discourse, and the findings reveal unique patterns in her communications. In doing so, this study draws on and contributes to two areas of research. First, it builds on identity research: both fan identification and social identity, particularly on social media. Second, it builds on fan-celebrity relationships in terms of intimacy, and how this can help to establish identity and ultimately brand loyalty in the age of digitalization and cultural entrepreneurship. As a result of this research, it was found that Lady Gaga reinforces and represents her brand on Twitter through identification; both fan identification and social identity, intimacy, and empowerment; through inspiration and through organizations. Additionally, her use of social media for interacting with her Little Monsters and sharing perceived backstage access with them allows for intimate, co-creative relationships to form between them. When intimacy is forged with fans it provides a deep-rooted understanding of them, and loyalty to the brand for long-term success both online and offline in a hypercompetitive market. With the results of this study, a model has been provided for effective brand personification on social media, particularly on Twitter for both artists and marketers. Although this research is based on an artist-specific case study, the results and findings contribute to both artist specific marketing and marketing in general, by revealing the patterns and therefore strategies involved in the day-to-day efforts of a successful artist on social media. This phenomenon we are currently experiencing on social media is of utmost importance as it is not only affecting fan culture but also consumer culture in general. Now more than ever, it is critical to understand how consumers can help shape

brands, but also the remarkable impact that artists and marketers have on consumers, shaping their identity and lives both online and offline.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A. Sample (75 Tweets) Coding Results

Category	Code	Code Meaning	No. of Occurrences	%
Identification	2	Happiness/excitement	29	39%
	5	Grateful/Thankfulness/honored	21	28%
	4	We/us/our/united/ "you", together, Collective Membership	16	21%
	3	(Little) Monster	13	17%
	6	Twitter name with Gaga Reference	13	17%
	1	Fans	7	9%
	7	Identity/Identify	3	4%
	8	Emoticon: Paws	2	3%
Intimacy	9	Caring	48	64%
	13	Retweet by Lady Gaga	25	33%
	10	Love	20	27%
	15	Emoticon: Heart	15	20%
	16	Emoticon: Kiss	5	7%
	11	Meaningful/"means to me"	2	3%
	12	Family	2	3%
	14	Proud	2	3%
Empowerment	20	Bravery	7	76%
	22	Support	42	56%
	18	Inspired/Inspiring	31	41%
	28	Charity/Charitable organization or cause	23	31%
	17	Peace	12	16%
	26	Sexual assault	11	15%
	19	Be Yourself/Difference/freak	8	11%
	23	Prayer/God/Blessed, Religious undertones	6	8%
	21	Strength/Fight/Power(ful)	5	7%

	24	Help/Helped	5	7%
	27	LGBTQ Rights/Pride	4	5%
	30	Emoticon: Prayer Hands	4	5%
	29	Emoticon: Worm	3	4%
	25	Forgiveness	2	3%

Appendix B. Selected Sample (362 tweets) Coding Results

Category	Code	Code Meaning	No. of Occurrences	%
Identification	1	Fans	9	25%
	2	Happiness/excitement	150	41%
	3	(Little) Monster	29	8%
	4	We/us/our/united/ "you", together, Collective Membership	36	10%
	5	Grateful/Thankfulness/honored	83	23%
	6	Twitter name with Gaga Reference	36	10%
	7	Identity/Identify	4	1%
	8	Emoticon: Paws	5	1%
Intimacy	9	Caring	108	30%
	10	Love	70	19%
	11	Meaningful/"means to me"	8	2%
	12	Family	22	6%
	13	Retweet by Lady Gaga	113	31%
	14	Proud	19	5%
	15	Emoticon: Heart	65	17%
	16	Emoticon: Kiss	14	4%
Empowerment	17	Peace	15	4%
	18	Inspired/Inspiring	91	25%
	19	Be Yourself/Difference/freak	23	6%
	20	Bravery	35	10%

	21	Strength/Fight/Power(ful)	37	10%
	22	Support	211	58%
	23	Prayer/God/Blessed, Religious undertones	12	3%
	24	Help/Helped	8	2%
	25	Forgiveness	2	.5%
	26	Sexual assault	63	17%
	27	LGBTQ Rights/Pride	16	4%
	28	Charity/Charitable organization or cause	111	30%
	29	Emoticon: Worm	6	2%
	30	Emoticon: Prayer Hands	8	2%