

**MAYHEM ON THE BEACH: AN ANALYSIS OF LADY GAGA FANS'  
INTERACTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARASOCIALITY AND  
PARTICIPATORY CULTURE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

"This is the manifesto of Mother Monster." Thus begins the prologue to *Born This Way*, an album free of prejudice, judgment and marked by freedom. Throughout her career, Lady Gaga has built an intimate relationship with her fans. In a song from her album *Mayhem*, Gaga sings, in the verses, of her desire to "vanish into you", in other words, to disappear into the person she loves. By reframing this verse, it is possible to interpret it as an expression of the emotional devotion of the fan, who seeks a symbolic fusion with the idol, in an attempt to dilute themselves in the universe that the artistic figure represents.

In this context, parasocial relationships emerge, which are an imagined interaction in which the public feels they know a media figure, as if there were a real personal exchange (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Even though they are characterized as one-sided relationships, they offer psychological support and meet emotional needs (Lotun et al., 2024). This relationship is based on the viewer's social attraction (sympathy), physical attraction or competence (skill) in relation to the media figure (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). In addition to these aspects, this connection is built through strategies such as looking directly at the camera, the use of nicknames and informal speech, which creates a feeling of intimacy and closeness, despite being a one-sided relationship and without real reciprocity (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

The social network allows artists to share personal aspects of their routine, behind the scenes and opinions, creating a perception of intimacy between fan and artist, even without frequent direct interaction (Wert, 2021). This online environment makes it possible to create a participatory culture, in which users inform each other, express criticism and love (Sels et al., 2025). This participation is encouraged by comments, likes and replies to stories that create moments of semi-reciprocity, which are not symmetrical interactions, but are enough to activate a sense of connection in fans (Wert, 2021).

These people who develop these one-sided relationships are known by the term fan, who are individuals who follow and create a connection with popular media, thus creating their identity through engagement with the content (Jin, Lee & Lee, 2025). Fans form communities that are referred to as fandoms. These communities are described as being an environment with strong social interdependence and where members seek a connection and thus form a sense of community through the activities carried out in this space (Williams & Bennett, 2022).

These fandoms have great mobilizing power and are identified by their own names: Demi Lovato fans are known as Lovatics, Taylor Swift fans are called Swifties, Ariana Grande fans are called Arianators and Lady Gaga fans are known as Little Monsters (Cabral, 2022). These fandoms use social media as an object of transformation, allowing them to become active fans, sharing stories, feelings and art inspired by the artist. Lady Gaga's fans have re-appropriated the term monster, which once had a negative meaning, but is now used as a symbol of pride and resistance, celebrating difference (Click, Lee & Holladay, 2017).

Fans attend live concerts not just as spectators, but as engaged consumers who travel in groups, share experiences and are influenced by social media and friends to live these unique experiences (Kruger & Saayman, 2015). In this context, the *Todo Mundo no Rio* event is a project created by Rio de Janeiro City Hall that aims to transform the city into a hub for major free international concerts, held annually on Copacabana Beach (Gonçalves, 2025).

In its first edition, in 2024, the main attraction was singer Madonna, who performed for around 1.6 million people, bringing a great economic return to the city (Gonçalves, 2025).

In its second year, the headliner was singer Lady Gaga, whose concert was held on May 3, 2025 on Copacabana Beach, bringing together an estimated audience of 2.1 million people. The singer's performance was described as a “collective ritual of affection, identity and celebration” (Swidrak, 2025). The motivation behind participating in these experiences is identification with the artist, the feeling of a unique experience, escapism and socialization (Kruger & Saayman, 2015).

In view of this, an opportunity was identified to understand how fans actively participate in the construction of meanings around Lady Gaga's concert in Brazil, based on their interactions in online posts. The research is guided by the following problem question: **How do fans interact and co-construct meanings in posts about Lady Gaga's concert in Brazil?**

Considering these points, the aim of this study was to identify the types of interactions and co-constructions of meaning made by fans in posts about Lady Gaga's concert in Brazil. The study is justified by the need to understand how digital interactions between fans contribute to the construction of affective, symbolic and identity bonds around pop culture events.

In terms of structure, the study is divided into four sections, in addition to this introductory one. The second section is made up of the theoretical framework, which is subdivided into two modules, the first of which is responsible for conceptualizing and explaining the theory of Parasocial Relations and the second module deals with Participatory Culture. The third section presents the methodological procedures that enabled the study to be carried out, the findings of which are discussed in the fourth section. Final considerations, limitations and suggestions for future studies are presented in the last section.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Parasocial Relations Theory**

The Theory of Parasocial Relationships, formulated in the United States, was introduced by sociologists Horton and Richard Wohl (1956), in a world where television emerged as the main form of entertainment and information, viewers developed a sense of closeness with program presenters, celebrities, and fictional characters, despite never having experienced direct contact with these figures.

Parasocial Relationships are characterized by the formation of one-sided emotional bonds that individuals develop with media figures, which can meet psychological needs such as companionship and identity formation (Madison, 2024). These bonds do not require actual reciprocity, but involve feelings of intimacy, admiration and symbolic belonging (Schramm et al., 2024; Sheng, Kostyk & Chatzipanagiotou, 2025). The creation of this relationship can have an impact on personal identity and mental health, particularly among adolescents and adults, satisfying attachment needs and consequently influencing their social relationships (Mula-Márquez, Nava-Arquillo & Matías-García, 2024).

This relationship is built on an illusion of face-to-face interaction, where viewers begin to treat the characters as if they were part of their social cycle (Bonus et al., 2021). This relationship focuses on how audiences interact, relate and develop relationships with a celebrity (Lacap et al., 2023). Although the interaction is fictitious, the feelings generated are real (Kowert & Daniel, 2021). The development of these one-way feelings is a starting point for the creation of bonds between the fans themselves (Abade & Pereira, 2021).

Parasocial relationships do not depend on the frequency of exposure, but rather on the degree of affective involvement and perceived affinity with the media figure (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Thus, the way celebrities present themselves, their language, authenticity

and sharing of personal experiences, strengthen the feeling of closeness and lead fans to build a symbolic friendship relationship (Kim & Kim, 2020). On social media, this dynamic is amplified, as artists share intimate content, respond to comments and interact directly with fans, promoting the feeling of an authentic connection (Wert, 2021; Syawal, 2023).

This one-way emotional connection can bring benefits such as well-being, life satisfaction and reduced stigma related to mental health, especially when fans identify with difficult experiences expressed by artists (Kresovich, 2020). However, it can also generate unrealistic expectations, stigmas and social comparison problems (Mula-Márquez, Nava-Arquillo & Matías-García, 2024; Lotun et al., 2024). The feeling of loss or exclusion, for example, can lead fans to consume multiple versions of the same experience, such as shows and movies, driven by the fear of missing out (FoMO) and the need to maintain a continuous connection with the admired figure (Maxwell, Tefertiller & Neese, 2025).

Viewers who develop some emotional feeling and empathy with celebrities often share their personal experiences with their audience, which enables viewers to create a sense of community (Nunes et al., 2024). This sense of community can be understood as fandom, which is described as a group of people who share an interest in the same artist (Sanhotene & Silva, 2021).

In fan communities like Lady Gaga's, the parasocial relationship transcends the individual and becomes a central element of a collective identity. Gaga is perceived as a protective and inspiring figure, especially by those who feel marginalized, which reinforces the sense of belonging through self-definition as “Little Monsters”, this relationship, cultivated on social networks, creates a shared affective base in which fans not only consume, but participate and engage with each other (Click, Lee & Holladay, 2017).

The development of these one-way feelings also acts as a bridge for building bonds between fans themselves, promoting the formation of communities of support, friendship and mutual recognition (Abade & Pereira, 2021). Viewers who develop empathy and emotional identification with celebrities often share their own stories on the networks, which reinforces a sense of community (Nunes et al., 2024; Sanhotene & Silva, 2021). It is in this context that participatory culture emerges, where fans, in addition to being recipients of content, also become producers of this cultural content.

## **Participatory Culture**

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, with the arrival of the internet, the public had access to new forms of expression and collaboration, giving rise to participatory culture, which is a transformation in the relationship between consumers and the media, driven by the convergence of digital technologies and the appreciation of the public's active role. Fans are no longer seen as passive and stigmatized subjects, but as protagonists in cultural production, engaging in activities such as fanfics, videos, blogs and modified games (Jenkins, 2006).

Participatory culture is one in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content (Jenkins, 2006). Not only is content produced and circulated, but there is also active participation in discussions and evaluations of these creations (Zhang, 2024). Participatory culture influences contemporary popular entertainment and is constantly represented in audiovisual products through images that celebrate and encourage real fan activities (Radošinská & Mago, 2023).

Like other participatory social media, online communities around figures such as Lady Gaga require active involvement from users, who interact through touches, clicks and movements. These fans not only consume content, but are also affected by it emotionally and sensorially, in a process of constructing meaning that involves the body, emotion and

technology (Graeber, 2016). In digital communities dedicated to celebrities such as Taylor Swift, fans collectively build interpretive archives through participatory practices that involve research, debate and the production of shared meanings. These activities form affective and collaborative spaces of belonging and knowledge building (Stowell, 2025). This constant exchange creates a feeling of intimacy and belonging, in which fans feel heard, welcomed and emotionally close to the artist (Click, Lee & Holladay, 2017).

On social media, fans not only watch or consume content, but also help to create it, with captions, artwork, videos and campaigns (Shimauchi, 2024). In these digital spaces, users share information, personal experiences and opinions, collectively creating meanings about the object of their passion (Sels, Kuipers & Aupers, 2025). Even without producing content or actively participating, many recognize themselves as fans by repeatedly watching, commenting on posts and seeking belonging in digital communities (Zheng, 2025).

When they create content or record and share videos of concerts on social networks, fans stop being just spectators and become active participants, creating personal versions of the event. These records work as ways of intensifying the experience, prolonging the moment and generating emotional and social connections with other fans (Stage, 2012). These environments and this sharing of content become participatory communities, where users not only debate, but also influence each other, build knowledge and mobilize collective action (Sels, Kuipers & Aupers, 2025).

In some communities, there is internal organization among fans, with specific functions such as video editing, fundraising and comment moderation; these groups operate with structures similar to formal organizations, even without official registration (Mao, Wang & Chen, 2023). In addition, fans engage in activities such as liking, commenting, voting and fundraising for their idols, such actions are organized by fan clubs, which establish rules of conduct and supervise members, encouraging practices in line with “authentic fan” behaviour (Williams & Wang, 2025).

Participatory practices such as these also manifest themselves in the creation of alternative content, such as anime parodies edited and dubbed by fans, which circulate on platforms such as YouTube. By remixing the original content, fans reinterpret the work in the light of their own cultural references, becoming active producers of meaning (Mertens, 2023). This active participation is also expressed in everyday actions such as the use of Chat in live broadcasts, where users seek visibility, interaction with creators and recognition within the community (Lin, 2024). This desire for recognition and belonging is present in various spheres; fans of virtual idols engage emotionally and share content as a way of alleviating loneliness and building connections through parasocial relationships (Liu, 2023).

In digital communities dedicated to pop culture, users form collaborative networks that transcend the simple sharing of information. Even without knowing each other, they create collective meanings based on common values, transforming the networks into participatory spaces where emotions, beliefs and experiences intertwine (Capoano, Costa & Balbé, 2024). In the universe of dramas, fans not only consume the productions, but also discuss them, recommend them and share their experiences, acting as cultural mediators and strengthening community ties (Moura & Farias, 2024). These activities form networks where meanings are shared, beliefs are reinforced and a common identity develops, sustained by affective engagement, repetition and continuous collaboration (Petersen et al., 2023). The next section deals with the methodological aspects adopted in the research.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In the process of creating any scientific research, it is necessary to define the type of research, which delimits the subject under investigation. From this perspective, this study is

characterized as a study with a qualitative approach, since it seeks to examine and understand a group of subjects in detail (Brooks & Normore, 2018). As far as the objective is concerned, it is descriptive-explanatory, since it seeks to point out and explain the characteristics of a particular phenomenon.

The locus of the research is the online environment of virtual communities. The term virtual communities was conceptualized by Rheingold in 1993, defining them as “Social aggregations that emerge from the network when a sufficient number of people undertake [...] public discussions for long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form networks of personal relationships in cyberspace [...] (Rheingold, 1993, p.5)”.

The data was collected between April 29 and May 5, 2025. First, a fan club page (Figure 1) related to Lady Gaga was selected. The page had to be covering the artist's appearance at the *Todo Mundo no Rio* event, which took place on May 3, 2025 in Rio de Janeiro. The collection was carried out in a time frame of events: before, during and after the show. During this collection of posts, comments identified other Instagram accounts that were also creating content related to the show, which also formed part of the data corpus.

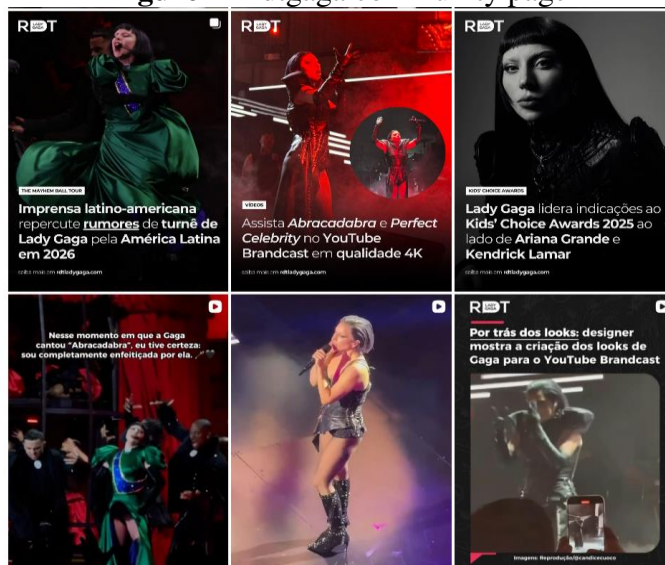
**Figure 1** - rdtgaga community page



Note. Instagram RDT Lady Gaga, 2025.

The main page selected for data collection was the “RDT Lady Gaga” profile (@rdtgaga), recognized as one of the largest Lady Gaga fan sites in Brazil and Latin America. Created in 2011, the profile (Figure 2) actively disseminates content related to the artist, focusing on news, event records, backstage, interviews and interactions with the public. It has more than 102,000 followers on Instagram and more than 4,900 publications at the time of collection.

**Figure 2** - rdtgaga community page



Note. Instagram RDT Lady Gaga, 2025.

During the collection process, other fan club accounts that were also producing content about the event and pop culture more broadly were identified through interactions in the comments. These additional pages were incorporated into the data corpus because they contributed discourses, records and reactions that complemented the event's narrative. In addition, two posts from the event's official profile “Todo Mundo no Rio” (Everyone in Rio) were also included in the analysis, as they presented relevant interactions about the artist's performance.

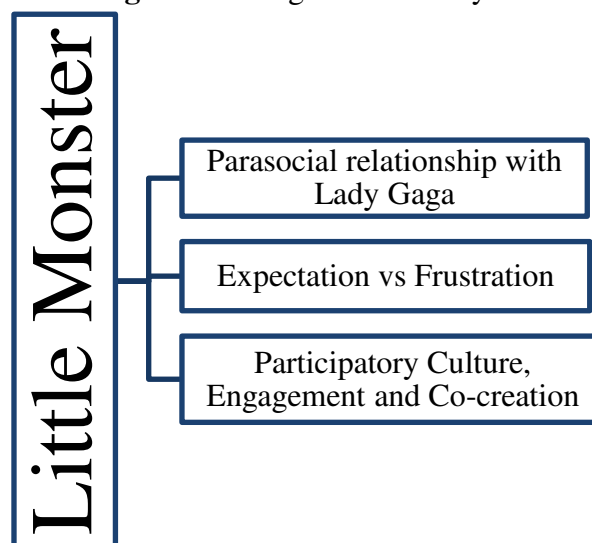
Data was collected by capturing and organizing comments, taking into account the level of interaction the post had, its number of comments and responses to those comments. In order to guarantee the privacy and security of the participants, the users mentioned in the analysis of this study were assigned codes. Each user mentioned was given a specific code that is used instead of their real user, ensuring that their responses and experiences are discussed ethically and securely (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). In addition, the research followed the ethical principles established by Resolution No. 510, of April 7, 2016, of the National Health Council (CNS), which regulates research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, especially those that use public data accessible on the internet.

In order to preserve the identity and privacy of the users whose comments were analyzed, fictitious codes were used, in accordance with Resolution 510/2016 of the National Health Council, which regulates research with human beings in the humanities and social sciences. These codes were constructed from the name of the artist's fandom, “Little Monster”, followed by sequential numbering, in order to represent each user mentioned in an ethical and impersonal manner.

The collection included 50 posts, including content from other fan club accounts that produce pop culture content, as well as two posts from the event's official profile. In all, the research corpus resulted in 1,676 pages of comments, representing an expressive sample of online interactions around the artist's performance.

After organizing the research corpus, a Content Analysis was carried out as proposed by Bardin (2016). This analytical procedure followed three stages: (1) pre-analysis, (2) exploration of the material and (3) treatment of the results with inference and interpretation. The recording units were organized into thematic categories, as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3-** Categories of Analysis



Note. Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

The information extracted from the comments based on the categories shown in Figure 3 was tabulated in a word file and was used to help construct this study. The findings of these methodological elements are presented below.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Parasocial relationship with Lady Gaga

Lady Gaga's persona goes beyond the role of artist and becomes an emotional and identity reference for her fans, helping them in moments of loneliness and the construction of their self. The theory of parasocial relationships explains that even though these relationships are one-sided, they are real for the person experiencing them (Kresovich, 2020). This is evidenced in the fragments taken from the comments made by fans. "This woman made me who I am and love myself the way I am... it makes me shiver deep down in my soul!" (@LittleMonster1) and "She played a fundamental role in my life when I felt alone, strange and isolated..." (@LittleMonster2). We can see how the parasocial relationship is not just one of admiration, but of emotional belonging, bringing a sense of well-being for the fan and identity building, given that this relationship is nurtured over the long term, as some fans have followed the artist since the start of her career in 2007.

"I've waited so long for this moment, my adolescence without knowing my hidden identity, without knowing if it was right to be where I wanted to be. And to know that it was this woman who made me who I am and love myself the way I am, and that God made me beautiful in my own way, makes me shiver to the depths of my soul! I can't wait and I know this is going to be the show of my life."  
@LittleMonster3

"Very excited!!! She played a fundamental role in my life when I felt alone, strange and isolated. I had to move out of necessity at 14, I was away from my best friends, I was 14/15, it was too hard!!! I'm going alone on Saturday to see Mother up close"  
@LittleMonster4

According to Madison (2024) and Schramm et al. (2024), parasocial relationships can function as forms of emotional support and directly influence individuals' identities. It is clear that it is not just a question of liking an artist, but of experiencing a shared history, marked by symbolic events such as concerts, launches and phases of personal life. Many comments draw on memories from childhood and adolescence, such as "I've been following Gaga since I was 8 years old, I still remember the first time I saw her on TV... my mother subscribed to SKY to watch the VMAs... BUT THIS MOMENT IS MINE (@LittleMonster5)"; "I changed my name from Paulo to Alejandro at school because of her (@LittleMonster6)" and "I've been following her since 2005... I really wanted to be at this concert, but here at home I'll feel like I'm there (@LittleMonster7)".

For these fans, Gaga occupies a large space in their lives, providing comfort, inspiration and connection, even in the absence of direct interaction (Figure 4). The comments point to the role of these relationships in satisfying important psychological needs, such as being welcomed, coping with difficult situations and strengthening self-esteem, which directly connects with the findings of Kresovich (2020) and Mula-Márquez et al. (2024), who discuss the influence of parasocial relationships on mental health and coping with negative feelings. One fan reported that Lady Gaga saved him from religious fanaticism and depression, showing the strength of this relationship beyond entertainment, as her work ends up being used by fans as an escape to a place of acceptance.

**Figure 4- Parasocial relationship with Lady Gaga**



Note. Instagram, 2025.

Another point that stands out is the construction of identity and the feeling of belonging, which is in line with the study by Click, Lee and Holladay (2017). Fans use terms like “our generation” and “Brother Monsters” to express this collective identification, reinforcing that belonging to the group goes beyond simple admiration for the artist, as it is also a space for mutual support, personal validation and this community becomes a safe space for sharing feelings and exchanging experiences related to the artist. Belonging to a community provides a sense of identity and social support. In addition, participating in fandom-related activities can be a form of escapism.

It was also noted that the corpus of data contained comments thanking the artist's fan club profile, demonstrating that fans not only connect with the artist, but also with the digital channels and spaces that facilitate access to information and experiences related to her. This phenomenon is in line with the studies by Wert (2021) and Syawal (2023), who discuss how digital platforms amplify parasocial relationships and strengthen the sense of community and create this safe environment of community and belonging for the fan. As highlighted by the following comments.

"I would like to thank all of you from the RDT team for being part of our lives together with Mother, bringing information about her and her beautiful work at all times in our Gaga's career. I remember always looking to you for information, because you have always had and will always have my complete trust. Thank you for your dedication and love for the mother and automatically with us. We'll meet you in Copacabana." @LittleMonster8

"RDT I've followed you for so many years, and this video gave me a unique feeling. Thank you, for making me connect with her, it's simple videos like this in translation that always make me more connected to her! Thank you." @LittleMonster9

"I've seen it I don't know how many times and every time I get emotional @rdtgaga I love you so much" @LittleMonster10

As well as confirming aspects already discussed in the literature, the data makes some contributions. One is the centrality of personal trajectory and overcoming in the development of this relationship. Many fans report that Lady Gaga plays a fundamental role in their lives,

helping them to overcome difficult times and find a path of self-discovery. Another element that emerges from the comments is the temporal construction of this relationship. Several fans mention that they have followed the artist since childhood or adolescence, thus demonstrating that these relationships can be long-lasting and evolve over time. As can be seen in the following comments.

"I've been following Gaga since I was 8 years old, I still remember the first time I saw her on TV..." @LittleMonster11

"It was 2008, I was only 13... I changed my name from Paulo to Alejandro at school because of her" @LittleMonster12

"My mother and grandmother worked their asses off to get me to go [to the 2012 concert] when I was only 12... seeing her from afar already in the stands but crying my eyes out just to be there..." @LittleMonster13

"In 2012 I was there at the door of the Fasano hotel waiting for her... I love you, Gaga." @LittleMonster14

"My 2009 child and 2017 adult are looking forward to it!!!" @LittleMonster15

"Man, my 7 year old... In 2008 I only had a DVD and a dream. And after 17 years that same child is going to realize it." @LittleMonster16

"I had the immense pleasure of attending The Born This Way Ball in 2012 and I'm living a dream... feeling exactly the same anxiety I felt 15 years ago." @LittleMonster17

"I've been crying since she arrived and now you're making me cry more! When you grow up, you think everything is going to be different, but we find ourselves here suffering from the same feeling of not going... we'll be together, in one heart!" @LittleMonster18

In addition, one aspect observed is the search for a face-to-face experience as a form of emotional fulfillment of the relationship built up over time. Many fans describe the concert as the realization of a dream, the culmination of an emotional journey with the artist. Even though this relationship is built at a distance, face-to-face contact is seen as an emotional validation of the relationship. As can be seen in the following comments.

"The artist who literally saved me from a years-long depression, anorexia, and who to this day is the reason for smiles and the will to live..." @LittleMonster19

"She was the mother who accepted me, she is my life... I fell in love in 2008 and since then it's only grown with each era." @LittleMonster20

"I swear... it's like a movie in my head and my heart can't take it! What happiness! How much love!!! We are all together to live a historic, magical and unique moment in each other's lives! And to once again mark our Mother's life forever!" @LittleMonster21

"I'M GOING TO SEE LADY GAGA, I once thought I would never honor this woman BUT THIS MOMENT IS MINE. Rio SOON I'M COMING!!!!" @LittleMonster5

"I had the immense pleasure of attending The Born This Way Ball in 2012 and I'm living a dream, feeling exactly the same anxiety I felt 15 years ago. Counting down the hours to be in Copacabana, living this beautiful moment!" @LittleMonster22

These emotional bonds created by fans reflect the illusory intimacy and one-way communication that is one of the characteristics of this relationship model. These emotional bonds extend beyond the moment of viewing the content, this interaction becomes a parasocial relationship, where fans maintain a bond similar to a real relationship (Dibble, Hartmann & Rosaen, 2016), having an impact on overcoming personal problems, building long-term bonds and the importance of the face-to-face experience as the affective culmination of this relationship.

## **Expectation vs Frustration**

The parasocial relationships developed by the Little Monster can have negative reactions that are triggered by actions taken by the media figure, especially when it is perceived by fans that the artist does not meet their expectations or that values and beliefs are no longer similar (Sanderson & Truax, 2023). Despite the strong emotional bond, many fans express frustration at the lack of direct interaction with Lady Gaga, especially in the run-up to the concert. Comments such as “She doesn't even care about her fans...” (@LittleMonster23), “Not even a bye?” (@LittleMonster24) and “I'm having to appeal to fibromyalgia to justify her” (@LittleMonster25) reveal an emotional strain between idealization and reality. This frustration is caused by the very expectations that the fan places on the artist (Sanderson & Truax, 2023), given that these expectations are often not met because the relationship is one-sided and these expectations are fed by the creation of an illusory intimacy between the fan and Lady Gaga. As can be seen in the following comments.

“Brazilians have waited so long for her not to even say hello in the window... I love Gaga, but I wouldn't lend myself to the role of humiliating myself...”  
@LittleMonster26

"I'm a fan of hers, but it's unbelievable how little she's doing this whole week. It's like she's lost a bet and she's doing it out of debt!" @ LittleMonster27

"Disappointing. After 13 years and canceling a show this is a totally distant return."  
@LittleMonster28

“She doesn't care about her fans and it'll be the last time she comes here.”  
@LittleMonster29

"I just think we're used to it, wanting things to happen one way and in the end it's another. We need to learn to respect each other's space and moment. I understand the fans waiting, but let's have balance." @LittleMonster30

It can be seen that the fans are defending the artist from the haters (Ouvrein, 2024), which in a parasocial relationship can be seen as a positive relationship, but its result is negative, instead of having a positive emotional connection, it becomes negative and without reciprocity, which leads the individual to have negative reactions about a particular artist. As highlighted in the following fragment.

"do you know her to know that she doesn't care about her fans? you probably don't know her at all. because if you did, you'd also know how much she's done for her fans and for people, including having an NGO that works to support people with mental health problems. And you? you've probably never done anything relevant in your life and you're going to talk crap about a pop diva who just wants to be private“  
@LittleMonster31

”People, leave the woman alone. She must be really looking forward to it with so many people waiting to see her. Remember that she's human and has a fucking responsibility on her back. All this fuss outside the hotel must only be making her more nervous and anxious. Everyone has waited so long for this moment, what's the point of waiting until showtime?“ @LittleMonster32

In addition to this defense, fans themselves question the artist about their attitudes. Fans often develop illusions of intimacy and mutuality (Horton & Wohl, 1956), which leads them to expect certain behaviors from the celebrity in the form of explicit gratitude or public stances and when these behaviors don't occur, frustration arises as a result of the breach of expectations created within this imagined relationship. Fans see themselves as responsible for the artist's continuity and success, which can lead to frustration if the celebrity's behavior doesn't live up to the emotional investment they believe they have made. And in this sense,

the fan feels disregarded and disappointed when the artist's attitudes don't match the accessible and caring image that has been built up over the course of their career. As can be seen in the following comments.

Is there an exaggerated fan? Yes, but there are many who have survived because of her lines, they are there because of what she says she represents. She does have an obligation, it's her fans who keep her where she is, if it wasn't for them, she would have died in the Artpop era. They went there and kept supporting her, that's the least of it! @LittleMonster33

It's not about obligation, but consideration. This kind of attitude does contradict her entire discourse with her fans. Even more so for someone who was so accessible the first time she performed in Rio and carries a tattoo of it on her back. @LittleMonster34

What a shame that when she comes to Brazil she's in this persona that doesn't interact with people. It was like that at Coachella, in Mexico and now in Brazil. 13 years without coming here and when she does she doesn't want any interaction, she doesn't publish anything... that puts people off. Although I understand that she has no obligation, I find it very strange, because it's not the attitude that matches everything she preaches. I just want to see if she gets to the European tour stage and posts a couple of things on insta, tiktok, etc. @LittleMonster35

On the other hand, some fans develop a more conscious view of the limits of this relationship, recognizing that the artist also needs to preserve her individuality and well-being. These fans understand that overexposure can create the illusion of closeness and that the celebrity will not always be able to meet the expectations created. In this case, frustration is minimized, as there is an acceptance that the absence of interaction does not mean a lack of consideration or affection for the fans. As can be seen in the following comment.

I think she's right. She's preserving herself and spending time with those she loves. She gives a lot of herself to her work and as an artist her job is not to serve us. People get used to artists because their overexposure makes many think that they know them well, that they have some kind of control and it must be exhausting for anyone, she herself has said a bit about it. I don't even think it's about loving the fans less for that, but about prioritizing herself when she's not working, right? @LittleMonster36

My God people, the comments are full of clueless people, do you think she owes you something? The last time she came she did everything and more in Rio. She went to the Favela, rode a motorcycle, played soccer, drank beer at the boteco... 13 years have passed, she's older, full of health problems and maybe she just wants to do the show well and that's it, I've been Little Monster since 2009, but I think it's an abuse what the fans are doing outside the hotel. Notion sends his regards. @LittleMonster37

These reactions are a reflection of the emotional connection that fans develop with the singer, making them sensitive to any change that might alter their previously established perceptions and expectations. However, it can be seen that criticism does not necessarily break the emotional bond that has been built, and that fans defend the artist's position and attitude. As can be seen in the following fragments. "I still love mom, because I'm a fan of an artist, and one thing has nothing to do with the other" (@LittleMonster38); "I love Gaga very much, I've been a fan since I was 9 and I understand that she's a human being like any other." (@LittleMonster39); "They're making up a lot of fake news, anyone who's a real Gaga fan knows she's not like that!" (@LittleMonster40).

“She needs to follow security protocol, she won't show up at the hotel door... the fanaticism of some Little Monsters goes over the top.” @LittleMonster41  
 “Do you know her to know that she doesn't care about her fans? [...] She has an NGO that supports people with mental health problems.” @LittleMonster42  
 “Gaga is tired, people don't understand. Sometimes she's not feeling well and wants to rest...” @LittleMonster43  
 “We're not used to it, we want everything our way” @LittleMonster44  
 “It doesn't cost anything to wait until showtime” @LittleMonster45  
 “Guys, she must be enjoying herself with her husband, with her family. She's just left Mexico, she's probably tired and just wants to relax in her corner. At her moment she shows up, says hi from the window, she's going to do an incredible show and that's it. I love Gaga very much, I've been a fan since I was 9 and I understand that she's a human being like any other.” @LittleMonster39

Fans learn to deal with contradictions and end up humanizing the artist. This issue of humanization is addressed in songs such as Demi Lovato's *sober* (2018), in which she sings: “And I'm sorry for the fans I lost, who watched me fall again, I wanna be a role model, but I'm only human...” In this verse, the artist recounts her struggle to be an example to her fans and ending up not being able to meet the expectations placed on her because she is human. When these relationships are developed, the fan feels a great emotional connection with the artist, creating symbolic bonds so intense that they end up generating expectations that often shouldn't exist.

When fans realized that the singer was following their movements and had the attitude of sending pizzas to fans who were waiting for an appearance (Figure 5), they reinforced the idea that she maintains a relationship of care and attention with her audience. This kind of gesture is interpreted as a response to the emotional expectations built up over the course of the parasocial relationship. Even in a context where frustrations could arise, fans mobilize to defend the artist, recalling memories of similar situations in the past and stating that she has always shown affection and concern for her fan community. This defense illustrates how they recognize each other, even at a distance, which contributes to keeping the parasocial relationship in a state of satisfaction and belonging.

**Figure 5-** Lady Gaga republishes fan videos



Note. Instagram, 2025.

In addition to these aspects, when the artist republishes fan content (Figure 5), as in the case of a fanpage's TikTok about sending pizzas to fans who were waiting for her at the hotel, she validates and feeds back into this participatory culture, thus generating a feeling of recognition and belonging within her community. This further strengthens the emotional bond with her fans, who feel seen and important to the artist's career.

### **Participatory Culture, Engagement and Co-creation**

The study's data corpus shows that participatory culture within the observed fandom is manifested in various aspects, from the creation of memes, videos with translations of the artist's songs, content in the form of informative videos about the singer and even collective organization to protest about the dynamics organized by the fanpages. As can be seen in the following comments: “If there's no list of winners, some Adv sis can work something out!” (@LittleMonster46) and “We urgently need to go and complain on Gaga Now's Twitter” (@LittleMonster47) showing that the engagement of Lady Gaga's fandom goes beyond the consumption and creation of content and reaches the sphere of digital mobilization to resolve injustices suffered by fans. These fans also report frustration with the platforms and denounce the lack of accessibility to the quizzes that were held to draw tickets to be closer to the singer at the concert. This sense of injustice turns fandom into a space for solidarity, as can be seen in the following comments.

“I stayed up studying and didn't even go to work to take this quiz...”  
@LittleMonster48.

“Life as a little monster isn't easy, @rdtgaga, help me out.” @LittleMonster49

“I'm humiliating myself so much, RDT DO SOMETHING” @LittleMonster50

“They probably released the pin to the little friends and the famous ones first so the fans couldn't get out of verification mode” @LittleMonster51

"@rdtgaga has the round started yet? There are a lot of people waiting for the nickname verification so far, myself included. If the round has already started, I think it's important that you inform us so that we don't wait here like fools, hoping to take part!!!" @LittleMonster52

“What a shame, they make people emotional by following every step to the letter and nothing happens, waste of time... what a lack of respect, ethics and professionalism” @LittleMonster53

“For God's sake change the dynamics, it's being unfair to a lot of people, surely Lady Gaga wouldn't be in favor of this kind of injustice.” @LittleMonster54

“If the idea was a fairer dynamic for the fans the choice of this platform was AWFUL” @LittleMonster55

Corroborating Jenkins (2006) and Click, Lee & Holladay (2017), fans are also characterized as cultural producers, as they organize flash mobs, sell products, share experiences and collectively build symbolic memories with other fans, giving new meaning to the art created by the artist. As evidenced in the following fragments “Guys, help me, I want to sell at the show” (@LittleMonster56) and “Make a list with the transmission points” (@LittleMonster57), it is clear that culture not only moves affections and is a place of belonging for the fan, but is also marketable, as reported in the following fragments.

Wow, I remember running out of my apartment and then being told that she had left the stage. I cried so, so much, but I saw you @rdtgaga live on insta that she was still

on stage. That's when I ran as far as I could in Copacabana, and it was such a desperate feeling that when I got there, I collapsed like a child." @LittleMonster58  
 "just an example of how culture moves the economy" @LittleMonster59  
 "Man, she knows how to be an entrepreneur, and she's right! May it be even more successful in all the other shows to come!" @LittleMonster60  
 "We love to see creative fan clothing that goes beyond the standard of just putting the artist's face on, they deserve all the success" @LittleMonster61  
 "For the bitter people who are criticizing the show, just understand how much it moves the economy! This interview is living proof! Good sales!!!!" @LittleMonster62  
 "This shows how local businesses profit from it. This event can't die." @LittleMonster63  
 "If this celebration is because she's in the hotel, MANOOOOO, what's the day of the concert going to be like? Brazilians are DIFFERENT." @LittleMonster64  
 "Everything Brazilian turns into a 3 day event right kkkkkkkkkkkkkk" @LittleMonster65

The participatory culture developed by Lady Gaga fans manifests itself not only in the way content is produced, but also in the way the fans themselves structure their experiences in narrative phases, before, during and after the event. These experiences are systematized in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Categories of Meaning by Time Phase of Fan Participation**

Phase	Theme	Fan Narratives
Before	Emotion / Anxiety	"I'm crying eating my lunch at work, looking forward to this special moment (use of emojis)"
		"This is our moment, Brother Monsters (use of emojis)"
	Personal story / Frustration	"I bought a ticket and everything, but my mother is ill and my work didn't allow it..."
	Nostalgia	"In 2017 the story: she didn't come. But now this is my moment... I'M GOING TO SEE LADY GAGA"
During	Intense emotion	"She was singing looking into our eyes, like the Mother she is to us, UNFORGETTABLE ONLY"
	Personal story	"Being there on the side of that stage was amazing! Thank you @ladygaga it was amazing!"
	Belonging	"Even my 81-year-old grandmother became a little monster after watching this show (use of emojis)"
	Criticism of the structure	"The VIP bathroom was a total eyesore"
	Accessibility and safety	"My mother is PCD and she couldn't stand waiting in the hot sun... then they invaded"
After	Intense emotion	"I think I'll NEVER get over this show (use of emojis)"
	Post-show depression	"I'm suffering from post-show depression (use of emojis)"
	Personal story	"I live every day remembering that day, the emotion of it all will never leave me"
	Criticism of the organization	"Perfect show, terrible organization, even worse city logistics!!!"
	Legacy	"It was more than a show, it was a magical and unrepeatabe moment"

Note. Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Fans not only comment on the event, but also construct an emotional narrative, using emojis, abbreviations and typical fandom terms (Mother, Little Monsters, Brother Monsters). This behavior is part of what Jenkins (2006) defines as the cultural protagonism of fans, who

stop being passive consumers and start acting as transformers of content, actively participating in virtual communities and interacting with other fans. The fan plays a central role in the construction of this culture, especially within the sphere of social media, where they are active agents of creation and not characterized as mere passive consumers. During the pre-show phase, there is a strong presence of feelings of anxiety, belonging and affective memory, while during the event, there is an intensification of emotion, but also structural criticism of accessibility and the construction of the event itself, as can be seen in the comments.

“I’m crying eating my lunch at work, looking forward to this special moment”

@LittleMonster66

“I love that moments before the show started, I got into a fight with someone in the crowd and when she started, we were singing along and getting emotional.”

@LittleMonster67

“I was sitting on the sidewalk of the Copacabana palace, waiting for her to show some sign of life, when suddenly the stage lit up and she appeared, I got up running, I cried a lot, it was too beautiful, I would venture to say that this rehearsal meant more to me than the concert itself, a gift that Mom gave us” @LittleMonster68

"FOR THE LOVE OF GOD ORGANIZE THE AMBULANTS. THEY CAUSED A TRUE INFERNO“ @LittleMonster69

”Terrible event for PwDs, they could pre-register beforehand, and then classify according to ICD and needs“ @LittleMonster70

”The VIP restroom was a total eyesore" @LittleMonster71

"I ran 2km to see her and it was worth almost losing my lung @melmoreira.c

a\_montebarras Whoever said they wouldn't go because they wouldn't watch on the big screen... I only say one thing: LOST! It was perfect... the energy was surreal... everyone singing... emotional... lots of joy and everyone happy!" @LittleMonster72

"Calm down. It was chaos. Popcorn sellers and peddlers going around crushing people, pushing and shoving, fights, theft, people getting sick. I witnessed it all. The organization was terrible“ @LittleMonster73

”Apart from the wonderful show, I thought the organization was very good, the searches, the security... a totally friendly atmosphere. There were some problems on the way out, but 2.5 million people, OF COURSE THERE WOULD BE, WOULDN'T THERE? No city is prepared for this madness. But it was 10/10“ @LittleMonster74

”I’ve never felt so safe in a tourist/capital city as I do here this week! It was very well produced. Let it be an example to other cities to stay that culture moves millions, humanizes, educates, brings joy to our country that lacks public spectacles like these! Congratulations @todomundonorio and @eduardopaes for the organization!" @LittleMonster75

“I just think they should respect those outside the vip more as a whole, but then, I don't even have to talk about anything else, what a vibe, what good energy z what delivery.” @LittleMonster76

These statements reinforce the idea that the fandom functions as an active and interpretive community (Zhang, 2024), which not only celebrates, consumes and creates content, but also evaluates the experience. After the event, manifestations of post-show depression emerged. As can be seen in the following fragments.

“I’m living in the memory of that trip, the thrill of it all will never leave me” @LittleMonster77

“A real dream, and I'm still stuck in it.” @LittleMonster78

“It was more than a show, it was a magical and unrepeatable moment!” @LittleMonster79

“I can't describe how much that moment, that day has marked my life forever.” @LittleMonster80

"Unforgettable! The whole weekend, the RDT party too, walking around the city, everything“ @LittleMonster81

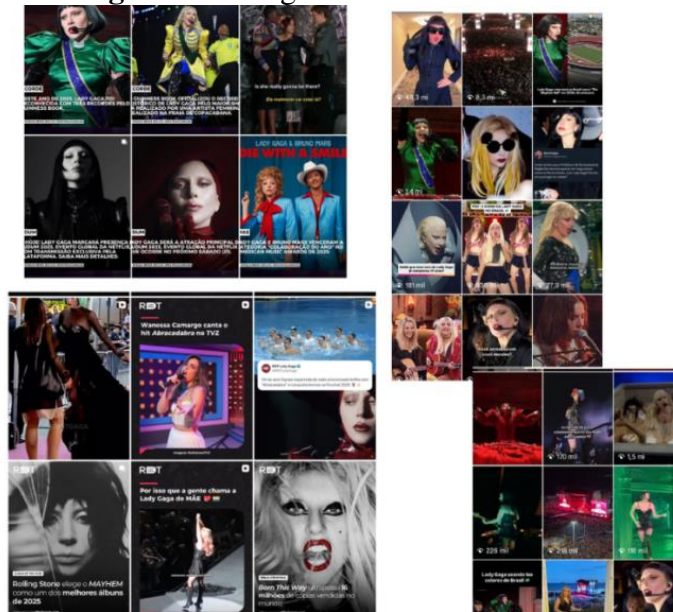
"A dream really. I was thrilled from afar, I can't imagine who was there. Best show I've ever seen. She's such a sweetheart, humble and she got so emotional. Talent to spare for this artist, choreographer, singer, etc. It was so important for her to talk about mental health, fibromyalgia, gender prejudice, she has no idea how many people she has helped to overcome so many barriers. Lady Gaga I love you."  
@LittleMonster82

"The best day of my life and it's not just lip service ... As if acceptance wasn't enough, Gaga came along at that moment giving us the strength to live with our pain and accept the ups and downs of life ...but never stop believing in. ourselves"  
@LittleMonster83

"Mentally I'm still at the Gagacabana. It was a once in a lifetime experience. I will NEVER forget how I felt at the show. I felt so free, so happy and surrounded by people who love Gaga as much as I do. We are monsters and monsters never die."  
@LittleMonster84

This extension of the experience even after the event corroborates the findings of Stage (2012), who highlights the role of social media as affective extenders of cultural experiences. Representing that fans and consumers in general are invited to produce and disseminate, on a non-profit basis, new content based on the adaptation and shaping of cultural products (Jenkins, 2006), which in this case concerns the experiences shared and the content created with GagaCabana as the focus. By sharing these stories on social media (Figure 6), fans reinforce their sense of belonging and help consolidate a collective emotional archive.

**Figure 6 - Fan-generated content**

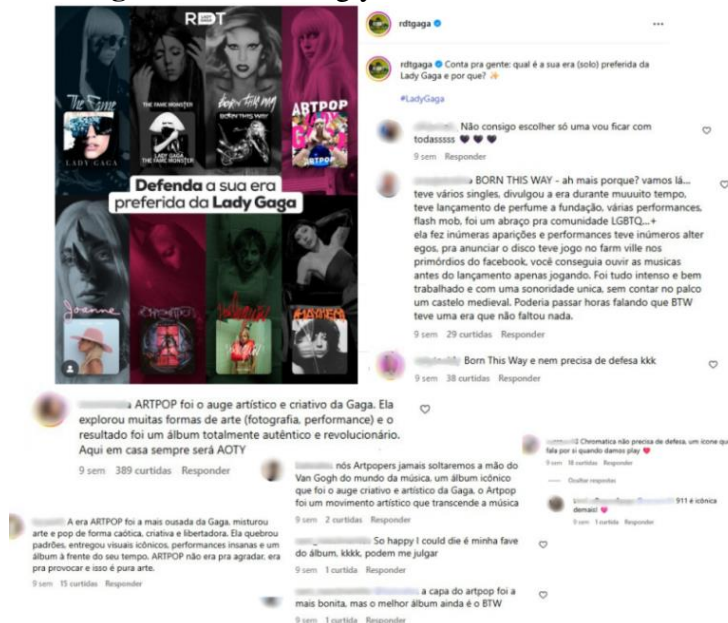


Note. Instagram, 2025.

Finally, looking at a post that asked fans to defend their favorite era of Lady Gaga (Figure 7), it can be seen that fans develop deep parasocial relationships that go beyond simple admiration and become sources of identity construction, as well as works that serve as emotional support (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Madison, 2024). Fans connect the albums with personal experiences and these works and Lady Gaga herself end up offering a sense of companionship and contributing to the formation of their own identities. When a fan reports that *Born This Way* was her rebirth, there is a clear reflection of the idea that parasocial relationships do not depend solely on exposure, but on the degree of affective involvement and perceived affinity with the media figure and the work created by the artist (Rubin &

McHugh, 1987; Kim & Kim, 2020). This type of bond is characteristic of the symbolic connections created with artists, who share their vulnerabilities and personal struggles, enhancing the feeling of closeness with their admirers and creating a community that is seen as a safe environment for the fan (Wert, 2021; Syawal, 2023).

Figure 7- Defending your favorite era



Note. Instagram, 2025.

In addition, it is clear that the comments demonstrate an environment where fans share similar experiences, defend their favorite eras, and sometimes confront external criticism, which strengthens the sense of belonging and solidarity among members of the fandom (Abade & Pereira, 2021; Nunes et al., 2024). These comments are in line with participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), where fans not only consume, but actively (re)interpret and discuss the artist's work. The debates about which album was most impactful represent a practice of co-creation of meanings, where each fan contributes to building collective meanings around the singer's trajectory (Zhang, 2024; Sels, Kuipers & Aupers, 2025). As can be seen in Figure 8, which shows fans discussing their favorite era of the artist.

Figure 8- Defense of your favorite era



Note. Instagram, 2025.

It can be seen that the interaction exchanges present in the comments bring collaborative practices that create spaces of belonging, where fans feel comfortable sharing their opinions on the artist's works and these spaces also help in the collective construction of meanings (Capoano, Costa & Balbé, 2024). In this environment, fans feel heard and recognized, thus reinforcing the idea that, even without direct contact with the artist, Lady Gaga is emotionally present in fans' lives and accompanies them in every step of the construction of the fan's identity.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study sought to identify the types of interactions and co-constructions of meaning made by fans in posts about Lady Gaga's concert in Brazil, in the light of the Theory of Parasocial Relations and Participatory Culture. The findings show that the interactions go far beyond the consumption of a musical spectacle. Fans get emotionally involved in collective experiences where they express all their love for the artist and especially for the music, which unites and moves people of all ages.

From a theoretical point of view, the research broadens the understanding of parasocial relationships by showing how they not only meet individual emotional needs, but also structure communities, where belonging and collective identification are central points. The data showed that fans develop deep bonds with Lady Gaga, interpreting her presence as emotional support at key moments in their lives. The construction of these relationships, even if unilateral, is constantly fed by online interactions, gestures of recognition and the feeling of closeness provided by social networks and by the artist's own works and speeches, which create a sense of community with her fans from the start of her career, making these relationships long-lasting and fans feel that this community is safe.

In addition, the analysis revealed that these relationships also generate expectations, and failure to meet them can lead to frustration and criticism. However, even in the face of disappointment, the bond is not easily broken and is re-signified as fans negotiate the boundaries between admiration and the reality of the artist. These expectations oscillate between idealization, humanization of the celebrity and emotional maturation on the part of the fans.

With regard to participatory culture, it was observed that fans are active agents in the construction of meaning, mobilizing around shared experiences, creating their own content, organizing collectively and even criticizing organizational structures that affect the experience of fandom. These practices bring about a cultural protagonism, where the fan not only consumes, but also interprets, debates and transforms the work and legacy of the artist, creating affective archives in digital environments.

Socially, this study contributes to understanding how large-scale free cultural events, such as "Todo Mundo no Rio", provide an example of how pop culture drives the economy and can act as a catalyst for collective emotional and identity experiences. Lady Gaga's concert was experienced as a symbolic ritual of belonging, liberation and celebration of personal trajectories crossed by pain, resistance and empowerment. Fandom, in this sense, acts as a safe space for embracing and expressing subjectivities, especially for audiences who have historically been on the margins of society, and these events democratize cultural access for people who wouldn't be able to access this type of content, as well as bringing economic benefits to society as a whole through large-scale consumption.

One limitation is that the analysis focused only on online interactions in a specific time frame, and did not cover other social media or offline expressions of the fandom. As a suggestion for a future agenda, it is worth mentioning that studies could be developed that adopt comparative approaches between different fandoms, investigating longitudinally how

these relationships evolve over the years, especially taking into account tours, album releases and moments of crisis faced by the media figure. In addition, investigations that seek to identify how the co-construction of meaning changes between different social groups within the same fandom (age group, gender or sexual orientation).

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