## HEC MONTRÉAL

École affiliée à l'Université de Montréal

## Deux articles sur l'engagement du consommateur et la performance de nouveaux produits dans l'industrie de la musique

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École affiliée à l'Université de Montréal

Cette thèse intitulée :

# Deux articles sur l'engagement du consommateur et la performance de nouveaux produits dans l'industrie de la musique

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### Résumé

Cette thèse prend la forme de deux articles qui s'intéressent à la performance de nouveaux produits dans l'industrie musicale. Plus précisément, cette thèse montre en quoi le l'engagement de consommateurs et le fit entre une marque et son nouveau produit ont un impact important dans le succès de nouveaux albums de musique.

Le premier article examine la relation entre l'engagement du consommateur et l'adoption de nouveaux produits, en termes de valeur perçue, d'intentions d'achat et de bouche à oreille. L'article soutient l'hypothèse que cette relation est modérée par le fit entre l'innovativité de la marque et celle du nouveau produit. Pour tester cette hypothèse, cette étude propose deux expériences qui simulent le lancement d'un nouvel album par des groupes de musique fictifs, manipulant l'innovativité de la marque et celle du nouveau produit. Dans l'expérience I, l'engagement est mesuré envers le genre de musique de la marque tandis que dans l'expérience II, l'engagement est mesuré envers le genre de musique du nouveau produit. Les résultats montrent que l'effet positif de l'engagement du consommateur sur l'adoption de nouveaux produits est conditionnel à la présence d'un bon fit entre l'innovativité de la marque qui le met en marché et de celle de son nouveau produit. Plus précisément, l'expérience I révèle que, pour les musiciens moins innovants, les consommateurs fortement engagés envers le genre musical du groupe accordent une valeur plus grande à leur nouvel album et démontrent de meilleures intentions d'achat et de bouche-à-oreille uniquement si ce nouvel album est perçu comme étant d'un même niveau d'innovativité ; autrement, l'engagement n'a aucun effet. Pour les musiciens plus innovants, le fit ne modère que l'effet de l'engagement du consommateur sur les intentions d'achat. L'expérience II montre quant à elle que pour les consommateurs engagés envers le genre du nouvel album, le fit n'affecte que la valeur perçue des albums plus conventionnels. Cette étude met en lumière comment, pourquoi et quand l'engagement du consommateur a un impact sur adoption de nouveaux produits.

Le deuxième article examine la relation entre l'engagement des consommateurs sur les médias sociaux, le fit, la longévité de la marque et la performance des nouveaux produits toujours dans le contexte de l'industrie de la musique. Cette étude montre que le niveau

d'engagement sur les réseaux sociaux trois mois avant le lancement d'un album a un impact sur les ventes de disques seulement lorsque le nouveau produit montre un bon fit celui qui a été lancé précédemment. Ce phénomène est particulièrement vrai pour les marques les plus jeunes. En d'autres termes, si les musiciens peuvent bénéficier de l'engagement, ils doivent en contrepartie poursuivre un chemin créatif qui leur est déjà bien connu. Pour tester le modèle conceptuel, un modèle d'équation d'estimation généralisée qui tient compte des problèmes d'endogénéité est appliqué. Un échantillon de 181 albums lancés par 158 artistes sur le marché canadien entre 2016 et 2017 est utilisé. Cet ensemble de données combine les ventes hebdomadaires de disques, le niveau d'activité hebdomadaire sur le réseau social Facebook et l'analyse des composantes sonores extraites de Spotify. Cette étude contribue à la littérature en fournissant des preuves empiriques quant au possible côté obscur de l'engagement : bien que l'engagement puisse aider les artistes à réussir, il peut aussi restreindre leur liberté artistique. De plus, cette étude offre des insights managériaux pertinents sur les meilleures stratégies de médias sociaux à adopter en fonction de la nature d'un nouveau produit et de la marque qui le lance sur le marché.

Mots clés : Engagement du consommateur, fit, innovation, adoption d'un nouveau produit, lancement de nouveaux produits, consommation de musique, marketing numérique, réseaux sociaux

Méthodes de recherche : Analyse multivariée, expérimentation, recherche quantitative.

### Abstract

This thesis takes the form of two papers that focus on the performance of new products in the music industry. Specifically, this thesis shows how customer engagement and the fit between a brand and its new product have a significant impact on the success of new music albums.

The first paper examines the relationship between customer engagement and new product adoption, in terms of perceived value, purchase and word of mouth (WOM) intentions. This paper proposes that the relationship between customer engagement and new product adoption is moderated by the fit between brand and new product innovativeness. To test this hypothesis, this study relies on two experiments simulating the launch of a new album by fictitious musicians, manipulating brand and new product innovativeness and measuring engagement with brand genre in Experiment I and engagement with new product genre in Experiment II. The results show that the positive effect of customer engagement on new product adoption is conditional on the presence of fit between brand and new product innovativeness. Experiment I reveals that, for less innovative musicians, engagement in the brand's genre increases perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions only if the new album is perceived as similarly innovative; otherwise, it has no effect. For more innovative musicians, absence of fit only the effect of customer engagement on impacts purchase intentions. Experiment II shows that, for customers engaged with the genre of the new album, innovativeness fit affects only the perceived value of more conventional albums. This study sheds light on how, why and when customer engagement impacts new product adoption.

The second article examines the relationship between customer engagement on social media, fit, brand longevity, and new product performance in the context of the music industry. This study shows that the pre-release level of social media engagement impacts record sales only when the new product shows a good fit with the previous one. This phenomenon is particularly true for younger brands. In other words, if musicians can benefit from engagement, they must in return pursue a creative path that is already well known to them and their customers. To test the conceptual model, a generalized estimating

equation model that considers endogeneity issues is applied. A sample of 181 albums released by 158 artists on the Canadian market between 2016 and 2017 is used. This dataset combines weekly record sales, weekly social media activity on Facebook and Spotify's audio features analysis. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence for the possible dark side of engagement: while engagement can help artists succeed, it can also limit their artistic freedom. In addition, this study offers relevant managerial insights on the best social media strategies to adopt depending on the nature of a new product and the brand that is launching it in the market.

**Keywords:** Customer engagement, fit, innovation adoption, new product launch, music consumption, digital marketing, social media.

Research methods: multivariate analysis, experimentation, quantitative research

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## Liste des abréviations

- BI: Brand innovativeness
- CE: Customer Engagement
- CI: Confidence intervals
- FE: Fixed effects
- GMM: Generalized method of moments

M: Mean

- NPI: New product innovativeness
- **REF: Random effects**
- SD: Standard Error
- WOM: Word-of-mouth

À Clémence et Madeleine

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## **Avant-propos**

Les deux articles de cette thèse ont été rédigés en collaboration avec Danilo Dantas, Renaud Legoux, ainsi que Marcelo Vinhal Nepomuceno (pour le 2<sup>e</sup> article seulement), qui m'ont apporté des conseils ainsi que des commentaires et suggestions au sujet des premières versions manuscrites des articles. Je suis toutefois le premier auteur des deux articles et j'ai personnellement eu la charge de l'ensemble des étapes de recherche. Par ailleurs, les trois coauteurs ont donné leur accord pour que ces deux articles soient inclus dans cette thèse.

### Introduction

Depuis le début du XXIe siècle, l'industrie de la musique a subi des changements profonds, causés principalement par la numérisation de la musique (*digitalisation*, Théberge, 2015). À titre d'exemple, la consommation musicale est passée d'un modèle basé sur la possession d'objets musicaux physiques (CD) puis numériques (mp3) pour finalement être fondée sur l'accès aux importants catalogues de contenus musicaux des plateformes de diffusion en continu (*streaming*) (Koh, Hann, & Raghunathan, 2019). La numérisation de la musique a également réduit les barrières à l'entrée sur le marché musical. En effet, grâce à des plateformes comme Bandcamp ou DistroKid, les nouveaux artistes peuvent distribuer à bas coûts leurs œuvres musicales, œuvres qui elles-mêmes sont beaucoup plus simple à produire avec la démocratisation des logiciels de production de musique tels que *FL Studio* et *Ableton Live*.

Une des importantes conséquences de la numérisation et de la diminution des barrières à l'entrée consiste en la hausse de la compétition dans le marché musical. À titre d'exemple, un total de 36,3 millions de chansons différentes ont été diffusées au moins une fois en 2018 (Stein, 2020) et plus de 60 000 nouvelles chansons sont ajoutées quotidiennement au catalogue de *Spotify* (Ingham, 2021). De plus, cette concurrence accrue se produit dans le contexte d'une industrie qui génère toujours moins de revenus qu'elle ne le faisait au tournant du millénaire : en 2020, l'industrie mondiale de la musique enregistrée a généré 21,6 milliards de dollars, ce qui ne représente que 86 % du pic de revenus atteint en 1999 (IFPI, 2021). Par conséquent, s'il était déjà important pour les artistes de savoir comment percer, et surtout perdurer, sur le marché de la musique, cette question est devenue critique dans le contexte hautement concurrentiel d'aujourd'hui.

Une piste de réponse possible pour les musiciens semble résider dans l'engagement du consommateur (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011; Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014), c'est-à-dire en développant une relation profonde avec leurs consommateurs, dans l'espoir de réduire l'incertitude liée à la production de nouvelles propositions artistiques (Buli, 2014). Ces bénéfices potentiels s'expliquent par le fait que les consommateurs engagés souhaitent tout connaître sur leurs

artistes et leurs genres musicaux préférés, cherchent à interagir avec les artistes et ont régulièrement des expériences profondes avec les objets musicaux (A. E. Greasley & Lamont, 2011; Hollebeek, Malthouse, & Block, 2016a; North & Oishi, 2006). De plus, les consommateurs engagés souhaitent non seulement créer et entretenir un lien étroit avec leur objet d'engagement (par exemple, avec un musicien), mais cherchent également à l'aider, à le promouvoir et à en parler avec d'autres personnes, notamment dans des communautés de marque ou sur les réseaux sociaux (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Vivek et al., 2014).

Pour plusieurs artistes, l'engagement du consommateur semble être une composante considérable de leur stratégie marketing. C'est le cas du *boys band* Coréen BTS qui bénéficie grandement de son «ARMY», le nom donné à leur bassin d'admirateurs hautement engagés, notamment pour sa promotion sur le marché mondial. Ainsi, les membres de cette communauté de marque se mobilisent pour aider les musiciens de leur groupe favori à percer le marché mondial en opérant des comptes twitter qui traduisent du coréen vers l'anglais les interventions promotionnelles des musiciens de BTS et d'autres comptes qui surveillent plutôt les hashtags tendance en lien avec le groupe (K. Moon, 2020). D'autres artistes tels que Taylor Swift ou Justin Bieber tirent également profit de leurs consommateurs fortement engagés, appelés respectivement les *Swifties* et les *Beliebers*, toujours impatient de découvrir les nouveaux contenus de leur artiste favori.

Pour d'autres artistes, le fait d'avoir des consommateurs fortement engagés a parfois été une cause de frustration. Se sentant artistique prisonnier du succès de *Creep*, leur premier simple, les membres du groupe rock Radiohead a refusé pendant de nombreuses années de jouer cette chanson en spectacle, malgré l'insistance de leurs admirateurs et les conséquences associées au fait de les décevoir (Dalton, 2016). Un phénomène semblable accabla le chanteur country Garth Brooks en 1999 lors de la sortie de son album *the life of Chris Gaines*. Dans ce cet album, Brooks cherchait à explorer de nouvelles avenues musicales grâce à une nouvelle persona, nommé Chris Gaines, et un son pop loin de ses habitudes country. À l'époque, l'album obtint des critiques négatives autant de la part des journalistes musicaux que de ses admirateurs, qui lui reprochèrent cet important changement de genre (Browne, 1999; Stefano, 2021). L'album généra des ventes

décevantes pour Garth Brooks, toutes proportions gardées, qui retourna aussitôt à son style country habituel.

Ces exemples montrent que si l'engagement du consommateur peut venir avec d'importants avantages, il possède également avoir un côté sombre. Ainsi, lorsqu'un consommateur développe un fort lien d'engagement avec un artiste, il développe également des attentes élevées envers ce même artiste et celles-ci peuvent être difficiles à satisfaire (Harmeling et al., 2017). Fait intéressant, malgré le grand nombre d'études consacrées aux facteurs qui contribuent à développer et entretenir l'engagement, nous en savons très peu sur les potentiels effets négatifs d'avoir des consommateurs très engagés. Par exemple, on ne sait pas actuellement quelles sont les conditions requises pour que l'engagement ait un effet positif sur le succès des nouveaux produits, tel que des albums de musique.

Dans cette thèse, nous proposons de répondre à cette question en s'attardant aux facteurs qui influencent l'effet de l'engagement du consommateur sur la performance de nouveaux produits, le tout dans le contexte du lancement d'un nouvel album musical. Le modèle général de cette thèse, tel que présenté dans la figure i.1, propose plus spécifiquement que si l'engagement du consommateur peut avoir un effet positif sur la performance de nouveaux produits, son effet est modéré par le fit entre le nouveau produit et la marque qui le met en marché. Plus précisément, lorsque le degré de fit est élevé, un artiste avec des consommateurs fortement engagés devrait obtenir beaucoup de succès lors du lancement d'un nouvel album. À l'inverse, un nouvel album qui est en rupture avec le style habituel de son artiste sera mal reçu par les consommateurs fortement engagés et risque d'obtenir des ventes décevantes.

Pour tester ce modèle, cette thèse se structure autour de deux articles scientifiques qui visent à offrir des pistes de réponses à l'aide de méthodologies différentes. Les principales différences entre les deux articles sont présentées dans le Tableau i.1.

Premièrement, les deux articles se distinguent d'abord par les méthodologies utilisées pour tester le modèle conceptuel. Dans le premier article, nous avons conçu deux expériences qui simulent le lancement d'un nouvel album par deux groupes de musique inconnus du consommateur. Dans deux des conditions expérimentales, les consommateurs font face à un groupe de musique qui propose un nouvel album qui correspond parfaitement à son style habituel tandis que dans les deux autres, les consommateurs sont plutôt confrontés à un nouvel album qui propose une rupture par rapport au style habituel du groupe de musique. Dans le deuxième article, le modèle est testé grâce à une modélisation basée sur les équations d'estimation généralisées (GEE) et inspiré de la régression discontinue, ainsi qu'à l'aide d'une base de données secondaires. L'utilisation de méthodologies différentes nous permet tester notre modèle conceptuel avec des angles d'analyses complémentaires. Plus précisément, l'article #1 offre une bonne compréhension du mécanisme théorique qui explique l'effet de l'engagement du consommateur sur la performance de nouveaux produits tandis que le deuxième permet d'estimer l'effet précis des différentes variables du modèle sur les ventes hebdomadaires d'albums sur le marché musical canadien.



#### Figure i.1 — Modèle général de la thèse

La deuxième différence entre les deux articles se situe au niveau de l'objet d'engagement. Dans le premier article, l'engagement est mesuré envers un genre de musique, plus précisément le folk ou le rock expérimental. En effet, la plupart des études sur l'engagement abordent ce concept seulement sur l'angle des marques, négligeant ainsi d'autres possibles objets d'engagement possibles tels qu'une communauté de marque ou une catégorie de produits, ce qui peut « conduire à une compréhension partielle des antécédents et des conséquences de l'engagement » (Traduction libre : Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016). Le fait de mesurer l'engagement envers une catégorie de produit dans ce premier article permet donc de déterminer l'effet de l'engagement sur le comportement de consommateurs potentiels, dans une perspective de développement de nouvelles clientèles. Dans le deuxième article, nous mesurons plutôt l'engagement envers une marque, plus précisément un musicien ou un groupe de musique, ce qui nous permet de tester notre modèle dans un contexte différent.

	Article #1	Article #2	
Titre	Customer Engagement and New Product Adoption in the Music Industry: the importance of the fit between Brand and New Product Innovativeness.	When Strong Engagement in Social Media Hinders New Product Performance: the Importance of Fit.	
Méthodologie	Designs expérimentaux avec artistes fictifs	Modélisation statistique avec données de ventes issues du marché musical canadien	
FocusEngagement envers un genreEngagement end'engagementmusicalparticulier		Engagement envers un artiste en particulier	
Mesure d'engagement	Interactions et connexions avec le sujet d'engagement, d'après l'échelle de Vivek et al. (2014)	Nombre d'abonnés et d'interactions sur Facebook	
Type de fit	Innovativité perçue de la marque et du nouveau produit	Composantes sonores des albums	
Mesure de performance	Intentions d'achat et de bouche à oreille, valeur perçue du nouvel album	Données de ventes hebdomadaires (physique, numérique et streaming)	

Tableau i.1 Principales différences entre les deux articles qui composent la thèse.

La troisième différence principale entre les deux articles de cette thèse se situe au niveau du type de mesure d'engagement. En effet, dans la littérature scientifique sur le marketing relationnel, il existe quatre pôles de définition de l'engagement. Ainsi, l'engagement est défini soit comme (1) un état d'esprit psychologique (2) une motivation intrinsèque (3) un ensemble d'actions effectuées par le consommateur ou encore (4) par la valeur ajoutée par le consommateur à une l'entreprise (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020 ; Harmeling et al.,

2017). Dans cette thèse, nous adoptons dans le premier article une définition proche des deux premiers pôles en adaptant la définition offerte par Vivek, Beatty, Dalela & Morgan (2014). L'engagement du consommateur y est alors défini comme étant le niveau d'interactions et de connexions accomplies par un consommateur envers un genre de musique spécifique, et ce en termes d'attention consciente, de participation enthousiaste et de connexion sociale. Le deuxième article propose quant à lui une approche qui mêle les troisième et quatrième perspectives sur l'engagement. Il y est donc proposé que l'engagement du consommateur est composé d'un ensemble d'actions effectuées par le consommateur (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010) qui ajoute de la valeur à une marque ou une entreprise (Pansari & Kumar, 2017), le dans le contexte des médias sociaux. De façon pratique, le deuxième article se concentre sur l'engagement des consommateurs sur les pages de différents artistes sur le réseau social Facebook.

Dans un quatrième temps, les deux articles se distinguent par la manière dont est mesuré le fit entre un nouvel album et les offres précédentes d'un artiste. Dans le premier article, notre mesure de fit est fondé sur l'innovativité perçue de la marque (Boisvert & Ashill, 2011) et de celle du nouveau produit mise en marché par celle-ci. Cette approche nous permet de tester notre modèle conceptuel et de mettre de l'avant que la performance d'un nouvel album de musique ne dépend pas directement de son niveau d'innovativité, mais plutôt du fit entre ce niveau d'innovativité et celui qui est typiquement associé avec l'artiste. Dans le deuxième article, notre mesure de fit se base sur l'analyse des composantes sonores des albums. Pour ce faire, nous utilisons les données sur les composantes sonores des chansons, telles que calculées par la plateforme de diffusion de musique en continu Spotify. En effet, à l'aide d'algorithmes développés par The Echo Nest, Spotify brosse un portrait détaillé des chansons de leur catalogue (ex. : de leur caractère dansant ou encore de leur niveau d'énergie) qui est disponible via une API. Cette mesure de fit a comme principale avantage d'être objective, puisqu'elle n'est pas biaisée par des catégorisations arbitraires ou encore les campagnes de communication des artistes et de leurs maisons de disques.

Finalement, la mesure de la performance des nouveaux produits diffère dans les deux articles. Dans l'article #1, puisqu'il s'agit de designs expérimentaux avec des albums

fictifs, la performance est mesurée par rapport aux intentions d'achat, de bouche-à-oreille et de valeur perçue de l'album. Dans le deuxième article, la performance des nouveaux albums est mesurée par le nombre d'albums et de simples vendus hebdomadaires ainsi que du nombre de chansons écoutées sur des plateformes de diffusion en continu (*Spotify*, *YouTube*) par semaine, le tout converti en unités équivalentes à l'album.

Dans l'ensemble, cette thèse contribue à la théorie en marketing relationnel en nuançant les bienfaits annoncés de l'engagement du consommateur et en mettant de l'avant l'importance du fit dans la performance de nouveaux produits. En effet, les résultats de cette thèse suggèrent que si l'engagement possède bel et bien un certain potentiel pour le marketing de nouveaux produits — dans de bonnes conditions, l'engagement du consommateur augmente la probabilité de succès des nouveaux albums de musique — ce potentiel est conditionnel à la présence d'un bon fit entre le nouveau produit et la marque qui le met en marché. Autrement dit, cette thèse contribue à la littérature en fournissant des preuves empiriques du possible côté obscur de l'engagement : bien que le fait d'avoir des consommateurs fortement engagés puisse aider les artistes à réussir dans le marché de la musique, cela peut également restreindre leur liberté artistique. Les jeunes artistes ainsi que les artistes au style musical plus conventionnel sont particulièrement sensibles à ce phénomène.

De plus, cette thèse offre des conseils managériaux pertinents quant aux meilleures stratégies a adopté en fonction de la nature d'un nouveau produit et de la marque qui le lance sur le marché. Par exemple, lorsqu'un artiste lance un album très similaire à ces précédents efforts, il est tout à fait pertinent pour celui-ci de stimuler l'engagement de ses consommateurs, notamment sur les réseaux sociaux, afin de favoriser la réussite de ce nouveau produit. En contrepartie, lorsqu'un artiste décide d'explorer un nouveau genre musical, il est préférable de le faire sans investir des sommes importantes pour stimuler l'engagement de ses admirateurs ou encore de concentrer ses efforts promotionnels envers la recherche de nouveaux consommateurs qui des grands amateurs de ce nouveau genre de musique.

Les chapitres 1 et 2 présentent respectivement l'article #1 intitulé *Customer Engagement* and New Product Adoption in the Music Industry : The importance of the fit between Brand and New Product Innovativeness et l'article # 2 nommé When Strong Engagement in Social Media Hinders New Product Performance: the Importance of Fit. Finalement, la section « Conclusion » expose les contributions pratiques et théoriques de cette thèse et propose des pistes de réflexion pour des recherches futures.

## Chapitre 1 Customer Engagement and New Product Adoption in the Music Industry: The Importance of Fit Between Brand and New Product Innovativeness

#### Abstract

Using the music industry as context, this study examines the relationship between customer engagement and new product adoption, in terms of perceived value, purchase intentions and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions. The authors hypothesize that this relationship is moderated by the fit between brand and new product innovativeness. To test this hypothesis, they use two experiments simulating the launch of a new album by fictitious musicians, manipulating brand and new product innovativeness and measuring engagement with brand genre in Experiment I and engagement with new product genre in Experiment II. The results show that the positive effect of customer engagement on new product adoption is conditional on the presence of fit between brand and new product innovativeness. Experiment I reveals that, for less innovative musicians, engagement in the brand's genre increases perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions only if the new album is perceived as similarly innovative; otherwise, it has no effect. For more innovative musicians, absence of fit only the effect of customer engagement on impacts purchase intentions. Experiment II shows that, for customers engaged with the genre of the new album, innovativeness fit affects only the perceived value of more conventional albums. This study sheds light on how, why and when customer engagement impacts new product adoption.

### 1.1 Introduction

In the last two decades the music industry has been through radical changes, mainly because of digitalization (Théberge, 2015). The number of new music releases has considerably increased due to lower production and distribution costs. For instance, Spotify now adds close to 40,000 tracks per day to its global offering (Ingham, 2021). This growth has greatly expanded competition in the music market, where sales are more

and more concentrated (Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2016) and revenues have dropped significantly (IFPI, 2021). Therefore, the important question of how artists can break into, and persist, in the music market has become critical in today's highly competitive context.

One possible avenue for musicians seems to be customer engagement (Vivek et al., 2014) — that is, targeting customers who are deeply immersed in music. Indeed, engaged music fans like to know everything about their favourite genres, seek to interact with artists, and regularly have deep experiences with music objects (A. E. Greasley & Lamont, 2006; North & Oishi, 2006), which makes them more likely to adopt new music products. Therefore, relying on engaged customers could act as an "uncertainty reducer" for musicians releasing new albums. That said, while the engagement of diehard hip hop fans can explain, for instance, the wildly successful crowdfunding campaign of the hip-hop trio De La Soul (Setaro, 2016), it cannot explain the fate of *Scream*, an electro-pop album by Chris Cornell, lead vocalist for the grunge band Soundgarden, which was roundly rejected by grunge fans. Therefore, it is unclear whether, and under which conditions, customer engagement has a positive impact on the success of new music products.

Using two experiments simulating the launch of a new album by fictitious musicians, we show that while engagement can be a powerful tool for enhancing the commercial performance of a new album, its usefulness is conditional on the fit between the perceived innovativeness of the new product and that of the brand<sup>1</sup> that launches it on the market. To explain the importance of fit, we rely on categorization theory (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986). According to categorization theory, when evaluating a new product, consumers will first link it to a specific category — for instance, a music genre — and then transfer positive associations if it is perceived to fit with the category of the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990). This effect is of prime importance for engaged customers because their deep knowledge allows them to evaluate fit more easily and transfers considerable positive effects if the fit is good. In Experiment I we show that, for less innovative musicians, customer engagement with the brand's genre increases perceived value,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> In this article, the term "brand" or "music brand" refers to musicians, whether solo artists (e.g., the rapper Drake) or bands (e.g., the pop rock band Coldplay). It does not refer to music industry-related brands such as labels or venues.

purchase and WOM intentions only if the new album displays a low level of innovativeness; otherwise, it has no effect. For more innovative musicians, fit moderates the effect of customer engagement on purchase intentions only. Hence, customer engagement is a double-edged sword: instead of allowing musicians to explore new music horizons, engagement compels them to do the same thing over and over, thus constraining their creativity. In Experiment II we demonstrate that, for customers engaged with the new album's music genre, innovativeness fit affects only the perceived value of more conventional albums. In other words, if engaged customers do not like it when musicians in their favourite genre change, they may still enjoy a new album in their favourite genre, even if it was made by musicians not typically associated with this genre.

#### **1.2** Customer Engagement

In the marketing literature, customer engagement can be positioned as an extension of relationship marketing, where more attention is given to behaviours that go beyond purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In contrast to other consumer-brand relationship constructs (such as commitment, trust or attachment), engagement is highly interactive, behavioural and social in nature (Dessart et al., 2016; Hollebeek, 2011). Engaged customers not only develop and maintain a relationship with an engagement focus, but also promote it and talk about it, mainly within brand communities. Researchers do not agree on the dimensionality of engagement, which can include cognitive, affective, behavioural, emotional and social dimensions (see Table 1.1). In this study, we follow Vivek et al. (2014) and define customer engagement as the level of a customer's interactions and connections with a specific music genre, in terms of conscious attention, enthusiastic participation and social connection. Engaged customers are attentive to everything related to the object of engagement, are highly enthusiastic about it and devote a lot of their free time to it, often with friends. Vivek et al. (2014) definition is well suited to the context of music, since it includes a social dimension — an important component of music consumption (Hollebeek, Malthouse, & Block, 2016b; Laplante, 2011).

Construct	Author	Definition	Dimensions
Customer engagement	Vivek et al., 2014	"Customer engagement goes beyond purchase and is the level of the customer's (or potential customer's) interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/offering/activity."	<ol> <li>Conscious attention</li> <li>Enthused participation</li> <li>Social connection</li> </ol>
Music engagement	Hollebeek et al., 2016b	"A second-order construct comprising four types of consumer experiences with music (i.e. identity-, social-, transportive-, affect-inducting experience) that, collectively, comprise musical engagement"	<ol> <li>Social-identity</li> <li>Transportive</li> <li>Affect-inducting</li> </ol>
Consumer engagement	Dessart et al., 2016	"The state that reflects consumers' individual dispositions toward engagement foci, which are context- specific"	<ol> <li>Enthusiasm</li> <li>Enjoyment</li> <li>Attention</li> <li>Absorption</li> <li>Sharing</li> <li>Learning</li> <li>Endorsing</li> </ol>
Customer engagement with tourism brand	So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016	"A customer's personal connection to a brand as manifested in cognitive, affective, and behavioral actions outside of the purchase situation"	<ol> <li>Identification</li> <li>Enthusiasm</li> <li>Attention</li> <li>Absorption</li> <li>Interaction</li> </ol>
Consumer brand engagement	Dwivedi, 2015	"Consumers' positive, fulfilling, brand-use-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption"	<ol> <li>Vigour</li> <li>Dedication</li> <li>Absorption</li> </ol>

#### **Table 1.1 Definitions**

Furthermore, we choose to use music genre rather than music brand (i.e., musicians) as the focus of engagement, for both theoretical and managerial reasons. While the study of customer engagement in a specific product category such as music genre is not common in the marketing field (an exception being Hollebeek et al.'s [2016] work on music consumer engagement), engagement with music has been shown to be an important construct in other aspects, such as in the formation of individual music preferences (Bonneville-Roussy, Rentfrow, Xu, & Potter, 2013; A. E. Greasley & Lamont, 2011; Weinberg & Joseph, 2017). Moreover, most marketing research tackles customer engagement as a brand-related issue, thus overlooking other possible foci of engagement such as product category, which can "lead to a partial understanding of the drivers and outcomes of engagement" (Dessart et al. 2016, p. 400). In other words, examining consumer engagement with a music genre instead of with specific musicians can yield new knowledge about the reactions of potential new customers, which are important in the context of product launches and brand extensions.

#### **1.3** Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

The goal of this research is to develop and test a conceptual model (Figure 1.1) to explain why and when customer engagement positively affects the adoption (here, measured as perceived value, purchase, and word-of-mouth [WOM] intentions) of new music products.



#### Figure 1.1—Path diagram of the conceptual model

First, the model suggests that customer engagement increases the adoption of new music products. Indeed, engaged music fans are preoccupied by a need to know and possess

everything about an artist and its genre (A. E. Greasley & Lamont, 2006; North & Oishi, 2006) and perceive themselves to be an important part of the music industry (A. Greasley, Lamont, & Sloboda, 2013). Also, engagement can act as a cue that increases the perceived value (Dovaliene, Masiulyte, & Piligrimiene, 2015). Indeed, for engaged customers, new products have a high potential for functional ("I will listen to these new songs a lot"), psychological ("I feel well when I learn, talk and interact with this musician") and social ("New songs means I can discuss about this musician with my friends") value, which may also increase their likelihood of purchasing a product and endorsing it through WOM. Customer engagement has also been linked to brand loyalty in both conceptual studies (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011) and empirical studies (Chen, De, & Hu, 2015; Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2016; Saboo, Kumar, & Ramani, 2016; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016b). Furthermore, the results of a meta-analysis by de Oliveira Santini et al. (2020) suggest that customer engagement in social media has a positive effect on behavioural intentions and WOM. Thus, we can expect that an artist with an audience that is highly engaged in his/her genre is more likely to see his/her new products succeed.

Second, we propose that the relationship between customer engagement and new product adoption is moderated by brand and new product innovativeness, defined as the extent to which a brand or new product is perceived by consumers to be innovative, creative, unique and unconventional (Pappu & Quester, 2016; Shams, Brown, & Alpert, 2017). Thus, in our study an innovative brand offers unorthodox and unconventional music, in a new-to-the-market logic, while less innovative musicians offer works that follow established musical codes. According to a meta-analysis by Szymanski et al. (2007), the effect of product innovativeness on new product success is positive but varies substantially when other contextual elements are considered. When applied to the context of music, we see two possible outcomes. Affective commitment, self-connection with music and brand intimacy — concepts close to customer engagement (see Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, et al., 2011; Read, Robertson, McQuilken, & Ferdous, 2019; Wang & Lee, 2020) — are positively associated with artistic vision. In other words, engaged customers will commit, no matter what, to an artist's new endeavours (Turri & Smith, 2013). Hence, customer engagement will have a positive effect regardless of whether the new product is highly
innovative. Other studies have shown that familiarity and repetition are strong predictors of music preferences and that customers tend to stay with what they are used to, for both known and unknown songs (Hunter & Schellenberg, 2011a; Nunes, Ordanini, & Valsesia, 2015; Ward, Goodman, & Irwin, 2014). Therefore, engaged customers — those who are especially familiar with the focus of their engagement — might prefer incremental innovations that fit with what they are used to. Moreover, a recent study by Shi et al. (2018) suggests that albums released by genre-specialist musicians tend to get higher customer evaluations than those released by genre-generalist musicians (those who switch genres from one album to another), which is in line with the "power of repetition" argument.

In this article, we argue that it is not the level of product innovativeness per se that matters when examining the effect of customer engagement, but the fit between a new product and brand innovativeness. This hypothesis aligns with the results of several studies that show how fit plays a major role in the success of brand extensions (Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2016; H. Moon & Sprott, 2016; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Relying on categorization theory (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986), these studies show that when evaluating a new product, consumers will first try to place it in a specific category, such as a music genre. Then, those with favourable and positive brand associations, such as engaged consumers, will more easily transfer those effects to the new product if it is perceived to fit with the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Therefore, the key element for music brands with engaged consumers is not to look for innovation at all costs nor to always rely on repetition but, rather, to offer a new product whose innovativeness fits with that of previous ones.

Hence, for less innovative music brands, which typically offer more conventional music, the effect of engagement will be stronger when the new product represents an incremental innovation (new songs that exploit well-known music codes). In contrast, for highly innovative musicians who are valued for their imagination and their ability to surprise, radical innovations (new songs that explore new sonorities) will be sought by hardcore fans. In both cases, the absence of fit, in terms of innovativeness, between the previous albums and the new one will make it more difficult for customers to classify the new product in the brand's category (Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2016) These engaged customers may, then, question the brand's ability to deliver a good product, which will decrease new product adoption. Finally, engaged customers, who are better able to assess both brand and new product innovativeness and are more likely to make positive brand evaluations, will be more affected by the perceived fit than occasional consumers. In the case of the latter, new product evaluation will be formed in a piecemeal fashion, by assessing the newest product without considering the brand's previous history.

*H1:* The effect of customer engagement on new product adoption is moderated by brand and new product innovativeness. Hence, the effect of customer engagement on perceived value (*H1a*), purchase intention (*H1b*) and WOM intentions (*H1c*) is stronger when there is a fit between brand and new product innovativeness.

Third, we expect that music brands perceived as more innovative are less vulnerable to lack of innovativeness fit. Indeed, relying on signalling theory, some studies suggest that brand innovativeness can act as a positive cue for customers evaluating new products, in the same way that brand name or advertising does (Pappu & Quester, 2016; Shams, Alpert, & Brown, 2015). By being perceived as more innovative, these brands gain in flexibility (Barone & Jewell, 2014), because they are seen as more credible when the time comes to launch new products (Shams et al., 2017). Furthermore, consumer innovativeness — that is, the need for consumers to be the first to try and to buy new products (Goldsmith & Foxall, 2003) — is linked to innovation adoption in terms of both intentions/behaviour (Arts, Frambach, & Bijmolt, 2011) and brand extension success (Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Since innovative music brands can be expected to attract more innovation-minded consumers, they will be less penalized by their fans in the case of a stylistic change. Thus, the moderating effect of brand and new product innovativeness fit is less important for highly innovative brands than for more conventional ones.

*H2:* For less (vs. more) innovative brands, the fit between brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness has a stronger (vs. weaker) moderating effect on the relationship between customer engagement and new product adoption.

Lastly, we expect that the fit between brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness has a stronger effect on customers engaged with the brand's genre than on customers engaged with the new product's genre. In other words, fit is more important for current customers than for potential new ones. To explain this hypothesis, we rely on the endowment effect (Carmon & Ariely, 2000; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), according to which the perceived value of a product tends to be higher when it is given up than when it is acquired. This loss aversion phenomenon is said to be driven by emotional attachment (Ariely, Huber, & Wertenbroch, 2005) and psychological ownership (Shu & Peck, 2011). When consumers are deeply connected with an object and feel that it is "theirs," they will be reluctant to give it up, since they attach great value to it.

Since customer engagement is conceptually close to both emotional attachment and psychological ownership (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, et al., 2011; Harmeling et al., 2017), we can anticipate a loss aversion effect among engaged customers. As this research explores engagement with a music genre, we expect the endowment effect to be linked to the product category (i.e., the music genre), and not with music brands (i.e., the artists) themselves. Hence, when engaged customers are put in a loss frame — that is, when musicians performing their favourite genre switch to another genre — they will be greatly affected because a part of the object of their engagement is taken away from them. In contrast, when in a gain frame — that is, when musicians from another genre switch to their favourite genre — engaged customers will evaluate this new album in the same way that they evaluate new songs from an artist typically associated with their favourite genre. In other words, a switch to a customer's favourite genre will not have a positive effect on new product adoption, apart from that linked with their intrinsic interest in that genre.

*H3*: The importance of fit between brand and new product innovativeness is greater when customers are engaged with the genre of the brand rather than with the genre of the new product.

# 1.4 Experiment I

# 1.4.1 Methodology

#### Procedure and Participants

The objective of Experiment I was to test the first two hypotheses of our model using a 2 (brand innovativeness [BI]: low vs. high) x 2 (new product innovativeness [NPI] low vs. high) between-participants experimental design. Survey participants were asked to read the following text about experimental rock (high BI condition) or folk rock (low BI condition) musicians: "[Jumper Wire/Noble Moon] is an [experimental rock/folk rock] music band that already has three albums to its credit. On their [exciting and ground-breaking/calm and old-fashioned] albums, the band likes to use guitars to perform [complex/simple] songs. Their music [comes/does not come] as a surprise for most music fans. The three songs presented here below are respectively from their first, second and third album." Participants were then asked to listen to three songs, said to be from the band's first, second and third albums, and to rate the innovativeness of the three songs on a five-item scale (see *Measures* section below).

Participants were then asked to read the following text and listen to a fourth song: "[Jumper Wire/Noble Moon] musicians are currently working on new songs for their new album, to be released in the coming months. They would like to know the opinion of customers about a song that will be on this new album." For both BI conditions, participants were shown either an experimental rock song (high NPI) or a folk rock song (low NPI) and were asked to rate the innovativeness of the fourth song. With this new song in mind, participants gave their opinions on the band's future album in terms of perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions. Then they completed a customer engagement scale for either experimental rock (high BI condition) or folk rock (low BI condition). Finally, they were asked to report their age, gender and education, to guess the objective of the research, and to describe the survey in terms of realism and easiness.

Participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk and Qualtrics was used as the data-collection platform. To qualify for the study, consumers had to be at least 18 years

old, live in the United States, and declare at least some interest in experimental rock and/or folk rock. We excluded consumers with no interest in either of these two genres since we sought participants who could realistically be potential customers of one of the two bands. To identify such potential customers, we first asked participants to report their interest, on a seven-point Likert scale, in experimental rock, jazz, folk rock, electronica, hip hop and classical music. For those reporting no interest in experimental rock or folk rock, the survey was then terminated. Participants declaring interest only in experimental rock (folk rock) were shown the high (low) BI condition, while those interested in both genres were randomly assigned to one of the two BI conditions. The final sample comprised 184 completed surveys. Participants were mostly men (57.1%) aged between 18 and 72 (mean = 38.0) with either a high school diploma (35.9%) or a bachelor's degree (38.0%). Most reported that the questionnaire was at least somewhat realistic (89.7%) and somewhat easy to complete (92.9%).

#### 1.4.2 Measures

## Brand and new product innovativeness

To measure both brand and new product innovativeness, we used a five-item, seven-point bipolar scale adapted from Boisvert and Ashill (2011): 1 = predictable, 7 = innovative; 1 = ordinary, 7 = unique; 1 = common, 7 = original; 1 = conventional, 7 = unconventional; 1 = traditional, 7 = cutting-edge. Both brand innovativeness ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and new product innovativeness ( $\alpha = .96$ ) showed very good reliability.

We also measured the similarity between the first three songs (used to manipulate brand innovativeness) and the fourth song (used to manipulate new product innovativeness) on a one-item scale from 0 to 10 (0 = extremely dissimilar, 10 = extremely similar). This item was used as a robustness check for the effectiveness of the manipulation.

#### *Customer engagement*

To measure customer engagement with the music genres of interest, we used a scale adapted from Vivek et al. (2014). This five-point (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly disagree) scale of customer engagement measures three dimensions — conscious attention, enthused participation and social connection — with 10 items. The scale

includes items such as "I pay a lot of attention to anything about [folk rock/experimental rock]," "I am passionate about [folk rock/experimental rock]" and "I enjoy folk rock music more when I am with others." Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 indicates very good reliability. It is important to note that, since both bands in our study were fictitious, we measured engagement with the music genre rather than with the musicians.

## Perceived value

To measure perceived value of the new products, we adapted Sweeney and Soutar's (2001) three-item scale. The scale included the following items: "I think that this new album will be of high quality," "I think that I will enjoy this new album" and "I think that this new album will be of good value." Cronbach's alpha (0.91) again showed good reliability.

## Purchase and word-of-mouth intentions

For the purchase and WOM variables, we used two scales (Alexandrov, Lilly, & Babakus, 2013; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014) adapted for this context. Both scales included three items. For purchase intentions, only two items were retained — "I will consider buying this new album" and "It is possible that I [will] buy this new album" — since the third ("I have no intention to buy this album") showed weak correlation with the other two. WOM intentions was measured using the items "I will say positive things about this new album," "I will discuss with friends about this new album" and "I will recommend this new album to others." Cronbach's alphas were 0.94 and 0.90, respectively.

## Control variables

The questionnaire also included sociodemographic questions: age, gender and education level.

## 1.4.3 Data Analysis

## Regression models

*H1, H2* and *H3* suggest three moderated moderation models (A. F. Hayes, 2017), where the strength of the relationship between customer engagement and the three outcome variables (perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions) is conditional on

the value of two moderators — that is, brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness. We used the PROCESS syntax and methods presented in Hayes (2017) to estimate the necessary coefficient (1.1):

$$Y = i_{Y} + b_{1}X + b_{2}W + b_{3}Z + b_{4}XZ + b_{5}WX + b_{6}WZ + b_{7}XWZ + e_{Y}$$
(1.1)

In the equation, X is the independent variable (customer engagement), Y is the dependent variable (perceived value, purchase intentions or WOM intentions), W is the first moderator (brand innovativeness) and Z is the second moderator (new product innovativeness). The coefficients  $b_4$ ,  $b_5$  and  $b_6$  are the double interaction terms, while  $b_7$  is the triple interaction term. The significance of the respective coefficients was calculated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples.

#### Manipulation checks

An independent sample t-test confirms the expected differences across brand innovativeness conditions — Noble Moon, the low brand innovativeness condition (M = 3.54, SE = 1.46), was perceived as less innovative than Jumper Wire, the high brand innovativeness (BI) condition (M = 5.09, SE = 1.24). This difference is significant: t(182) = -7.71, p < 0.001. Similarly, the fourth song presented in the high new product innovativeness (NPI) condition (M = 4.98, SE = 1.40) was perceived as more innovative than the high BI/low NPI condition song (M = 3.74, SE = 1.56). The difference is significant: t(182) = -5.66, p < 0.001. Moreover, the fourth song presented in the high BI/high NPI condition (M = 3.74, SE = 2.34). The difference is significant: t(90) = 4.146, p < 0.001. Likewise, the fourth song presented in the low BI/low NPI condition (M = 2.85, SE = 2.54). The difference is significant: t(90) = 9.074, p < 0.001. These results suggest that manipulation functioned as planned and are adequate.

#### 1.4.4 Results

Table 1.2 presents the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all the variables used in the models. As expected, customer engagement (CE) is positively correlated with perceived value (r=.28, p <0.01), purchase (r=.46, p <0.01) and WOM intentions (r=.49, p <0.01). Table 1.3 presents the results of the multiple regression models for Experiment I. Overall, customer engagement has a strong positive effect on perceived value (effect<sub>CE</sub>-<sub>>PV</sub>=.49, boot SE =.15, p <0.001), purchase intentions (effect<sub>CE</sub>->PI =.93, boot SE =.17, p <0.001) and WOM intentions (effect<sub>CE</sub>->WOM =.79, boot SE =.14, p <0.001).

According to H1, the effect of customer engagement on perceived value (H1a), purchase intentions (H1b) and WOM intentions (H1c) is moderated by brand and new product innovativeness. Bootstrap analysis (see Table 1.3) reveals that the three-way interaction between customer engagement, brand and new product innovativeness is significant in all three models. This suggests that innovativeness fit moderates the effect of customer engagement, as expected in H1a, H1b and H1c. Interestingly, the brand × new product innovativeness interaction is non-significant in all three models, implying that fit matters only when considering engagement.

To visualize this moderated moderation effect, Figure 1.2 displays the three-way interaction in plots. For the folk rock musicians (low brand innovativeness condition), customer engagement tends to have a significant positive effect only when the new album displays a similar level of innovativeness for each of the three outcome variables. For instance, the positive effect of customer engagement on purchase intentions is significant when the new album is perceived as not very innovative (effect<sub>lowNPI</sub> =.93, SE =.17, 95% CI =.60 to 1.27) and insignificant when it is perceived as highly innovative (effect<sub>highNPI</sub> =.26, SE =.22, 95% CI =...16 to.69). The difference between these two effects is significant: f(1; 174) = 5.71, p = 0.018. Moreover, the effects of customer engagement on WOM intentions between low new product innovativeness (effect<sub>highNPI</sub> =.28, SE =.14, 95% CI =...07 to.63) are also significantly different: f(1; 174) = 5.21, p = 0.024. Lastly, the difference between the effects of engagement (effect<sub>highNPI</sub> =.49, SE =.15, 95% CI =.20 to.78; effect<sub>highNPI</sub> =.03, SE =.14, 95% CI =...35 to.40) is marginally significant for perceived value: f(1; 174) = 3.61, p = 0.059.

							R					
Variable		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	Customer engagement	2.94	0.99	1								
2	Perceived value	3.54	1.08	.28**	1							
3	Purchase intentions	2.99	1.34	.46**	.81**	1						
4	Word-of-mouth intentions	3.07	1.12	.49**	.82**	.86**	1					
5	Folk rock preferences	4.88	1.44	.17*	.02	.01	.05	1				
6	Experimental rock preferences	5.27	1.23	.08	.11	.11	.18*	10	1			
7	Brand innovativeness	0.5	0.5	07	.14	.08	.15*	46**	.28*	1		
8	New product innovativeness	0.5	0.5	03	16*	19**	19**	03	05	0	1	

Table 1.2 Descriptive statistics and correlations (Experiment I)

*Notes:* N = 184. Brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness are dichotomous variables (0/1). \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01

	Perceived value (H1a)			Purchase intentions (H1b)				WOM intentions (H1c)				
Predictor	b	SE	Р	value	b	SE	Р	value	b	SE	Р	value
Controls												
1. Intercept	3.47	0.15	.000		3.01	.18	.000		3	.14	.000	
2. Experimental rock preferences	.06	.07	.341		.1	.08	.193		.12	.06	.06	
3. Folk rock preferences		.06	.505		03	.07	.636		.04	.06	.45	
Primary predictors												
4. Customer engagement (CE)	.49	.15	.001		.93	.17	.000		.79	.14	.000	
5. Brand innovativeness (BI)	.42	.22	.058		.39	.25	.126		.5	.21	.016	
6. New product innovativeness (NPI)	21	.21	.325		22	.24	.365		24	.2	.232	
Interaction terms												
7. CE*BI	38	.22	.086		64	.25	.012		46	.2	.025	
8. CE*NPI	46	.24	.059		67	.24	.364		51	.23	.024	
9. BI*NPI	14	.30	.641		42	.35	.223		24	.28	.385	
10. CE*BI*NPI	.76	.32	.0172		1.12	.36	.002		.78	.29	.009	
Model summary												
Overall F				3.69				8.2				10.1
Overall R2				.16				.3				.34
Adjusted R2				.003				.000				.000

 Table 1.3 Multiple regression results (Experiment I)

Notes: N = 184. Final model results are reported. Customer engagement, folk rock and experimental rock music preferences are mean-centred.

The same logic does not apply to experimental rock musicians (high brand innovativeness condition): the differences in the effects of customer engagement on perceived value and WOM intentions are not significant (p > 0.05) whether the new album is perceived as highly innovative or less innovative. In the case of purchase intentions, customer engagement has a positive effect for experimental rock musicians when the new album is perceived as innovative (effect<sub>high NPI</sub> = .74, SE = .15, 95% CI = .44 to 1.04) and null effect when it is perceived as less innovative (effect<sub>low NPI</sub> = .29, SE = .18, 95% CI = -.07 to .65). The difference is marginally significant: f(1; 174) = 3.65, p = 0.06. This suggests support for *H1* and *H2*. Hence, the fit between brand and new product innovativeness moderates the relationship between customer engagement and new product adoption; this effect is stronger for less innovative music brands.



Figure 1.2 – Conditional effects of customer engagement at values of brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness (Experiment I)

## 1.4.5 Discussion

The aim of the experiment was to test a moderated moderation model where the effect of customer engagement on new product adoption is moderated by brand and new product innovativeness. We tested this model by means of an experiment using two fictitious music brands and a scenario of a new album to be released shortly, measuring engagement with the brands' genre.

As expected, we found that customer engagement has a significant positive effect on perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions. This suggests that engagement can be used by musicians as a tool to foster customer loyalty and to improve the success of a brand's new products. We also found that for less innovative brands this positive effect of customer engagement is conditional on fit between the innovativeness of a musician's brand and the innovative nature of its new release. Therefore, instead of increasing artistic freedom by protecting musicians against the risk associated with a new release, customer engagement incites musicians to keep doing the same thing repeatedly. In other words, customer engagement is a double-edged sword: if engagement can help more conventional musicians in their release of new music, it can also constrain their creativity. For highly innovative music brands, the consequences of absence of fit are smaller and impact purchase intentions only: it is possible that because of their already changing and dynamic nature, innovative music brands have more leeway to make stylistics changes.

That said, some musicians may still want to make stylistic changes, whether for creative reasons or marketing reasons (some changes are more popular than others), despite the issue associated with absence of fit. This possibility raises a new question: how is a change in innovativeness perceived by customers engaged with the new music genre? For instance, does experimental rock lovers' perception of a new experimental rock album depend on whether its musicians are typically associated with this innovative genre, or with a more conventional one? This is the question tackled in Experiment II. As revealed in the conceptual model section, we expect to see significant differences between the results of the two experiments, notably because of the endowment effect, which concerns engaged customers' loss aversion.

# **1.5** Experiment II

## 1.5.1 Methodology

## Procedure, Participants and Measures

The objective of Experiment II was to test H3 using a procedure similar to that used in Experiment I — a 2x2 (brand innovativeness [BI]: low vs. high) x 2 (new product innovativeness [NPI] low vs. high) between-participants experimental design — except that this time we measured customer engagement with the genre of the new product. Participants were shown a text about one of the two bands (see procedures for Experiment I) and were then asked to listen to three songs, said to be from the band's first, second and third albums, and to rate their innovativeness. They were then asked to read the following text and to listen to a fourth song: "[Jumper Wire's/Noble Moon's] musicians are currently working on new songs for their new album, to be released in the coming months. This album will feature songs [in Jumper Wire's usual genre of music, that is, **experimental rock**/in an unusual genre of music for *Jumper Wire* 

usual genre of music, that is, **folk rock**]. They would like to know the opinion of consumers about a song that will be on this new album." For both BI conditions, participants were shown either an experimental rock song (high NPI) or a folk rock song (low NPI) and asked to rate the innovativeness of this fourth song. Again, with this new song in mind, participants gave their impressions of the band's future album in terms of perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions. They then completed a customer engagement scale on either experimental rock (high NPI condition) or folk rock (low NPI condition). Finally, participants answered sociodemographic questions. Overall, we used the same measures as in Experiment I, the only difference being that engagement was measured for the genre rather than for the brand of the new album.

Participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk and we used Qualtrics as the data collection platform. To qualify, consumers had to be at least 18 years of age, live in the United States, and declare at least some interest in experimental rock and/or folk rock. The final sample comprised 199 completed surveys. Participants were between 20 and 79 years of age with a mean age of 41.2. Half (50.3%) were men and a plurality (46.7%) had

a bachelor's degree. The experiment was perceived as at least somewhat realistic by 79.4% of participants and at least somewhat easy by 90.5% of participants.

#### Manipulation Checks

An independent sample t-test confirms the expected differences across brand innovativeness conditions — that is, Noble moon, the low brand innovativeness (BI) condition (M = 3.54, SE = 1.52), was perceived as less innovative than Jumper Wire, the high BI condition (M = 5.29, SE = 1.21). This difference is significant: t(187.002) = -8.94, p < 0.001. Similarly, the fourth song presented in the high NPI condition (M = 5.12, SE = 1.19) was perceived as more innovative than the song in the high BI/low NPI condition (M = 3.46, SE = 1.52). The difference is significant: t(187.262) = -8.55, p < 0.001. Moreover, the fourth song presented in the high BI/ligh NPI condition was perceived as more similar (M = 6.34, SE = 1.99) than in the high BI/low NPI condition (M = 2.64, SE = 2.04). The difference is significant: t(98) = -9.195, p < 0.001. Likewise, the fourth song presented in the low BI/low NPI condition (M = 3.10, SE = 2.27). The difference is significant: t(97) = -11.14, p < 0.001. These results suggest that manipulation functioned as planned and was adequate.

#### 1.5.2 Results

Table 1.4 presents the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all the variables used in the models. Once again, customer engagement, this time with the genre of the new album, is positively correlated with perceived value (r = .36, p < 0.01) for both purchase (r = .52, p < 0.01) and WOM intentions (r = .55, p < 0.01. In all three multiple regression models (see Table 1.5), customer engagement has a strong positive effect on perceived value (effect<sub>CE</sub>—)PV = .53, boot SE = .13, p < 0.001), purchase intentions (effect<sub>CE</sub>—)PI = .90, boot SE = .16, p < 0.001) and WOM intentions (effect<sub>CE</sub>—)WOM = .82, boot SE = .14, p < 0.001).

				R							
Variable		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Customer engagement	2.93	0.92	1							
2	Perceived value	3.65	0.92	.36**	1						
3	Purchase intentions	3.11	1.24	.52**	.74**	1					
4	Word-of-mouth intentions	3.20	1.08	.55**	.74**	.86**	1				
5	Folk rock preferences	5.19	1.48	.11	01	.03	.02	1			
6	Experimental rock preferences	5.01	1.32	.09	04	01	.05	09	1		
7	Brand innovativeness	0.5	0.5	03	.10	.08	.02	05	02	1	
8	New product innovativeness	0.5	0.5	01	15*	05	04	.37**	.41**	.01	1

Table 1.4 Descriptive statistics and correlations (Experiment II)

*Notes:* N = 199. Brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness are dichotomous variables (0/1). \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01

	Perceived value				Purch	Purchase intentions		<b>WOM intentions</b>				
Predictor	b	SE	Р	value	b	SE	Р	value	b	SE	Р	value
Controls												
1. Intercept	3.62	.12	.000		2.89	.15	.000		3.16	.13	.000	
2. Experimental rock preferences	01	.05	.830		04	.06	.500		.02	.05	.730	
3. Folk rock preferences		.04	.071		05	.06	.399		05	.05	.281	
Primary predictors												
4. Customer engagement (CE)	.53	.13	.000		.90	.16	.000		.82	.14	.000	
5. Brand innovativeness (BI)	.40	.17	.018		.56	.21	.008		.23	.18	.214	
6. New product innovativeness (NPI)	14	.18	.450		.21	.23	.351		.01	.20	.972	
Interaction terms												
7. CE*BI	36	.18	.040		38	.22	.087		31	.19	.110	
8. CE*NPI	.21	.19	.260		21	.23	.372		30	.20	.144	
9. BI*NPI	.40	.24	.095		66	.30	.028		29	.26	.261	
10. CE*BI*NPI	.54	.26	.038		.44	.32	.176		.51	.28	.073	
Model summary												
Overall F				5.59				9.72				9.91
Overall R2				.21				.32				.32
Adjusted R2				.000				.000				.000

# Table 1.5 Multiple regression results (Experiment II)

Notes: N = 199. Final model results are reported. Customer engagement, folk rock and experimental rock music preferences are mean-centred.

In contrast to Experiment I, bootstrap analysis (see Table 1.5) reveals that the three-way interaction between customer engagement, brand and new product innovativeness is significant only in the perceived value model and marginally significant in the WOM model. This suggests that fit between brand and new product innovativeness only moderates the effect of customer engagement on the perceived value of the new product, thus giving support to H3.

To visualize this moderated moderation effect, Figure 1.3 displays the three-way interactions in plots. For the folk rock album (low NPI condition), customer engagement has a significant positive effect on perceived value only when it is released by musicians used to play music that is perceived as similarly innovative (effect<sub>lowBI</sub> =.53, SE =.13, 95% CI =.26 to.75; effect<sub>highBI</sub> =.16, SE =.12, 95% CI = -.10 to.39). The difference between these two effects is significant: f(1; 189) = 4.25, p = 0.04. In contrast, engaged customers rate the new experimental rock album (high new product innovativeness condition) similarly, regardless of whether it was released by musicians with experience in that genre f(1; 189) =.18, p = 0.04.



Figure 1.3 – Conditional effects of customer engagement at values of brand innovativeness and new product innovativeness (Experiment II)

## 1.5.3 Discussion

The purpose of Experiment II was to determine whether the phenomena observed in Experiment I was also present when we examine the reaction of customers engaged with a new album's genre, depending on whether or not the brand's previous albums are perceived as similarly innovative. We tested this by means of an experiment using two fictitious groups of musicians and a scenario of an album to be released shortly (similar to Experiment I), measuring engagement with the genre of the new product. Our results show that engaged customers have little concern for the previous career of musicians when they offer new music in a genre that they like. The only exception to this rule is in the perceived value of a less innovative new album, where fit is preferable. We explain these results, as hypothesized above, using the endowment effect. In Experiment I, when engaged customers detect a lack of innovativeness fit between a brand and its new product, they experience a great loss: their favourite genre is losing a veteran performer, and this is painful for them. In contrast, since participants in Experiment II all face a positive outcome (their favourite genre is enriched through a new release), they do not show any reluctance towards albums released by musicians traditionally associated with another genre. Experiment II therefore brings an important boundary condition to the moderating effect of brand and new product innovativeness on new product adoption. Indeed, it seems that in the case of a lack of innovativeness fit, the risk lies mostly in the reaction of current customers, not in that of potential new ones.

# **1.6 General Discussion and Managerial Insights**

Our main objective in this study was to gain knowledge about whether customer engagement can help in the launch of new music products and, if so, under what conditions. Our hypothesis was that engagement has a positive effect on perceived value, purchase intentions and WOM intentions only when there is a fit between brand and new product innovativeness. We ran two experiments simulating the launch of a new album by fictitious musicians, manipulating brand and new product innovativeness and measuring engagement with the genre of the brands in Experiment I and with the genre of the new products in Experiment II.

Our results suggest that customer engagement has great marketing potential: under the right conditions, it allows artists to significantly increase the success probability of their new products. This aligns with previous research showing that engagement can be used by musicians as a tool to foster customer loyalty and to improve new product performance (see Brodie et al. 2011; Hollebeek 2011). Moreover, our results are in line with the recent craze in both the popular press (Buli, 2014) and the music industry for customer engagement. For instance, Next Big Sound, a New York-based firm specializing in online music analytics, uses social media engagement data to predict which new artists are most likely to succeed.

We also show that if customer engagement can be used by musicians to enhance the performance of a new album, its effectiveness is conditional on the fit between the perceived innovativeness of the new product and that of the brand that launches it on the market. Indeed, rather than following their favourite artists wherever they go, engaged consumers have high expectations and appreciate having things stay the same. Brand managers must therefore be aware that although engagement is a good tool for musicians to develop a solid and loyal fan base, it requires them to make artistic concessions. For example, conventional artists with highly engaged fans are denied the opportunity to experiment with more complex music, while innovative brands are encouraged to always create cutting-edge songs.

That said, the results of the two studies do not necessarily prevent musicians from undertaking any creative changes. Indeed, for some musicians a genre change may still be the best marketing choice. This is the case when the loss of a musician's original fans caused by a stylistic change can be offset by a gain in new admirers, especially when one genre is much more popular than another. Moreover, the results of Experiment II show that while fit is important for current customers, it is not a concern for potential new customers. Therefore, it might be interesting for switching-genre musicians to target consumers engaged in the new genre, to reduce the negative consequences associated with the loss of their previous customers. Thus, when releasing a new album, musicians must first determine whether there is a good fit between this new product and their brand, and then choose which engaged customers to target. Consequently, the key contribution of this study is not to establish whether engagement is good or bad but, rather, to highlight the importance of considering the dynamic associated with fit and engagement when making artistic and marketing decisions.

# 1.7 Limitations and Future Research

As with all studies, ours is subject to limitations. First, since we used fictitious musicians, we measured customer engagement with music genres instead of with the musicians themselves. It is plausible that the results would be slightly different in the case of real musicians. Customer engagement with a real music brand could have a negative effect, instead of a null one, in the case of low fit. Indeed, customers engaged with a specific artist may feel betrayed in the case of a change in innovativeness, which is less likely to happen with unknown musicians. Second, in both studies we used the same two music genres, to increase parsimony, instead of using multiple innovative genres and multiple conventional ones (for instance, we could have used folk rock and country music for the low innovativeness condition). Hence, it is possible that the effect of fit is caused by mere genre similarity rather than by innovativeness per se. This is another limitation. To reduce this possibility, we chose not to describe the genre of the new album in the experiment, in order to let the participants themselves evaluate the product and its genre. Moreover, participants in Experiment I were asked to describe the genre of the new albums, and their diverse responses suggest that several participants did not connect the new album with the genres of both music brands. This result reinforces the idea that innovativeness is driving the moderating effect of fit and not just similarity. Third, our study did not consider certain personal characteristics of the participants, such as their level of consumer innovativeness (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991) – in other words, propensity to try and to buy new music. It would be interesting to know whether the differences, in the effect of fit, between the innovative and the more conventional brands are due to the innovativeness of their consumers (as assumed but not tested in our study) or to some unknown factor. Lastly, our study does provide ways to override the double-edged sword

aspect of customer engagement. It would be interesting to look at whether the use of new brands or specific promotional tools can help musicians gain from engagement while making significant stylistic changes.

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# Chapitre 2 When Strong Engagement in Social Media Hinders New Product Performance: the Importance of Fit

# Abstract

In the recent years, customer engagement in social media has received great attention from both researchers and managers, looking at how engagement can help brands and products perform better on their respective markets. However, very little attention has been given to the potential dark side of engagement, especially in the context of new product launches. This paper thus examines the relationship between customer engagement in social media, fit, brand longevity and new product performance. In this paper, we use the music industry as a study context to show that the level of pre-release social media engagement only impacts record sales when the new product's fit is strong, and that this is particularly true for younger brands. In other words, if entertainment brands such as musicians can gain from engagement, it is only true when they follow a creative path that is already well known to them and to their best customers. We use a sample of 181 albums launched by 158 artists on the Canadian market between 2016 and 2017 and a dataset that combines weekly record sales, weekly social media activity and Spotify's audio features analysis. To test our hypotheses, we apply a regression-discontinuity inspired generalized estimating equation model in which we account for endogeneity concerns. This study contributes to the literature by providing robust empirical evidence of the possible dark side of engagement: while engagement can help artists succeed, it might constrain their artistic freedom. Furthermore, this study offers relevant managerial insights about the best social media strategies to adopt depending on the nature of a new product and of the brand that launches it on the market.

# 2.1 Introduction

Since their rise in importance at the turn of the 2010s (Perrin, 2015), social media networks have had a major impact on consumer behavior due to their widespread use: in January 2020, social networks were used by more than 3.6 billion people worldwide, each

of those users spending on average more than 2 hours a day watching videos, sharing ideas or liking content on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter (Statista, 2020). The music industry is one of the sectors the most impacted by social media; according to a study by MusicWatch (Crupnick, 2018), nine out of ten social media users engage in social media to share music videos with friends, to discover new artists or to give their opinion on the newest song of their favorite musicians. It is therefore not surprising to see artists, especially emerging ones, use social media as a privileged means to create a strong engagement bond with fans, in the hope of boosting new album sales and fostering loyalty (Buli, 2014). This is particularly true since strong levels of social media engagement typically allow firms to generate better consumer insights (Moe & Schweidel, 2017), to exchange directly with their customers (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014) and thus to increase the success of new products (Baum, Spann, Füller, & Thürridl, 2019).

Engagement seems even more important in today's highly competitive music industry. Indeed, contemporary artists must navigate through a market where the number of available products is massive and constantly increasing. For instance, a grand total of 36.3 million different songs were streamed at least once in 2018 (Stein, 2020) and 60,000 new songs are added on a daily basis to Spotify (Ingham, 2021). Moreover, this increased competition happens in an industry which still generates less revenues than what it used to at the turn of the millennium: in 2020, the global recorded music industry generated US\$21.6 billion, which represents only 86% of the peak in revenues reached in 1999 (IFPI, 2021).

It is in this context that customer engagement (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Harmeling et al., 2017), notably on social media, can help brands stand out and increase the success of their new products. We can think of how international stars like Justin Bieber and Charlie Puth were able to get a mainstream audience thanks to the intense engagement of their first YouTube fans (Hoffman, 2009; Oliver, 2019), or to the many smaller artists who managed to fund music projects on crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter thanks to the support of their most loyal customers (since its launch, Kickstarter has raised more than US\$250 million for musical projects (Kickstarter, n.d.)). The effect of engagement on new product performance comes from the fact that highly engaged music

fans are interested in knowing everything about their favorite artists, seek to interact with them on social media and to promote them actively (Dessart et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2016b), which makes them more likely to adopt new products (Perron-Brault, Dantas, & Legoux, 2020). Indeed, customer engagement has been associated with loyalty in various contexts (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019) such as sports television channels (Lim, Hwang, Kim, & Biocca, 2015), mobile applications (Thakur, 2019) or tourism (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017).

However, engagement can also have a negative effect for brands. The launch of the New Coke and the following backlash from outraged customers or even the overhaul Pepsico tried to implement in the Tropicana juice packaging are very eloquent examples of the negative consequences of having highly engaged customers (Andrivet, 2015; Klein, 2015). This is also what happened to Linkin Park, a band who was best known for their nu metal sound, after the release of their seventh album entitled One More Light (2017). The album, which hip-hop/pop style was far from the original sound of the band, was negatively received by hardcore Linkin Park fans, who saw it as a proof that the band had "sold-out" (Cook-Wilson, 2016). Although the case of Linkin Park may seem trivial, it highlights the potential dark side of engagement: strong brand-customer links can create high expectations which may be hard to fulfill (Harmeling et al., 2017). Interesting, despite the large number of studies dedicated to understanding how to create and nurture engagement (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Dimitriu & Guesalaga, 2017; Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014), we know very little about the potential negative effects of having highly engaged customers. For instance, it is currently unclear what are the required conditions for engagement to have a positive effect on the success of new entertainment products, such as music albums.

In this paper, we argue that if customer engagement can have a positive effect on new product performance, this effect is also moderated by new product fit. In other words, engagement's effect should only be positive when a new product fits well with the brand's previous launches. In contrast, new products that deviate greatly from the existing ones (i.e. low fit) will be negatively impacted from engagement. To test these propositions, we use a sample of 181 albums launched between 2016 and 2017 by 158 different artists on

the Canadian market. For each of those albums, we gathered record sales and streams data, social media engagement on Facebook, and fit metrics via Spotify's audio features. We analyse this longitudinal dataset in a regression discontinuity model, while accounting the possible endogenous nature of social media activities.

Our research makes three main contributions to theory and practice. First, our results bring nuance to the literature demonstrating that having highly engaged customers on social media pages is not enough on its own to generate more sales. Second, and more importantly, this study demonstrates the double-edged sword effect of social media engagement. Our results show that to benefit from social media engagement, brands must offer new products with a high level of fit (i.e., a product that is similar to the ones previously launched). On the contrary, when confronted with a new product that is significantly different from the usual, highly engaged consumers may feel betrayed and react negatively, thus decreasing sales performance. Lastly, this study establishes that brand longevity acts as an additional boundary condition. Indeed, we find that new product fit is particularly important for early and mid-career artists, but not as much for experienced musicians. This condition allows us to identify which types of artists should pay the most attention to the relationship between their consumers' engagement and their new product fit.

# 2.2 Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

## 2.2.1 Customer engagement in social media and entertainment product performance

In the relationship marketing literature, engagement definitions revolve around four poles: engagement as (1) a psychological state of mind, (2) intrinsic motivation, (3) customer activities and as (4) customer-added firm value (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Harmeling et al., 2017). In our case, we adopt a practical approach that mixes the third and fourth perspectives and posits that customer engagement is made-up of customer activities (Hollebeek et al., 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010) and customer contributions to firm value (Pansari & Kumar, 2017), in the context of social media. Hence, in this paper, a highly engaged customer will comment on a brand's Facebook page, retweet its content and share it with friends on Instagram, to name a few examples. These interactions in turn lead to improved sales performance by generating more word-of-mouth and by boosting behavioral intentions (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020). We choose to focus on social media because of its importance in today's marketing (brands spend on average approximately 13% of their marketing budget on social media [Moorman 2020]), but also due to their observable and functional nature. Hence, while a psychological state of engagement can be difficult to monitor among a consumer base, Facebook likes, for instance, is a readily usable measure that can be employed to describe and assess the impact of engagement on performance.

According to the literature, we can expect that the more engaged are the customers of a brand, the more successful the new products of that brand should be. In other words, brands whose customers are highly active on social media should see their products perform better than those with less engaged customers. This hypothesis first echoes the results of a recent meta-analysis which reviews 97 studies on customer engagement in social media (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020). In their study, the authors indeed show that engagement through Facebook & Twitter can significantly improve firm performance, directly and indirectly via an increase of behavioral intentions (willingness to continue interacting with a brand, including through purchases).

In the specific context of entertainment science (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2019), other studies also converge toward this prediction, even if results are a bit fuzzier. First, prerelease consumer buzz, defined as "the aggregation of observable expressions of anticipation by consumers for a forthcoming new product" (Houston, Kupfer, Hennig-Thurau, & Spann, 2018, p. 349) seems to be usually associated with the performance of entertainment products (Dhar & Chang, 2009; Houston et al., 2018; Morales-Arroyo & Pandey, 2010; Xiong & Bharadwaj, 2014). However, Dewan & Ramaprasad's (2014) results suggest instead that blog buzz has no effect on album sales and even negatively impacts song sales. These two authors explain this phenomenon by a sales displacement caused by free online sampling, which was common on blogs at the time of data collection (2006). Indeed, customers could first check out a new song on a blog, instead of purchasing it right away, which would then decrease song sales. However, this phenomenon is probably not as important today since music blogs will usually share links to YouTube videos, which are now accounted for by Nielsen Soundscan in recorded music performance figures.

More recently, Saboo et al. (2016) have studied the relationship between social media activities on networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and Last.fm, and human brand sales in the specific context of recorded music. In their analysis of 36 musicians' sales and social media data, they show that the number of social media followers has an inverted u-shaped effect on music sales: an increase in Twitter and Facebook followers has a strong effect for lesser-known artists but becomes unproductive, even slightly negative, when an artist becomes too popular. Meanwhile, the effect of the social comments on music sales follows an exponential curve, i.e., the more customers discuss and share opinions about an artist's music, the more the effect of these comments on sales increases.

Using a data set that includes all major movies released between 2012 and 2014 in North American, Kupfer et al. (2018) report a similar positive effect of the number of an actor's Facebook fans, three months before the release of a movie, on box-office performance. When controlling for other factors such as brand power, genre and product-related posts, an increase of 10% in Facebook fans generates on average 0.5% higher revenues. Some marketing and IT researchers have also studied the impact of social media on the entertainment product performance in the perspective of firm marketing actions. For instance, Gong et al. (2017) analyzed the impact of messages posted on Sina Weibo (the top tweeting website in China) by firms as well as by influencers on TV shows viewing. To do so, they have collaborated with a major Chinese television production company to develop an experiment where TV shows were either not tweeted at all, tweeted by the company or tweeted by the company and retweeted by an influential Weibo user. Findings from Gong et al. (2017) indicate that the company's tweet increases by 0.6% TV viewing. Influencers' retweets had also had similar effect. Similarly, Chen et al. (2015) analysis of social media activities from 616 artists shows that personal messages broadcast<sup>2</sup> on Myspace (an important social media for music at the time of data collection) can significantly increase sales, but the effect is only modest. Overall, despite the recent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Personal messages broadcast refers to a kind of message/newsletter that could be sent by an artist directly to their fans using the internal mailbox of Myspace.
changes in the music industry caused by the rise of streaming, customer engagement in social media should have a positive effect on new album performance.

# H1: Customer engagement in social media is positively associated with new product performance.

#### 2.2.2 The Importance of Fit

We propose that the relationship between customer engagement and new product performance is moderated by the fit between the new product and its brand previous offerings. In other words, engagement's effect should be more positive when a brand releases a new product whose characteristics are similar to their previous products. In contrast, we hypothesize that a new product that deviates greatly from the brand's previous product portfolio will be negatively perceived by its engaged customers and will not benefit from the same engagement boost.

In the brand extension literature, it is commonly accepted that the fit between a new product and its parent brand is a key component of its success (Bouten, Snelders, & Hultink, 2011; Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2016; H. Moon & Sprott, 2016; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Indeed, a new product with a good level of fit is generally perceived as more familiar to customers (Bouten et al., 2011), is easier to evaluate and is more likely to benefit from the positive associations with the brand that launched it (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Among entertainment science research, we find similar results. For instance, Shi, Lim, and Suh (2018) show in their study of the impact of boundary crossing on music customer evaluations that musicians are generally rewarded for doing the same music repeatedly (and thus implicitly punished for innovating too much). Indeed, after comparing iTunes album ratings for more than 10,000 musicians, the authors have observed that artists who specialize in a particular genre tend to get better ratings than those who regularly switch genres. Moreover, familiarity and repetition are strong predictors of musical preferences, meaning that music fans tend to prefer when things remain the same (Hunter & Schellenberg, 2011b; Nunes, Ordanini, & Valsesia, 2014; Ward et al., 2014). Thus, we can expect that a brand's new release will perform

better when it presents a strong level of fit with the brand's previous products, all other things being equal.

### H2: New product fit is positively associated with new product performance.

In this paper, we expect that the positive effect of engagement is moderated by new product fit. Indeed, engaged customers, highly familiar with their favorite artists and deeply attached to their music, should prefer when their beloved musicians release new albums that are in the continuity of the previous ones. To explain our hypothesis, we rely on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), a framework first developed in the field of sociology. This theory suggests that individuals engage in a social exchange based on a cost-benefit analysis where reciprocity is a key element (Guo, Gruen, & Tang, 2017). Hence, when customers engage in a relationship with a brand, they expect that the positive feelings and behaviors conveyed toward that brand should be returned in the form of benefits for themselves (Braun, Batt, Bruhn, & Hadwich, 2016; Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2018). Moreover, in a social exchange, partners aim to maintain balance at all times, undertaking balance-restoring actions when equilibrium is disturbed (Hollebeek, 2011). Based on the social exchange theory, we propose that when music fans display engagement for a musician, notably on social media, they also expect that this same musician return the favor in the future by offering new music they will enjoy. Since we hypothesize that engaged customers prefer new albums which fit with the previous ones (see previous paragraph), we can expect that in cases of very low fit, customers should be under the impression that the musician has not honored his part of the bargain. Fans may therefore engage in balance-restoring endeavors such as not purchasing the new album, backlashing the artist, and even reducing previous albums listening time.

## H3: The greater the new product fit, the greater the positive association between customer engagement and new product performance.

## 2.2.3 The moderating effect of Brand Longevity

In addition to the moderating role of new product fit, we propose that brand longevity, which refers to how long a brand has existed and endured in a specific market (Moulard,

Raggio, & Folse, 2016; Preece, Kerrigan, & O'Reilly, 2019), may also play a moderating role. One could argue that older brands are more likely to have a strong brand heritage, or, in other words, to be characterized by unique methods, distinct referents and well-known attributes (Spiggle, Nguyen, & Caravella, 2012). Honoring brand heritage and showing consistency (i.e., staying more or less the same in the minds of consumers) are both important drivers of brand authenticity (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015; Moulard et al., 2016). In turn, brand authenticity is associated with positive brand extension responses (Spiggle et al., 2012). Hence, one could expect that for older brands, brand heritage can act as a burden, forcing them to stay the same and reducing their creative leeway.

Nevertheless, recent findings from the literature lead us to believe that older brands will instead be less punished by their engaged customers in the event of a weak new product fit. First, in their study of the success of 92 movie franchises, Heath et al. (2015) found that earlier sequels (i.e. the first or second sequel) perform better when they are very similar to the first installment of the franchise, since consumers are at this moment still excited about the franchise and impressed by its novelty. In contrast, later sequels (i.e. the fourth or fifth sequel) show better performance when they diverge significantly from the first chapter of the franchise, because this divergence compensate for a certain boredom that can set in with time. In the context of our study, we can therefore expect that for experienced brands, which have launched many products during their existence, a weaker new product fit will be appreciated by engaged customers because it refreshes the novelty associated with the brand. Moreover, Chun et al. (2015) suggest that for strong reputation brands, brand extension evaluations and spillover effects are higher in the case of low fit extension. The idea is that when a strong reputation brand launches a product that is not in line with what it is known for, it creates surprise among customers, who are then more motivated to process information about the new product thoroughly and detect its qualities. Since reputation is earned over time (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009), we can expect that older brands are more likely to benefit from the positive effect of reputation that newer brands, which have less time to establish a strong reputation.

H4a: For brands with low or moderate longevity, the greater the new product fit, the greater the positive association between customer engagement and new product performance

H4b: For brands with high longevity, the association between customer engagement and new product performance will not be impacted by new product fit.

## 2.3 Methodology

To test the conceptual model (see Figure 2.1), we use the Canadian music industry for both local and international artists as the study context, a substantial market composed of artists of various stages and status: the Canadian recorded music market is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest in the word and grossed \$394 US million in 2018 (FYI Music News 2019; IFPI 2021). Since we needed to assess the impact of customer engagement and fit on new album performance, we first created a sample of artists for which we collected sales data, engagement numbers and the list of albums released by those artists during our data collection period (2016–2017). The next sections describe the data collection process. Table presents the variables of interest, their definition, operationalisation, and the source from which they were obtained. We also report descriptive statistics of our variables in Table .



Figure 2.1 - Conceptual model and hypotheses

#### 2.3.1 Sample and Album-Related Data

To compile the sample for the study, we employed a stratified convenience sampling strategy. Thus, we created five categories of Facebook reach (More than 5M page likes; between 1M and 5M; between 100k and 1M; between 10k and 100k; Less than 10k) to obtain a sample of artists with a significant variance in terms of social media reach. We first looked for artists with more than 5M page likes and retrieved 87 of them. We then selected artists in fitting in the other categories, with the aim of creating groups of roughly similar size. In total, we selected 405 artists for which we obtained sales data for 2016 and 2017 (104 weeks in total). We subsequently dropped 22 artists because sales or social media data were in their case incomplete or mssing. For the remaining 383 artists, we collected the data for each of the variables of interest. We then used MusicBrainz's application programming interface (https://musicbrainz.org/doc/MusicBrainz API) to assemble a list of all the albums released between 2016 and 2017 by the musicians in our sample and the exact date of their Canadian release date. MusicBrainz is a collaborative music database which captures information about more than 1.7 million musicians as of October 2020, their works, and the relationship between them; this thus makes MusicBrainz an ideal source to obtain music-related metadata. To ensure the validity of our MusicBrainz record inventory, we triangulate the list of releases with our sales database, with informational websites such as Wikipedia and with the data collected via Spotify (see next paragraph). In total, 226 artists of our sample released at least one album between 2016 and 2017, for a grand total of 329 albums. For those 226 artists, we then gathered information's about their previous album (title, list of songs and release date), essential to the new product fit calculations, as well as the year of release of the first album of each artist in the sample, in order to calculate the brand longevity. After discarding albums that consist of compilations or live music, those that are the first effort of an artist (which makes it impossible to compute a fit) and those that are characterized by missing values or invalid information, we compiled a final sample of 181 albums launched by 158 different artists.

Variable	Definition	Source
Dependant variables		
Sales performanceit	Sum of record sales and streams in album- equivalent unit (1 album = 10 songs = 1500 streams) for artist i in week t.	Nielsen Soundscan
Independent variables a	nd moderators	
Social media engagementi	Total number of unique users who created a story (for instance by liking, sharing or commenting on a post or by mentioning or tagging an artist) on or about the Facebook page of artist i in the third month before new album release, residuals after controlling for social media reach.	Facebook
Social media reachi	Total number of Facebook page likes on the page of artist i in the third month before new album release.	Facebook
Social media postsit	Total number of Facebook brand posts for artist i in week t	Facebook
Audio-features fiti	<ul> <li>0 – the Euclidean distance between the average audio features of the newest album and the previous release of artist i</li> <li>(0 represents a perfect fit and negative values a poorer fit)</li> </ul>	Spotify
Brand longevity <sub>i</sub>	Years since the launch of the first album of artist i	Musicbrainz
Consumers's comments valence <sub>i</sub>	Average emotional tone of the comments posted by consumers on the Facebook page of artist i in the third month before new album release	Facebook
Consumer's comments toxicity <sub>i</sub>	Average toxicity of the comments posted by consumers on the Facebook page of artist i in the third month before new album release	Facebook
Promotioniw	Ratio of the number of the Facebook posts by artist i in week w to the mean number of Facebook posts by artist i six to three months before new album release	Facebook

## Table 2.1 Variables and Operationalisations

Variable	Mean	(SD)	Min	Max			
Dependant variables							
Sales performance	1399.63	(4422.44)	0	115,622.17			
Independent variables and moderators							
Social media reach	7,150,626.51	(15,104,817.92)	2315	104,634,506			
Social media	73,681.26	(176,384.74)	0.14	1,877,366.43			
engagement							
Facebook posts	5.10	(5.66)	0	105			
Audio-features fit	-1.45	(0.93)	-5.24	029			
<b>Brand longevity</b>	8.50	7.43	0	49			
Consumers'	53.40	(13.67)	1	99.00			
comments valence							
Consumers'	14.55	(5.53)	1.36	53.14			
comments toxicity							

## **Table 2.2 Descriptive statistics**

Note: The data presented encompasses data from 181 albums, each over 17 weeks. For time-varying variables, weekly values are provided. Non-instrumented and non-residual-corrected values are provided.

### 2.3.2 Record Sales and Streaming Data

For every artist in the final sample, we obtained weekly record sales and streaming data for every week between January 2016 and December 2017. The data source is Nielsen SoundScan, the main information supplier on recorded music performance in North America (Elberse, 2010). To monitor music consumer behavior, Nielsen compiles weekly albums and singles sales for both physical and digital format, and on-demand and programed audio & video streams from more than 39,000 outlets around the world, including bricks-and-mortar stores and online platforms such as iTunes or Spotify. Those performance numbers are then published by *Billboard*, an US entertainment media brand, in multiple charts such as the *Billboard* Global 200 for singles, the Artist 100 or the Canadian Hot 100.

We aggregate record sales and stream numbers to create an album-equivalent unit measure, following the standard used from 2014 to 2018 by both *Billboard* and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). One album-equivalent unit correspond to one album sales, ten digital song sales or 1500 streams. In total, the 383

artists in our first sample (i.e., the sample before removing artists without any new release) generated 24.5 million album-equivalent units. In our dataset, sales are aggregated at the artist level: the sales and streams of all albums and songs contained in an artist's portfolio are combined for every week. If this prevents us from having the precise number of album-equivalent units generated by the most recent album of a given artist, it allows us to see its impact of a new product on the performance of the whole portfolio of that same artist.

By using album-equivalent units, our approach differs from Elberse (2010) and Papies & Van Heerde (2017) who use revenues as their dependent variable by multiplying unit sales by the average price of their corresponding format (for instance, a digital track download is typically priced \$.99). We deviate from their choice due to the nature of our sales data. Indeed, our period of analysis (2016–2017) is characterized by the rising importance of streaming as a means of music consumption—streaming represents approximately 60.5% of the album-equivalent units generated by the artists of our sample. This was not the case for Elberse (2010) and Papies & Van Heerde (2017) data, which was collected before the rise of streaming services (respectively 2005-2006 and 2004-2010). The inclusion of streaming in recorded music revenues calculation raise a problem because there are important discrepancies in the amount paid by streaming services to artists for each stream. For instance, payouts tend to differ between songs streamed by a paying subscriber and those by an ad-supported user, even among the same streaming service (Sisario, 2018). Moreover, while Apple Music pays as of 2021 1.0 cents per stream, Spotify offers around 0.4 cents and YouTube 0.07 cents (Sanchez, 2018). Since our data does not allow us to identify through which service a song was streamed, it would be difficult, and risky, to determine a reliable mean value for each stream. The choice of album-equivalent units therefore seems the most relevant considering the nature of the data.

### 2.3.3 Social Media Engagement

We obtained Facebook social media engagement data for the artist of our final sample via Next Big Sound, a music analytics firm based in New York. Next Big Sound collects and analyzes social media engagement data across several websites such as Facebook, Pandora, Twitter & Songkick to predict the likelihood of success of various musicians.

For our study, we choose to focus on Facebook since it is the social media network the most widely used by Canadian consumers (Gruzd & Mai, 2020) — in 2017, more than 65% of Canadians were Facebook users — and because Facebook is often employed to consume, create, and share music-related content (Crupnick, 2018). To measure social media reach, we gathered the weekly number of Facebook pages likes for every artist of our sample during 2016 and 2017. To measure social media engagement, we collected the weekly numbers for Facebook's "People Talking About This" metric, which sums the total number of unique people who created a story of any kind about or on a specific page. Stories, as described by Facebook, include actions such a commenting, sharing, or liking a post as well as tagging or mentioning someone. Since the total number of engaged users is directly linked with the number of page likes, we follow Kupfer et al. (2018) steps: in our model, we use as the only engagement-related variable the residuals of a regression in which the weekly number of Facebook pages likes is the independent variable and the weekly Facebook's "People Talking About This" is the dependent variable. This technique is interesting because it allows us to determine, for each artist-week pair, if the level of engagement of an artist's fanbase is greater or lower than what can be expected from an artist with a similar level of reach.

We also used Facebook's API to the gather the comments made by fans on each post produced by the artists of our sample during the study period. For each of the identified comments, we also collected their textual content and then used LIWC (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010), a tool created to do automated text analysis, to evaluate the emotional tone of those comments. This technique allows us to evaluate the valence of an artist's social-media engagement and to add this valence as a control variable in our model<sup>3</sup>. In a similar fashion, we analyzed the same comments with Google's Perspective API (www.perspectiveapi.com) to evaluate their toxicity<sup>4</sup>. This is important because it allows

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> As a robustness check, we also run of models using the VADER dictionary (Valence Aware Dictionary for Sentiment Reasoning). The results are overall very similar to those obtained using LIWC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> It is important to include both valence and toxicity in our model because both variable measures distinct aspects of the content of a comment. Indeed, while valence describes the (positive or negative) nature of the emotions displayed in a comment, toxicity refers how rude, disrespectful, and aggressive is a comment. For instance, the following comment displays negative emotion without being toxic: "This new album disappoints me. I am sad that this artist has changed so much." On the contrary, a comment stating that "this artist is stupid" will be both negatively connoted and toxic.

us to identify the percentage of comments that can be associated with internet trolls and use this measure as another control variable. Lastly, to control for the use of social networks by the artists themselves, which can have a strong effect on sales (Papies & Van Heerde, 2017) and engagement, we also gathered the weekly number of Facebook posts for each artist of our sample.

### 2.3.4 New Product Fit

To evaluate new product fit, we use Spotify's audio features, which are available for free via Spotify's API. Since it bought The Echo Nest in 2014, a music intelligence platform created to improve music identification and recommendation via machine learning, Spotify employs proprietary algorithms to analyze the musical content of the songs offered on their platform. Moreover, the Audio Features are also used by Spotify in the design of Discover Weekly, a weekly personalized playlist offered for each Spotify user which includes new music suggestions in line with user personal preferences. Spotify's Audio Features consist of twelve criteria, divided in three categories. The first category consists of confidence interval measures which determine whether a song is likely to be acoustic, recorded live, instrumental or to contain spoken words. The second category includes perceptual measures of a song's level of energy, loudness, danceability and valence while the third category comprises of objective musical descriptors (duration, tempo, key, and mode). To compute our measure of fit, we therefore obtained the audio feature numbers for every song included in the albums released by our artists between 2016 and 2017 as well as in their previous studio album<sup>5</sup>. For each of these albums, we calculate the album-wide means for each of the audio features to have a series of unique measures for each album. Lastly, we use the Euclidean distance to calculate the musical difference between the newest album and the previous one, by first standardizing three of the variables (i.e. loudness, tempo and duration)<sup>6</sup> and excluding key, time signature and mode to have only interval variables.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> We do not include compilations or live albums to our sample since they usually don't offer new songs.
<sup>6</sup> In contrast to Askin and Mauskapf (2017), we decided to only standardize the audio features characterized by a large range of values ("loudness", "tempo" and "duration") in order to bring them to the same scale as the others, i.e. between 0 and 1. Indeed, for the majority of the audio features extracted Spotify's analysis, the different values between 0 and 1 have a precise meaning that we prefer

## 2.4 Modeling Challenges

To test our hypotheses properly, we adjust our model in a specific way to address four main issues. First, because of the aggregated nature of our sales variable (weekly sales are at the level of the artist and not of specific releases), we cannot use a traditional linear growth model which estimates the sales from the first week of release. Instead, we build a generalized estimating equation (GEE) model<sup>7</sup> inspired by regression discontinuity (Jacob, Zhu, Somers, & Bloom, 2012). Hence, for each of the new album of our sample, we track weekly sales from 8 weeks before to 8 weeks after the release of the new album (see Figure 2.2 for a theoretical overview of the approach). This allows us to analyze the impact of the launch of a new product on the sales growth of an artist whole portfolio of music. When looking at the whole sample, we can see in Figure 2.3 that the variations of total weekly record sales from 8 weeks before to 8 weeks after the release goes in line with our theoretical model. Indeed, we observe a slow increase in sales in the weeks preceding the launch, followed by a strong jump at the launch (week 0) and a gradual decrease in sales in the following weeks.

to keep intact (see <a href="https://developer.spotify.com/documentation/web-api/reference">https://developer.spotify.com/documentation/web-api/reference</a> for more information). For instance, the variable Speechiness detects the presence of spoken words in a track so that values close to 1 indicate tracks that are most likely audio books or poetry, values between 0.33 and 0.66 tracks that contain both music and speech and values below 0.33 tracks that are most likely music (which included sung lyrics). As our sample includes only music albums, the average speechiness across the sample is very low (about 0.08) and the standard deviation is relatively small (about 0.07). Thus, two albums with a mean speechiness of 0.05 and 0.20 respectively could appear very distant after standardization, while the real values indicate in both cases that they are most likely music-only albums and that they do not differ significantly on this level.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> To run our model, we use SAS' GENMOD Procedure.



Figure 2.2 - Theoretical example of our regression discontinuity approach

Second, since social media engagement and sales can have simultaneous effects on each other (Facebook comments and shares can generate a buzz that boosts sales, which then lead more customers to engage in social media and post new comments and so on and so forth), we follow Kupfer et al. (2018) and isolate for each album the mean level of engagement on the artist's Facebook page three months before its release (i.e., 9 to 12 weeks before the launch) and use those means in our model instead of weekly engagement numbers. This technique is interesting because it circumvents a possible endogeneity problem caused by simultaneity bias while being more relevant from a managerial point of view. Indeed, it is interesting for artists and their managers to know which promotional strategy considering the level of engagement of their audience a few months before the launch, when it is still possible to make adjustments. For the sake of consistency, we use the same approach with our valence and toxicity control variables, thus using the mean emotional tone and the mean level of toxicity of comments posted in the third month before new album release.





Note : This figure plots the sum of weekly record sales for the 181 albums of our sample 8 weeks before and after new album release. The new album launch correspond to 0. All albums have been released between 2016 and 2017.

Third, we need to control for the possible endogeneity of new product fit in our model. Indeed, it is possible that new product fit is associated with an unobserved variable, such as the intensity of the promotion, which itself impacts weekly sales. Indeed, when artists release new albums that diverge strongly from their usual style, it is possible that they will tend to promote them less on social media because of their riskier nature, which in turn may result in a reduction in overall sales. To control for this phenomenon, we created a "promotion" variable that we added to our model. This variable consists of a ratio between the average number of posts published on Facebook by each artist from 26 to 9 weeks before the launch of the new album and the number of weekly publications during our period of interest, i.e., 8 weeks before and 8 weeks after the album release. In other words, our promotion variable allows us to determine if an artist has made more (or less) Facebook posts during the period associated with the new album launch than it usually does.

## 2.5 Model specification

For our complete model, we use a log-log approach where the weekly recorded music sales for artist i in week t is:

$$\begin{split} \ln(\text{Sales})_{it} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Week}_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Week}_{it} \times \text{Week}_{it}) + \beta_3 \text{Launch}_{it} \\ &+ \beta_4 (\text{Week}_{it} \times \text{Launch}_{it}) + \beta_5 (\text{lnEngagement}_i) \\ &+ \beta_6 (\text{Fit}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it}) + \beta_7 \text{Longevity}_i \\ &+ \beta_8 (\text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Week}_{it}) + \beta_9 (\text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it}) \\ &+ \beta_{10} (\text{Longevity}_i \times \text{Week}_{it}) + \beta_{11} (\text{Longevity}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it}) \\ &+ \beta_{12} (\text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Longevity}_i) \\ &+ \beta_{13} (\text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it} \times \text{Week}_{it}) \\ &+ \beta_{14} (\text{Fit}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it} \times \text{Longevity}_i) + \beta_{15} (\text{Fit}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it} \times \text{Week}_{it}) \\ &+ \beta_{16} (\text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Fit}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it}) \\ &+ \beta_{17} (\text{Longevity}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it} \times \text{Week}_{it}) \\ &+ \beta_{18} (\text{Fit}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it} \times \text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Longevity}_i) \\ &+ \beta_{18} (\text{Fit}_i \times \text{Launch}_{it} \times \text{lnEngagement}_i \times \text{Longevity}_i) \\ &+ \beta_{19} \text{Promotion}_{it} + \beta_{20} \text{Valence}_i + \beta_{21} \text{Toxicity}_i + \epsilon_{it} \end{split}$$

In the model,  $\beta_1$  denotes the effect of time on sales, ranging from -8 to 8 and launch is a dichotomic variable that is equal to 1 when the new album has been released (i.e., from week 0 to week 8). The first two hypotheses are tested through the main effect of the level of engagement for artist i three month before new album release (H<sub>1</sub>:  $\beta_5 > 0$ ) and through the effect of new product fit from week 0 to week 8 (H<sub>2</sub>:  $\beta_6 > 0$ ). It is important to note that we only include in our model the effect of the fit once the album is released: indeed, in the weeks before the release, the new product fit is not yet known by consumers. Hypothesis 3 is verified using through the interaction between the level of engagement and fit from week 8 (H<sub>3</sub>:  $\beta_{16} > 0$ ). Lastly, we test Hypothesis 4 using the triple interaction between engagement, fit, and brand longevity from week 0 through week 8 (H<sub>3</sub>:  $\beta_{18} < 0$ ). The model also controls for the main effect of promotion, engagement valence and engagement toxicity. The term  $\varepsilon_{iw}$  is the error term. The sales and engagement variables are both log-transformed to normalize their distribution (we also added a constant of 1 to each value to avoid taking the log of 0). In the model, we also standardize

engagement, fit, longevity, promotion, valence, and toxicity around a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. This allows us to interpret the coefficients at the mean level of the independent and control variables.

## 2.6 Results

### 2.6.1 Preliminary analysis

Before analyzing the results of our models, we calculate bivariate correlation coefficients between the raw weekly values for the variables of our model (sales, social media engagement & reach, brand longevity, number of brand posts, new album fit and mean consumers' content valence & toxicity). The values of those coefficients can be found in Table 2.3. As expected, we find positive associations between sales and social media engagement (r =.25) and sales and social media reach (r =.25). In other words, the more an artist has Facebook page likes, comments, shares, etc., the more it generates weekly sales. There is also a smaller, but still positive and significant, association between weekly sales and new album fit (r =.06). Album fit and social media engagement also display a positive association (r =.13). Lastly, there is no significant association between weekly record sales and brand longevity (r =.01). Whereas these results give some indications on our hypotheses, they do not address the challenges stated in the previous paragraphs, notably the aggregated nature of our sales variable and the possible simultaneity effects of sales and engagement.

### 2.6.2 Hypothesis testing

In Table 2.3, we report the parameters estimates from four regression models: (1) a model that only includes the main predictors, (2) a model with the main predictors and control variables, (3) a model with the main predictors and interactions terms, (4) a complete model with main effects, interactions, and control variables.

	Sales	Reach	Engagement	Posts	Fit	Longevity	Valence	Toxicity
Sales	1.00							
Reach	0.24***	1.00						
Engagement	0.25***	0.58***	1.00					
Facebook posts	0.10***	0.26***	0.29***	1.00				
Fit	0.06**	0.20***	0.13***	-0.05**	1.00			
Brand longevity	0.01	0.33***	0.14***	0.18***	0.09***	1.00		
Consumers'								
comments	-0.48*	-0.02	-0.7***	0.01	0.12***	-0.02	1.00	
valence								
Consumers'								
comments	0.07**	-0.01	0.11***	0.08***	-0.05*	0.09***	-0.43***	1.00
toxicity								

 Table 2.3 Bivariate correlation coefficients (n = 3077)

Note: \*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p<0.05; non-instrumented and non-residual-corrected values are provided.

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Model estimates	Hypothesis & Expected effect	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.
Intercept	•	5.426***	(0.166)	5.812***	(0.187)	5.421***	(0.187)	5.826***	(0.191)
Time-related variables									
Week		0.202***	(0.011)	0.346***	(0.028)	0.205***	(0.011)	0.349***	(0.028)
Week <sup>2</sup>		0.019***	(0.001)	0.030***	(0.003)	0.019***	(0.001)	0.030***	(0.002)
Launch		0.934***	(0.061)	0.863***	(0.066)	0.945***	(0.069)	0.856***	(0.074)
Week × launch		-0.465***	(0.023)	-0.745***	(0.057)	-0.468***	(0.023)	-0.747***	(0.056)
Main predictors									
Engagement	H1:+	0.000	(0.171)	-0.111	(0.166)	-0.082	(0.174)	-0.276	(0.170)
Fit × launch	H2:+	0.502***	(0.147)	0.378**	(0.133)	0.298	(0.206)	0.210	(0.165)
Brand longevity		0.432**	(0.147)	0.397**	(0.133)	0.514**	(0.163)	0.560***	(0.167)
Interaction terms									
Engagement × week						-0.009	(0.006)	-0.021**	(0.008)
Engagement × launch						0.016	(0.110)	0.082	(0.104)
Longevity × week						-0.005	(0.004)	0.004	(0.010)
Longevity × launch						0.074	(0.097)	0.028	(0.101)
Engagement × brand longevity						-0.241*	(0.147)	-0.276 <sup>T</sup>	(0.166)
Engagement $\times$ launch $\times$ week						0.006	(0.009)	0.029*	(0.014)
Fit × launch × longevity						0.307 <sup>T</sup>	(0.171)	0.265 <sup>T</sup>	(0.141)
Fit $\times$ launch $\times$ week						-0.007	(0.007)	-0.010	(0.009)
Engagement $\times$ fit $\times$ launch	H3: +					0.471**	(0.172)	0.393**	(0.148)
Longevity × launch × week						-0.008	(0.008)	-0.020	(0.019)
Longevity $\times$ engagement $\times$ fit $\times$ launch	H4: -					-0.267	(0.167)	-0.346*	(0.157)
Control variables									
Promotion				-0.501***	(0.090)			-0.485***	(0.086)
Customers' posts valence				-0.520**	(0.168)			-0.505***	(0.152)
Customers' posts toxicity				0.278**	(0.165)			0.328**	(0.142)

## Table 2.4 Parameters estimates from the regression models.

Note: Dependent variable = natural log of weekly album-equivalent units. All the variables (except Weeks and Launch) have been standardized prior the regressions.  $^{T} = p < 0.10$ ; \* = p < 0.05; \*\* = p < 0.01; \*\*\* = p < 0.001.

 $H_1$ : Contrary to our hypothesis, the level of social media engagement (three months before the release of a new album and when controlling for social media reach) does not have a significant effect on weekly record sales ( $\beta_{model_4} = -.0002$ , p =.99). This is true in all of our four models. In other words, an artist with strongly engaged customers does not generate more sales and streams than another artist with a similar reach (i.e., a similar number of Facebook pages like), but a lower level of engagement. This thus leads us to reject H<sub>1</sub>.

*H*<sub>2</sub>: To test H<sub>2</sub>, we look at the main effect of the new album fit on weekly sales, from week 0 to week 8. We find a significant and positive effect in our first two models ( $\beta_{model_1}$  =.502, p <.001;  $\beta_{model_2}$  =.378, p =.004), but an insignificant one for the two models that include interactions ( $\beta_{model_3}$  =.298, p <.145;  $\beta_{model_4}$  =.210, p =.203). This implies partial support for H<sub>2</sub>.

*H*<sub>3</sub>: When looking at the interaction between fit and engagement from week 0 to week 8, we find an important positive effect ( $\beta_{model_4}$  =.393, p =.008). Figure displays the effect of the interaction between social media engagement and new album fit on weekly sales. We learn that a high level of customer engagement, in the pre-release period, can have a positive effect on sales but requires a strong level of new product fit to do so. Indeed, when the fit between the new album and the previous one is strong (one standard deviation over the mean), a high level of engagement allows artists to generate on average 1200 album-equivalent units during the first week of release, which is more than 50% times as much as an artist with a low level of engagement (800 album-equivalent units). Moreover, when the fit is low (one standard deviation below the mean), an album released by an artist with highly engaged customers will generate only 359 album-equivalent units in the first week of release. Overall, those results support H<sub>3</sub> since they show that the effect of social media engagement depends on the level of new album fit.





*H*<sub>4</sub>: To test H<sub>4a</sub> and H<sub>4b</sub>, we first look at the main effect of brand longevity on weekly record sales. Overall, the results show that older brands tend to generate more record sales than younger ones ( $\beta_{model_4} = .560$ , p <.001). For instance, we find that emerging artists i.e., artists in the second year of their career, generate three times and a half less weekly record sales than experienced artists i.e., artists with fifteen years of experience (442 album-equivalent units in the first week of new album release versus 1436). Moreover, when looking at the interaction between brand longevity, social media engagement and new product fit, we find a negative and significative effect ( $\beta_{model_4} = -0.346$ , p <.028). Figure 2.5 displays the effect new product fit and social media engagement on weekly record sales for brands with low (1 years of experience), moderate (8 years) and high (15

years) brand longevity. As expected, we find that for younger brands, strong levels of engagement and fit significantly increase weekly record sales (approximately four times more than in a low fit, strong engagement condition), which support  $H_{4a}$ . In contrast, there is no significant difference between the weekly record sales of experienced artists, regardless of the level of fit of their new album and of the level of engagement of their consumers. These results provide evidence for  $H_{4b}$ . This thus suggests that while engagement and fit are important variables for artists who are in the first part of their career, this is not the case for experienced musicians.

*Control variables.* As for the control variables, they show unexpected effects that can, however, be explained by the nature of our dataset. Indeed, our model suggests that the more an artist's audience is negative ( $\beta_{model 4} = .-485$ , p = .001) and toxic ( $\beta_{model 4} = .328$ , p =.021), the more it will generate sales, which is counter-intuitive. However, as displayed in Table 2.3, both consumers' comments valence and toxicity are correlated with social media engagement so that when a brand has very engaged fans, it will also tend to attract trolls that will also post negative and toxic comments. This could be explained by the fact that trolls may aim pages where there is a lot of activity, to spread their negativity to as many people as possible (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Nepomuceno, Visconti, & Cenesizoglu, 2020). Lastly, artists that create more posts than usual on Facebook during the release period (-8 to 8 weeks) tend to sell fewer records ( $\beta_{\text{model} 4} = -.485$ , p <.001.). This counter-intuitive result can be explained by the fact that artists with fewer Facebook page likes tend to increase their number of Facebook posts during the launch period more than artists with a larger social media reach<sup>8</sup>. Since weekly record sales are strongly associated with social media reach (as shown in Table 2.3), it is therefore less surprising to see this effect.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The correlation between our promotion variable and social media reach =-.18, p < .001.



**Figure 2.5 - Weekly Record Sales as a Function of New Product Fit, Social Media Engagement and Brand Longevity**. *Note: Engagement, longevity and fit are standardized to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. Low and brand longevity represent respectively one standard deviation below and above the mean. Effects when week=0 and at the mean level of the control variables. With 95% confidence limits.* 

#### 2.6.3 Robustness Checks

To ensure the robustness of our results, we first performed extensive analyses regarding the possible omitted variable bias related to our *new product fit* variable (see modeling challenges section). Because of the hierarchical nature of our dataset, we used the R package REndo (Gui, Markus, Algesheimer, & Schilter, 2021) to apply Kim and Frees' (2007) instrument-free generalized method of moments technique. This method exploits the structure of the hierarchical data in order to check for an omitted variable bias without the need for an external instrumental variable. Using a test inspired by the Hausman-test for panel data, this method compares a reference random effects model (REF) with a more robust fixed effects model (FE) and a generalized method of moments (GMM) model. Interestingly, both omitted variables tests are significant (comparison between REF & FE models:  $x^{2}[11] = 157.5$ , p < .001; comparison between REF & GMM models:  $x^{2}[20] =$ 236,556.0, p < .001)) thus suggesting that the random effects estimators may be biased and that the FE or GMM models should be used. However, when comparing the parameters of the three different models, we note that they are all closely similar (to the third decimal place) and converge to the same results as presented in Table 2.4. This indicates that while there may be an omitted variable bias, our results are virtually unaffected by it and should therefore be considered robust.

To crosscheck our results, we also performed analyses using another data source to evaluate the fit, namely the website AllMusic (https://www.allmusic.com/) and its classification of albums by subgenres and musical styles. AllMusic is a privately owned comprehensive database dedicated to recorded music. On this database, internet users can find music metadata, album reviews as well as information about the musical genres associated with different artists and their albums. More precisely, albums on AllMusic are typically classified according to one of the 21 primary genres considered by the website. This primary genre is then divided into subgenres and, but not always, into musical styles. For instance, Doja Cat's Hot Pink (2018) is a rap album (primary genre), which includes pop-rap music (subgenre) and is tinted by hardcore rap (style). Using a JavaScript

scraper<sup>9</sup>, we thus collected primary genres, sub-genres, and styles information for the last two albums released by the artists in our sample. After observing the structure of the gathered data, we decided to focus on sub-genres and styles instead of relying on primary genres. Indeed, as explained by Shi et al. (2018), AllMusic combines pop and rock music even though these two genres are quite different. This poses a problem since two thirds of the albums of our sample are considered pop/rock releases; this greatly reduces the genre-related variance and makes the data unusable. Conversely, information about subgenres and styles is richer and much more varied. To measure the fit between the respective albums in terms of subgenres and styles, we then used Jaccard distance in a similar, if simpler, fashion than Shi, Lim and Suh (2018). The Jaccard distance reflects the proportion of pairs of binary classification that matches for two albums and takes the following form:  $1 - \frac{M_{11}}{M_{01} + M_{10} + M_{11}}$  where M<sub>11</sub> represents the sum of positive matches between the two albums and M<sub>01</sub> & M<sub>10</sub> represent the instance where one album displays a subgenre or a style that is not shared by the other. The Jaccard distance is relevant in this context since we do not want to give importance to the absence of a genre in both albums. To give more weight to subgenres than styles, our final measure of fit is equal to the sum of the Jaccard distance for sub-genres and half the Jaccard distance for musical styles.

Once this new fit measure was calculated, we performed our analyses again, using the model presented in the "model specification" section and substituting the original "fit" variable by the newly calculated genre-based fit measure. The complete results of these analyses can be found in Table 2.5. In general, the results obtained with the alternate fit measure are in line those presented in Table 2.4, but display weaker effects. Hence, engagement has a marginally significant positive effect only when the genre of an artist's new album is similar to its previous release ( $\beta = 0.175$ , p =.080). Moreover, this double-edged effect of engagement is true only for younger artists ( $\beta = -0.215$ , p =.030). This is consistent with our main model and offer some support for H<sub>3</sub> and strong evidence for H<sub>4</sub>. Interestingly, in the model with the AllMusic data, fit is not associated with weekly recorded sales ( $\beta = -0.000$ , p =.998), and marginally negatively associated with social

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The scraper can be found here: https://github.com/fpbrault/allmusic-scraper

media engagement ( $\beta$  = -0.290, p <.089), thus refuting both hypotheses 1 and 2. This difference can be explained by the nature of the AllMusic data. Indeed, while Spotify's audio features are objective (the features cannot be manipulated by brands once the songs are launched on the market and thus offer a good portrait of the nature of the songs), the same cannot be said about music genres. Indeed, since musical genres come with specific codes and identity markers that are well known to consumers, these categories are often used as a way for artists to position themselves on the musical market (Silver, Lee, & Childress, 2016). This is important because it is possible that when artists make significant changes to their musical content, they may seek to reduce the negative effects of this shift by presenting their new album as still belonging to the same genre as the previous album, thus creating a bias in our variable. This could explain why we find consistent but weaker effects in the model that uses the AllMusic data. Overall, these additional analyses show the robustness of our results while providing an interesting insight on how to measure the similarity between two albums and on the limits of music genres as a research variable.

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Model estimates	Hypothesis &	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.
	Expected effect								
Intercept		5.423***	(0.184)	5.812***	(0.187)	5.420***	(0.187)	5.829***	(0.191)
Time-related variables									
Week		0.202***	(0.011)	0.347***	(0.029)	0.205***	(0.011)	0.351***	(0.029)
Week <sup>2</sup>		0.019***	(0.001)	0.030***	(0.003)	0.019***	(0.001)	0.030***	(0.002)
Launch		0.934***	(0.050)	0.863***	(0.059)	0.909***	(0.058)	0.825***	(0.068)
Week × launch		-0.465***	(0.023)	-0.746***	(0.058)	-0.468***	(0.023)	-0.750***	(0.057)
Main predictors									
Engagement	H1:+	0.010	(0.171)	0.106	(0.166)	-0.083	(0.173)	-0.290 <sup>T</sup>	(0.170)
AllMusicFit × launch	H2: +	-0.012	(0.150)	-0.055	(0.138)	-0.088	(0.192)	-0.001	(0.167)
Brand longevity		0.408**	(0.147)	0.384**	(0.134)	0.522**	(0.167)	0.588***	(0.173)
Interaction terms									
Engagement × week						-0.009	(0.006)	-0.021**	(0.008)
Engagement × launch						0.135	(0.089)	0.185 <sup>T</sup>	(0.099)
Longevity × week						-0.005	(0.004)	0.004	(0.010)
Longevity × launch						0.040	(0.068)	0.002	(0.077)
Engagement × brand longevity						-0.257	(0.159)	-0.330 <sup>T</sup>	(0.173)
Engagement × launch × week						0.006	(0.008)	0.029*	(0.014)
AllMusicFit × launch × longevity						0.064	(0.136)	0.077	(0.131)
AllMusicFit × launch × week						-0.008	(0.006)	-0.012	(0.010)
Engagement × AllMusicFit × launch	H3:+					0.137	(0.108)	$0.175^{T}$	(0.010)
Longevity × launch × week						-0.008	(0.008)	-0.021	(0.019)
Longevity × engagement ×	H4: -					-0.224*	(0.095)	-0.215*	(0.099)
AllMusicFit × launch									
Control variables									
Promotion				-0.503***	(0.093)			-0.491***	(0.089)
Customers' posts valence				-0.550**	(0.171)			-0.518**	(0.165)
Customers' posts toxicity				0.289	(0.170)			0.367*	(0.157)

## Table 2.5 Parameters estimates from the regression models using an alternative fit measure.

Note: Dependent variable = natural log of weekly album-equivalent units. All the variables (except Weeks and Launch) have been standardized prior the regressions.  $^{T} = p < 0.10$ ; \* = p < 0.05; \*\* = p < 0.01; \*\*\* = p < 0.001.

## 2.7 Discussion

With this study, one of our main objectives was to better understand the conditions in which brands can benefit from or be negatively affected by social media engagement, especially in the context of new music releases. In recent years, most studies have focused on the positive aspects of social media engagement, linking engagement with a boost in the performance of music records (Saboo et al., 2016), movies (Kupfer et al., 2018; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021), to name a few examples. However, engagement can have a dark side and there is a need to better understand the vulnerabilities linked with engagement and the ways firm can deal with them, especially in a proactive way (Beckers, Doorn, & Verhoef, 2018; Harmeling et al., 2017).

This reality is particularly important in the context of new entertainment product launches, considering that the effects of social media engagement tend to be three times more important for hedonic products than for utilitarian products (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020) and that a failed launch can be very costly. Relying on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and in response to the above-mentioned calls from Harmeling et al. (2017) and Beckers et al. (2018), our study contributes to the literature by highlighting this double-edged aspect of social media engagement. Indeed, if it is true that having highly engaged customers can reduce the risks associated with the launch of a new product, our results show that engagement creates important expectations that must be fulfilled, especially in terms of new product fit. The following paragraphs present in a more detailed fashion the theoretical and managerial implications of our study as well as its limitations and avenues for future research.

## 2.7.1 Theoretical Implications

In our study, we chose to analyze specifically the effect of pre-release social media engagement, i.e., the level of engagement of an artist 3 months before the launch of a new album. This choice is explained by the presumed importance of pre-release consumer buzz in the success of new entertainment products (Houston et al., 2018) and by the fact that brands have a greater agency during the pre-release, since it is much easier to make

strategic adjustments before than after a new product launch. Interestingly, our results show that the level of pre-release engagement alone does not have a significant impact on the weekly record sales, which contrast with some of the conclusions found in the literature, notably those of Saboo, Kumar and Ramani (2016). This difference can be explained by the fact that contrary to Saboo, Kumar, and Ramani's study (2016), we chose to analyze social media engagement while controlling for the level of social media reach instead of focusing on absolute totals of page likes and comments. In other words, we compare artists that have a similar total of social media followers, but that differ in the level of activity of their respective followers.

Remarkably, our results suggest that it is still possible to benefit significantly from social media engagement, but that to do so artists must release new products that present a high level of fit, i.e., that are very similar to the previously launched product. In itself, the fact that fit, on its own, has a positive effect on album sales in our regression models is not surprising and is consistent with the literature on brand extension (Völckner & Sattler, 2006) and with Shi, Lim and Suh's (2018) study of genre-switching artists in the music industry. This result also supports the hypothesis that music consumers tend to appreciate more what is familiar to them (Hunter & Schellenberg, 2011b; Ward et al., 2014). What is surprising is that new product fit moderates the relationship between engagement and sales performance. More precisely, when an artist with a high pre-release level of social media engagement launches a new product that is very similar to its previous one, its weekly record sales will increase. On the contrary, an artist who has a very engaged fan base and who launches an unorthodox new album will be severely punished by its fans and will thus obtain poor sales results. In other words, while having engaged consumers can be beneficial, it also somehow forces artists to do the same thing repeatedly and thus limits their artistic freedom.

Lastly, this study highlights that brand longevity acts as an important boundary condition in the relationship between new product fit, social media engagement and sales performance. Our results suggest that the record sales of an artist with more than fifteen years of experience are not negatively affected by the combination of a weak new product fit and a highly engaged fan base. On the contrary, young artists who wish to benefit from social media engagement have to offer a new album whose style is very close to their previous effort. Thus, it appears that well-established artists have more room to innovate, possibly because a rupture of fit in their case creates a sense of renewal and offset the fatigue that may have accumulated over time. This goes in line with Heath et al.'s (2015) study on movie sequels, which showed that later sequels were more successful when they are distant from their parent movie.

#### 2.7.2 Managerial Implications

This study provides relevant insights for managers concerning the use of social media engagement in the context of new product launches, depending on whether they aim to specialize in a specific genre or explore multiple avenues.

First, by developing a fanbase of engaged consumers, entertainment brands that specialize in a specific genre can indeed reduce the risks associated with a new product launch and benefit from a loyal fanbase eager to see a new iteration of one of their favorite products. However, managers must accept that if they rely on strong social media engagement to foster sales performance, they must settle for incremental innovation and must thus reiterate the same kind of product repeatedly. In the specific case of musicians, this means making new albums that differ only slightly from previous ones and accepting to make artistic changes in a slow and gradual fashion. That said, important artistic changes may still be a good option at times, despite these potential pitfalls mentioned above. This can notably be the case when switching from a niche genre to a very popular one (e.g., switching from acid jazz to pop music) since the losses of some "original" fans can be compensated by the reach of a new and much larger audience. Changes can also be necessary for creative development: as put by John Lasseter, former Chief Creative Officer for Pixar's and Disney's animation studios, "Sequels are financially less risky. But if that's all we did, we would become creatively bankrupt" (Franklin-Wallis, 2015). Thus, it may be preferable for entertainment brands to periodically innovate to preserve their artistic sustainability, even if it may result in a short term decrease in sales performance. Another possibility for musicians with strong social media engagement is to innovate not by changing their own musical style, but by collaborating with artists from different backgrounds, in what is known in the music industry as a *featuring*. Indeed, a study by Ordanini, Nunes, and Nanni (2018) suggests that songs that combine artists from distant genres tend to perform better in music charts. For instance, the collaboration between rapper Lil Nas X and country singer Billy Ray Cyrus on the song "Old Town Road" was a huge success in 2019, accumulating over 18 million in equivalent song units (Cirisano, 2020). The *featuring* strategy is valuable since it allows songs to benefit from the combination of each artist's audiences while still allowing each musician to maintain their own positioning.

Second, for brands that want to diversify and explore multiple genres, our results suggest it's best not to put too much emphasis on social media engagement to avoid unnecessary and non-productive expenses. Since fans' love for their favorite artist has not been returned in the form of a new album that follows their preferences, highly engaged consumers will want to redress the balance by not buying the future album, by reducing their listening to previous songs and perhaps share negative WOM. This is especially true for new artists, probably because the relationships with their customers are more fragile due to their recent nature. Therefore, it's advisable for those new artists to either first explore different genres of music and then aim for stronger levels of social media engagement, or to wait until they reach a stage of maturity to innovate and switch genres.

## 2.8 Limitations and Future Research

In our study, we focused on the short-term performance of artists and their albums, i.e., within eight weeks of the release of the new record. It is therefore our research provide no insights regarding the long-term effects of social media engagement, fit, longevity and their interactions on the performance of entertainment products, which is an important limitation. Interestingly, a study by Parker et al. (2018) suggests that introducing a distant brand extension early in a portfolio expansion strategy (as opposed to later in that process) is beneficial for brands, particularly in terms of final brand attitudes and brand concept fluency. Indeed, the longer it takes for a brand to launch a distant brand extension, the more difficult it is for consumers to integrate it in the brand concept, thus resulting in poorer results. Following the logic of Parker et al. (2018), artists who wish to explore different musical genres should start doing so in the early stages of their career even if this comes, as our results show, with negative effects in the short term. Indeed, with this

strategy, artists may make significant gains in the long run, in terms of both artistic freedom and brand attitudes. It would therefore be interesting to further study the differences between the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of engagement and fit on the sales performance of entertainment brands.

Furthermore, because of the nature of our dataset, we could not measure in this study brand innovativeness, i.e., the propensity for brands to innovate and to offer products that are strongly distinguished from one another (Boisvert & Ashill, 2011; Pappu & Quester, 2016). This is a notable limitation since the results of a recent study by Perron-Brault et al. (2020) suggest that when a brand is perceived as innovative, it is less likely to be sanctioned by its engaged consumers in the event of a low fit new product launch. Similarly, a study by Gerrath & Biraglia (2021) suggests that congruence has no impact on new product evaluations for non-traditional brands, in other words, for brands that are already known to launch less congruent products. It would therefore be interesting in the future to deepen our research model to see if artists who tend to innovate on a regular basis have more room to maneuver and can thus benefit from high social media engagement levels without having to restrict their creativity.

Lastly, in our study, we only looked at the issues linked with the dark side of engagement — especially in terms of its impact on the creativity of entertainment brands — without exploring potential strategies to overcome them. However, we can see that in the recent past of the music industry, for instance, several artists have adopted specific strategies when they undertook a major stylistic change. First, some have chosen to use the rebranding strategy and launch different albums under different brands, depending on the main musical genre of each album. This is the case of Damon Albarn, first known as the frontman of the Britpop band *Blur*, who explored hip-hop and electro-pop music with his band *Gorillaz* and art-rock with his project *The Good, the Bad and the Queen*. Other artists have preferred to strengthen the fit by adjusting the marketing communication campaign supporting the new album. This is notably what Lady Gaga and Interscope, her label, did for the launch of *Cheek To Cheek* (2014), an album of jazz standards performed by Gaga and jazz singer Tony Bennett. During the publicity campaign surrounding the launch of the album, emphasis was placed on Gaga's jazz education: "I've been singing jazz since

I was a child and really wanted to show the authentic side of the genre" (Interscope Records, 2014). The objective was probably to try to convince her engaged customers that the album, contrary to what one might think at first glance, fits well with Lady Gaga and is lined with her brand, her positioning, and her artistic personality. In the future, it will be useful to explore these different strategies to measure their real effectiveness and better understand how entertainment brands can benefit from social media engagement without losing creative freedom.

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# Conclusion

Dans le cadre des deux articles qui composent cette thèse, nous nous sommes intéressés aux liens qui existent entre l'engagement du consommateur, le fit entre un nouveau produit et la marque qui le met en marché et la performance de nouveaux produits, le tout dans le contexte de l'industrie de la musique. Plus précisément, l'un de nos principaux objectifs de recherche était de mieux comprendre comment l'engagement du consommateur affecte la performance de nouveaux albums. En effet, la majeure partie des études sur l'engagement des dernières années se sont surtout concentrées sur ces aspects positifs, liant l'engagement des consommateurs à une augmentation des performances de ventes de musiciens (Saboo, Kumar et Ramani 2016), de films (Tajvidi et Karami 2021; Kupfer et al. 2018) ou encore pour des organisations touristiques (Harrigan et al., 2018; So et al., 2016b). Pourtant, certains auteurs ont récemment mis en lumière le possible côté sombre de l'engagement : la présence de forts liens entre une marque et ses consommateurs peut créer des attentes élevées chez ces derniers, attentes qui peuvent être difficiles à satisfaire par la suite (Harmeling et al. 2017; Beckers, Doorn et Verhoef 2018). Cette thèse cherchait donc notamment à mieux comprendre les risques associés à un fort engagement des consommateurs ainsi que les façons dont l'entreprise peut y faire face, en particulier de manière proactive.

### Contributions théoriques

Cette thèse contribue à la littérature en marketing relationnel en montrant que si l'engagement peut bel et bien être encouragé par les marques dans l'optique d'améliorer la performance d'un nouveau produit, son efficacité est conditionnelle à un bon degré de fit entre ce produit et sa marque. Ainsi, si les musiciens aux consommateurs fortement engagés souhaitent profiter de l'enthousiasme de ces derniers, ils doivent lancer des œuvres qui ne soient pas trop différentes de celles déjà connues de leur public. Nos résultats suggèrent de plus que cette réalité est particulièrement importante pour les artistes en début de carrière ainsi que pour ceux qui sont associés à un genre de musique plus conventionnel. Cette thèse contribue aussi à la littérature sur le marketing des arts et de la culture en montrant comment l'engagement et le fit influencent la consommation de biens culturels.

### **Contributions pratiques**

Cette thèse offre également de recommandations pertinentes pour les gestionnaires concernant les meilleures stratégies à appliqués dans un contexte de marketing de l'engagement, selon les objectifs artistes de leurs musiciens. À titre d'exemple, si un artiste souhaite exploiter un même genre musical au courant de sa carrière, il peut être tout à fait pertinent d'investir pour renforcer l'engagement de ses consommateurs. À l'opposé, il est préférable pour un nouvel artiste qui souhaite explorer différents genres de musique au cours de sa carrière de diversifier d'abord son offre et ensuite investir pour obtenir des niveaux plus élevés d'engagement des consommateurs, ou encore d'attendre d'avoir atteint un certain niveau de maturité avant d'innover et de changer de genre musical.

#### Limites et pistes de recherches futures

Dans cette thèse, l'accent a été mis sur le possible côté sombre de l'engagement notamment au niveau de son impact sur la marge de manœuvre créative des artistes sans toutefois explorer les potentielles stratégies pour les surmonter. Or, certaines études et plusieurs cas pratiques offrent des pistes de solutions qui méritent d'être étudiées dans des travaux futurs. D'abord, une étude d'Ordanini, Nunes et Nanni (2018) suggère que les chansons qui combinent des artistes de genres éloignés ont tendance à mieux performer dans les palmarès musicaux. C'est le cas par exemple de la récente collaboration entre le rappeur Lil Nas X et le chanteur country Billy Ray Cyrus sur la chanson « Old Town Road » : cette chanson a été un énorme succès en 2019, générant plus de 18 millions d'unités de ventes (Cirisano, 2020). Il est donc possible qu'une stratégie de co-marquage comme celle du *featurin*g puisse être une piste de solution intéressante pour les artistes qui veulent explorer de nouveaux genres sans effaroucher leur public : collaborer permet aux artistes rejoindre un nouveau public et d'innover, le tout maintenant son positionnement artistique. Pour d'autres artistes, la stratégie idéale pour innover sans se dénaturer et trahir ses admirateurs semble résider dans la création de nouvelles marques. C'est le cas de Damon Albarn, leader du groupe Britpop *Blur*, qui a recourt à différents véhicules musicaux pour explorer des genres de musiques variés comme le hip-hop (*Gorillaz*), le funk (*Rocket Juice & The Moon*) ou encore le folk (*The Good, the Bad & the Queen*) à chaque fois avec un succès notable. Après avoir vécu un échec critique et commercial avec son album reggae *Reincarnated* (2013) lancé sous la persona Snoop Lion, le rappeur américain Snoop Dogg a lui aussi bénéficié de cette stratégie et a pu retrouver rapidement ses admirateurs en retournant à sa persona habituelle et à son style hip-hop sur *Bush* (2015), son album subséquent. Dans l'ensemble, ces exemples offrent des pistes de réflexion quant aux possibles stratégies qui s'offrent aux artistes pour innover sans pour autant être négativement impactés par le fort niveau d'engagement de leurs consommateurs. Ces

Une des limites de cette thèse se situe également au niveau de la temporalité des effets du modèle conceptuel. En effet, nous nous sommes concentrés dans cette thèse sur les effets à court terme de l'engagement et du fit sur la réussite de nouveaux produits. Or, une étude de Parker et al. (2018) suggèrent que si l'introduction d'une extension de marque distante au début d'une stratégie d'expansion de portefeuille de produits (par opposition à plus tard dans ce processus) peut avoir des effets négatifs à court terme, elle est bénéfique pour les marques à long terme, en particulier en termes d'attitudes finales de marque et de maîtrise du concept de marque. De fait, plus une marque attend avant de lancer une extension de marque distante, plus il est difficile pour les consommateurs de l'intégrer dans le concept de marque, d'où de moins bons résultats. Suivant la logique de Parker et al. (2018), les artistes qui souhaitent explorer différents genres musicaux devraient commencer à le faire au début de leur carrière même si cela s'accompagne, comme le montrent nos résultats, d'effets négatifs à court terme. Il serait donc important d'étudier dans le futur les différences entre les effets à court, moyen et long terme de l'engagement et du fit sur les performances des marques et de leurs nouveaux produits.

Dans cette thèse, l'accent a été mis sur l'engagement des consommateurs envers une marque ou une catégorie de produits. Or, il serait pertinent dans le futur de revisiter le

modèle conceptuel en examinant d'autres types d'engagements, tels que l'engagement envers une communauté de marque (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Hollebeek, Juric, & Tang, 2017; Kumar & Nayak, 2018, 2019). À titre d'exemple, lorsqu'une marque offre un nouveau produit avec un mauvais fit, nous ne savons pas comment les consommateurs engagés réagissent par rapport à la communauté de marque, qui même si elle est intimement associée à la marque, reste une entité séparée. L'exemple du fiasco créé après l'annonce du jeu vidéo Diablo Immortal par Blizzard Entertainment lors de la BlizzCon 2018, une convention annuelle pendant laquelle se regroupent les plus grands amateurs des jeux de Blizzard Entertainment, est révélateur à cet égard. En effet, depuis sa création en 1997, la franchise Diablo connait un succès important et génère un niveau d'engagement élevé chez de nombreux consommateurs, qui attendent d'ailleurs avec impatience et appréhension la sortie du 4<sup>e</sup> opus de la série (Bergin, 2021). C'est pourquoi lorsque les développeurs de Blizzard Entertainment ont annoncé Diablo Immortal, un jeu mobile qui s'éloigne significativement du reste de la franchise, les consommateurs ont réagi négativement, accusant la compagnie de ne pas les écouter et de n'être préoccupée que par des objectifs mercantiles (Kain, 2018). Or, si Blizzard a beaucoup souffert de ce désaveu – l'action de la compagnie a perdu près de 7 % en une seule journée – les admirateurs sont restés profondément engagés envers leur communauté de marque et ce qu'ils estiment être l'essence de la franchise. Il serait donc pertinent dans de futures recherches de s'attarder aux différentes réactions qu'on les consommateurs engagés selon leur type d'engagement, notamment puisque ces types d'engagements sont, comme le suggèrent Dessart et al. (2016), interreliées et interdépendant.

Finalement, dans cette thèse, nous nous sommes concentrés sur l'engagement du consommateur envers le présent d'une marque, soit envers son catalogue musical récent et sa nouvelle offre musicale. Or la nostalgie, un concept de plus en plus étudié en marketing (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Youn & Dodoo, 2021), est un important moteur de consommation des biens culturels, tels que les œuvres musicales (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015; D. Hayes, 2006) si bien que plusieurs consommateurs démontrent un engagement envers le passé d'un artiste. C'est le cas par exemple du groupe Genesis, qui possède toujours deux grandes bases d'admirateurs engagés qui s'opposent : la première est restée engagée avec nostalgie envers les premières années rock du groupe, lorsque

celui-ci était mené par Peter Gabriel, tandis que les autres préfèrent le reste de la discographie plus pop où Phil Collins agit comme leader (Roberts & Lester, 2015). Ce qui est intéressant dans ce cas, c'est qu'au lieu de simplement délaisser Genesis après son virage pop, certains consommateurs, probablement poussés par la nostalgie, sont restés fortement attachés au passé du groupe et prêts à défendre «l'authenticité» de ces premières années. Il serait donc intéressant de mieux comprendre l'impact qu'à une rupture de fit sur l'engagement du consommateur envers le passé, le présent et le futur d'une marque, pour mieux circonscrire notre modèle conceptuel.

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