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VISUAL PROMOTION IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE
OF VISUAL BRANDING AND
BRAND COMMUNICATION
ON MUSIC PERCEPTION



PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

Adrian Remus Chețan

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Introduction

In today's world, music is consumed at every corner, on a wide variety of promotion and distribution channels, and is subject to complex communication and promotion processes and strategies. Many people have the feeling that the commercial music industry is competitive and oversaturated because of the rising number of artists, especially on the internet, and the fact that everyone is competing for attention (Penchev, 2019). The technological development and the rise of the Internet started a real revolution within the industry, contributing to the appearance of a wide variety of distribution methods, such as streaming, and also new promotion methods, such as branding and social media communication, which are utilized by the majority of today's artists who want to have a word to say within the music industry. Since it becomes increasingly easier to get access to a variety of music distribution and promotion instruments made possible by these advances in technology and the proliferation of the Internet, the saturation of the market becomes very visible (Meler & Skoro, 2013; Haynes & Marshall, 2018; Lieb, 2018).

On the one hand, many people can notice nowadays how every beginner artist has access to a variety of online resources that are either free or cheap and simple to use. On the other hand, even though these tools are cheap, free, or easy to use, it must be noticed that everyone has access to them, so they can't be considered a proper advantage. Of course, using them is essential in order not to fall behind, but sometimes it might not necessarily be enough to achieve success. Therefore, in order to set themselves apart from the competition, their presence must be established more efficiently (Hutchison, 2013; Hughes et al.; 2013; Allen, 2018).

It is possible to achieve such an effective presence on social media and online distribution channels considering people use these platforms constantly, for following their favorite artists and engaging with their content. In addition, these platforms represent a cheap and easy-to-use method to promote one's business (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012). More precisely, performances in the form of video, the emotion expressed through images, mimics, movement, gestures photos, video content, live show aspects, or physical appearance sometimes might improve the perception on quality, emotional resonance,

or general appreciation of the song (Waddell & Williamon, 2017; Juchniewicz, 2008; Gillespie, 1997, Finnäs, 2001; Ellis, 2013; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009).

Therefore, nurturing a consistent artist identity should receive a significant amount of attention and priority (Achacoso, 2014; Allen, 2018). The public's evaluation of music is no longer restricted to the musical qualities themselves, and the artists who dominate the top positions on commercial songs chart have brands assembled around their music as well as effective strategies for brand communication that have been planned and implemented (Lieb, 2018; Borg, 2020). This appreciation will sometimes turn into fandom, and it can stem from the interaction that artists have with fans and the graphical elements that music artists display either online or through conventional media outlets (Lieb, 2018; Meler & Skoro, 2013).

One could say that a brand identity in the music industry can be efficiently communicated and expressed through the visuals embedded in the spaces where the artist and the music are present, such as websites, logos, music artwork, social network pages, or event banners, even though it is defined at core by a set of values, characteristics, emotions, and promises (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Rowles, 2022). Building a strong and distinctive character, particularly early in one's career, can be the difference between being an unknown artist on the market and standing out. Experts advise emerging artists to establish a visual identity that they will respect or portray consistently on social media or in any other setting where they interact with music fans or music industry workers (Meler & Skoro, 2013; SunEagle, 2010; Allen, 2018).

Effects such as a better relationship with the public, and increased sales are of course given primarily by the musical product itself and its popularity and perceived quality and attractiveness. These are also the main marks of success in the industry, bearing in mind that the understanding of what success means can vary from artist to artist (Hughes & Lang, 2003; Herstand, 2016; Rutter, 2016; Allen, 2018). However, on the communication level, a well-defined brand identity and efficient brand communication can make the difference in the context of a saturated market where there are a lot of artists already perceived to have good or even exceptional music.

A good brand image serves as the pinnacle of a successfully articulated brand identity. By creating a strong and effective brand identity, professionals can attempt to control how the public perceives a certain good, service, organization, or individual (Morris, 2005; Schroeder, 2005; Allen, 2018). One can also discuss personal branding and communication in a music industry context. When an artist is viewed as a personal brand, brand branches such as songs, merchandise, concerts, and other financial streams are nearly always present, and these extensions are good examples of elements and actions that can be branded and are subject to brand communication strategies (Baker, 2015; Taylor, 2013; Khedher, 2014).

In light of this branding knowledge and the subjectivism of music fans, a crucial question in the music business is whether branding and communication can aid in both enhancing the artist's image, which has already been established (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Hutchison, 2013; Meier, 2017; Borg, 2020) and the way the music itself is regarded. According to numerous research over the years (Iwamiya, 1994; Gillespie, 1997; Geringer, Cassidy & Byo, 1997; Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005; Finnäs, 2001; Juchniewicz, 2008; Platz & Kopiez, 2012), visual stimuli can alter how music is perceived. It is clear that this influence is still present and that specific isolated visual elements can affect how listeners experience a song in regards to emotions, quality, or overall appreciation, even though the course of this influence in these experiments is not always consistent (Waddell & Williamon, 2017).

However, there is a **gap** in the literature with regard to investigating the visual elements' influence on a listener's perception of music in a manner that is based on branding and brand communication. It is a well-established fact that the perception of aural elements, such as music can get different ratings when evaluated in the presence of visual information (Gillespie, 1997; Platz & Kopiez 2012; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field 2009; Waddell & Williamon 2017). However, this hypothesis has been primarily tested only in rather sterile laboratory conditions or in contexts that do not imitate the circumstances of a practical and contemporary music industry setting. In real life, the audience is frequently exposed to promotional or communication materials of the artist and their music, materials that express a predetermined brand identity.

Considering this context, the present work **aims** to analyze the way the visual identity of a music artist influences the way a song is perceived. More specifically, it aims to test, through qualitative and quantitative methods, the manner in which the visual identity surrounding an artist is changing how songs are perceived with regards to the overall attitude towards the song and its components, emotional value, and behavior.

In order to accomplish this, the first requirement to is present and clearly analyze the main mechanisms related to the success of artists and the importance of branding in achieving it. Afterwards, a logical and vital step to follow is the comparison of this information with what the specialists in the industry say, and this is achieved through direct discussions with them. In the end, the paper proposes the experimental testing of some situations not yet analyzed in the specialized literature, of the phenomenon of the influence of visual elements on musical evaluation in a branding setting.

These steps manage to conceptualize and test what is meant by visual identity as an element of branding and what are its components, as well as ways to operationalize song perception. It is shown that the visual identity represents a set of graphic elements that are either unique or uniquely configured, that aim to be attractive to the listener and that convey the characteristics, emotions, values of the brand, the musical artist in this case. At the same time, musical perception is operationalized in attitude towards the music, the emotions felt when listening to the music, as well as the behavior towards the music, both general and intentional.

Compared to existing literature, this paper analyzes this phenomenon in a modern context which is found on the music market today, more precisely by using a brand identity as a visual stimulus.

Thus, the research questions of the paper are the following:

RQ1: What are the obstacles that must be conquered in order to achieve success in the music industry, and how may success be defined within this profession?

RQ2: Why is it vital for a music artist to have their own brand, and how should it be done in the most effective way?

RQ3: How can a visual brand identity affect a listener's appreciation of the music, their perception of the music's quality, as well as the type and intensity of emotional reactions to the music?

RQ4: How can a visual brand identity affect a listener's attitude towards the song, the emotional reaction, and the intentional behavior?

RQ5: How can a particular element of a visual brand identity presented in two different colors affect a listener's attitude towards the song, the emotional reaction, and the intentional behavior?

Since this curiosity can and should be answered both through the analysis of professional discussions, and through the clear testing of some assumptions made following the analysis of the theory and the discussions with experts, three stages of research can be outlined.

The first stage is the discussion with professionals (**RQ1, RQ2, RQ3**) who work in the music industry, more specifically interviews, in order to obtain vital information regarding what is happening today in the practical industry and the role of communication in achieving success and differentiation on the market. These interviews are conducted on 18 individuals who are actively involved in the music industry in one form or another. These specialists perform positions such as artist manager, radio director, music industry consultant, event planner or music marketing specialist.

Following the discussions with specialists, the need to test the assumptions made by them is taking shape. It is clear that this would be the second stage of research, this time experimental. Through this experiment, the aim is to introduce the stimulus of a visual identity composed of several elements, in order to test whether people's perceptions are different when they listen to a song and come into contact with an integrated visual identity, compared to a control group of listeners that are asked for the same evaluation of the same song, but where visual stimuli are not used (**RQ4**). This first experiment is conducted on a sample of 122 people, out of which 55 are in the control group who simply evaluate a song, and 57 in the experimental group, where they evaluate a song after watching some visual materials as well.

Finally, according to the data obtained with the testing of the hypotheses of the first experiment, its limits and bringing to light some new variables, a new research question arises, based on the need to offer more specificity, analyzing a singular part of a visual brand identity, and introducing a new and important variable in analysis, the color of the visual stimulus (**RQ5**). Therefore, a new experiment is conducted, this time with two experimental groups, where only one visual stimulus is used, and not a complete brand identity, but in two different color variants. As mentioned, only one visual stimulus is used, this time a song artwork or cover, in order to be able to efficiently integrate and analyze the variable of color and its emotional value, while also testing if a single stimulus can have an influence on perception compared to the situation where a multi-element visual identity is used. The experiment is conducted on 187 respondents. Out of those, 60 are in the control group, with no visual stimulus, 65 in the first experimental group, where a black visual stimulus was used when asked to evaluate a song, and 62 in the second experimental group, where a blue visual stimulus was presented to the respondents before getting asked to evaluate the song.

Delving into the topic may have significant implications. One of the suggestions that can be drawn, is that top charting music is not simply evaluated based on the musical complexity, but also based on prior experiences or interactions of the people with the graphic stimuli around the artists and their music (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005), and that marketing companies, managers, promoters, or the artists themselves can find significant value in paying more attention to visual elements.

Answering the research questions and verifying the hypotheses will result in the fulfillment and completion of this work, which can be innovative and of great relevance from a variety of angles. The **relevance** comes from two directions, both theoretical and practical. At the theoretical level, the results will cover a gap in the literature, providing explanations with regards to the influence of the visual for a contemporary situation, which imitates the interaction with an artist from everyday life, where the song is a modern one and the artist is accompanied by promotional materials. The current work incorporates information from the fields of communication, psychology, and sociology, so it can be considered an interdisciplinary effort. At the level of

communication, this work manages to exemplify several theories of communication in a field poorly covered in the literature and makes intensive use of concepts and techniques of branding and brand communication. Also, this work tries to explain phenomena encountered at the sociological and psychological level, borrowing research tools from these fields in order to analyze cognitive variables related to attitude, perception and behavior.

The results of this research manage to fill the **theoretical** gap with regards to how a visual brand identity influences the music perception. Concisely put, it is not yet explained how visual elements can influence musical perception in the context of a visual brand identity in the modern music industry. Therefore, this paper performs the testing and analysis of the influence of visual elements on musical evaluation in a modern context, where the artist is accompanied by a visual brand identity, characteristic of communication and advertising processes found everywhere today. It also opens the way to a variety of new research ideas by having this new experimental tool that can be replicated using a multitude of newly found variables. In addition, the critical analysis of the literature, as well as the original research of this work also fills gaps in what represents the practical exemplification of some theories of communication and cognitive effects still analyzed very little or not at all in the context of the modern music industry.

Theories and cognitive patterns such as The Theory of Reasoned Action, The Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein, 1979; Ajzen, 1991; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015) and the Halo Effect (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Thorndike, 1920) therefore obtain new sides and useful applications to better understand and explain the mechanisms of an industry in continuous development. These theories can also be applied to branding and the perception of music, by exemplifying some cognitions that influence the behavior, such as a positive attitude towards the artist influenced by visual stimuli rated positively, as well as the perception of meeting the conditions necessary to discover, listen and evaluate the artist's music, in this case eased and influenced by the presence of a brand identity and well-developed communication strategies.

On the **practical** side, the current work can provide valuable information to industry specialists, providing information tested through experimental research to fill the validity gaps in their current knowledge, often based on subjective experiences or anecdotal information. The main use consists of helping managers and music branding specialists with new concepts, instruments, and strategies that are useful in the efficient creation of nowadays musicians' identities, as well as overcoming the hardships of reaching success in the business. All these tools and strategies can thus be built on the conclusions that this work offers, using visual stimuli in different forms to complete the artistic product for a better relationship with the fans and to sediment the musical brand. In addition, exposing these influences caused by visual stimuli contributes to a more transparent music industry, raising new questions and discussions regarding the cognitive bias of listeners, and even problems related to reasoning errors in music criticism. Also, exploring the effects that visual elements can have on how music is perceived can offer new lines of thinking to industry specialists, to better explain to them why some artists are more successful than others and whether the visual part plays a notable role or not.

What this doctoral thesis offers at the novelty level is the presentation and testing of the phenomenon of influence that visual elements can have on music in a contemporary context, where visual stimuli are represented by an online brand identity of an artificially created artist that simulates music artists from the industry itself. Compared to research in the field, the novelty is supported not just by testing the phenomenon in a modern and practical context, by also by the fact that the influence is not only tested experimentally, therefore quantitatively, but also qualitatively, through discussions with specialists who work in different branches of the nowadays' very dynamic music industry.

The work is divided into two large parts. The first part is the theoretical part, with three comprehensive chapters designed to highlight everything necessary to understand the phenomena and relationships in the fields of communication, the music industry, branding and the influence of visual elements. The second part aims to answer the research questions that have arisen as well as to test the hypotheses, through empirical research, carried out through a set of interviews with music industry professionals and two

individual experiments aiming to test the impact of a visual stimulus on how music is evaluated. The end of the work is represented by the part of conclusions, which highlights the information obtained from the research, the relationship between them and what the specialized literature states, the limits of the work, as well as the various contributions for the academic environment and for the practical music industry.

PART 1 – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This part has the role of providing a comprehensive theoretical framework, in order to understand the field of the music market and industry, the promotion of the musical product and the artist, how branding and brand communication are used in the promotion processes, as well as the way in which previous experimental efforts from literature approach the influence of visual materials on how music is appraised by listeners. This theoretical part has a role in increasing the degree of knowledge regarding promotion in the music industry, as well as offering a context and preparing the concepts needed for the empirical research part of this doctoral thesis.

1. Communication and branding

This first chapter discusses four primary concepts: communication, marketing, advertising, and branding. To begin, the present paper will explain what communication is and the communication paradigm or perspective that will be used to fulfill the purpose of this thesis. After defining communication, one of the simplest and most well-known models of communication will be described. Last but not least, the sub-chapter will get more particular about communication by discussing interpersonal communication and mass communication, and then finish off by discussing what good communication is and how it may be done.

The focus will next shift to marketing, which is often conceptualized as a form of communication yet possesses a profound and fundamental commercial orientation. This section will examine a few of the many points of view pertaining to the definition of marketing, as well as the explanation of the marketing mix, which is one of the most well-known and widely utilized frameworks that helps us comprehend the various facets of the marketing processes. In addition, this section will explain what the benefits of marketing are for a product, service, company, or any other entity that is susceptible to such processes, as well as why it is almost impossible to launch and communicate a commodity on the market without first going through these procedures.

In the end, the discussion will go deeper into the marketing mix, and from the promotion side, it will identify and explore the phenomena of advertising. Once again, some of its definitions are going to be discussed, as well as information on its significance and the actual approaches that are used whenever promoting anything with the help of advertising. To acquire a deeper comprehension of the phenomena of branding and brand communication, as well as the manner in which the various aspects of these concepts intertwine, explain, or supplement one another, it is essential to have an integrated comprehension of what it means to engage in communication, marketing and advertising.

The chapter ends with the most consistent and relevant part, that of branding. Therefore, what a brand means will be explored. Starting from the definition of brand and branding and up to specific categories such as personal branding, the chapter will review all the important characteristics related to brand, branding and brand communication. Vital concepts such as brand identity and brand image will be analyzed and the role of emotions and colors used in branding will be explored and explained according to specialized literature, constantly emphasizing the usefulness and effect of all these strategies and tools.

1.1 On communication

Communication has been studied as a science since ancient times, but there has been a significant rise in the depth and frequency with which it has been examined during the twentieth century (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). Since the end of World War One, social and technical advancements have made communication a modern field that captivates the interest of the academic community. Because it successfully promotes society change and progress, the study of communication has gained prominence for this reason. As this interest has grown, communication has developed into a discipline that is studied at the university level all around the world, has its own professors, and has journals dedicated to it. At the classical or standard level, linguists, psychologists, and sociologists research this field in great detail, and the particularities of nowadays has made communication an important subject

of study in areas like media, politics, or the Internet (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010; Coblely & Schulz, 2013).

Communication can be defined as the act of disseminating information or the transfer of information through a variety of contexts, including those that are physical, verbal, nonverbal, and nonverbal, as well as through a variety of media or channels. It is common for two or more individuals to communicate with one another in order to share information, which may include their knowledge, feelings, and desires (Velentzas & Broni, 2014). Communication is considered a social activity since it involves interaction, regardless of whether or not that interaction is intentional.

Words as well as nonverbal cues, such as signs and symbols, are used in communication regardless of whether or not the communication is acknowledged or whether or not it takes on a linguistic form. In addition to this, communication is not at all something that can be considered static. Its social nature, as well as the cultural settings and forms to which it is exposed, are continuously responsible for influencing and mediating it. It is important to note that individual elements, such as perceptions and behaviors that are the outcome of communication, are continuously influenced by a geographical region, channel, culture, or set of values as well as language (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). When taking a closer look at these factors, it can be seen that they are intertwined.

Abilities or skills such as observation, listening, and analysis, as well as public speaking, are required for efficient communication on both the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels (Velentzas & Broni, 2014). There are three vital components in communication, more specifically a sender, a message, and a receiver, but the presence of a specific receiver is not always a prerequisite element for the communication to take place. Additionally, there are situations in which there is an obvious recipient of the communication, but in which this receiver will not get the message for an extended length of time, a situation in which the validity of the communication is not compromised in this regard.

Going a little further than the sender-message-receiver triangle, certain models of communication often explain communication. Although there are

a multitude of communication models, each with its own limitations and particularities, Shannon & Weaver's (1949) communication model is an important precursor to many subsequent directions of study of communication theories and models. In short, when talking of communication, this linear model presupposes the existence of a source of information, a transmitter, a receiver and a destination. While the source of information is what generates the message and the transmitter is the one who encodes the message in signals, the receiver decodes the message and the destination is practically the place where the message arrives (Fiske, 2010). In addition to these elements, most interpretations of this model include the channel factor, a central element that is taken into account when encoding the message in signals, as well as the noise element, which refers to any possible interference that may affect the way in which the message is decoded and received (Shannon & Weaver, 1949; Fiske, 2010).

Naturally, when thinking of communication, the first thing that typically comes to mind is interpersonal communication and the models of communication that come with it. Interaction refers to any exchange of information that takes place between two or more individuals, whether it be verbal or nonverbal. A transmitter is present in this scenario, much like in the model that Shannon and Weaver (1949) developed. This transmitter is personified as the one who transmits the information. The message can only be decoded and understood by the receiver (or receivers), who are the person or individuals who obtain it. It is noted that the message would be conveyed through a channel or medium, in multiple ways rather than just orally. In this context, examples such as the telephone and the internet are significant to underline this idea (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010).

When moving beyond the definition of what it means to communicate with someone face-to-face, the concept of mass communication or communication with the outside world can also be discussed. This term refers to the interaction that takes place between an organization or institution and the members of the general public who are not affiliated with it. In this scenario, it is very necessary for there to be specialized channels that are capable of making it possible to transmit information to a greater number of individuals (Velentzas & Broni, 2014). In addition, going even deeper and placing the conversation within the framework of modern times, will lead to talking

about communication through the web. This, similar to traditional media channels, offers the possibility of sending a message or content, to a large number of people. by using internet tools. However, it comes with modern advantages, such as interactivity, an accurate targeting of the intended audience, or low costs for anyone who wants to send a message through such a channel. Some of the most defining examples of web communication are social media networks, blogs, websites, online press, and video sharing platforms (Constantinides, 2009; Velentzas & Broni, 2014)

Due to the emphasis on communication studies, and because certain ideas about models and communication channels have been elaborated, it is important to point out that the study of communication may utilize a range of different paradigms. The process school and the semiotics school are the two schools of communication that are discussed in Fiske's (2010) categorization, which is one of the most commonly used classifications. According to the process school, communication is primarily defined as the act of transmitting information, with particular attention paid to the method by which the message is encoded and the medium through which it is sent. When the emphasis is placed primarily on the effectiveness of message transmission, and when the method of message transmission is considered to be of the utmost significance in the research, as opposed to how meaning is interpreted and conveyed, someone can say that one is dealing with the process school of thought (Fiske, 2010, Bhatnagar, 2011).

When sending and encoding information, the semiotic school of communication places a strong emphasis on meaning in addition to paying extra attention to the symbols and messages that are embedded within the message itself. Fiske (2010) states categorically that the semiotic school of communication considers communication to be the emission and transmission of meaning. The study of how communications connect with individuals and develop specific meaning takes precedence in this paradigm, which means that research on efficiency and communication channels comes second to this field of thought. In this context, the study of communication primarily makes use of semiotics and focuses on the examination of the message, its importance, and the cultural settings in which these messages and meanings are embedded. Semiotics is therefore the primary tool that is used (Fiske, 2010; Bhatnagar, 2011)

All of these schools of communication and theories of communication do not argue that they possess an absolute truth about communication and the study of communication, rather, they offer a variety of viewpoints that are appropriate and valuable in a variety of fields (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). As there are studies on communication from the perspective of semiotics as well as studies on communication as a process, it is equally valid that, in certain fields and situations of analysis, both variations can be applicable and taken into account for an objective and complete analysis of a certain phenomenon. What a linguist may regard to be essential in the analysis of a communication may differ from the features that are of interest to a researcher looking at, for example, media or marketing. Communication theories are established for the purpose of providing explanations for phenomena, of assisting us in understanding what may initially appear foreign, and of offering a framework through which research may be reviewed and analyzed (Griffin, 2006; Littlejohn & Foss, 2010).

Even the definition of communication or the study of communication in and of itself can have a variety of meanings. However, these schools of thought, communication theories, and definitions should not divide researchers. On the contrary, they should provide each with the appropriate context for their own specialized research and give them the opportunity to examine their subject of study from a variety of perspectives (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010).

1.2 Marketing and advertising

Since communication is seen as a process, marketing as a whole, can be regarded as a process as well. Individuals normally assign to it the meaning of activity through which a company attracts customers, generates transactions, or facilitates them. It is a process that satisfies people's needs while also generating profit for the business (Perreault & McCarthy, 1996; Kotler, 1999). However, the meanings, just like in the case of communication, vary from one specialist to another and from one researcher to another. As a result of the growth of society and technology, the meanings gain new sides and get redefined every few years.

According to Kotler (1999), the field of marketing can be viewed from both a social and a management point of view. When viewed from a society perspective, marketing may be understood as the process by which individuals satisfy their requirements by producing and exchanging various things. When talking about the management paradigm, sales are mentioned, and marketing is focused on the actual selling of these goods, with an emphasis on knowing the target audience and its behavior in order for the products to get sold.

In general, the various experts and researchers working in the field define marketing as a series of activities, interactions, strategies, and management, with the ultimate goal of promoting goods and services, serving the consumer by identifying his consumption needs, and ultimately generating a transaction and a profit for the business (Perreault & McCarthy, 1996; Kotler, 1999; Varey, 2002; Drummond & Ensor, 2006; Armstrong & Kotler, 2015). In his own definitions of marketing, Varey (2002) places an emphasis on the human and communicational aspects of the phenomenon. This leads to the idea that marketing is essentially a communication activity, and that marketing activities involve participants such as sellers, producers, and intermediaries. One can therefore observe a strong parallel with the theories and model of communication, as well as the model of Shannon and Weaver (1949), in which the producer is the information source, the seller is the transmitter, the intermediary can be the channel, and the buyer is the decoder and receiver, with roles that can be exchangeable depending on the perspective.

In addition to the arguments made by Kotler (1999), there are several ways in which the concept of marketing might be seen to have two or more distinct sides. According to Varey (2002), the field of marketing can be approached from both a managerial and a social or organizational perspective. From a different angle, it might be argued that marketing is responsible for the creation of long-term interactions that will continually satisfy the requirements of the public at large (Drummond & Ensor, 2006). This continuity in public relations is also described by Gary Armstrong and Philip Kotler (2015), who state that marketing is concerned with existing relationships, as well as maintaining loyalty and ensuring long-term transactions. In addition to attracting new customers by offering promises

and satisfying their needs, marketing is also concerned with existing relationships. As a result, marketing may be understood as a process by which a corporation maintains favorable relationships with customers and delivers promises in exchange for which the company receives value and generates profits for itself (Drummond & Ensor, 2006; Armstrong & Kotler, 2015).

Thus, the utility of marketing is self-evident, and in today's business environment, an approach that is marketing-oriented is an absolute necessity. This approach generates every one of these benefits, which make it easier for transactions to be completed between a seller and a buyer while simultaneously cultivating a long-term relationship among them (Drummond & Ensor, 2006, Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

The marketing mix, which was established and popularized by E. Jerome McCarthy (1960), is now one of the most widespread ideas in the field of marketing. Product, pricing, placement, and promotion are the four components that make up this classification of marketing, which is also referred to as "the 4 Ps." By product we mean a material product or service that is sold as well as all its characteristics. Pricing refers to the actual cost of this good, but also to various advertising or distribution costs. Place or placement means the physical ways of distribution and management of the respective products and services. Finally, promotion encompasses all the promotional elements through which the product is brought to the attention of the public (McCarthy, 1960; Singh, 2012).

This classification is indeed rather simplified (Jefkins, 2012), especially when compared to others, but it is useful for any organization to establish an overview of what marketing comprises and to develop a strategy with a solid base.

The aspect of communication and advertising known as "P" that deals with promotion is definitely the area of interest for the current thesis. It is formed and put into practice by a number of actions that are centered on communication, and it is representative of the fundamental promotional methods that the mix employs. Public relations, advertising, internet marketing, direct marketing, and sales promotion are some of the aspects

that fall under this umbrella. Many of these components actually make up what is known as the communication or promotion mix, and their primary objective is to increase people's awareness of a product and a service, create a relationship with the target audience, and persuade the target audience to buy or consume the product (Kotler, 1999; Drummond & Ensor, 2006).

The field of public relations is also included in this understanding of the communication mix. According to Jefkins (2012), marketing and public relations are connected, which suggests that a correct integrated strategy is formed by taking into account both public relations and the traditional elements associated with marketing. It should come as no surprise that public relations can have a significant effect on the purchasing decisions that consumers make, given that the term "public relations" refers to the organizational image, interaction, and communication with the public. In addition, according to Jefkins (2012), the human actors that are involved in public relations might find their equivalent in marketing.

For instance, discussing about the relationship with distributors or producers in marketing, in public relations, discussing the relationship with the customer is of most interest. This is, of course, only another perspective on the connection between public relations and marketing, but public relations play a key role in familiarizing or acclimating the customer with the product, thereby generating a fertile atmosphere for marketing to carry out its function properly (Jefkins, 2012).

Based on the above discussion on what marketing entails and why it is beneficial, it is of great importance to clarify more exactly which kinds of entities can go through a marketing process. Philip Kotler (1999) provides an excellent classification of the entities that are handled by marketing specialists. Among these categories, the most notable are goods, services, events, people, experiences, locations, organizations, information, and even ideas. When dealing with the marketing of a certain entity, marketing professionals are consequently needed to make certain decisions and are responsible for adopting strategies, techniques, and tools that are relevant and effective to each scenario (Kotler, 1999).

As a tool of marketing, advertising could be defined as a communication type that is symbolic of marketing, a practice of trying to sell a product by putting out a message. In contrast to other types of communication, it is paid and carried out with the specific intention of persuading the audience in question. This is one of its defining characteristics (Belch & Belch, 1998; Fletcher, 2010). Therefore, advertising serves the purpose of informing, but it is clearly evident that this is done in order to capture people's attention. In this case, as is the case with many other ideas, the meanings can vary, and frequently, advertising is analyzed, studied, and put into practice not only as a method for increasing the sales of products and services, but also for promoting a variety of different causes, people, or even messages of public interest (Belch & Belch, 1998).

When debating marketing strategies and the marketing mix, the "4 Ps" (price, product, place and promotion) are oftentimes brought into discussion. In the following step, the examination of the aspect of promotion leads us to the discovery of the advertising concept (Brierley, 2005). Therefore, advertising is a sort of promotional messaging, which, despite the fact that it can be carried out on a local level and verbally through the medium of word of mouth, is most commonly used to inform a much more widespread audience. It is feasible to talk of information in a broad and objective manner, but while discussing advertising, it is essential to note the persuasive nature of advertising as well (Fletcher, 2010). In addition, as was said earlier, advertising is a paid activity that can be seen in the media and it also represents a single branch of the promotional mix that is studied in marketing (Brierley, 2005; Dyer, 2008).

The language used in advertising is one of the distinguishing features that set it apart from other types of promotional concepts. When talking about advertising language, one of its descriptions implies that it is type of language that is packed full of meanings. Its primary objective is, of course, to persuade members of the public to purchase a good or service while simultaneously helping in fostering a positive connection between the company selling the good or service and the customer (Shimp, 2000; Dyer, 2008). It can be noted that this language full of meaning that creates memorability makes advertising stand out from the general marketing, and it is accomplished via the use of advertisements and messages. Therefore,

the advertising language has two purposes: one is to attract attention, and the other is to increase memorability, which may be accomplished by maintaining a consistent brand (Dyer, 2008).

This advertising language may therefore be considered one defined by persuasion, which places the phenomena in a context connected to the impact it has on society. Dyer (2008) suggests that advertising has an effect on the beliefs and values of a society, and that it is now an integral and active part of communication, having influences in fields such as art and literature. Moreover, Dyer suggests that advertising has an effect on the beliefs and values of a society. When discussing the role that it has in taking decisions, it is essential to point out that advertising is not always an accurate source of information. Because the advertiser has a direct interest in selling the products or services that it offers, it is evident that the information that is communicated in advertising materials is not necessarily objective. Misinformation of the general public and even the company's own customers can happen when characteristics and attributes are exaggerated or altered in particular ways. Consumers will soon notice the fact that the traits of a product, service, organization, concept, or person have been exaggerated or altered, which may be detrimental to the image of the brand. As a result of this, misleading advertising is not seen as an ethical or successful method for increasing sales and nurturing long-term loyalty (Nelson, 1974; Dyer, 2008).

Concerning the implementation, it is correct to say that advertising becomes tangible both in the form of an advertisement and in the form of an advertising campaign, which includes a variety of such elements. Also, there might be many different motivations behind an advertising campaign. A campaign of this type can be used not only when introducing a new product or brand on the market, but also when the goal is to bring back previous clients, change the behavior of existing clients, or change the target demographic, for example (Fletcher, 2010).

Due to the fact that advertising is done on many media channels and because of media growth overall, it was originally separated into two distinct categories that are still often used today: above the line advertising and below the line advertising (Brierley, 2005). While above-the-line advertising

uses traditional media channels like television, print, radio, and the Internet (although due to the Internet's complexity, it can fall into other categories as well), below-the-line advertising refers to activities like outdoor advertising, sponsorships, public relations, on-site promotions, and direct marketing (Brierley, 2005; Wilmshurst & Mackay, 2010).

Discussing individuals as entities that are subject to advertising processes, then talking about public relations and branding is also useful. While most sales are made through advertising, public relations are suitable for both corporations and individual persons (Dyer, 2008). On the other hand, branding is accomplished via the content of advertisements and is typically the end result of all advertising and communication strategies that have been used over the course of time. The advertising materials contain many examples of the sensory components that are associated with the brand (color palettes, fonts, packaging, music, logos, slogans, experiences etc.) (Dyer, 2008; Krishna, Cian & Sokolova, 2016).

Both the definition and explanation of advertising and marketing, which have already been successfully accomplished, as well as the analysis and implementation of the balance of concepts such as public relations and branding are required. The importance of those come from the fact that they help to later evaluate the promotional element of the marketing mix regarding a person, in this instance a music artist. This is essential in order to study the promotional element of the marketing mix applicable for a music artist, for example. In the context of an analysis of such a type of person, this is a crucial point to keep in mind because the situation may be a little bit different than it would be in the case of a classical brand. On the one hand, there is the artist, who can be subjected to processes of personal branding, brand communication, and PR, and on the other hand, there is the artist's music itself, in relation to which standard advertising, sales, and traditional branding processes can be brought into attention.

1.3 Brand and branding concepts

By delving further into the marketing mix, the concept of branding becomes known. In terms of the brand and branding, a focus will be made on the

many understandings of these phenomena, as seen through the lens of the various definitions and points of view that scholars and industry professionals have. After providing an example of the brand in the form of a trademark with a soul, the next part will provide a definition of the brand and branding from the most common perspectives, after which it will provide an explanation of the significance and benefits of the formation of a brand. Finally, the discussion will emphasize presenting the brand and branding as a process that requires constant attention and management.

After that, the discussion will move towards examining the idea of brand identity, which is a component of a brand that is of particular significance for the aim of this particular work. In this instance, the focus will be placed on two schools of thought that are somewhat at odds with one another and are held by researchers and industry experts: the theory that brand identity is a compilation of a company's values, promises, visions, and defining characteristics; and the theory that brand identity is predominately a visual construct, in the form of a logo and a brand style that is graphically expressed.

The analysis of the brand identity will then be conducted through the lens of the visual elements, and various considerations will be brought to light regarding the emotions that people can receive from a visual identity, as well as the influence or importance of colors in the process of delivering messages that are consistent with the personality of the brand. Other aspects and ideas relating to brands and branding, such as brand image, brand positioning, and, last but not least, brand consistency, will also be investigated. In order to facilitate the transformation of a brand identity into a positive and effective brand image, the significance of the element of consistency will be emphasized in everything that is related to shaping a brand identity or communicating the identity.

In closing, an examination of the notion of personal branding will follow. Since a musical artist is a complex entity in terms of branding, it is necessary to talk about both the branding of the musical product itself, as well as the formulation of a brand identity of the artist as a person, a fact for which the review of the personal concept branding is useful.

1.3.1 Defining the brand

A trademark is where a brand initially begins. It may be simply described as an icon, a name, or other visual representation of a certain item or service (Ramello, 2006). The registered trademark is a legal designation that closely describes what a trademark stands for, and it is a concept connected to trademarks. The trademark is a key component in both legal and communicative aspects of the market and helps to distinguish one product from another. The difference between trademark and brand in a simplistic way, is that a brand is basically a trademark that over time has acquired meaning and values (Ramello, 2006; Blackett, 2016).

At the same time, a brand may be examined in more detail. It is thought to be a useful approach to describe and market a product or service in order to cultivate value, loyalty and equity (Travis, 2000; Clifton, 2009; Aaker, 2012). Given that branding is a concept with origins in marketing and advertising, it should be clear that, after a few processes and practices, it will ultimately serve the purpose of generating financial gain. A brand, however, represents more to the consumer than just a single sale; it also symbolizes a process of brand loyalty, an experience, and certain shared values. Therefore, one of the goals of branding is to increase customer affinity for the product by making promises and keeping them, forging bonds of trust, and giving a complete experience both before and after the consumer makes a purchase (Clifton, 2009; Aaker, 2012, 2014).

A brand may be thought of as a comprehensive collection of traits, ideals, and experiences that surround or highlight the underlying qualities of the product (Aaker, 2012; Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2014; Rowles, 2022). According to one of the definitions that have been proposed based on this idea, a brand truly encapsulates everything that people encounter in relation to a certain product. One can frequently see how a brand, while discussing a product or service alone, delivers a personification of the product, or a humanization, through which the product unquestionably stands to win by forging a connection with the general public of consumers (Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2014; Rowles, 2022).

As compared to this, branding may be simply described as the act of shaping a product, service, organization, institution, or person with identity components and a communication plan that is established and applied using consistent approaches. The process of branding may be thought of as the acquisition of all the identity and communication components that will later help an entity to become a brand (Clifton, 2009; Aaker, 2012; Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2014). Branding is a process, according to experts. The product or thing that is put through this process will gradually change how others see it. Efficiently defining the branded object and its characteristics, the fulfillment of statements and brand promises, the identification of values that are closely related to the characteristics, as well as their translation as much as possible into tangible aspects relevant to identity such as visual elements, narrative elements, and communication style, are the branding stages that are considered to be the most crucial (Aaker, 2012, 2014; Rowles, 2022).

1.3.2 Brand identity

Typically, there are two perspectives on brand identity. In order to establish a positioning inside the minds of customers and a brand image, the brand identity firstly reflects the sum of values and traits that the brand expresses via multiple channels of communication (De Chernatony; 2010; Wheeler, 2017). However, many branding experts only refer to the notion of identity when discussing solely its visual components. Branding professionals and scholars (Sicard, 2012; Aaker, 2012; Wheeler, 2017) discuss elements such as fonts, pictures, logos, color palettes, visual styles and other visual identification components such as advertisements or packaging. Wheeler (2017) supports the concept that brand identity contains tangible, readily recognizable components, like those in marketing materials or associated with target audience communication. He also makes reference to recognizing these aspects using one's senses. To put it another way, brand identity is a clearly defined link between a company's ideals and the general public that provides a palatable and marketable aspect of the brand's traits and values. All marketing and communication channels used to promote a product or locations where the customer interacts with them express and

make identifiable the brand identity, which delivers clarity, distinctiveness, and uniqueness.

Brand identity can also be considered a projected perception that the owner of a brand has about it, a perception that contains a multitude of characteristics that can later be transmitted through different elements. Among them, Burmann, Riley, Halaszovich & Schade (2017) mention names, visual elements, advertisements and products. They consider these elements of the brand identity to be basically messages that are later received by the public, becoming a brand image. Jain (2017) also mentions some "sources" of a brand identity, specifically symbols, graphic elements such as logos, fonts or other symbols, slogans and even tunes.

It is thus useful to note how a brand identity can contain tangible elements that are not just visual. Budelmann, Kim & Wozniak (2010) mention that a brand identity is often confused with a logo, but it is more complex than that, including elements such as the name or the music used in communication and in the relationship with the public. All these elements related to brand identity are therefore vital for differentiation on the market, being the mirror for what the owner of the brand wants the public to perceive (Jain, 2017). This relationship with the public basically represents a relationship that is reciprocal, which must be stable and lasting, so that the branding objectives are achieved (Burmann, Riley, Halaszovich & Schade, 2017)

The statements and promises thus receive clear forms, whether visual or narrative, to help demystify the product and in the correct transmission of the proposed values (Aaker, 2012; Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2014; Wheeler, 2017). A logo, a color palette, a logo and a slogan are some elements of visual identity or expressed visually, considered essential to start the branding process. These elements work together, achieving a unitary and well-expressed whole of values and promises (Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2014).

It is vital to take different viewpoints into account as well. For instance, Sicard (2012) asserts firmly that a brand identity is not immaterial. She believes that a brand's defining components are always tangible and connected to identification. Brand identity consists of elements like the logo, colors, and other visual elements or presentational forms. Naturally, these

components are based on particular values and goals, but in the truest sense, a brand identity cannot be solely composed of values, as these are more strongly associated with the brand promise and mission statement than with the actual physical aspect or the body that the company or brand uses to interact with consumers. Accordingly, it would appear that both aspects of the brand identity, namely both the face of the brand (the visual identity) and its basis (the values, promises, and experiences), have significant meaning, depending on the perspective taken, which makes the utilization of both aspects in a balanced manner an ideal situation (Sicard, 2012, Aaker, 2012, Rowles, 2022).

In terms of efficiency, an effective brand identity is one that manages to obtain public interaction with the brand in a variety of channels or touchpoints, having at the same time the role of shaping and empowering the brand (Gains, 2013). It is therefore obvious that a properly realized brand identity is vital for differentiation and for transmitting the correct message. Today, we can talk especially about a visual brand identity that has the advantage of quickly attracting the public's attention. This can give people general ideas and influence perceptions about the brand before they know too much about them, and practically provides significance, differentiation and sustainability in the brand market (Jain, 2017).

1.3.3 Emotional branding through color

There are several reasons why the public chooses a brand, such as functional or rational and emotional (Pandey, Kumar & Svodan, 2012). While the rational reason refers to the logical characteristics or benefits of the brand, the emotional reasons refer to the feelings and aspirations of the consumer. The emotional factor often succeeds in empowering the way in which the rational benefits are communicated. Through emotional branding, preferably reflected in both product and service branding, as well as in the experience with consumers (Hammond, 2008), emotions are used to satisfy some emotional needs, which will lead to a solid relationship with the public (Pandey, Kumar & Svodan, 2012).

When talking about emotional branding, it can be said that it is important for any brand because it manages to offer differentiation on the market, a vital thing in the current context where there is oversaturation in many areas (Akgün, Koçoğlu & İmamoğlu, 2013). Regarding the usefulness of emotion itself, Hammond (2008) considers that any brand purchase has a notable emotional aspect, because brands are emotional at their core.

When it comes to specific touch points in emotional branding, color is an important aesthetic element since it can convey both information and feelings to customers. These are believed to have a particularly potent impact because of their ability to evoke ideas, feelings, thoughts, or memories (Gobe, 2010). Cunningham (2017) proposes a more succinct definition of these impacts, which indicates that they can evoke an emotional response, contain and communicate meanings, and provide information to the customer about the brand and its positioning. To put it simply, color may play a role in the effectiveness of a brand's communication, and marketing professionals are aware of and make use of the fact that a brand's visual features and colors serve as the initial business card for the brand (Rider, 2010).

At the same time, the power of color is not just limited to establishing a mood, but it is also capable of having a major influence on the perspectives and purchasing decisions of customers. They have a strong advantage in the influence that they can have on people's emotions, and emotions are quite essential when it comes to developing connections with customers (Cunningham, 2017). Because of this, the function of colors in advertising is an essential one, as their effective application becomes an extra technique that is both powerful and effective in helping the brand to differentiate itself from its rivals (Oladumiye & Ebenezer, 2018).

When developing a brand, it is essential to pay attention to the colors that are going to be used. Consumers might be confused by poor selections because they can send conflicting or incorrect messages to them. On the other hand, the value of the brand will increase if color experts or designers select colors that are consistent with the core values of the company. Messages related to branding need to be clear and specific, and the color palette needs to meet these requirements as well (Gobe, 2010, Oladumiye & Ebenezer, 2018). When talking about brand identity, things like the effective

communication of ideas through visual materials and the triggering of emotional responses through color can make a substantial difference (Rider, 2010; Mohebbi, 2014).

This impact can be caused by the color of a conventional package but also by the color of other visual stimuli. Many individuals base their decision between two items on their visual look and color, hence it is important for marketers to carefully choose colors, pictures, and other visual stimuli that are utilized in branding (Silayoi & Speece, 2007; Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014). However, these marketing and/or graphics professionals need to research colors in advance so that they are familiar with their importance in a variety of cultural settings as well as the feelings that are evoked by certain shades. The importance of choosing colors that are congruent with the mission and values of the company and its products cannot be underestimated (Rider, 2010).

Packaging and visual identity may have a significant impact on a company's level of success in sales, and colors are not an exception to this rule (Singh, 2006). Any graphic designer or branding professional should be aware of this fact. When the product packaging is appealing, consumers are more likely to make a rapid purchase. In point of fact, the easiest way to transmit the feeling that is associated with a certain color is through the use of solid color palettes, which have a restricted mix of colors but a wider range of shades or hues. It is important for the psychological connotations associated with the colors to be shared by the audience, at which point the connection between the brand and the customer becomes more solidified (Fehrman & Fehrman, 2004; Wei-Lun, Hsieh-Liang, 2010, Mohebbi, 2014).

Colors used in branding can have a variety of meanings and evoke all kinds of emotions (Cunningham, 2017). They can influence the brand communication process and have an impact on consumer perception, so it is a useful thing for marketers to consider. In other situations, color is seen not only as a useful element, but as an absolutely vital element in any marketing strategy or marketing communication. It is suggested that any professional marketer knows the importance of these colors, and that the careful choice of colors when using advertising material, packages and other

communication tools, are necessary to arouse the intention to consume (Hunjet & Vuk, 2017).

It therefore is understood that the importance of color in marketing can also be specifically related to a brand identity. Jin, Yoon & Lee (2019) conclude in a study that color identity has a vital function to communicate with a target audience. It is suggested that such a color identity can raise expectations and lead to a better association. Companies and outside experts alike need to understand the significance of a well-built brand identity.

Regarding the meanings of the colors themselves, they may vary from individual to individual and from a cultural context to another, but it is possible, in most cases, to identify some affective values that are shared throughout most of opinions. For instance, the color black is commonly associated with seriousness, but it actually conveys more information. The color black is associated with feelings such as sophistication, power, elegance, style, formality, professionalism, and modernism (Aslam, 2006; Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011). Additionally, black is recognized as a multi-dimensional color that successfully evokes feelings of trustworthiness (Singh & Srivastava, 2011).

Another example that is addressed in literature is the color blue, which, despite the fact that, in some contexts, it conveys the same sense of trustworthiness as black does, is still characterized by different affective qualities. In comparison to black, blue is able to successfully evoke human feelings, despite the fact that it is mainly used in classic branding. Peace, sincerity, sadness and wisdom are some of the feelings that fall within this category. Additionally, blue is known to be a soothing color, capable of inducing sentiments of serenity, calmness, and even hope in its observers (Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011; Mohebbi, 2014).

Therefore, the emotional responses that customers experience when they come into touch with a brand can be influenced by the colors that are used in its branding. These are a good indicator of its overall spirit, and somewhat more conventional and general effects include increased brand appreciation, as well as higher purchase intention once the color is consistent with the characteristics of the target audience (Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010).

1.3.4 Notable concepts in branding

Any entity that has achieved a certain amount of recognition or awareness and has been subjected to marketing and communication activities has a brand image, which can be defined as a sum of perceptions that the consumer has regarding the brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Burmann, Halaszovich & Schade, 2017). Simply put, the brand image is the sum of all of the existing views of the brand. In its most fundamental form, a brand image is comprised of people's perceptions of a certain product, service, organization, person, etc. Perceptions are what contribute to the formation of this brand image, and they include not just ideas and values but also feelings and attitudes. Even if the brand image is a reflection of existing views and is thus already developed, it is still important to shape it by developing and effectively expressing a good and strong brand identity and cultivate trust (Aaker, 2012, 2014; Burmann, Halaszovich & Schade, 2017).

There are also other concepts that are associated with branding and brand image, such as brand positioning. Brand positioning can be defined as all of the characteristics that make a product stand out from those of its competitors, and it serves as a guide, as a set of directions for the specialists when formulating and communicating the brand identity (Aaker, 2012, 2014). This concept refers to both the most important and compelling factors that make a product stand out from its competitors as well as the compelling reasons that lead customers to choose one product over another.

Consistency refers to the coherence between the aspects of a brand's identity, such as its logo, image, colors, messages, and tone, across all platforms or channels where the brand communicates. This consistency is vital for the brand because it helps to define and effectively communicate the brand, which leads to the growth of a strong brand, and this strong brand growth is generated from the outlining and effective communication of an identity and brand promises (Aaker, 2012; Blackett, 2016).

When consistency is put first, branding may be effective, according to input by Chiaravalle and Schenck (2014). A strong brand will effectively communicate its values and commitment via all elements and channels. Whether the focus is on talking about a name, a logo, a website, a campaign,

communication strategies, or relationships with customers, consistency is seen as the key to success. Additionally, what distinguishes a weak brand from one that is excellent is brand experience, or the sum of each person's interactions with the relevant elements of the brand (Aaker, 2012; Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2014).

Over time, the idea of branding has expanded among many people, with many different interpretations that set one specialist apart from another. According to Rowles (2022), people who understand branding are less likely to automatically associate it with a visual identity, and take concepts such as image, positioning and consistency into account as well. In its broadest sense, branding something involves all of the ideals, feelings, experiences, strategies, perceptions, and concepts relevant to the soon-to-be brand. At the consumer level, each of these components contributes to the perception of a brand, and one's own experiences and experimentation contribute to the idea of a brand experience. Additionally, a limited but understandable acceptance of a brand is that it actually defines something's personality (Rowles, 2022).

All these concepts can be outlined and put to use in a few straightforward branding principles, such as the need to understand the brand's target audience, commitment to brand promises, and consistent brand communication. According to these guidelines, it can be stated that effective branding occurs when consumer perceptions of the brand become similar to or identical with what the company intends to advertise, when interaction with the brand becomes a satisfying sensory or emotional experience, when trust between the consumer and the brand is cultivated, and when brand communication becomes clear but consistent (Travis, 2000; Clifton, 2009; Aaker, 2014; Rowles, 2022). There are a number of rules that must be followed for a brand to be effective. One of them makes reference to paying attention to the target audience, as abovementioned. It is necessary to conduct some research in order to find information about the target audience, attitude, online and offline behavior to better develop branding and brand communication strategies (Aaker, 2014, Rowles, 2022).

Another rule that arises by delving deeper into branding and brand positioning is differentiation. It is essential for a brand to communicate its

values and promises in addition to having a unique visual identity. Branding may reflect particular experiences and beliefs in addition to product qualities, which can help differentiate a brand and position it more favorably in the marketplace (Aaker, 2012, 2014; Blackett, 2016).

In conclusion, the concept of a brand is closely linked to the act of expressing specific values and promises to customers by providing them with experiences that are embodied in particular elements that form the brand identity. Therefore, one may utilize these components to produce specific visual effects by making promotional materials, and one can use written elements to generate written content. A collection of fundamental rules that address the target audience, establish and uphold a set of values, and identify and apply some unique features are the foundation of effective brand development. This is the most crucial aspect of effective brand development.

1.3.5 Personal branding

Since it has just been argued that marketing and branding can be applied to several types of entities, further emphasis can be placed on the phenomenon of branding a person. Johnson (2019) considers the concept of personal branding to be one that can be used by any and all individuals, and it can represent its public identity, formed by a mix of elements such as the individual's image, his relationships with people, his values, the products he offers or his physical appearance (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009). It is also considered that everyone has a personal brand, but it is up to everyone whether they want to develop it or not (Petrucă, 2016). There is no other option but to go along with the process of automatically creating a brand, but one does have the capacity to control this process in order to develop a strong and authentic identity. However, a successful personal brand stands out not only by identifying these component elements, but also by the efficiency with which the public's perceptions are controlled (Lindahl & Öhlund, 2013).

People need to pay attention to their personal brand, especially in the digital age, when the only freedom they have in relation to it is whether to manage

it or not. The difference between a classic and personal brand is made clear by Johnson (2019) once again, pointing out that with a personal brand, the focus is on cultivating a positive and consistent personal image in the minds of others rather than on attracting customers through attractiveness, and that this encourages people to support, admire, and follow your lead.

The process of developing one's personal brand can also include gaining a better understanding of one's own brand identity (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Chritton, 2014). A person is able to clearly define their beliefs, qualities, attributes that make them distinctive, objectives, and aspirations by going through the stages of introspection and developing a strategy relating to personal branding. Consistency in terms of brand communication, the interaction between the brand and the general public, will be helped by an improved understanding of the brand, or a personal brand, in this case (Chritton, 2014).

Moreover, if the topic shifts from the concept of personal brand as a tool of self-understanding, to the concept of personal brand as maintaining and transmitting an identity, it is important to note that a brand, even a personal one, needs to be communicated with the public in a consistent and effective manner. In the same way that conventional branding does, increasing commitment requires engagement with the public. As long as the brand-holder stays true to its values over the years, the effect will be favorable (Gouitcheche, 2018).

Even with the traditional brands of today, one may occasionally see a personification process, which recognizes the value of a human and emotional connection with the audience. Johnson (2019) emphasizes that a personal brand cannot do more than facilitate the creation and implementation of these connections. In light of this finding online channels to promote one's own personal brand, personify a classic brand or at the very least carry out communication is simple. The most prominent of the mentioned digital channels are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and they are useful because they are easy to use and cheap, so they are a handy tool for personal branding (Petrucă, 2016).

1.4 Summary on communication and branding

This chapter has successfully managed to describe and explain vital concepts of the topic at hand, specifically communication, marketing, advertising and branding, but also the relationship between them. First, the emphasis was placed on defining and explaining communication, seen as information exchange where some certain communication skills are needed (Velentzas & Broni, 2014), a phenomenon studied both as a process and from a semiotic point of view (Fiske, 2010), continuing by explaining marketing as a particular process of communication. The analysis of the marketing phenomenon inevitably led to the explanation of the marketing mix, where the promotion part becomes a point of interest (McCarthy, 1960; Singh, 2012).

Starting from the promotion factor of marketing, advertising was reviewed, explaining the mechanisms by which it is realized and its objectives, mainly seen as a type of communication used to convince an individual to buy a product (Belch & Belch, 1998; Fletcher, 2010). The importance of branding was also highlighted later, together with the explanation of the central concepts of a brand, such as brand identity and brand image, where consistency is a key element in successful branding (Aaker, 2012; Blackett, 2016). The analysis of the importance of branding later led to the analysis of a particularity, that of emotional branding through color, noting how colors convey certain emotions, help the brand in differentiation and nurture a connection between the brand and the consumer (Cunningham, 2017; Oladumiye & Ebenezer, 2018).

Since in this work the emphasis is on the branding of both a product, music, and a person, the artist, the logical consequence was the explanation of the phenomenon of personal branding, the extent to which it can be controlled and its importance. It has been highlighted that cultivating a personal brand or at least of controlling the existing personal brand that people inevitably have, be it weak or strong, is vital, and that personal branding manages to cultivate connections and can influence perceptions (Lindahl & Öhlund, 2013; Johnson, 2019).

2. Branding in the music industry

The second chapter is meant to inform about what the music industry is about, promotion, as well as the link between these two. In the first phase, the presentation of the music industry from the perspective of the contemporary music market will be carried out. Later on, the phenomenon of promotion in this industry will be analyzed. Further on, a link will be created between the music and the artist and their promotion through processes related to branding and brand communication.

2.1 The popular music industry

In the initial step of the analysis process, the music is presented by selecting popular or commercial music as a typology or even as a genre owing to the fact that it is intended for commercial consumption. This review will outline the origins of this type of music, the reasons why people listen to and hear popular music everywhere, as well as certain qualities that may be used to identify popular music as a musical genre.

The musician will take center stage in the second part of this overview of the modern music industry, and several topics pertaining to management will be covered in this segment as well. The necessity of music management, as well as the difficulties associated with putting this approach into practice, will be underlined. Considering that an emerging artist typically does not have the financial resources necessary or the justification to hire a manager, an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of self-management will also be provided.

Another direction of music business analysis will be focused on analyzing the primary obstacles that are now facing the market. Even though it is nowadays easier and cheaper to distribute music than it ever was, the competition is notably higher, and there is difficulty for beginning musicians to distinguish themselves in an oversaturated market. Other difficulties and requirements, such as the overall necessity of maintaining consistent and productive lines of communication with the general public, will also be investigated.

2.1.1 Pop music

Popular music first emerged as a method for classifying and identifying various musical forms that appeared in urban regions (Reily, 2007). It is attempting to infiltrate a significant portion of our culture by making appearances on cultural and mass communication platforms including radio, television, film, and the internet. Due to the daily presence, popular music has evolved into one of the most common areas of study (Fisher, 2011).

The word "pop" was commonly used in the 1960s to refer to anything that was popular among young people in a broad sense. The term "pop" represented youth, and it seemed natural that it would be associated with pop art, a movement well renowned for its playful approach to the visual arts. In former decades, pop stars frequently used the term "pop" in a broad and ambiguous sense. The term conjures images of simplicity, ease, and appeal. The word "pop music" first appeared throughout the 20th century as a useful way to distinguish between music that was performed in more classical music settings and music that was aired on the radio, and this was done in order to appeal to a larger audience (Sanneh, 2021).

People listen to popular music in a variety of settings. Regardless of whether people listen to music for enjoyment, diversion, social integration, or self-identification, it is widely consumed because to the variety of styles and the ability of the audience to identify to it through the messages and emotions conveyed (Moore, 2003). Due to the close ties between this music form and technology, the idea of popular music is particularly important for understanding the music industry (Reily, 2007).

Popular music combines a variety of artists who have gained notoriety over the years and whose music is recognized by a sizable audience. While pop music dominates the popular music scene, other genres such as rock, hip-hop, dance, techno, folk, R&B, blues, and jazz also have their origins there and have done well to illustrate this category (Shuker, 2002).

Pop music may be defined as the type of music that people listen to unconsciously and as experiencing melodies that they are familiar with even if they may not be aware of how they first heard it (Frith, 2001). These days,

it is natural to think of pop music when hearing the term of pop. Pop music is accessible to us through a wide variety of mediums and settings due to its commercial nature. Some of these include the television, the radio, cars, public places like shopping malls and outdoors. Over time, the influence of pop music becomes increasingly present in people's thoughts. As a result of the fact that pop music is simple to learn and simple to perform, the idea that pop music is accessible might be drawn from this. Pop music may sound lighter, and the artists who perform it typically do not need to have the same abilities as musicians who play, for example, classical or jazz music (Frith, 2001).

Thus, popular music is most of the time considered to be commercial music and not a specific kind of music or musical genre, but concepts such as “light,” “memorable” and “commercial sounding” might be used when trying to describe it. Popularity is by all means a definition of popular music. However, popularity does not create a new musical genre, but represents the relationship between the individual listener and the musical product (Fisher, 2011). Considering it is widely known, popular music seems like excellent subject for promotion analysis.

2.1.2 Managing vs. self-managing the pop artist

Since pop music, as stated earlier, is a genre or type of music good to analyze due to its globality and complex commercial processes around it, the usefulness of artist management becomes notable. The term "artistic management" refers to the process of overseeing and organizing an artist's whole professional life, particularly within the music business (Allen, 2018). A manager is responsible for keeping themselves informed about everything that is going on in the artist's business life as well as the artist's personal life when it comes to the management of the artist. The fact that a person is brought into discussion, rather than a company, makes it clearly evident that the manager's work will focus on both the artist's work and portions of the private live. In general, the job of an artist manager is dedicated to the aspects of an artist's career that are associated with music creation, planning, strategy, sales, and even the coordinating the activities of third parties involved in the artist's work (Voogt, 2015; Allen, 2018).

According to Voogt (2015), another role that an artist manager plays is that of a facilitator. They not only make it easier to put a business strategy into action, but they also make it easier to connect with other people working in the industry. A manager is someone who not only has a strategy to achieve all of these goals but also have the relevant abilities and contacts to do so successfully. As a result, the responsibilities of an artist manager include not only the facilitation and execution of the phases of strategy, planning, and music creation, but also the cultivation of relationships with both the gatekeepers of the business and the general public (Voogt, 2015, Schwetter, 2019).

A music manager in today's world is well aware of what it means to grow an artist as a brand and the general importance of branding (Allen, 2018). The management process requires careful attention to detail in order to provide an accurate and complete outlining as well as promotion of the artist. Although the specifics of each situation are different, a manager's responsibilities typically include maximizing an artist's potential for financial gain while also fostering the artist's growth as a brand in the interest of cultivating a consistent image and increasing the artist's brand equity (Allen, 2018; Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018).

Baskerville and Baskerville (2018) have a concept of the ideal characteristics of an effective artist manager. They say that any artist who is seeking for a career manager should search for someone who is serious, highly organized, and is a proficient communicator. Reputation is brought up as well. It is recommended for a manager to have contacts with a large number of people, and the relationship that they have with those individuals should be a positive one. In addition, a successful management process is one in which the artist and the manager have similar objectives and perspectives on where the project should go.

Particularly in the earliest stages of the artist's career, the manager is not always a distinct individual, but rather may be the position that another person in the artist's life, such as a trusted friend or a booking agent takes on (Voogt, 2015). As long as the above individual is able to generate opportunities, the demand for a manager will, at the very least, be somewhat

satisfied. In the same spirit, artists themselves have the ability to be their own managers especially at the beginning of their career.

According to Schwetter (2019), self-management is not an ideal situation, but in the early stages of a profession, it is sometimes the only alternative. The artist is responsible for basically everything, and their goal is to find a good balance between their creative work and the challenges of running a business. If an artist wants to be successful at self-management, they need to develop their entrepreneurial skills and be willing to understand the importance of the business side of the industry. In addition, it comes as no surprise that the musician will have to give up some of the time that was intended to be spent creating music in order to deal with the additional activities and with the requirement to always be informed about the latest market trends, particularly in the context of digital media (Allen, 2018).

There are two primary motivations that drive artists to take charge of their own management. On the one hand, the requirement is a financial one. This is due to the fact that revenues are unpredictable at the beginning of a career, and the involvement of third parties in an artist's life, such as managers, is not financially viable. On the other hand, novice artists do not have record deals, which otherwise would help facilitate the logistical and financial access to a manager (Morrow, 2018; Allen, 2018). Additionally, sometimes artists choose to deliberately not have managers so that they can feel free and in control of their own artistic activity and career path, and other times they simply do not have the ability to self-manage or any viable alternative (Schwetter, 2019).

Furthermore, the rapid growth of the internet as well as online advertising and distribution tools helps artists in accomplishing certain objectives on their own. Having said that, everyone has access to these tools, which leads to a strong competition. The manager and in this case the self-managed artist, need to have both an interest for and competence in the digital environment. It is essential to consistently monitor and manage not only websites but also the connections and exchanges that take place online as well (Allen, 2018). Even though self-management is the only choice available to some artists, particularly when they are just starting out in their careers, it is clear that having a manager of one's own comes with a couple of major benefits. First

of all, he is able to handle all areas of the artist's business, which allows the artist to concentrate nearly entirely on making and performing music. Second of all, a manager is a highly specialized individual who possesses a certain set of abilities and connections in the field of music, the media, or event planning (Allen, 2018; Schwetter, 2019).

2.1.3 Challenges in the music industry

Based on the existing research on the phenomena that are associated with branding and the music business, it is evident that there is a lot of competition that musicians must deal with before their introduction to the market. It is possible that these difficulties are the result of an oversaturated market, a poor relationship with the general public, or a lack of a business-oriented mind. According to Penchev (2019), one of the key things to do in order to battle such issues is to have a memorable market presence. For instance, an image developed and communicated effectively will help with the problem of correctly establishing oneself in the industry and with nurturing the relationship with the audience of the artist.

A significant obstacle is the high degree of competition that exists on the market, which is a direct result of the saturated market that the business currently holds (Haynes & Marshall, 2018; Penchev, 2019; Meler & Skoro, 2013; Lieb, 2018). There is a large number of musicians, and each of them has relatively simple access to various musical distribution tools. At the same time, listeners have a large selection of music from which to pick. When placing this difficulty in the context of other challenges, such as the decrease in the number of physical sales of music and signing record deals that are not as advantageous as they used to be, this challenge takes on an even greater level of significance. The importance of artists being aware of these problems and the requirement for an entrepreneurial spirit is growing with each passing day. They have a responsibility to educate themselves on the best practices for selling their musical product, focusing on the techniques, tools, and information that will be of use to them in this effort (Thomson, 2013).

The artist relieves some of the pressure that comes from being aware of the intense level of competition by drawing attention to the particular attributes

that he possesses through a clearly defined image. Successful artist branding is not only essential for success, but it also helps in developing and maintaining a proper connection between the listener and the artist (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020). It is essential for artists to have both a marketing strategy and a communication plan in order to successfully express their brand. The artist's relationship with the audience is no longer limited to the realm of music alone; it now encompasses other fields as well, such as the social and the affective ones, and the artist is required to keep in constant contact with the, even if the music has not yet been released yet. In order to improve the chances of being successful in a field that is competitive, it is important to use strategies that include elements such as raising interest and awareness through the use of photos and videos from behind the scenes, or by posting teasers on social media, for example (Murphy, 2015).

Because many of the traditional gatekeepers no longer hold the same influence they once did, creative individuals may experience a sense of relief and gain greater control over their own artistic vision (Lieb, 2018). However, record labels, at least back in the day, provided access to greater levels of funding, production, and distribution than independent artists could hardly reach on their own. Since they cannot rely on a record label or a manager to handle marketing alone, musicians feel as though they are being forced onto social media, where they are required to engage with the audience in order to create a relationship of trust with them. This might seem questionable for some artists, from two points of view. On the one hand, some artists want to devote themselves as much as possible to their music, and not to the business side. On the other hand, social media is an easy tool to use, but all artists have access to it, so the level of competition is a big one, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for artists to stand out (Baym, 2018).

These difficulties associated with becoming known on the market are definitely caused by the technological changes that have taken place not just in the music industry but also in society in general. These shifts have taken place on two levels. The expenses of producing and distributing music are becoming lower, and a large number of music artists all over the world now have access to the industry because of the expanding internet access. Musicians, record labels and managers need to be aware that the music market has to be regularly monitored since it will most likely continue to

evolve. Additionally, tools for engaging with the public, such as social media and websites, are required in order to gain fans and ultimately generate profit (Dolfsma, 2004; Thomson, 2013)

2.2 Promotion in the music industry

Before delving into the specifics of what promotion in the music industry comprises, it is necessary to have a fundamental comprehension not just of the music, but also of the artists themselves as commercial entities, goods, or conveniences. Some arguments will be given about this perspective, as well as the usefulness of conducting an analysis directed towards brand and commercial elements for any manager or artist marketer. In addition, the tangible aspects of the artist's music distribution and marketing will also be included.

It is important to understand the primary goals that musicians have in relation to the music industry or the music business before delving into the specific tools through which artists promote themselves. The goals may be commercial, personal, creative, or any combination of these three, and the communication methods that are adopted must take this into consideration, as will be detailed in the following paragraphs. Understanding the dynamics that have been taking place in the music industry over the course of the past years is a second important step before moving on to the techniques or tools of promotion. Aspects relating to the changes and advances that have occurred in the business in terms of industry gatekeepers will also be analyzed, along with a few points of view about social media and the presence of artists on various online channels.

Last but not least, an overview of the most important promotional tools will be shown. These are resources that are essential for any beginning artist who aspires to enter this business and who wishes to have a good starting point compared with the other people who are already in the industry. The analysis will focus on aspects that refer to both the artist's online presence and its relationship with gatekeepers or other players in the industry.

2.2.1 The music and the artist as products

Music has been promoted and placed under a commercial umbrella for a very long time, and a significant part of the musical brands that are known all over the world actually have real business plans behind them, as well as serious financial investments in production and distribution of the music in the mass media (Rutter, 2016). The approach as a product is heavily emphasized by the tangibility of some of the aspects that incorporate music, however it must be stated that music itself can be considered a service because its intangibility. Physical elements like CDs, vinyl disks and DVDs can be used to distribute music, but also digital files, through radio, television, and the Internet (Dann & Jensen, 2007). Despite being a part of culture and art, branding and other marketing strategies may be used to promote music, which is subject to a logic very similar to that of traditional products (Borg, 2020; Morris, 2005; Chertkow & Feehan, 2012).

It is crucial to emphasize that music itself must have specific forms in order to be categorized as a product or a commodity. Globalization and market growth have led to the commodification of many ideas and concepts, including culture and music. As Baym (2018) states, since the first musical scores were sold in antiquity and up until the present, it is clear that tangible music products have been on the market for an extended amount of time and music has been and is marketed in a variety of formats. According to Taylor (2015), music is only a commodity when it is connected to the physical and technological components used for its storage and reproduction. He believes that this type of commodification only applies to music as sound, not music itself. People are constantly seeking for methods to commodify music and make their musical effort into something that brings in money since music in the music business has the function of being sold and producing money (Baym, 2018).

When taking all of these tangible factors into account, it is feasible to claim that the music itself, as well as the musicians who perform it, can be related to commodities. Artists do not sell themselves as tangible entities; but they sell images, through building personal brands through which they acquire the characteristics and capabilities of conventional brands (Schroeder, 2010). Nevertheless, one thing that is obvious in the modern music business is the

fact that music itself, even as a product, is not as physical as it once was. Many individuals no longer possess music in a physical manner because of the fast and steady shift from cassettes and CDs to download and later to streaming (IFPI, 2015, 2018, 2022). This suggests that music is now essentially offered as a digital product, at the border with services. Styvén (2007) both expects and observes the shift towards an intangible form of music consumption, which results in music once again taking on the role of a service rather than a conventional product. Building a music or artist brand outside of the music itself is therefore a good alternative for solidifying an intangible musical product or service (Palmer, 2013).

When an artist wants to be successful and enjoy financial benefits, it is of great use for them to pay attention to all of these branding aspects and concepts. However, in order to acknowledge music and artists as products or commodities and to develop them accordingly, specific knowledge is required. In order for music to be financially successful as a product or as a hybrid between a product and a service, either the artist or the management has to have the time and abilities related to technology, advertising, networking, and the music industry in general (Baym, 2018).

2.2.2 Goals and success in the music industry

Beeching (2010) suggests a career should start with a well-defined strategy that includes goals and what achieving success means for an individual. For some artists, success is measured in terms of money and notoriety. However, success can mean a variety of things for other artists, including the ability to give back to the community, the benefit of having a job that satisfies them emotionally and intellectually, and the ability to keep one's artistic integrity and authenticity even when the artists are on the top (Beeching, 2010; Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018).

The primary purpose of artist marketing and management is to increase the success potential in the music industry (Allen, 2018, Borg, 2020). Contouring objectives is the initial step in the development of any strategy, and this is because it is one of the most important methods of being able to identify, define, and measure what success means for the artist. An accomplished

artist is one who has been able to achieve all of his or her ambitions. An artist could be said to have achieved success, for example, if he is able to put out music that is well received by the general public, if he is capable of consistently earning money from his musical endeavors, or if he has signed a recording deal with a label. Everything is subject to the desires of the individual artist and what he hopes to accomplish with his career (Allen, 2018).

A record label or a manager may have their own conception of what constitutes a successful career for the artist, in addition to the objectives that are chosen by the artists themselves. For an industry expert, the achievement of a big number of records sold is the most evident sign of success, while for others, the successful selling of secondary products can be regarded the achievement of that goal. Success, from the perspective of those who work in the music industry, is the effective execution of a business strategy that results in financial revenue (Hughes & Lang, 2003; Allen, 2018).

As a result, it is not surprising that the view of record labels on success is centered on the commercial aspect. This is because companies aim to generate both short-term profits and stable, long-term revenue through the cultivation of relationships with the general public. Sometimes, a record company could be willing to invest a big deal of money in order to generate money in return, through marketing in the mass media on a wide scale, but this is something that varies from case to case (Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004). In addition, there are instances when, for a conventional record company, reaching objectives and being successful means nothing more than growing the number of online music streams and downloads, and not necessarily achieving any extra goals that are particular to the artist as an individual (Allen, 2018).

When an artist does not have a record label or manager in their career, the objectives that they have might be different, but some indicators of success that are common between all of them, can definitely be noted. According to Rutter (2016), success does not have a single formula that can be applied to all situations, but it is possible to achieve when certain conditions are satisfied. According to their point of view, the achievement of goals such as the production of attractive music, differentiation on the market, a high

degree of commerciality, and even an effective visual identity is universal, can lead to success and can constitute a good start in terms of the artist's overall objectives. In most instances, the level of an artist's financial success may be seen as an additional indication of that artist's level of success (Herstand, 2016).

There are many goals that a musician in the music industry may have, some of which are more closely related to the artist's own desires and needs. For example, some of the goals that an artist can have is to earn the respect of both other music artists and the audience, artistic or creative freedom and a sense of belonging (Beeching, 2010). It is possible that artists desire not just status and praise, but also opportunities for creative growth and a healthy balance between their personal life and their careers. Furthermore, success for an artist might mean gaining financial stability while retaining complete creative control (Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018). It is evident that while success, for some people, may be defined as notoriety and stable financial gains from music, for others, success may simply be defined as the ability to make a living from music, or having the freedom to pursue their own career desires (Beeching, 2010; Herstand, 2016).

2.2.3 Internet development and online platforms in the music industry

A new kind of communication is certainly one governed by the internet. SunEagle (2010) identifies connectivity as the key component that allows for access to digital information and serves as a gateway for the consumption of creative materials. The way that music is created, shared, consumed, and promoted has changed together with the increased and constant digitalization of the music business. The explosion of the internet and the development of technology have been by far the most influential factors in the changes that happen in the industry, and the release of new music distribution forms such as CDs and MP3 files was a true revolution for a world that had previously listened to music on cassettes, vinyl records, radio, or television. In the end, even these technologies started to become outdated, and the music business was reimaged through the transmission of music through file sharing and, subsequently, streaming (Voogt, 2015).

According to an IFPI report (2015) on the financial results of the music industry in 2014, digital music profits increased by 7 percent compared to 2013 levels, totaling around \$6,9 billion in revenue. Streaming has definitely evolved even more since then, but this year in particular is relevant because in 2014 there was a first-ever equalization of physical and digital music revenue, with around 46% of each, with the remaining 8% representing income from performing in public spaces and using music for advertising (IFPI, 2015). Later, because of the development of the industry and the increase in the technology ownership of the public, data from the industry (IFPI, 2022) highlights a solid increase in global revenue but also in streaming as a form of music consumption.

Therefore, it is obvious that the music industry efficiently handled the shift from physical to digital, from PC to mobile, and even from downloads to streaming services, all at once, or successively, the year 2022 being the eighth consecutive year of general growth of the global music market (IFPI, 2022). In the 2015 IFPI report, Edgar Berger, the former CEO International of Sony Music Entertainment, states that the music industry is doing a great job of evolving as technology advances and that music as a business seems to be a stable form of business, statements that have been proven (IFPI, 2022).

The rapid growth of internet has led for the digital distribution and streaming channels, as well as technology, live events and online strategies to become increasingly valuable (Beeching, 2010; Borg, 2020). The biggest challenge facing musicians today is captivating an increasing number of people and turning them into a loyal fanbase. The ultimate goal in business is to get recognition and money, and it can potentially be helped by developing a strong personal brand and making the most out of the online environment (SunEagle, 2010, Borg, 2020). As a result, nearly all production companies base their operations on the internet. It gives them the option to distribute music in digital format and to actively promote their artists in various ways. Before the internet, music consumers relied on music magazines, radio, and television to connect with music and musicians, but, with the rise of digital media, these channels for distribution and dissemination are becoming obsolete (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012, Borg, 2020).

The digital revolution has brought musicians both advantages and the emergence of certain new challenges. The need for musicians to stand out in

a highly competitive environment is a given, and even music marketing has undergone changes from the perspective of strategy, refocusing on market demands and trends rather than just exposing music to audiences and distributing it. This is more specifically done by placing a smaller emphasis on general audiences and a larger emphasis on getting more specific audiences to discover the music by themselves (SunEagle, 2010, Beeching, 2010, Chertkow & Feehan, 2012).

Nonetheless, there are also popular artists who have a well-established and strong position on the market, and these artists view internet marketing rather as a complementary tool for communication, but not vital. Since the emergence of the internet age has fundamentally altered many industries, maintaining a sizable and devoted fan base ensures an artist's success even in the absence of a required online presence. However, for artists who have stated in the past decade, the internet is an effective and necessary resource for opportunities to promote their music (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020).

In the music industry, Lieb (2018) identifies four main areas of interest, based on Griswold's (2012) cultural diamond, the social world, the cultural object, the creator and the receiver, in this case the audience. The social world would be a sum of interactions, the cultural object would be the artist, the creator could be the artist manager, while the receiver is the public. One of Lieb's work's objectives is to provide more information about these elements and their interactions, while taking note of the many changes and technological development from the industry. From vinyl all the way to online music streaming, the way music gets to the consumer has definitely been through some changes. The popular artists are aware of these changes and as Lieb exemplifies, it can be observed in the music industry how singers such as Beyonce are actively following the wave in terms of new media and music distribution channels. Not only the form of music distribution has evolved, but music gatekeepers as well. Old gatekeepers such as radio owners or big label owners are losing some power as new gatekeepers arrive. Music blog owners, artist managers, journalists and the big players of social media, the influencers, have taken some of the traditional gatekeepers' power for good. They possess the ability to facilitate the connection between the artist, the

music and the audience, providing new and easier ways to reach the fans (Lieb, 2018).

It is notable that almost every big industry player nowadays uses social media marketing and communication. Platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram or Facebook are highly used by labels and artists themselves because of the benefits they bring to the table. Social media helps building a strong and fruitful relationship between the fans and the artist. Communicating online through social networks offers a wide range of opportunities for artists to get their music out there and to promote a brand. Social media manages to facilitate music consumption directly and also develop relationships and offer brand experiences (Lieb, 2018; Gouitcheche, 2018). It is again reinforced by Lieb (2018) that a social media presence helps build a strong brand personality, a vital element that brings the fans closer to the artist. They manage to attract and engage fans, they help in reaching specific audiences and most notable, they help keeping the fans informed and interested, at very low or no costs at all.

People come across artists and their music through different channels. While on the communication and image side it is vital to mention brand identity and brand touchpoints, such as visual elements, messages etc. (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012), in terms of music, Lieb (2018) calls these touchpoints music discovery mechanisms. The author lists the most relevant music discovery mechanisms, both traditional and modern, such as: radio, live venues, streaming services, television appearances, advertising, music publications, event performances or endorsements.

Donnelly (2017) addresses the contemporary artist, claiming that it is vital to take the promotional or marketing aspect of music equally as seriously as composing music itself. He says this in order to emphasize the importance of the modern musician's role in the music industry. In addition, it has been stated that the internet audience cannot be ignored since it makes it simpler for beginning artists to "make it" now than it was for beginning artists to do so many decades ago. Donnelly (2017) underlines, similarly to what Lieb (2018) has stated, that conventional gatekeepers, who are mostly represented by labels, have less authority in selecting whether artists will be successful. These days, musicians have more influence over their careers than ever before; a good illustration of this is the internet presence that they cultivate

and upkeep. The fact that one does not have to be signed to a major label for achieving success is the source of this strength.

Once more, the web media provides sufficient resources for artists to successfully establish their careers or, at the very least, to shape an identity for their brand. This, in addition to the artist's efforts to create a fan base independently, assists the artist to better present themselves and their work to label decision-makers. According to Donnelly (2017), all the members of a band or the people surrounding the artist need to be on the same page in terms of promotion, and if some of the people involved in this equation do not place any importance into social media presence, it can lead for the band or the artist to stall.

It is noted that although social media feels like the main tool to use nowadays, websites still have notable importance (Donnelly, 2017; Rowles, 2022). A website for the artist, as previously mentioned, or band is a place where people come to find news, concert dates, and buy music or merchandise. Since the website must be consistent with the artist and the brand personality, efforts must be put to design a successful one. Both for artists and other individuals, webpages can be considered business cards that give a concise overview of what the owner is about. Social media platforms, even though promotion tools by themselves, will lead to these websites through different posts of the artist.

It is still suggested (Allen, 2018) that managers or PR specialists can be really helpful, in some cases vital to build a healthy awareness around the music brand. However, what Donnelly (2017) says is still of use and it can be interpreted that beginner artists with a lack of financial resources do indeed have tools to reach a certain degree of success by themselves. Regarding branding, Donnelly (2017) addresses the artists by saying they should not necessarily view themselves as products but rather adopt a brand-like mindset. Artists do have tangible elements such as music hard copies or merchandise and brand identity elements such as a logo are what an artist needs before using other marketing tactics.

The power shift from traditional gatekeepers to the artists themselves is reinforced in *The Economics of the Popular Music Industry* (Byun, 2016). The technological development decimated the importance of traditional

distribution channels, therefore artists no longer need big labels. Artist websites and social media platforms are excellent channels for music marketing and distribution. Of course, Byun (2016) still highlights the benefits of big music labels, since they still possess an important financial and image capital to help artists breakthrough. However, in the context of today's online environment, these big label collaborations are not vital anymore (Byun, 2016).

The IFPI Global Music Report 2018 presents a clear decline in physical revenue, related to the ongoing growth of online music streaming. Spotify alone has over 70 million paid subscribers worldwide, and this is something that strongly suggests that online platforms are where artists and bands nowadays should be. The report gives a relevant example of marketing success using both classic channels and social media. Camila Cabello, signed to Epic Records, reached worldwide success after her hit single "Havana" came out. As the report states, representatives say that a global marketing campaign was developed to help people discover Camila and her music. Content creation and engagement with fans on social media were at the core of this marketing campaign. Even though the campaign was a global one, at first sight, it is mentioned that it has been divided to better target every country or local market. Creating marketing campaigns and content tailored to specific audiences is one of the most vital practices in marketing and advertising (Kotler, 1999; Drummond & Ensor, 2006, Fletcher, 2010, Aaker, 2012). Therefore, musicians should have a global perspective about their artistry and development, but the marketing efforts should be focused on specific audiences.

Jenifer Mallory, executive vice-president of Sony, states for IFPI Global Music Report 2018 that the overwhelming success of Camila Cabello is the result of multiple elements working together. Music talent is the starting point, but eventually efficient marketing and the ability to engage with nowadays' audience, including online platforms are just as important in order to reach success in the music industry (IFPI, 2018). This may imply that an integrated approach that makes use of constantly engaging with followers on social media as well as emphasizing the artist's strengths might bring about positive results.

2.2.4 The main music promotion tools used in the online era

Promotion, in the understanding of this thesis, refers to the process of highlighting all of the attributes and advantages of a product or service to potential customers. This may be accomplished by creating an efficient strategy, the objective of which is, of course, to generate money. If an artist truly wishes to differentiate themselves in the industry, the use of various promotional tools is very necessary (Allen, 2018; Borg, 2020). It is necessary for the artist to engage in promotion in order to heighten both his awareness and his reputation before he can reach his objectives, which may include raising the number of concerts performed or the number of records that are sold (Beeching, 2010; Borg, 2020).

Traditional methods of promotion include elements like photographs, advertisements, articles, and appearances in the media, but with the emergence and development of the internet, artists have more digital alternatives. Online promotion is a relatively new strategy that is quite inexpensive, and it is believed to be essential for any artist, particularly for those who are just starting out in their careers. According to Borg (2020), online marketing for artists is simply the use of the internet to attract fans of the artist's music. All of the promotional tools that are available online, in addition to those that are available offline, are designed to attract fans, develop connections with them, stimulate conversation, increase music sales, and grow the brand (Beeching, 2010, Chertkow & Feehan, 2012, Borg, 2020).

However, there are aspects connected to the public image that do not belong to the artists or cannot be fully controlled by them. One example of this is publicity or earned media, which refers to all opinions, reviews, and stories originating from the public spotlight that are not controlled or paid for by the artist (Allen, 2018, Borg, 2020). An example of this can be a photograph of the artist taken by a fan or a review post on a critic's blog. However, the artist can attempt to influence these impressions through public relations, activities, and the formation of a strong brand identity (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020)

To circle back around to the concept of strategic or intentional promotion, it can be noted that the modern musicians make use of a variety of helpful resources, both online and offline. Some of the most relevant examples are websites, press kits, social media profiles, visual materials, and printed materials (Beeching, 2010, Chertkow & Feehan, 2012, Borg, 2020). These are frequently utilized simultaneously, as part of an integrated strategy, and in addition to the promotion itself, they both transmit the identity of the brand and establish an image for the long term. This brand identity will therefore be noticeable in all of the visual or tangible aspects through which the musician distributes and promotes his music, such as CDs, websites, advertisements, or social media platforms (Schwartz, 2009; Tortorella, 2013; Baskerville & Baskerville 2018).

Therefore, a brand identity is present across all promotional tools and it also does not just refer to the visual components of a product. It is a combination of things such as meanings, values, distinctive qualities, and so on, all of which have been contained in tangible elements and communicated to the general public through various forms of communication (Tortorella, 2013; Lieb, 2018).

When it comes to the online identity of a music artist, a website is considered a very important start. Websites continue to be useful for artists despite the rise of social media, which has replaced some of the functions formerly performed by websites. Some of the most essential tools or touchpoints for branding that may be found on a website include a biography, opinions, images, music, links, news, events, or videos (Beeching, 2010; Chertkow & Feehan, 2012). Because it provides the chance to present listeners with a comprehensive and controlled image of themselves, an artist's website is the location where they should focus their attention in order to attract the new or potential listeners. Artists can also obtain mailing lists or help in the direct sale of records or merchandise, such as t-shirts, mugs, stickers, and so on, which is another advantage of creating an artist website. Therefore, for artists, a website that has been properly created and is continuously optimized may be a very helpful promotional tool (Beeching, 2010; Chertkow & Feehan, 2012, Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018).

Simply said, it is strongly advised that the artist's website have professional photos, a biography, a section for news and upcoming shows, links to social media accounts, and eventually links to the music itself, whether it is music that can be physically bought or downloaded or just links to streaming services (Beeching, 2010; Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018). It is stated that the front page should always be clean and well-organized, the images should be attractive, and the artwork should genuinely reflect the brand personality. It is also important that call-to-action can be found as well on the website. along with social media buttons, contact forms, and pages for purchasing and listening to music and watching videos (Donnelly, 2017).

It was said before that the news, blog, and show dates areas of the website should be maintained up to date at all times and have all the necessary links and information surrounding the artist (Beeching, 2010). These things will keep the audience's attention and convince them that the website is, in fact, the principal source of information and content concerning the artist or the band. On an artist's website, the area devoted to their biography typically receives a little bit more attention than other parts of the site. Donnelly in this case begins by stating that the artist is obligated to compose an honest and modest biography of themselves. Because of this, listeners will be able to empathize with the musicians and support them in their endeavors. It is acceptable for the artist to boast about their accomplishments in the biography, but everything must be accurate. The audience is interested in how, why, and when did the artist start making music, how they can be characterized, and what the artist stands for or what the music transmits (Donnelly, 2017).

In addition, it is generally accepted that the artist should include in their biography any information that they think to be relevant (Donnelly, 2017; Johnson, 2019). It is essential to maintain authenticity in one's presentation and communication while maintaining an honest tone. The secret to success may vary from one situation to the next, but a brief biography that is significantly more honest and relevant may be of greater benefit than a lengthy and too complicated one. Authenticity is of utmost importance for today's musicians since it plays a role in attracting the appropriate audience and in fostering a sense of connection between that audience and both the music and the musicians themselves (Donnelly, 2017; Johnson, 2019).

The website may also function as a blog, which is a location where the artist may publish stories and opinions. Although the artist may do these things on social media as well, doing so on the website allows the artist to maintain complete control over the manner in which they are presented. Blog posts also provide the option to get comments from readers, which helps fans to feel engaged in the conversation. Along the same lines as the website itself, individual blog postings have the opportunity to include audio, links, or videos. The blog component of a website stays effective so long as it maintains a personal tone and perspective (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012, Borg, 2020).

Promoting oneself as an artist is made easier and more cost-effective with the use of social media (Franklin, 2011; Hutchison, 2013). Traditional gatekeepers no longer hold the influence they once had, and as a result, the success of an endeavor is now determined by the artist and, more importantly, the audience. Because the audience is the focus of all PR, branding, and marketing efforts, the success or failure of an artist ultimately rests in the hands of the audience. According to Donnelly (2017), artists do not necessarily require the assistance of PR agencies in order to be successful. He also claims that artists have the ability to promote themselves to a certain extent without the assistance of enterprises by making use of social media and internet platforms.

The majority of today's musicians have a presence on various social networking websites. The advantage of using social networks like Facebook and Instagram, for example, is that they have big audiences, which means that the fans are already there. These networks, along with Instagram, and lately TikTok (Toscher, 2021), are among the most popular social networks. As a result, social networking sites now fulfill some of the functions that were formerly performed by email marketing. It is advised that musicians maintain an authentic presence on social media platforms, since this helps build trustworthy relationships with their audience and earns the fans' respect. In addition, the brand identity needs to be conveyed in a consistent manner, throughout all the articles, news, or photographs that are posted by the artist. It is essential that the artist maintains an honest attitude, that his online presence is engaging, that he has a posting strategy, and that he regularly engages with the general audience. The graphical elements of the

artist's visual identity, such as a logo, colors, and posters, as well as the ones in the form of footage from concerts or vlogs, will all be present on social media, and are practically exposed to the opinions and discussions of the fans. Therefore, great consideration is given to the process of creating and promoting accounts on social media networks (Lieb, 2018; Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018; Borg, 2020).

Even if the visual aspects of the artist may be found virtually everywhere else in promotional materials, they nonetheless deserve a description all to themselves. The visual identity will express feelings, meaning, and qualities; it will instantly draw attention of the public (Beeching, 2010); and it will be found on all promotional materials, which gives it a very essential role to play. A logo, for instance, which is a vital component of any business, needs to be memorable, have a color that has been chosen efficiently, be original, and properly reflect the identity of the company. Some artists may not require highly designed logos for their businesses, but in other cases, a simple letterhead design that features the artist's name written in an appealing and easily identifiable font is appropriate (Beeching, 2010; Tortorella, 2013).

The photos are also a component of the visual identity, and despite the fact that they do not necessarily include elements of design or particular color palettes in the same way that the visual brand identity does, they have the advantage of being able to appear in a variety of contexts, such as on the website and in social media, as well as in traditional media and promotional materials. The photographs have a responsibility to portray authenticity, and it is to everyone's advantage if the artists also have some photos that convey professional competence, when used in the relationship with the gatekeepers of the business. When it comes to advertising, elements such as flyers and brochures are also materials that may be utilized by certain artists; hence, logos or photos must be used consistently on these materials as well (Beeching, 2010).

Videos created by artists can take a variety of different shapes. It can be talked about music videos, as well as vlogs or behind-the-scenes videos. Platforms that allow streaming of videos, and YouTube in particular, are an essential tool for both the streaming of music and the sharing of such clips

(Tortorella, 2013). Vlogs, interviews, live performances, and music teasers may all be uploaded by the artists. Additionally, in the same way as social networks, video platforms also have a social component, which means that they give the opportunity to connect with followers through the use of comments. Videos should be produced in such a way that they present interest, that they are attractive from the beginning, and that they contain references and links to all other platforms where the public can buy music or get in touch with the artist (Tortorella, 2013; Borg, 2020).

After going through the components associated with content marketing, the topic can shift to paid advertising. According to Borg (2020), this form of advertising is really a commercial message that requires financial investment. Just like any other brand, the artist may, if there are sufficient financial means, make use of promotional tools of this kind. This may be accomplished both offline (in physical publications such as newspapers and magazines) and online (through websites, social media, and search engine marketing platforms such as Google AdWords). Text and graphical components can be used in online advertising, but it must have some sort of call-to-action in order to be effective. For instance, the call-to-action may direct users to the artist's website or to the platforms on which their music can be discovered. It is strongly suggested that all of the components and guidelines associated with brand identity be consistently included in these paid advertising materials (Hutchison, 2013; Borg, 2020).

Another tool would be the press kit or promotion kit, which is a helpful and necessary tool in the connection with the mass media, bloggers, record labels, and other players in the media or music industry (Beeching, 2010; Borg, 2020). It will be distributed to gatekeepers and press with the purpose of informing them not only about the artists in general, such as their biography, successes, and events in which they participate, but also about the new music that the artists will soon be releasing. A basic press kit may contain a biography, a list of achievements, photographs, contact information, and visual identity materials. It is notable that the majority of press kits used in modern times are digital, allowing for the attachment of videos and links to various social networking sites. These media kits or packages can also be sent to the radios in order to offer a full package around the music that is given to them (Beeching, 2010; Tortorella, 2013; Borg, 2020).

Experiencing the music itself can be a promotional strategy in itself, along with live performances, but in this work, music will be regarded as promoted product or service, and not as a self-promoting good. The one thing that is clear is that in order for the artists to reach their goals in terms of success, they need to provide an entire package and cannot only rely on the music alone to do so (Allen, 2018).

2.3 Visual brand identity and brand communication in the music industry

The notion of a visual identity will be analyzed once more in this final section of the second chapter, but this time it will be seen through the lens of its application in the music industry, and an increased focus will be placed on the visual aspect of things. Authenticity in graphic or visual aspects along with logos, colors, and other graphic elements will be brought into discussion. In addition, the consistency factor will be assessed in terms of the cohesiveness of the brand identity throughout all of the components, including the channels, products, and materials, which surround a commercial music artist.

In the following, several ways that this visual identity might be communicated or transmitted will be noted. There is going to be a discussion about what brand communication may imply in the context of a visual artist, as well as the primary guidelines that have to be adhered to during this process, to ensure that the end result is as consistent as it can be to what the artist had in mind.

In the end, once branding and brand communication in the music industry have been explained, the primary brand touchpoints will be named and exemplified. These touchpoints include places, elements, or tangible channels where the fans will come into contact with the brand of the artist and their music. A discussion is also held on the effective management of these touch points in order to ensure that the brand identity is effectively expressed or presented.

2.3.1 Contouring an identity

In the same way that conventional branding does, establishing a brand identity in the music business is similar to conventional brands, and it requires a combination of tangible and intangible components that convey the owner's vision of how the brand should be seen by the public (Kapferer, 2008). Simply said, the brand identity is what the brand wants to transmit, and the correct communication of these components is the most important factor in the success of the brand. The intangible elements of a brand would be its values, promises, or promises, while the tangible elements in this case refer to the tangible, mostly visual aspects through which the public would first come into touch with the brand (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012, Tortorella, 2013; Aaker, 2014; Gouitcheche, 2018)

A musician's brand is enhanced by the logos, album art, graphics on promotional materials, colors, and fonts. For a brand to be authentic, such aesthetic components must blend well with the artist and his music (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020). Many times, a person does not even need to listen to the artist's music to get a first sense of what the artist wants to say, instead, a few clear visual elements are enough to offer an overview on the general message and personality of the artist. This is accomplished by using a logo, writing in a certain style and font, and relevant graphics. Besides that, the graphic elements will appear in many places, such as merchandise or live performances, so it is necessary that they be made efficiently from the very beginning. Although any designer may perform these responsibilities effectively, it is advised to speak with one who has expertise in visual brand identities. The artist is encouraged to present recommendations and ideas to the designer directly since sometimes less is more and the visuals do not always need to be complex (Borg, 2020).

Creating a one-of-a-kind logo is one of the most important phases in building and marketing a brand identity (Borg, 2020). When an artist has a memorable logo, all it takes for a fan to recall their name is a single glance at the logo. In point of fact, a logo is so important that it could even be a good idea to spend money in order to hire a qualified graphic designer to have one designed. This is recommended to be done since it is the very first symbol that is generated when developing the visual identity of the company, and it is also

one of the very first things that a customer interacts with. It needs to be unique enough to stand out when used, for instance, on promotional material, and the typeface and colors need to be complementary to one another (Eiseman, 2017; Borg, 2020).

The colors that are used, for example, have a powerful capacity to express not only the theme, but also the emotions (Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011; Mohebbi, 2014). It is useful for the artist or manager to research colors and their psychology (Borg, 2020). Colors in a brand's logo may evoke and trigger specific feelings, in addition to representing some of the brand's values, which strengthens the brand's image and message. It is very well possible for the brand's values, as well as its purpose, promises, intentions, and distinctive qualities, to be communicated through color. Additionally, colors may directly inspire interaction with the brand by grabbing attention, being an element that can provide a taste of what the brand actually represents and inviting the public to discover it. To achieve this, the brands must use a color palette that is unique, consistent with the brand identity, and which stands out in the eyes of the public (Eiseman, 2017).

However, it is important to reiterate that a brand identity in the industry, but also in general, is not made out of just a color or a color palette. Basically, any brand identity has to be a complete package, in which all of the components are consistent to one another. Videos, album covers, logos, and photos are all components of the visual identity of a music artist (Borg, 2020). When talking about the internet environment in particular, then any web page must visually represent the brand identity. They are a reflection of the musical message as well as the overall message of the brand. As long as artists have something to advertise, graphics may be improved by incorporating brand identity values and emotions into them; these visuals are also fantastic for increasing the general public's awareness of a particular brand (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Tortorella, 2013).

Because this is how the brand is able to successfully differentiate itself from the competition, a powerful visual brand identity must take into account the harmony and efficiency of all of these tangible elements. The visual elements are especially important because, in addition to the music itself, they

represent one of the audience's first contacts with the brand, and the first impression can have an influence on the target audience (Donnelly, 2017; Gouitcheche, 2018, Borg, 2020).

All of these things will eventually lead to the formation of a unique identity. It has been suggested that an artist's brand should be as consistent as possible, whether discussing the visual components of an artist's brand or the language that an artist employs in various verbal materials such as press releases or their biography. Donnelly's (2017) work has a comment that is relevant to the topic at hand. He says that even though the quality of the music should not be compromised for the sake of the visuals, people still seek experiences, including visual ones, and that is why they want to connect with the artist, for example through live shows. It has been said multiple times that bands and artists bring to the table elements such as attitude, communication, and visual aspects (Donnelly, 2017).

2.3.2 Brand communication in the music industry

Simply developing a brand identity is not enough to provide the necessary competitive advantage for the brand. Making people aware of the brand through brand communication is an important step in effectively positioning it in the minds of the target audience (Clifton, 2009; Lieb, 2018). It is evident that communicating a brand may be a difficult job, but it is also very clear that this is a very important responsibility. Because of this, managers need to take many decisions while developing their strategies for brand communication and putting those plans into effect. To perform a successful brand communication of the brand identity, it is necessary to choose channels that are consistent with the strategy and the audience. Moreover, communication should be consistent throughout the chosen channels. This prevents the target audience from being confused about the brand identity (Tortorella, 2013; Gouitcheche, 2018).

According to multiple sources delving into the branding topic in the industry (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Tortorella, 2013; Lieb, 2018; Borg, 2020), branding needs to be considered from multiple points of view: those linked to defining and respecting the identity, and those related to the communication or

projection of that identity. The first thing that is of the utmost importance is for the artist or the manager to have a comprehensive understanding of the constructed brand identity, including the values and ideas that it seeks to communicate as well as all of its defining traits. The second thing is a progression of the first and relates to the actual communication of the given identity. It relates to the manner in which the brand identity is highlighted and communicated, as well as the consistency with which this is done, taking into consideration the channels, promotional materials, the target audience, and the artistic vision (Beeching, 2010; Borg, 2020).

According to Chertkow and Feehan (2012), when it comes to the music business, branding and brand communication need to take into consideration a number of primary aspects, such as accuracy, impact, repetition, and consistency. The concept accuracy refers to the authenticity of the artists as well as the balance that exists between them and the brand. Even though branding should outline and enhance the features of the artists and their music, it has to reflect the truth and respect the promises that were made. Going further, the impact aspect refers to how well communication is carried out. Brand communication needs to be done efficiently and easily in order for the intended audience to understand the messages that are being communicated, and furthermore, it can be said that memorability is an important element in this equation.

Next, the concept of repetition suggests that the performer maintains consistency with the audience and communicates on a constant basis. This is done to consolidate the brand into the mind of the audience. This sort of behavior is essential since it is able to create connections with the public, attract and build a loyal fanbase, develop an emotional connection with people, and even transform them into brand ambassadors for the artist. Those are all things that are beneficial for the artist's success (Borg, 2020). Consistency is the last but not the least of the elements, and by this it is meant that the artist must communicate the same values, concepts, and promises in all points of interaction that the audience has with the brand (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012).

In everyday life, artists are expected to stand out not just by a positive and consistent behavior, but also by the unique characteristics they bring to the

table (Borg, 2020). Because distinctive qualities are what set artists apart from their competitors, it is important that these qualities be expressed consistently throughout all brand communication. The creation of a pleasant and consistent experience with the brand, in addition to the development of a high-quality musical product, are both essential components that must be taken into consideration. Because of this, openness to the public is a very significant characteristic in good brand communication. It is also one of the foundations that will attract fans for artists and, more importantly, will keep existent followers loyal (Tortorella, 2013, Allen, 2018; Borg, 2020).

2.3.3 Branding touchpoints specific to the music industry

A set of general guidelines about the target audience, the modeling and implementation of a value base, as well as the discovery and application of differentiators, are the basis for the development of an effective brand (Tortorella, 2013; Borg, 2020). A few branding touchpoints can be systemized if brand identity is approached from the perspective of tangible components. Touchpoints are places where consumers interact with a brand. Offline and online touchpoints are the two primary classifications of touchpoints. On the offline side, some of the most well-known touchpoints include elements like CDs, t-shirts, and posters, all of which contribute to increased brand exposure as well as financial gain. In the realm of the internet, the presence on social networking sites and websites that stream media is given the highest importance (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Wikström, 2020; Borg, 2020).

Johnson (2019) begins by discussing online presence, through a website, as a touchpoint. It has been claimed that a website for a personal brand may also serve as an audience-drawing blog. If you want the public to find the content relevant, it must be consistent and regular. The "About me" part is crucial since it includes information about the artist's life, education, projects, and accomplishments, all of which help to establish the artist and give them a more credible appearance. A press section or media kit, or anything else that might be beneficial to media outlets when the artist is being interviewed, covered, or spoken about, is also something that an artist will require. Additionally, this shapes a more professional image (Johnson, 2019).

When simple actions, conversations, and human connections are added to a brand's overall experience, the personal brand is improved. Each touchpoint will contribute to the overall brand experience. To increase brand recognition, a variety of small activities, elements, and encounters should be used or performed. A few examples of such touchpoints associated with the brand can be the following: conversations with fans, e-mails the artist sends or e-mail replies, social media profiles, a blog or a blog section on an existing website, active participation in online groups, photos posted on social media and so on (Taylor, 2017). The branding approach using touchpoints is also referred to as the "Brand Toolbox" in *The Indie Band Survival Guide* (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012). The brand name, a recognizable visual identity (logo, images), verbal components (a story, a statement, a slogan, dialogues), and the music itself make up this "toolkit." These components can be found in videos, social media posts, press releases, printed materials, online or printed publications, etc. (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012).

Points of contact with a musical brand can also be live performances or music tours (Borg, 2020). They are crucial in the beginning because they provide people the chance to experience the artist's music live and take part in a memorable experience that draws in new fans and nurtures the relationship with the ones they already have. Live performances have a stronger and more lasting impact than recorded music, and tours help spread the word about the brand social media and word-of-mouth. If the artists open for some larger acts or bands, the association of their brand with that of the main artists, whether it be physical, on advertising materials such as posters, or just psychological, increases the brand's reputation (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020).

Another point of interaction would be music blogs (Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018; Borg, 2020). Even though these cannot be controlled by the artists, several strategies can be implemented in order to make the best of it. Maintaining positive relationships with bloggers is advised, just as it is with the press. The public perception will resonate with what the artist intends to convey if the brand identity is well-established, the music or show is of high quality, and the reviews are positive and accurately reflect the identity. Artists need to be aware that music blogs may have a significant impact on consumer behavior. While providing bloggers with special information or

elements is recommended, artists have little influence over whether blogs will mention them or whether the articles will be favorable. It is also important to keep in mind that music websites will write about a big number of bands or musicians, including competitors (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020).

When it comes to the management of an artist, there are a few more branding touchpoints that can be summed up. When an artist is just starting out or works independently, it is the manager's job to focus more on building a brand and enhancing the artist's profile by utilizing a variety of strategies. Among them are elements like establishing and maintaining a favorable image of the artist in the public's mind, as well as building a professional network of connections and subject matter experts in the industry (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020). At the same time, it is extremely important to promote the artist as a talent as well as a brand, and this promotion needs to be done in tandem with ongoing consultations with the artist to improve this brand. The identity needs to have both visual and textual components; these components need to be present on the materials that will be included with the demos and songs that are going to be delivered to radio stations or record companies. To obtain record deals, media attention, and sponsorships, one effective technique may be to invite representatives from record companies and media institutions to performances (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020).

From another perspective, there are three tactics for music marketing: raising awareness, developing relationships, and focusing on the commercial end (Baker, 2005). It is simple to identify several clearly defined action courses and touchpoints using this summary. Awareness-raising is the first step in this process. In the case of the artist, this can be accomplished through activities like frequently performing live, creating posters and other visual materials, launching social media pages, developing a website, uploading videos of the artist's performances, and conducting research to identify where the target audience can be found, whether it be primarily offline or online. Then, it might be helpful to get in touch with bloggers or media sites to request that they write about music or events in order to increase publicity. It is ideal to already have a press kit for this, and it's preferable if the managers produce the press releases on their own. (Baker, 2005).

The second step is to put the attention into developing relationships in as many ways as possible. Putting together a mailing list of email addresses and beginning the publishing of a newsletter might be helpful. Because the offline component is equally as vital, it is strongly suggested that artists engage in conversation with their audiences during live performances and make an effort to be kind and considerate toward their audience members. Obtaining e-mail addresses may be made more simpler by using an online form that allows for entry of such addresses. It is in your best interest to promptly respond to any media or business e-mails and to keep up with the publication schedule of the newsletter (Baker, 2005).

The third group of activities focuses on the commercial side of the situation. The audience should be directed to a link on the website and through social media where they may either stream or purchase the music. Merchandise stalls may also be included at live performances. It is helpful to use some testimonials, as it is for other products as well, and in the communication strategy regarding this topic, it is important to emphasize the experience that the consumer gets, rather than the commodity itself. This is because the experience is what the consumer remembers most about the product, which is the experience of music, in this case (Baker, 2005).

Since having a presence on the internet is regarded to be of the biggest significance in this day and age, it is helpful to reevaluate, in a concise way, what rules must be followed and what components a website should have. Hutchison (2013) compiles a “Web Site Content” list. This list includes components such as a biography, photographs, media coverage, song info, multimedia, a subscription or fan base sign-up page, information about upcoming tours and events, an online store, links, contact information, a blog, and a press kit (Hutchison, 2013).

It has been argued that even after developing an appropriate online presence and formulating a strategy for communicating with the target audience, the artist must still make use of the traditional media in order to become well-known (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012). Therefore, on the one hand, conventional media such as newspapers, television, magazines, and radio are still valuable stakeholders in the process of building a brand and raising awareness of that brand, but on the other hand, more modern media actors such as music

vloggers, music bloggers, and online content makers are essential channels for the artists (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Hutchison, 2013; Borg, 2020).

There are, in fact, a great deal of touchpoints, and the look of those touchpoints, despite the fact that their form initially serves to promote the brand, has, eventually, as its ultimate purpose to draw fans and boost financial profit. It is reasonable to say that music qualifies as a commodity, and downloads, streaming services, physical and digital items, compilation CDs, and apparel collections are subjected to marketing and are all sources of revenue (Morris, 2005; Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Borg, 2020). A well-made music brand is one that is consistent and has an identity that radiates this quality in all channels and touchpoints where the person may get in contact with it. This indicates that the music brand was created with care. Therefore, for new musicians to get into the music industry, a sign of professionalism is to establish and maintain a brand identity that is uniformly communicated across all touchpoints. Because of the impact that it has on customers' initial perceptions, maintaining such a professional identity becomes very necessary for them.

2.4 Summary on branding in the music industry

In the previous chapter, it was possible to explain the contemporary music industry, with an emphasis on pop music, understanding that pop music is not necessarily a genre, but rather a very well-known music classification, a sound that has the ability to be memorable (Frith, 2001; Reily, 2007; Fisher, 2011; Sanneh, 2021). Pop music is also an excellent topic of analysis in the context of branding, since it manages to convey emotions that the public easily identify with (Moore, 2003). Emphasis is also placed on artistic management, the role of managers and how this position is important in the context of the current industry. The challenges faced by artists today were also discussed, noting how the oversaturation of the market is one of the biggest obstacles when an artist tries to stand out on the market (Meler & Skoro, 2013; Haynes & Marshall, 2018; Lieb, 2018,).

This chapter discusses in more detail the promotion processes in the music industry. The focus in the first phase was on explaining the fact that artists

and music can be seen as products, so they can generate revenue and can be subjected to promotion processes and strategies (Rutter, 2016; Baym, 2018; Borg, 2020). Later, we tried to understand the objectives of the artists on the market and what success means to them. It can be observed how success can mean a lot of things, from a personal sense of accomplishment and connection with the fans, to a steady stream of financial revenue and a solid business plan (Hughes & Lang, 2003; Beeching, 2010; Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018; Allen, 2018). In achieving success, it can be seen how the Internet and social media are vital factors, because the music industry is increasingly leaning towards the digital environment, social media and streaming (Lieb, 2018; IFPI, 2022). Thus, the main promotion methods of the artists could be identified, from the creation of a brand identity (Tortorella, 2013; Lieb, 2018), to the use of specific tools where this identity is found, such as a website, a press kit and accounts on social networks (Beeching, 2010; Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Baskerville & Baskerville, 2018; Borg, 2020).

In the end, the spotlight remained on the visual side of the promotion, discussing in detail what it means to outline an identity. It has been highlighted how an identity refers to a combination of tangible and intangible elements, meant to differentiate the brand, starting from values and promises, and ending on specific visual aspects (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Tortorella, 2013; Aaker, 2014; Gouitcheche, 2018). It has been also highlighted how is brand communication carried out once the identity is set up, noting that respecting consistency, knowing the target audience and highlighting unique qualities are vital (Beeching, 2010; Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Tortorella, 2013; Borg, 2020). Moreover, the last subchapter managed to successfully highlight the main branding touchpoints in the case of a music artist, noting how websites, blogs, press, human interaction, concerts, press-kits, CDs, merchandise, posters and relationship with stakeholders are all relevant touchpoints (Chertkow & Feehan, 2012; Johnson, 2019; Taylor, 2017; Borg, 2020).

3. The effect of visual stimuli on music perception

In the last chapter of the theoretical argument, an attempt is made to explain some attitudes and behaviors that are associated with the consumption of

music and the admiration of artists. This is important in order to be able to draw certain directions by which it can be noticed which elements impact the behavior of listeners in addition to the music itself. A few communication theories will be analyzed, and then the focus will move onto a set of relevant efforts that a variety of scholars have done to investigate how music perception is influenced by stimuli that are not musical.

3.1 Theories applicable in music perception and behavior

Looking at various communication theories, it is notable that some of them can explain, at least partially, some of the behaviors and attitudes of music listeners when they make musical choices. These are factors that are not related to the music itself, but which can have an effect in convincing them to listen to music or follow an artist. In what follows, three of these theories will be examined in further detail.

In the beginning, the Theory of Reasoned Action will be examined and broken down into its component parts in order to better comprehend its core principles and operating processes. In addition to this, this will be examined through the lens of a real-world example that illustrates how this theory could be put into practice in the context of the present conversation, more exactly the music industry and the attitudes or behaviors that are associated with listening to music.

In the next section, The Theory of Planned Behavior, which basically constitutes an improvement upon the first theory by the inclusion of the idea of behavioral control, will be examined. In the case of this theory, there are some actual research papers that study the behavior of music listeners through its lens.

In the end, the investigation will focus on the Halo Effect Theory, which is a theory that asserts that the assessment of one characteristic, which in this context refers to music or an artist, may impact the evaluation of another characteristic of that person or product. There will also be a review of some research that analyzes this topic with regard to music.

3.1.1 Music and The Theory of Reasoned Action

The concepts detailed in the analysis part of both the theoretical and the experimental literature, outline trends, ways of thinking and patterns that are found in certain theories of communication. In the present case, two of the relevant theories are the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein, 1979; Ajzen, 1991). Both theories refer to individual motivating factors that push people to perform certain behaviors. Both theories assume that the most important determinant of certain behaviors is the behavioral intention formed by the perception of normative social elements and, especially, by the attitude towards the behavior itself (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015).

As Fishbein (1979) proposes, the Theory of Reasoned Action practically states the idea that behavior is the result of an intention, an intention that people in most cases have prepared or thought about in advance, and these intentions, as mentioned beforehand, are divided into attitudes towards behavior, and subjective norms.

Attitude towards behavior is practically the individuals convincing themselves whether the behavior is favorable or not. This is decided both by analyzing the possible outcome of that behavior and then evaluating that outcome to balance what they lose and what they gain by practicing it. The subjective norms part can refer to the social standards that the individual perceives must be met and in which that behavior must be framed. Such beliefs or perceptions refer both to beliefs about what other people think about the behavior to be practiced, but also to the individual's own desire to conform to such social expectations. These two components and determined parts of a behavior contribute to it in different proportions, depending on the case, but it can be seen that they efficiently explain the motivations behind an intention that becomes behavior (Fishbein, 1979).

Considering the theory can be applied in any field related to psychology, sociology and any other branch that analyzes and uses human attitudes, intentions and behaviors, the human resource of the music industry is no exception. To illustrate this, one can analyze the behavior of a music listener, who may as well be motivated and determined by his attitudes and

perceived norms. For example, the attitude towards listening to music by an artist is favorable when the potential listener agrees with the musical genre of that artist, when he is a passionate music listener or even when it resonates with the way the artist promotes or communicates with the audience.

On the subjective norms side, the music listener may have the cognitions that listening to new music, especially from a novice artist, is something that society considers favorable, is a musical genre that the group of friends listens to, or it is necessary both to help the artist at the beginning of his career, and to develop a musical culture as rich as possible in order to increase the personal image in social contexts. Of course, the individual must agree and be willing to conform to such social expectations, to identify with them and to have the will to turn them into behavior. In the end, both attitude and subjective norms intersect and lead to an intention that materializes in the listening behavior.

Moreover, applying this theory in relation branding, a listener can have the cognition that an artist with a brand identity is a serious and professional artist, therefore worth listening to, so the potential outcome would be that he will like his music, thus clearly observing how such a cognition can influence a behavior.

3.1.2 Music and The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) has the same basis as The Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, 1979), but introduces an additional element. In addition to personal attitudes and subjective norms that determine a behavioral intention and a behavior, there is also a perceived behavioral control, or perception of self-efficacy and necessary conditions in order to perform that behavior. For example, people who go to driving school (behavior) can be motivated by the need, desire and positive feelings towards driving a car (personal attitude), the fact that all their colleagues already drive a car so they must do it in order to avoid social exclusion (subjective norms), but also self-confidence that they are able to learn to drive a car and have the time to do so (perceived behavioral control).

Both theories, The Theory of Reasoned Action and The Theory of Planned Behavior, have been applied in a multitude of media fields, including the music industry. However, in this field, they have been applied and analyzed rather with reference to music streaming platforms, specific music download tools, and motivations for or against music piracy (Al-Rafee & Cronan, 2006; Kwong & Park, 2008; Delikan, 2010; Dörr et al., 2013; Kinnally & Bolduc, 2020;)

Applying perceived behavioral control to the music listening example mentioned above, the following can be offered as examples of perceptions (for or against behavior): the free time that the potential listeners have to discover new music, the access to the necessary devices for them to be able to listen to it, and also the previous experiences with listening to the music of new artists and their tone of communication with the audience.

In terms of branding, the aspect of perceived behavioral control can best be exemplified in terms of necessary conditions to perform the behavior. Nowadays, the listener may consider it absolutely necessary for the artist to have a brand identity and a well-developed brand communication in a variety of branding touchpoints, so that he can have trouble-free access to his music. Thus, branding can be seen as a necessary condition for the music to be found by the listener and not to be lost in the oversaturated market.

3.1.3 Music and the Halo Effect Theory

The theory of the halo effect (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Thorndike, 1920), implies that the perception, in this example of a brand, can be modified by other perceptions or cognitions already existing in regard to it. The Halo Effect is considered a cognitive bias, where positive cognitions on some attributes are projected to other characteristics (Nicolau, Mellinas & Martín-Fuentes (2020).

In the real world, this impact manifests itself when the perceptions on the quality of a performance will affect the evaluations of other features or vice-versa. According to Myford and Wolfe (2004) and Zoanetti & Champion (2016), this phenomenon is essentially characterized by a tendency to assign the same ratings to a number of different independent features. They, in turn,

provide an explanation for this theory by referring to the independence of judgements. To be more specific, the judgments of the many aspects of a performance or product are not exactly as independent from one another if the halo effect happened. The fact that assessments are subject to change and that these evaluations may not accurately reflect particular quality levels, such as those of certain performances or items, is one of the consequences of the phenomena described above (Zoanetti & Champion, 2016).

Nicolau, Mellinas, and Martin-Fuentes (2020) discuss the beneficial as well as the bad aspects of influence. They say that in addition to the positive impressions that result from the Halo effect, their reversal can also be noted, which is the situation in which a negative characteristic negatively influences the perceptions of other characteristics. They say this by referring to Burton et al. (2015), who suggest that in addition to the positive impressions that result from the Halo effect, a negative impact can also be observed.

In the case of the music business, literature is scarce regarding this phenomenon named specifically as a halo effect, but some trends may be seen. According to Williamon (2004), the Halo effect is essentially an inflation of judgments, and he claims that it may also be seen in the field of music. The clearest illustration of this phenomenon is provided by the situation in which a person assesses the musical capabilities of an artist on the basis of some earlier experiences or previously existent cognitions, such as whether or not that artist is excellent. Manturzevska (1970) and Hunter and Russ (1996) are also mentioned in Williamon's work (2004), and they suggest that an example of this phenomenon can be when the artist's evaluations are positively influenced when the evaluator already knows the artist, or that the reputation itself can influence these evaluations, thereby making the halo effect visible.

It is evident that this effect may manifest itself in a variety of contexts; nevertheless, there is no definitive operationalization of the factors or characteristics that may have an impact on these characteristics in the context of the modern music industry. According to Williamon (2004), there are in fact such secondary factors that impact one's perception of music, but study into these factors has to be conducted in a more in-depth manner. The influence of visual stimuli of music perception has been demonstrated in

previous research (Gillespie, 1997; Platz & Kopiez 2012; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field 2009; Waddell & Williamon 2017), but this topic is not discussed in a framework in which the experimental circumstance involves a modern artist working in the current market.

3.2 Stimuli influencing music perception

The major objective of this study's theoretical review is to collect data on how the impact of branding-relevant visual cues influences listeners' perceptions of the music product. Even though there is a scarcity of studies that explore how visual stimuli affect how music is perceived in the field of branding and marketing in the popular music market, a number of studies that investigate how visual cues affect auditory aspects in general are evaluated.

In the beginning, it will be explained what it is that a visual stimulus is in this context, and this will be done through an analysis of some research that has been done in the field, combined with what it is already known at this point about brand identities and branding touchpoints in the music industry.

Following that, the investigation will focus on actual research that have been conducted to investigate this phenomenon. A number of works that investigate attitude, emotions, intentional behavior, and other topics are discussed and analyzed here. The great majority of them are the results of experiments that were conducted on actual people who were placed in a variety of experimental situations where they were presented with a number of visual stimuli as they were listening to music and sounds.

After analyzing the results of these experiments, a general review of the most important findings will be conducted in order to determine what recommendations or directions of research can be obtained from them in order to reach the empirical research objectives in this thesis.

3.2.1 Visual stimuli

As previously discussed in terms of visual brand identity and its impacts on brand image and success, it is clear that in order for an artist to be successful in the music industry, they need to possess a complete music and communication package. A branding or communication package of this kind contains a variety of things, the majority of which are, without doubt, visual aspects. Visual stimuli in artist branding are present everywhere, whether discussing websites, color, images on social media, artwork, or CD covers and sleeves (Rutter, 2016).

Stimuli, as approached in multiple works of research on the effect of visuals on music perception (Iwamiya, 1994; Gillespie, 1997; Platz & Kopiez 2012; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field 2009; Waddell & Williamon 2017), can come in a wide variety of formats, including photographs, live performances, videos, elements of shows, and even gestures or mimics. Such elements related to the visual identity of an artist can therefore influence the perceptions themselves, but also the expectations that people have with reference to music even before listening to it (Venkatesan, Wang & Spence, 2020), a fact for which elements such as a song cover, a font or a logo can be considered useful visual stimuli to analyze to observe potential influences.

These visual elements can influence music evaluations both through the direct messages and meanings they convey, as well as through secondary visual elements, such as colors. Colors, even on a website, a well-known brand communication channel, can influence the way auditory elements are perceived, both when they are congruent with these elements, but also when there is contrast between them (Cox, 2008). These visual stimuli can enhance the attraction towards music when their use is consistent. The audience could feel tempted to investigate the product so long as the visual stimulation hints to the theme, values, or even the type of music being played. To put it more simply, a positive and trustworthy image that is effectively conveyed through visual cues has the potential to have a significant influence on attracting listeners (Rutter, 2016). According to Venter et al. (2011), a visual package may unquestionably entice customers to purchase a traditional product; therefore, it is possible that this impact is occurring in the music industry as well.

3.2.2 The impact of visual stimuli on general attitude

The general appreciation of the song, in addition to particular song features that people may also evaluate on their own, is a very notable variable feasible to get examined with regards to attitude. This can be done in conjunction with specific song characteristics. Gillespie (1997) undertakes research to collect data on various musical features such as the speed, the musical vibrato or pitch. He finds that evaluations are indeed higher when visual elements are presented. The research is carried out on music educators, who are therefore considered to be music specialists.

They provide higher evaluations for the quality of the musical performances when they are accompanied with images as opposed to when they are merely hearing the music on its own. This study on the perception of music aims to determine whether or not specific musical features, such as speed, pitch, or vibrato, can be evaluated by music experts as being of higher quality when the aural material is presented with a visual one as opposed to the case in which there are no visual stimuli used. Specifically, the researchers are interested in determining whether or not music professionals can identify a higher level of quality in the aural material when the visual material is presented alongside the audio. One group gets to evaluate a violin performance just in audio form, while another group evaluates an audio-video version of the same performance. Both versions have the same music, which is consistent with how it was presented in the earlier versions. The audio-visual performance receives a higher rating in this inquiry. Vibrato, pitch, and a variety of other musical aspects are regarded as being of superior quality by the professionals from the visual stimulus group. These findings show that the influence of visual stimuli is not confined to basic non-specialized fans who may be biased towards their favorite singers, but rather that it may also occur in the case of those who are familiar with music on a professional level and who study it objectively (Gillespie, 1997).

According to the findings of another study that analyzed the quality of music as well as its emotional impact, the presence of visual cues was associated with a more upbeat and pleasant response to music (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009). Visual cues may have a significant impact on not just quality but also general evaluation. Iwamiya (1994) conducted study to investigate the effect

of video stimuli on music with intentionally reduced audio quality. They compared their findings to those of a condition with normal audio quality but in which no visual stimuli were present. Both versions of the music receive almost the same rating, which suggests that visuals can occasionally compensate for the poor quality and enhance evaluations of factors such as how rich the music sounds (Iwamiya, 1994).

Therefore, it seems Iwamiya (1994) developed a notable approach for analyzing the shift in perception. What this work suggests, is that visually presented information can have an influence of how sound is evaluated. The participants in the experiment are broken up into two major groups, and each of these groups is tasked with the examination of a different situation. While one group is provided with high-quality non-visual stimuli, the other group is shown the whole music video but the sound quality is lowered. It can be seen that music is evaluated almost at the same level in each of these instances, basically suggesting that the visual stimuli make up for the low aural quality of the audiovisual experiment. In addition, it would appear that visual cues impact listeners' evaluations of songs even more favorably than in the audio-only situation, despite the fact that the quality of the music being evaluated is lower. Basically, these findings show that pairing music with visual stimuli can make up for a lower quality level of the audio. In spite of the fact that Iwamiya's research was carried out in 1994, these results continue to be very relevant in studying the way the music business is now operating (Iwamiya, 1994).

The topic of general likeability is covered in Ellis' (2013) study. The study investigates if watching a vocalist perform a song increases listener satisfaction. The experiment's dependent variable is the general level of popularity of an opera aria. To determine whether or not people are affected by the presence of a visual stimulus, the researcher produces both audio-only content and a video that features the musician singing the aria. Twenty participants take part in the initiative. For the evaluation, 10 participants receive a straightforward audio file of the song, while the other 10 view a video of the performance. The song is divided into six segments for the participants' assessment paper. They are asked to use a simple Likert scale to express how much they like each music segment. In contrast to the audio-only situation, it is notable to see that in the audio-visual scenario, along the

fact that the music is enjoyed more, there are no highly disliked segments (Ellis, 2013).

The perceived quality of music has also been examined by Juchniewicz (2008) and Wapnick et al. (2009) utilizing visual stimuli of people and how they portray themselves. According to the research, not only may clothes, gender, and even the degree of body movement affect how people perceive music in general, but they can also affect how people perceive more specialized musical elements like rhythm or tone quality.

This study of Juchniewicz (2008) essentially includes the stage presence component, including body movement. A video of a pianist playing a song is offered for each of the three groups of research participants. In the first set, the pianist does not physically move, in the second, he moves his head and face, and in the third, his entire body is visibly in motion while he plays the piano. While Iwamiya (1994) suggests that audio quality might be influenced by visual, this study shows that the technical components of the song and the performance general quality are both scored better when there are body movements. The impact is greatest when the whole body moves, followed by situations in which only the head and face move. One argument is that when artists perform live, audiences already expect certain degrees of expressiveness from them. The researcher also makes the case that body expressiveness might be seen as an indication of musical professionalism. The lack of movement is more common in beginners because they lack the confidence necessary to focus on the communicated emotion (Juchniewicz, 2008).

Building further on the results of Juchniewicz (2008) regarding the body as a visual stimulus, Wapnick et al. (2009)'s approach prioritizes physical attractiveness. The study investigates if elements such as a performer's physical attractiveness, appearance, and stage presence may affect how the piano performances are evaluated qualitatively. Three groups were made out of 147 participants: one to assess aural performance alone, one to assess visual performance alone, and one to assess the connection between the two. The qualitative parts of the music are evaluated, and they include tone quality, rhythm, expressiveness, style, tonal accuracy, and overall impression. The experiment's key conclusion is that performances with

audiovisual elements are, in fact, evaluated more favorably than those without them. An attractive performer receives higher evaluations for the musical performance, which has also been proved to have the greatest effect on female artists. However, it is asserted that this rise in evaluations occurs most commonly early in the performance and may drop as it goes on (Wapnick et al., 2009).

It is important to evaluate both the live music aspect and the audience's perception of the presentation when discussing musical performances. In a study published by Finnäs (2001), differences in perception are assessed. The emphasis is on the examination of music in its three primary modes of presentation (aural, visual, and live), searching for any variations that could be related to the listening experience. The paper is a synthesis of previous research in this field and an analysis of their findings. Even though the study examines how channels are interpreted in terms of the listening experience, the author reviews several studies on the influence of a visual stimulus on the perception of musical attributes in the concluding section. The halo effect is explored along with Finnäs' views on the study's findings. According to Iwamiya (1994), the halo effect in the instance under study refers to the notion that powerful visual stimuli can influence how music is regarded or, to use his terminology, might distract from possibly inferior musical aspects. Since a person's experience with music is unique and includes several subjective components that cannot be measured since they are not always relevant, real, or genuine, it is difficult to force a certain perspective on a research participant (Finnäs, 2001).

Waddell & Williamon (2017) have investigated how perception is influenced by visuals of stage presence. Their research explores whether visual signals connected to stage presence and facial expressions influence listeners' assessments of musical quality. Nearly half of the 105 participants are professional musicians. The other participants have nothing to do with the music industry. The experiment's independent variables are the proper stage entrance, the incorrect stage entrance, the performance error, and the unfavorable facial reaction to the error. The assignment is to rate the quality of several performance videos. The analysis of the results leads to two intriguing deductions. If the musician responds badly to the mistake shortly after it occurs, the audience is less likely to ignore it and forgive the artist

when the musician makes a mistake during a performance. When an artist enters inappropriately, listeners will judge the music's quality more rapidly, for example when there is a lack of eye contact with the public or the artists keep their hands in their pockets. In light of this, it is asserted that non-verbal cues, such as stage presence or an artist's reaction to mistakes they have made, can influence how listeners assess the quality of music (Waddell & Williamon, 2017).

Since it has previously been suggested that gestures and facial expressions are vital to public perception of music (Juchniewicz, 2008; Waddell & Williamon, 2017; Wapnick et al., 2009;), other aspects of live music can also be looked at. As was previously mentioned, nonverbal communication can be used in live performances. Lehmann & Kopiez (2013) explore whether factors related to performance can influence how a complex or difficult piece of music – more specifically, a guitar solo – is perceived. The research has 59 individuals, who span a wide spectrum of musical expertise. They are responsible with grading a recorded rock guitar solo performance. The analysis of the data produced a number of intriguing findings, such as the contrast between how difficult guitar solos with show elements appear to non-specialists and how music students perceive them. As a result, whether evaluating musical aptitude in professionals or non-professionals, visual cues may have an impact. Higher marks can also be given for impressiveness and difficulty, although it depends on the audience (Lehmann & Kopiez, 2013).

3.2.3 The impact of visual stimuli on emotions

Visual elements can also have an impact on the emotion that music conveys via song and lyrics. According to certain theories, some emotions expressed in music may appear to the listener as having different feelings due to various influences. In addition to the music they hear, listeners are frequently exposed to other elements. Such factors may include visual components with their own emotional valence (London, 2001).

An experimental attempt to research this phenomenon has been done in 1994, in the context of a study where participants are shown a symphonic

performance (Adams, 1994). This experimental attempt aims to measure the emotional response of people when they are presented with different sets of audio-video stimuli. While the first group is asked to evaluate a symphonic performance in audio form, the second group is shown a version that also contains the performance's video. A third group is shown the video's actual content, but with no audio. The audio-video performance produces the highest emotional response, demonstrating that visual signals might influence how a music piece is received (Adams, 1994).

This study by Boltz, Ebendorf & Field (2009) reinforce what Adams' (1994) work suggests, by presenting the findings of experimental attempts on the influence of visual stimuli with various emotional values (pleasant and unpleasant) on how specific melodic constructions are perceived. The findings on the emotional aspects imply that songs that were previously regarded as neutral may later be scored positively when exposed to images or videos. Boltz, Ebendorf, and Field categorized the stimuli in this study into categories depending on the emotional valence of each stimulus and devised a range of experimental conditions.

One of this attempts' main goal is to determine whether or not the addition of visual information may affect how people perceive and remember music. The participants are students, who were split to experimental groups (two for each emotional valence), as well as a control group. Instrumental songs that have already been pre-tested and classified as neutral and vague are used by the researchers. The first group's participants are shown a selection of visuals that represent joyful emotions before being asked to rate different elements of music, such as the affect, tone, or rhythm. The second group's participants are required to complete the identical task as those in the first, but only after seeing non-dialogue scenes from movies with high affect ratings. While the third and fourth experiment scenarios are relatively similar to one another, they use visual stimuli that have been pre-tested to successfully provoke strong negative emotions. The control group participants respond to the musical elements without any visual cues. The study's results indicate that visual elements do affect how elements are perceived. In both of the positive-affect experimental circumstances, the music that was previously pre-rated as neutral receives ratings that are positive. These evaluations are based on a scale from one to seven, with one

being Very Positive and seven denoting Very Negative. Along this, the song receives low scores when the experimental situation presented a negative affect (Boltz, Ebendorf, & Field, 2009).

In a similar manner, the findings of a different experiment indicate that abstract audio-visual content is judged similarly to music-only situations. However, music can be perceived as having a stronger emotional impact if the visual stimulus has a narrative. This implies that when attempting to deliberately employ visual imagery as stimuli, consistency, narrative, and narratives are vital (Geringer, Cassidy & Byo, 1997). The respondents, who are placed in four groups, two control groups and two experimental groups, are asked to evaluate some Beethoven music. The participants from the first experimental groups are asked to evaluate the music while it is accompanied with an animated movie clip, while the participants in the second experimental group are asked to review the same song but with a video of an orchestra performance. The results show that animating the songs, more specifically the Beethoven masterpieces, boosted the affective response (Geringer, Cassidy, & Byo, 1997).

However, the condition including musical and visual performance obtains better marks for the cognitive response. The purpose of the cognitive assessment questions was to find out if the two experiment groups had different opinions about things like loudness, pace, style, and melody. The symphonic video performance in this case resulted in higher ratings. Therefore, the stimuli can have an effect on a song's emotional significance and perceived quality. An animated film with a compelling plot might evoke strong feelings, but videos with actual musicians receive higher marks from viewers (Geringer, Cassidy, & Byo, 1997).

Analysis of the congruence in terms of feelings is also conducted. According to findings (Moore, 2010), visual stimuli can alter how music is perceived, particularly when a depressing or upbeat tune are used. Positive-affect songs can provide an even more intense emotional reaction when the feelings embedded in the graphical materials are consistent with the music, according to an earlier study by Thompson, Graham, and Russo (2005). This study also supports the power of the influence in respect to sad music.

Moore (2010) conducted a study on music students to support this claim. A number of 150 music students were divided into eight groups by the researcher, who then closely investigated each group. Both videos and songs with emotional content that is in harmony or disharmony with musical elements are examined by each group, as well as songs with either positive or negative emotional content. The purposeful division into eight groups is to investigate each possible combination in terms of the valences of the two parts (visual and aural) and the order in which they are presented. The results showed that, regardless of the order and valence of the videos – be they positive or negative – visual cues do, in fact, influence how music is perceived. Additionally, the impact of visual stimuli is far greater when music has a negative emotional value. However, all of the scenarios under consideration alter noticeably when visual stimuli conflict with the emotional value of music (Moore, 2010).

The study by Thompson, Graham & Russo (2005) approaches visual stimuli in a somewhat different manner. In one of their experiments, the researchers have used video recordings of artists playing or singing while focusing on facial expression. Based on their tonal characteristics, two separate musical genres are chosen; some are built on major harmonies and the others on minor ones. In the first stage, videos of performances featuring upbeat facial expressions (smiles, aliveness, wide eyes) are paired with songs that have major intervals or have a pleasant tone, while videos of performances featuring sad facial expressions are paired with songs that have minor intervals. Meanwhile, uplifting clips are linked to minor intervals, while sad ones are linked to major ones. The sole aspect of the musical compositions to be evaluated by the participants is their emotional effect. The results suggest that there are situations in which emotional value is undoubtedly altered. Despite the fact that a happy face by itself will not always make cheerful music happier, adding a sad face will make the happy music sound sadder. Additionally, songs with minor chords are perceived as being far gloomier when a singer's facial expressions reflect the sorrow in their words (Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005). According to the study, facial motions serve as visual elements that influence how music is perceived in terms of conveyed emotion.

In the context of a live performance, facial expressions and gestures are notable. In this regard, Thompson, Graham, and Russo (2005) conducted a second experiment for the same paper in which they asked some participants to rate the emotional impact of a selection of songs, while the other participants were asked to do the same thing but this time after watching a video of the songs' performers. The results of this experiment demonstrate that, despite the fact that the music in this case is the same in both the control and the experimental groups, a combination of aural and visual variables obviously influences how a song is assessed. The exact direction in which this influence expresses itself, however, cannot be determined. There is no question that perception can be altered, but it all depends on multiple circumstances (Thompson, Graham, & Russo, 2005).

3.2.4 The impact of visual stimuli in intentional behavior

When considering the intentional or planned behavior that arise after listening to music, Lee, Pritchard, and Hubbles (2019) offer a specific example in the form of recommending songs to other people as a means of illustrating this phenomenon. To begin, the findings of this study indicate that a number of respondents feel that a successful music suggestion is also impacted by visual characteristics. This finding serves to reaffirm the fact that such an influence is capable of taking place. Second, with regard to intentional behavior done by recommending, it is thought that one of the positive effects of recommending songs is being part of collective experiences. More specifically, it is thought that a strong impact of music recommendations is participating in concerts, shared listening, or purchasing music. Additionally, a substantial portion of the people who participated in the research said that they had provided recommendations for music that was listened starting with a few months prior (Lee, Pritchard & Hubbles, 2019). A small number of respondents also made their decisions based on the popularity of the musician in general or on the basis of visual stimuli such as album art or band photographs.

The act of listening to a song multiple times is another component that has been linked to intentional behavior after listening to music. According to the findings of research performed by Madison and Schiölde (2017), increasing

one's familiarity with a song via the process of repeated listening would result in an increase in one's appreciation of the music, despite the degree of complexity. In addition, the degree of familiarity coupled with the amount of exposure may be a significant factor in the way music is digested. Even though a visual stimulus is not mentioned in this case, it can be deduced that this concept of familiarity might include multiple aspects from the relationship between the fan and the artist, including visual identity or visual cues. It can be deduced from such theories that promoting a specific intentional behavior can be beneficial for the artist or the manager.

A study by Brown & Sellen (2006) analyzes the processes and factors behind listening and sharing music, emphasizing a comparison between physical and digital formats. The methodological part was carried out by surveying music enthusiasts who spoke about such aspects. An important thing suggested by these results is the fact that sharing other people's music in physical format can be more inconvenient than in digital format, but it can be more meaningful. Thus, from the answers of some participants in the study, the researchers deduce the fact that music in a physical format can have a visual aspect that influences this intentional behavior to want to recommend and even buy the music to gift it to others. It is suggested that the music artwork cover is a different kind of stimulus that increases the desire of the participants to buy the music, both to collect it and to give it to others.

Therefore, it is observable that the intentional behavior aspect, which is illustrated by repeated listening to music, recommending it to others, or even purchasing it to give it as a gift, may be impacted by both visual stimuli and familiarity with the product in question.

3.2.5 An overview of visual stimuli influence applied in music

According to published research, traditional visual identification elements are not the only stimuli that are significant to branding (Roberts, 2005; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Khedher, 2014). In addition to the assessments of stage appearance by Juchniewicz (2008) and Waddell & Williamon (2017), the physical appearance component can be stressed. One

element that may have an impact on how music is interpreted emotionally or qualitatively is the type of audience. It is significant that persons with professional-level musical expertise may also be influenced, as Gillespie's (1997) research of music professionals indicates.

The use of visual stimuli produces a diverse range of communication strategies since music may cause affective reactions, subjective quality judgments, and a specific intentional behavior. According to Platz and Kopiez (2012), visual elements help with branding and communication in addition to having an effect on how a song's properties are perceived. This is based on the analysis of several studies that look at how visual stimuli affect people. The researchers believe that adding visual elements might give a musical composition and the message it conveys additional emotional weight and importance (Platz & Kopiez, 2012). It is difficult to get people to understand and act in a way that clearly differentiates between what they think about the particular song and the experience as a whole, a concept that covers a wide variety of other factors. This is because, as was earlier stressed, individuals have different musical experiences.

The aforementioned studies found that visual cues might affect how music is perceived, especially in cases when the artists are physically present, such as in videos or other situations. Multiple viewpoints may be taken into consideration when analyzing how people respond to music. While some studies focus on how a song's emotional resonance changes (Thompson, Graham, & Russo, 2005; Iwamiya, 1994; Adams, 1994), others also look at people's attitudes toward particular components, such as rhythm, melody, volume, or song quality (Gillespie, 1997; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Juchniewicz, 2008), and some assess the intentional behavior (Brown & Sellen, 2006; Lee, Pritchard & Hubbles, 2019). The emotional dimension is viewed as a crucial component since branding strategies frequently incorporate and illustrate emotions (Borg, 2020). No matter how much individuals focus on the emotional content or how it makes them react in general, these studies demonstrate that other visual inputs can alter how people feel about music.

The findings suggest that positive and even neutral visual stimuli can influence people's impressions of the quality and emotional worth of the

music they listen to, however the direction of this influence is not always clear due to factors like subjective experience and individual musical competence. According to Moore's (2010) research, although there may be cases where the opposite is obvious, the impact might be greater when the stimulus is positive and the music has a negative emotional value.

Even though the direction of the impact might sometimes vary according to varied factors and contexts, the majority of the research consistently suggest that music on its own can be more appealing and pleasant when visual variables such as positive thoughts, sentiments, and values are identified (Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005). The experiments were successful in fulfilling the objectives of this theoretical chapter since they carefully analyzed how individuals perceived the music itself, and not just the performer and performance as a whole.

According to the examined studies, both positive and negative stimuli have an effect on how music is viewed or evaluated. Additionally, if performers are accompanied by visual information that suggests attributes like expressiveness or other emotions, people may perceive music differently from a qualitative and emotional viewpoint. If a song is only ordinary or mediocre but is repeatedly depicted in a good manner, music is likely to be seen as being of a better quality, but the greatest music is often neglected and forgotten. Artists may utilize a correct visual expression to make themselves more identifiable. They may undoubtedly stand out in the already competitive music market with a unique graphic identity (Schroeder, 2005).

It is crucial to observe and take note of the fact that the majority of research on this topic assess visual stimuli used in video form or displayed by artists during live performances. These studies do not assess the effect in the case of a conventional brand identity in the music business, but mostly rely on videos and live interactions with artists. Since the experimental portion aims to fill in this gap, this will be evaluated in the following chapter. It will determine whether the literature's claims about the influence of visual stimuli hold true when it comes to a visual identity of typical branding or if they are restricted to the physical expression of artists and music videos.

3.3 Summary on the effect of visual stimuli on music perception

This last chapter, with particular importance in the analysis of the theme of this work, managed to explain first of all what visual stimuli are, especially in the field of branding in the music industry. It was therefore highlighted how visual stimuli are practically the visual branding touchpoints mentioned earlier, as well as their visual sub-elements, such as colors. Therefore, any promotional material such as CD, merchandise, poster, song artwork, color, videos, photos, website are visual stimuli found both in the brand identity of an artist, as well as in experimental research from the literature (Rutter, 2016; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field 2009; Cox, 2008; Platz & Kopiez 2012; Waddell & Williamon, 2017).

It is highlighted that visual stimuli, in addition to the attractiveness they offer, have the ability to influence the overall attitude, emotions, and planned behavior of the public in relation to the music they listen to. In terms of attitude, it can be observed in experimental literature how both the general appreciation of the song and specific characteristics such as sound quality, speed or pitch can be influenced by visual stimuli (Iwamiya, 1994; Gillespie, 1997; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009). Regarding emotions, it is notable that the emotion felt by the listeners can also be influenced by the visual stimuli, but the influence is complex and not yet very clear, and it can appear both when there is congruence between the emotions transmitted by the visual stimuli and those transmitted by music, as well as when there is a contrast between them (Adams, 1994; Thompson, Graham, & Russo, 2005; Geringer, Cassidy, & Byo, 1997; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Moore, 2010).

This influence can also occur at the level of intentional behavior, although this theme is explained in the literature at a theoretical level rather than experimentally tested. Concepts and patterns related to intentional behavior are highlighted, such as repeated listening to music (Madison & Schiölde, 2017), recommending music to other people (Lee, Pritchard & Hubbles, 2019) or sharing music (Brown & Sellen, 2006). It is evident that the behavior of people can be influenced by album art, photos, familiarity with the artist, which can also involve visual stimuli, but also by the presence of music in a physical format, which automatically involves such stimuli.

A common point in most of the mentioned studies is the use of dynamic stimuli to the detriment of static ones, more precisely videos where in most cases there is either a narrative or a human presence, that of the artist. This analysis arouses additional interest, trying in the following to prove if a conventional visual brand identity, largely static, can have the same influence as the dynamic ones in the literature.

PART 2 – METHODOLOGY

This part will provide empirical answers to the research questions in addition to testing the hypotheses. After performing an analysis on the data collected from the interviews as well as the two experiments, particular conclusions will be drawn, categorized based on the specific methods, in addition to drawing general conclusions with regard to the influence of visual branding on how the audience perceives music.

4. Methodological design

As supported by the review of the relevant literature, the main theme of visual influence refers to the impact of visual stimuli related to branding on listeners' perceptions of music. These are factors that have the potential to affect an artist's level of commercial success as well as the ease with which they can become established in their respective markets. As was previously shown, not only is there a substantial body of written material on brand, branding, and brand communication in the music industry, but there is also a collection of research that indicate the influence that visual stimuli can have on aural perception. However, a significant gap was found in this body of research. More specifically, this work aims to fill the gap found in the point of convergence between a modern branding-related communication approach and the influence of visual stimuli on perceptions.

The research that has been done on the topic does not provide any theoretical analyses or experiments that investigate how a modern visual identity, which is typical of the contemporary music industry, can affect the way that music fans perceive an artist's music specifically. The consistent studies that have been carried out on visual stimuli in music (Iwamiya, 1994; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field 2009; Gillespie, 1997; Waddell & Williamon 2017; Platz & Kopiez 2012) have conducted experiments that either relate to musical performance, without the use of variables related to branding, advertising, or marketing, or are carried out in sterile experimental situations, which in no way imitate a modern situation, through which a music fan comes into contact with fans in the mass media and especially on the internet and consumes their music.

Therefore, this work has several objectives. The first objective would be engaging in conversations with professionals working in a variety of fields within the music industry to gain a better understanding of what constitutes success, what the value of branding is, and how the use of visual information in branding might affect listeners' perceptions of music. The second objective would be designing and conducting innovative experimental research to determine whether the listeners' attitude, behavior, and emotions they feel when listening to music can be influenced by visual stimuli that are typical of a visual brand identity. Further on, a third objective would be drawing parallels between the results of the different research methods and the existing literature to determine both parts of theoretical innovation and perception effects that have not been investigated up to this point, namely effects that are specific to branding and brand identity on a song.

Lastly, a fourth objective would be identifying information that is useful for the practical industry, which artists and all other professionals working in the music industry can use to understand additional aspects of the interaction with music fans and to design communication strategies, in order to make the most of the mechanisms by which the visual information affects perception on the music.

Therefore, the following research questions take shape:

RQ1: What are the obstacles that must be conquered in order to achieve success in the music industry, and how may success be defined within this profession?

RQ2: Why is it vital for a music artist to have their own brand, and how should it be done in the most effective way?

RQ3: How can a visual brand identity affect a listener's appreciation of the music, their perception of the music's quality, as well as the type and intensity of emotional reactions to the music?

RQ4: How can a visual brand identity affect a listener's attitude towards the song, the emotional reaction, and the intentional behavior?

RQ5: How can a particular element of a visual brand identity presented in two different colors affect a listener's attitude towards the song, the emotional reaction, and the intentional behavior?

Thus, it can be noted that the methods that are suitable for accomplishing these goals are the interview with professionals and the sociological experiments to test what the literature and the specialists say. The first three research questions (**RQ1, RQ2, RQ3**) can be answered through an analysis of interviews with specialists. In this situation, the goal is twofold, both confronting the literature in the field with what those in the music industry say, as well as outlining some concepts and preparing the ground for the experimental stage.

Next, the question **RQ4** represents an experimental effort, where the influence of a set of stimuli as a whole on the perception of music is tested, and in this case the part of the results consists of a descriptive analysis of the data, as well as the correlations between the variables. Question **RQ5** is also answered through an experiment, but in this case, the stimulus is a single one and is present in two different variants, depending on the color.

Therefore, the current work can be found in a paradigm that combines constructivist or interpretive principles, through literature analysis and conducting interviews to discover different perspectives, as well as positivist principles, through the conceptualization of the information in clear concepts and experiments, through which the validation or invalidation of some hypotheses is desired (Schwandt, 1994; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

In order to assess how visual stimuli impact the auditory aspects, it is required to have a more accurate operational definition than the one that can be found in the existing research. There is still relatively little research done on the topic of how branding and visual identity influence how people perceive current music. The first section of the study's mission is to conduct comprehensive interviews with members of the music industry and the communication field, using a semi-structured format, in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the function that branding plays in conceptualizing how music is experienced. This is due to the fact that qualitative research methodologies are designed to cultivate a better

understanding of the knowledge, views, and experiences of the individuals who are involved (Kvale, 1994; Moriarty, 2011). This study contributes to the process of learning more about the promotion process as well as the benefits that artists may derive from branding and branding communication.

An interview is essentially a conversation that takes place between two people, with the primary objective of the conversation being to acquire some information regarding a number of different topics. The primary purpose of conducting interviews is to gain information concerning the interviewees' perspectives, in addition to the interviewees' prior experiences and levels of knowledge in a particular area. The most common method for carrying out these interviews is to do so in person; however, interviews can also be carried out via telephone and the internet (Kvale, 1994; Harrell & Bradley, 2009). In contrast to, for instance, surveys, the level and nature of interaction that occurs between the researcher and the respondent in interviews is clearly more distinct, even more in-depth, and why not, even more personal (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

When discussing the particularities of semi-structured interviews, the first thing that comes to mind is that in this instance, there is an interview guide that is largely respected. An interview like this gives the interviewer the right to reorder the questions to a lesser or greater extent and to ask a series of follow-up questions, but a predetermined set of questions will be respected regardless of how much the order is changed. In practice, a semi-structured interview will include both open and closed questions, and it will also make note that there will typically be some additional questions that will attempt to clarify certain positions, data or opinions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015). This potential continuation of the discussion through follow-up topics and questions represents a characteristic and an advantage of the interview (Galletta, 2013).

Therefore, conducting semi-structured interviews is beneficial in this scenario because doing so helps to obtain a number of different things. For instance, with their assistance, one can delve more deeply into a topic, thereby obtaining comprehensive and well-explained responses to certain questions that are posed on the basis of a series of concepts. In addition, the open-ended nature of some of the questions helps to obtain some personal

nuances, some individual thoughts of the respondent. This is done while still respecting the interview guide and allowing room to personalize and polish the discussions in order to obtain the most useful and complete data possible. Also, any interesting concept or idea that appears, but which is not included in the interview, can be approached and developed in order to identify new thinking templates and patterns among the respondents, with reference to sub-topics that the researcher may not have thought about (Harrel & Bradley, 2009; Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015).

As previously mentioned, the second direction of research is an experimental one. In this case, two experiments were used to assess in what way visual stimuli can influence how people evaluate or perceive music. The first experiment uses a holistic visual stimulus, a visual brand identity where there are practically several sub-stimuli, materialized through a logo, an event poster, a cover artwork as well as some other materials and visual particularities. The advantage of this situation is that it very well imitates a visual identity encountered in everyday life, where the consumer comes into contact with several sub-elements, and thus it is analyzed if the mere presence of visual stimuli produces an effect.

Instead, in the second experiment, both through the lens of the literature and the results of the first experiment and the new questions that arise, a single visual material is used, more precisely a song artwork or song cover, in two different colors, for two different experimental groups. The advantage of this situation is the fact that the independent variables are better isolated and crystallized, to see if the influence can be reduced to a single stimulus, in this case a song artwork. In addition, by using two color variants, it is possible to analyze if there is any influence of the emotional valences of different colors on how the music is appraised or evaluated from an affective point of view.

In order to understand the experiment as a method, it is necessary to first provide a concise explanation of the type of study that the experiment belongs to, specifically quantitative analysis. According to Walliman (2010), quantitative analysis focuses mostly on gathering and putting through various mathematical procedures the many pieces of data that are collected for the purpose of being examined. Since surveys are one of the examples, an experiment that is based on surveys is another example that is equally

valid. Even though it may appear that the application of mathematical analysis to quantitative data is something that is unique to the realm of the natural sciences, quantitative data analysis is something that can be performed by any researcher using software such as Microsoft Excel or SPSS, which performs these calculations in place of the researcher.

According to Christensen et al. (2011), an experiment is a quantitative research method that attempts to determine a cause-and-effect link between two variables. To be more specific, the purpose of an experiment is to change one variable in order to examine the effect that doing so has on another variable. According to Zimny (1961), whose definition was cited and appraised by Christensen et al. (2011), a psychological experiment is essentially an act of observing the changes that take place when, in a controlled situation, some things are changed while others are kept constant. Christensen et al. (2011) say that this definition accurately describes the purpose of a psychological experiment.

The fact that an experiment is the most effective approach for determining the existence of causal relationships and the fact that the scenario being investigated is one that has been carefully controlled are two of the most significant aspects of any experiment. When the experiment is conducted in laboratory conditions, it is possible to achieve an effective level of control over the variables; however, if this cannot be done, another option is the equal and randomized distribution of the participants in the experimental and control groups (Christensen et al., 2010).

Along with social and technological development, in addition to laboratory or field experiments, for example, the web experiment also stands out nowadays. To put it more simply, the online experiment is an experiment that is conducted with the assistance of the Internet. This kind of experiment, despite having its drawbacks, such as the absence of such a powerful control and the presence of a higher dropout rate, has a number of extremely significant advantages that make it viable in many different kinds of modern research. Reips (2000) lists these benefits, and among the most pertinent ones are the following: the ease of access to a large number of people who can be from very specific groups at the same time; the removal of limits related to

time, scheduling, money, and physical location; the simplicity of obtaining a statistically significant number of respondents; the easiness of access for participants; and the decrease of the observer expectancy effect (Reips, 2000).

4.1 Methodological design for the interview

The interview aims to obtain data from the specialist, in order to answer the first three research questions (**RQ1, RQ2, RQ3**). The objectives are to find out what the specialists in the practical industry know, to find out what success means in the industry, what branding helps and what influence visual stimuli can have on perceptions. In addition, the interview serves for a better operationalization of the concepts for the research stages that follow

Procedure

To answer the research questions, a semi-structured interview (Appendix 1) was applied to a number of 18 participants, people with professional activity in the music industry, also called music specialists or music professionals. Their selection was made through their search both on search engines and on social networks such as LinkedIn, where the tangent that the interviewee has with the music industry is very easily evident. Some of the interviews were carried out orally via the use of the Zoom or Skype platforms, while others were carried out electronically through the use of the Google Forms platform. The choice of the discussion platforms was determined by the preferences of the respondents. This was also necessary due to the fact that several of the responders, including two American individuals, were in completely different time zones. In addition, a handful of them made it clear that they wished to respond to the questions provided in writing form. This kind of written interview can still be considered just as valid in some circumstances (Hunt & McHale, 2007). To begin, it should be noted that in this scenario, face-to-face social signals are useless in delivering further information. Instead, the use of email made it feasible to contact a greater variety of knowledgeable individuals. Second, when it comes to scheduling, a textual approach is preferable to an oral engagement since it is less sensitive to differences in time zones and live availability. Last but not least,

given the expertise of the interviewers in their respective fields, it is guaranteed that they have proficient writing abilities (Opdenakker, 2006). Moreover, if needed, the respondents received additional questions, which were either asked orally or sent via e-mail. This was done in situations where respondents provided answers that were vague or unclear.

All the eighteen interviews were conducted between May 2021 and January 2022, a nine-month period. The duration of the oral interviews ranged from 35 to 50 minutes, depending on the responder and the additional questions that were asked. Written interview responses were received within one or two weeks of the request and, on average, took a further week if extra questions were needed.

Sample

The sample consists of 18 individuals who are currently engaged in the music industry and range in age from 23 to 42. These individuals hold a variety of professional positions within the industry, including those of record producer, music performer, music marketer, artist manager and music business coach (Table 1). In order to collect socio-demographic information from the respondents, they were asked for their names, ages, titles, or occupations, but they were given the option to remain anonymous. There were 18 respondents total, and 12 of them selected the option to remain anonymous. As a result, it was agreed that all of the respondents will be coded in order to protect their privacy and maintain consistency (from R1 to R18).

Table 1. *List of professionals and their occupation within the music or communication industries*

RESPONDENT CODE	COUNTRY	RESPONDENT OCCUPATION
R1	Romania	Musician, Vocal Coach & Sociologist
R2	Romania	Music Producer
R3	Romania	National Radio Program Director
R4	Netherlands	Producer & Music Journalist
R5	Romania	Musician & Event Planner
R6	Romania	Musician & Professional Video Producer
R7	Romania	Music Composer & Producer
R8	Romania	Radio Presenter & Social Media Executive
R9	Romania	Communication & Influencer Marketing Specialist, Streaming Manager
R10	Romania	Musician & Advertising Teaching Assistant
R11	Denmark	Vocalist & Digital Concept Development Specialist
R12	United States of America	Artist Advertising & Management Executive
R13	United States of America	Founder & CEO of Music Business & Coaching Platform, Author, Podcast Host, Content Marketer, Musician
R14	United Kingdom	Head of Promotions at a Record Label
R15	United Kingdom	Music Industry Consultant
R16	United States of America	Music Industry Web Designer
R17	Romania	Booking Agent
R18	Romania	Vocal Coach & Psychologist

A strategy that prioritizes convenience sampling has been put into place as a response to the challenges connected with availability. The interviewees have been selected through the utilization of the following three methods: (1) browsing the websites of professionals working in the industry to acquire their publicly available information for messaging them through the use of e-mail; (2) reaching professionals from music specialized groups and communities on LinkedIn and Facebook; and (3) contacting individuals working in the industry from the existent list of professional contacts.

Regarding the occupations they conduct in the industry, there is no obvious trend among the answers. The majority of positions in the music business are specific, adaptable, or even freelance (Rutter, 2016). The highly recognized record companies that have employee confidentiality agreements that restrict or prohibit access to interviewees would be an

exception to this rule. This industry is characterized by many professionals only working on a part-time basis, where each position is immediately related to others, and where there is no particular or permanent job title due to the industry's unpredictable nature of job responsibilities (Rutter, 2016). Nevertheless, the duties may relate to a variety of fields, such as public relations, band management, career coaching, concert and tour marketing, or music journalism (Britten, 2009).

The Internet has also made it possible for the music business to develop and diversify in terms of job options. It is believed that modern music industry specialists need to be more informed and multidimensional (Young, 2018). The job variety of the respondents is favorable for drawing common points, themes and conclusions, helping in the creation of new hypotheses that are more characteristic to the practical music industry of nowadays.

Measurements

Three categories – success, branding, and visual stimuli – have been created for interview guide. The concepts from the research questions, which are gathered through a review of the specialist literature, are translated into conversation themes to create the interview questions. Therefore, firstly, a deductive coding procedure is used, the conceptualization being based on specialized literature (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). These concepts are based on the literature on music (Morris, 2015; Beeching, 2010; Meier, 2017); brands and branding (Lieb, 2018; Morris, 2005; Johnson, 2019), and influence of visual elements (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Gillespie, 1997; Waddell & Williamon, 2017; Platz & Kopiez, 2012).

Secondly, the inductive procedure is used as well, carried out during the analysis of the answers, in order to operationalize the sub-concepts and crystallize of the common themes among the answers of those interviewed (Thomas, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The first category focuses mostly on the aspect of reaching success in the industry, the components of good music and an artist's likeability, as well as the difficulties encountered in this field. The importance and use of branding in the music industry,

brand communication methods, and the emotions a musician conveys are all factors that are discussed in the second part. Last but not least, the influence of visual stimuli on music likability, perceived song quality, and emotional response has received significant attention.

4.2 Methodological design for experiment 1

The first experiment aims to test a set of stimuli as a whole. This is done to see if there is an influence that an integrated visual identity can have on how songs are evaluated and perceived in terms of attitude, intentional behavior and emotions. The visual identity used as a stimulus is composed of several elements analyzed together, to simulate a real situation.

Hypotheses

As a result of the review of the relevant literature, one is able to recognize a sequence of branding and brand communication activities that involve a great number of components that are represented visually. In light of this, and with the intention of determining if the findings of published studies about the influence of the visual on the aural can be replicated in the context of a more current, but traditional, and static brand identity context, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1. A song accompanied by visual branding stimuli, in comparison with the lack of them, determines a more positive opinion on (H1a) the song and on (H1b) the elements of the song.

H2. A song accompanied by visual branding stimuli, in comparison with the lack of them, determines a more positive (H2a) emotional reaction and (H2b) emotional attachment.

H3. A song accompanied by visual branding stimuli, in comparison with the lack of them, increases (H3a) the intention to listen to the song again and (H3b) the willingness to recommend the song.

H4. When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, the actual opinion on music is positively correlated with (H4a) the attitude to the song, (H4b) the emotions, and (H4c) the planned behavior.

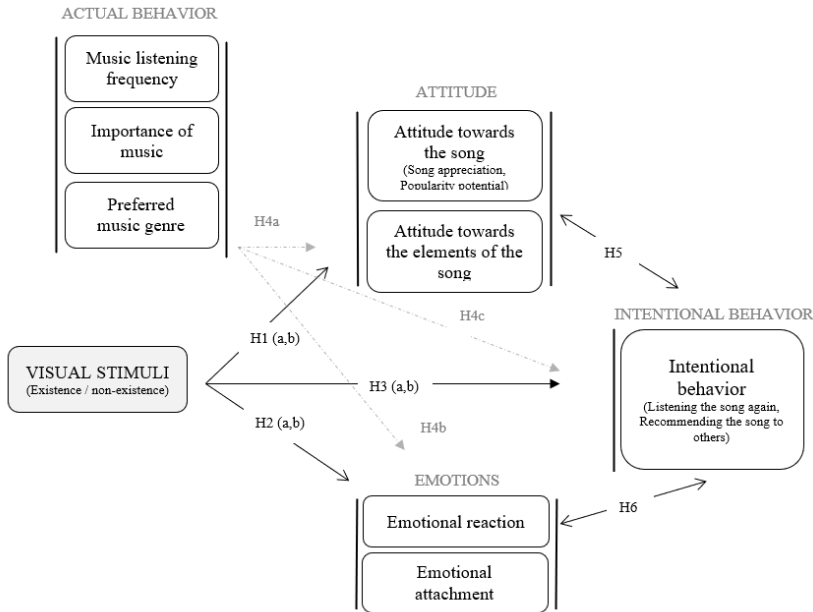
H5. When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, in comparison with the situation in which they are missing, the relationship between the attitude to the song and the planned behavior is greater.

H6. When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, in comparison with the situation in which they are missing, the relationship between the emotions after listening to a song and the intentional behavior is greater.

Procedure

A 1x2 between-subjects investigation (visual identity compared to the lack of a visual identity) was performed, in order to verify the abovementioned hypotheses and the causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The use of a post-test approach that is based on randomization has been decided upon. The objective of the experiment is to determine whether or not the presence of visual stimuli changes or influences attitudes, feelings, and intentional behaviors that are displayed or performed by listeners. The graphic that follows provides a comprehensive presentation of the conceptual framework (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Concept model for Experiment 1*



This experimental effort is conducted through a digital survey, so it is based on the web. Two online surveys have been designed (Appendix 2): the first one is experimental, for the group that receives the music together with visual stimuli, and the second one is a control one, so it imitates the first but has no visual elements. Simply put, the only difference in terms of the two surveys is introducing visual stimuli for the experimental group but omitting them for the control participants.

Before having each separate group listen to a song that was specifically chosen for the experiment and evaluating it in light of the aforementioned variables, which are attitude, emotional response, and intentional behavior, each group was asked to respond to a series of opening questions that tested actual behavior and general emotional attachment to music. The stimuli for the experimental group were presented to them before they were given the task of listening to the music. Utilizing Google Forms allowed for the incorporation of both photographs for the treatment application as well as links to the music that responders were requested to listen to into the instrument.

Sample

The sample ($N=112$) is evenly allocated between the two groups. A number of 55 respondents from the total sample of 112 respondents are placed in the group of control (CG), while 57 respondents are placed in the experimental group (EG). With 65.5% ($n=36$) of the participants in the control sample being female, while in the experiment group 70.2% ($n=40$) are female, it can be noticed the gender distribution across the groups is also balanced. The remaining respondents were all male. For both groups, more than 90% of respondents are between the ages of 19 and 25 ($M=21.21$, $SD=1.938$). The socio-demographic factors and samples for each category are summarized in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2. *Sample overview for Experiment 1*

Socio-demographic variables	CONTROL GROUP (CG) n (%)	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP (EG) n (%)
Environment		
Rural	10 (18.2%)	14 (24.6%)
Urban	45 (81.8%)	43 (75.4%)
Last graduated school		
Highschool	33 (60%)	39 (68.4%)
Secondary school	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Bachelor's degree	20 (36.4%)	15 (26.3%)
Post-graduated	2 (3.6%)	2 (3.5%)
Specialization		
STEM sciences	21 (38.2%)	28 (49.1%)
Social science	34 (61.8%)	29 (50.9%)
Gender		
Females	36 (65.5%)	40 (70.2%)
Males	19 (34.5%)	17 (29.8%)
Age		
19-25	51 (92.7%)	56 (98.3%)
26-35	4 (7.3%)	1 (1.7%)
Income		
Less than 1000 lei (<200 EUR)	21 (38.2%)	18 (31.6%)
1001-1500 (>200-300 EUR)	9 (16.4%)	16 (28.1%)
1501-2000 (>300-410 EUR)	11 (20%)	8 (14%)
2001-2500 (>410-510 EUR)	3 (5.5%)	3 (5.3%)
2501-3000 (>510-610 EUR)	5 (9.1%)	1 (1.8%)
3001-3500 (>610-710 EUR)	3 (5.5%)	1 (1.8%)
3501-4000 (>710-820 EUR)	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.3%)
Over 4000 lei (>820 EUR)	2 (3.6%)	7 (12.3%)

Randomization check

Age, gender, and specialization-based randomization of the surveys was done using the Independent Sample T-Test. All of them have proved successful using this procedure: gender $t(110)=-.531$, $p=.597$), age $t(110)=1.693$, $p=.093$), and what they specialize in professionally $t(110)=1.163$, $p=.247$). Therefore, it can be claimed that variances between groups are equal.

Measurements

Three control variables are used to evaluate the individuals' actual behavior (Table 3), more specifically, the frequency of music listening, music importance and the preference for the pop music. A scale from 1 to 6 is used to determine how frequently people listen to music, with 1 denoting *a few times a day* and 6 denoting *never*. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is *not at all important* and 7 is *very important*, the importance of music is assessed. Each genre is given a rating from 1 to 7, with 1 denoting *not at all* in terms of how much it is preferred and 7 denoting *very much*. Song genres such as pop, rock, soul, electronic, classic, hard rock, folk and jazz are just a few of the genres used, taken from the MPQ-R Music Preference Questionnaire (Nater, Krebs & Ehlert, 2005). However, since the experiment's chosen song belongs to the Pop genre and since Pop is the respondents' favorite genre, Pop music is highlighted (80% in the control group and 66.7% in the experimental one).

Table 3. Data overview for the actual behavior variables

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Frequency of listening to music	M=1.18 (SD=.512)	M=1.18 (SD=.571)	M=1.18 (SD=.541)
Importance of music	M=6.15 (SD=1.061)	M=6.35 (SD=.935)	M=6.25 (SD=1.00)
Preference for Pop	M=5.38 (SD=1.509)	M=5.11 (SD=1.644)	M=5.25(SD=1.578)

The experimental group has been subjected to the stimuli following the actual behavior measurement. The section after it provides a thorough explanation of them.

The song was chosen at random from a list of songs in the genre of pop from the website <http://theundiscovered.co/>. Due to variables including

availability, public familiarity, linkage to the marketing process, and the commercial aspect, a pop song was chosen for the trial (Meier, 2017; Lieb, 2018, Tschmuck, 2006). The platform provides a number of unknown tunes, ensuring that the responders are unaware of the music they have selected. Additionally, the song may only be accessed through the private link provided; it cannot be accessed on standard platforms. The song has been pretested on five respondents in order to guarantee the neutrality of the perception of the music and to leave space for perceptions to climb or decrease in terms of appreciation and quality.

After listening to the song, the respondents were tested regarding the variables. The three tested categories are attitude, emotion, and intentional behavior, each with its own variables, as follows.

The attitude variable is a combination of two sub-variables, more specifically, attitude on the song together with attitude on particular parts of the song. With regard to the *general attitude towards the song*, there are two sub-concepts that are noted in this case, more precisely, song appreciation and popularity potential (Table 4). Therefore, two 7-point scales are created, one to find the general appreciation the respondents feel toward the song after listening to it (where 1 means *not at all* and 7 means *very much*), and the second one to measure the potential that the song might have to become known or reach popularity (where 1 means *not at all*, and 7 means *extremely likely*). The variable of *attitude towards the elements of the song* (How much did you like the following elements of the song?), is assessed through several variables that are measured on 7-point scales, where 1 means *not at all* and 7 means *extremely much* (Table 5). An average of the song's particular characteristics has been calculated. The variables were taken and adapted from other experimental research that analyzed musical characteristics, such as the quality, emotions and rhythm of the melody (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Wapnick et al., 2009).

Table 4. Data overview for the general attitude towards the song

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Song appreciation	M=5.65 (SD=1.109)	M=4.35 (SD=1.356)	M=4.35 (SD=1.299)
Popularity potential	M=4.625 (SD=1.456)	M=4.26 (SD=1.518)	M=4.26 (SD=1.481)

Table 5. Data overview on the attitude on the elements of the song

Like song characteristics	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Message	M=4.76 (SD=1.478)	M=4.58 (SD=1.401)	M=4.67 (SD=1.436)
Sound clarity	M=4.80 (SD=1.556)	M=4.88 (SD=1.513)	M=4.84 (SD=1.528)
Voice	M=5.15 (SD=1.253)	M=5.14 (SD=1.529)	M=5.14 (SD=1.394)
Melody	M=4.71 (SD=1.410)	M=4.49 (SD=1.490)	M=4.60 (SD=1.449)
Rhythm	M=4.82 (SD=1.441)	M=4.70 (SD=1.569)	M=4.76 (SD=1.502)
Originality	M=3.82 (SD=1.335)	M=4.21 (SD=1.634)	M=4.02 (SD=1.501)
Emotional value	M=4.44 (SD=1.686)	M=4.23 (SD=1.581)	M=4.33 (SD=1.630)
Elements' appreciation (average)	M=4.641 (SD=1.124)	M=4.604 (SD=1.262)	M=4.622 (SD=1.191)

In order to assess emotions, the dimensions of emotional reaction and attachment to music are evaluated. With regards to *emotional reactions* (Table 6), the emotions used are selected and then adjusted accordingly using the Geneva Emotional Music Scales (Zentner, Grandjean & Scherer, 2008). Moreover, inspired by the work of Scherer (2005) and displaying relevance for the current experiment, the item *Amused* is introduced under the *Joyful activation* umbrella, *Amazed* under *Wonder*, and then the *Disappointed* element kept as an independent item. For analyzing reliability, the emotions that are negative were reversed. Considering a low reliability score inside the *Transcendence* field, the *Overwhelmed* emotion is also used independently. All the particular emotions are evaluated on 7-point scales, 1 meaning *not at all*, and 7 meaning *very much*.

Using Cronbach's alpha value, the internal consistency of the scales has been calculated (Table 6). Almost all of the constructs are greater than the 0.7 acceptable level, the values being satisfactory. Two of the used inventories, namely *Transcendence* and *Peacefulness*, have lower alpha levels. However, it might be due to the reduced number of items (Vaske, Beaman & Sponarski, 2016).

Table 6. *Reliability analysis and overview for the emotional reactions*

Categories	Items	Cronbach Alpha	Control group M (SD)	Experimental group M (SD)	Total M (SD)
WONDER	Moved Filled with wonder Allured Amazed	$\alpha = .765$	M=2.395 (SD=1.182)	M=2.899 (SD=1.089)	M=2.651 (SD=1.158)
TRANSCENDENCE	Fascinated Feeling of transcendence	$\alpha = .611$	M=2.236 (SD=1.189)	M=2.666 (SD=1.181)	M=2.455 (SD=1.199)
OVERWHELMED	-	-	M=6.07 (SD=1.372)	M=5.51 (SD=1.660)	M=5.79 (SD=1.545)
POWER	Strong Energetic Triumphant	$\alpha = .825$	M=3.139 (SD=1.732)	M=3.380 (SD=1.460)	M=3.261 (SD=1.597)
TENDERNESS	Tender Affectionate Mellowed	$\alpha = .741$	M=2.381 (SD=1.155)	M=2.953 (SD=1.277)	M=2.672 (SD=1.247)
NOSTALGIA	Nostalgic Sentimental Dreamy	$\alpha = .782$	M=3.133 (SD=1.315)	M=3.456 (SD=1.539)	M=3.297 (SD=1.436)
PEACEFULNESS	Serene Calm Soothed	$\alpha = .599$	M=2.830 (SD=1.309)	M=3.052 (SD=1.117)	M=2.943 (SD=1.215)
JOYFUL ACTIVATION	Animated Bouncy Joyful Amused	$\alpha = .734$	M=2.809 (SD=1.277)	M=3.00 (SD=1.185)	M=2.906 (SD=1.229)
SADNESS	Sad Tearful	$\alpha = .775$	M=6.091 (SD=1.070)	M=5.693 (SD=1.342)	M=5.897 (SD=1.228)
TENSION	Tense Agitated	$\alpha = .752$	M=6.227 (SD=1.117)	M=5.736 (SD=1.282)	M=5.977 (SD=1.223)
DISAPPOINTMENT	-	-	M=5.97 (SD=1.551)	M=5.82 (SD=1.560)	M=5.97 (SD=1.551)

The item of *emotional attachment to the song* (Table 7) is evaluated singularly (To what extent are you emotionally connected to the song?) using 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*. 7 = *very much*).

Table 7. *Data overview for the emotional attachment to the song*

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Emotional attachment	M=2.95 (SD=1.496)	M=3.05 (SD=1.767)	M=3.00 (SD=1.633)

Measuring dependent variables concludes with the section of intentional behavior (Table 8). Intentional behavior is evaluated in terms of *listening to the song again* (To what extent would you like to listen to the song again?)

and in terms of *recommending the song* (To what extent would you recommend the listened song to others?), both of which get measured using 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *to large extent*).

Table 8. *Data overview for the intentional behavior*

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Listen again	M=4.02 (SD=1.459)	M=4.00 (SD=1.615)	M=4.01 (SD=1.533)
Recommend to others	M=3.73 (SD=1.680)	M=4.18 (SD=1.692)	M=3.96 (SD=1.692)

Stimuli

The introduction of visuals just before requesting the subjects to give the song another listen and then score its qualities constitutes the independent variable, or the treatment. The visual stimuli have been presented as a package because the typical music listener typically engages with an integrated visual identity (Allen, 2018; Morris, 2005; Lieb, 2018). The treatment consists of a collection of graphic and visual-narrative materials that mimic brand identification components that, in general, every musician exhibits for marketing and branding purposes. All of these components are hypothetical and were produced especially for this research in order to replicate an actual artist surrounded by visual identity elements and story or biography in order to prevent any potential familiarity in case an existing music artist was used (Figure 2). The materials were created using Adobe Photoshop and Microsoft Word, as well as royalty-free assets from websites like Freepik.com (for graphical elements and vectors) and DaFont.com (for typefaces).

Figure 2. Stimuli for Experiment 1 – Visual brand identity



Song cover (contains an image, the artist's logo, the song's name, and serves as a CD cover.)



Website banner (includes an image, the artist's logo, information about him, and buttons for his social network accounts.)



Soundcloud music player mockup (comprising a background image with a visual representation of the artist's future single playing over it)



Event web poster (including an image, the artist's logo, the logos of the radio station and sponsors, and details on the live performance the artist will give)

Darius Pop

Darius was born in 1991 in a city that later influenced his artistic inspiration. Growing up in Constanța, the contact with the Black Sea and the inclination towards music combined perfectly, materializing the artist Darius Pop, a sensitive creator for whom the sea means freedom, and the waves are musical chords. A moment that Darius considers the trigger of inspiration is the memory of a summer evening, when he and his father spent hours near the sea waves, listening to him sing folk songs on an old guitar. In the following years, Darius studied piano for a while at an art school and excelled at several local young competitions, where he was appreciated for his talent and for the emotions he emphasizes when he plays. His passion for singing began somewhere later, in his teenage years, when Darius realized that this gave him a much greater artistic freedom, and his freedom defines an artist as if born and perfected by the sands of the sea. Recently, Darius Pop took the next step in his musical career, releasing the indie-pop songs "Tides of Bliss" and "Everything", being very well received in the musical sphere, later receiving the invitation of Radio Guerrilla to sing a live session at their studio. Darius is ready to enter the national radio, and for this reason he is planning a lot of things. You can follow his endeavors on his Facebook, YouTube and Soundcloud accounts, and sometimes you can find him sing on the beach, with a notebook, a pencil and a tape recorder, composing music supported by the breeze and accompanied by the sound of the waves.

Graphical & textual representation of the artist's story (comprising a number of narrative sentences and the artist's distinctive logo)

Observation: The logo of the artist, a color scheme, and sea images are all found on at least two of the visual materials abovementioned.

The responders are instructed to listen to the song after seeing the materials. A specific question has been designed that asks responders to select the song name from a selection of three options in order to confirm that they have actually listened to the song. The URL that automatically plays the song is the sole way for the respondents to learn the name. Any respondent who selects the incorrect response will be instantly returned to section of the survey that prompts the respondent with the music link.

Manipulation check

The study employs four successful manipulation tests to ensure that the subjects have understood the stimuli as planned. People in the experimental group have reported knowing the artist's name ($t(110)=-15.030$, $p=.000$), being capable of naming it ($t(110)=-15.030$, $p=.000$), knowing the artist's backstory ($t(110)=-6.731$, $p=.000$), and having observed the promotional items ($t(110)=-10.818$, $p=.000$) compared to those in the control group. The individuals have been acknowledged and informed about the fictitious stimuli at the end of the survey.

4.3 Methodological design for experiment 2

As a result of the first experiment, but also analyzing the specialized literature, the following hypotheses were formulated, intended to test this time the influence of a single stimulus, adding the color variable to see if two different colors can differently influence the perception of music.

Hypotheses

H1. A song accompanied by a visual branding stimulus (cover) determines a more positive attitude on (H1a) the general opinion on the song and on (H1b) the elements of the song.

H1.1. The presence of a colored visual stimulus (cover), in comparison with a black-and-white one, determines a more positive attitude on (H1.1a) the general opinion of the song and on (H1.1b) the elements of the song.

H2. A song accompanied by a visual branding stimulus (cover) determines a more positive (H2a) emotional effect and (H2b) emotional attachment.

H2.1. The presence of a colored visual stimulus (cover), in comparison with a black-and-white one, determines a more positive (H2.1a) emotional effect and (H2.1b) emotional attachment.

H3. A song accompanied by a visual branding stimulus (cover) increases (H3a) the intention to listen to the song again and (H3b) the willingness to recommend it.

H3.1. The presence of a colored visual stimulus (cover), in comparison with a black-and-white one, increases (H3.1a) the intention to listen to the song again and (H3.1b) the willingness to recommend it.

H4. When the visual stimulus (cover) attached to a song is colored, the actual opinions on music are correlated with (H4a) the attitude on the song, (H4b) the emotions, and (H4c) the planned behavior.

Procedure

A 1x3 between-subject inquiry (absence of visual stimulus vs. blue visual stimulus vs. black visual stimulus) was performed. It was decided to use a randomized post-test strategy. This second experiment tries to select a single visual stimulus, with a dominant color, such as black or blue, rather than a whole identity in order to imitate a first engagement that a listener could have with a music, particularly on streaming platforms where only the artwork cover is often shown.

In addition, according to the affective differences in the colors suggested by the literature (Aslam, 2006; Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011; Mohebbi, 2014) two different experimental situations are

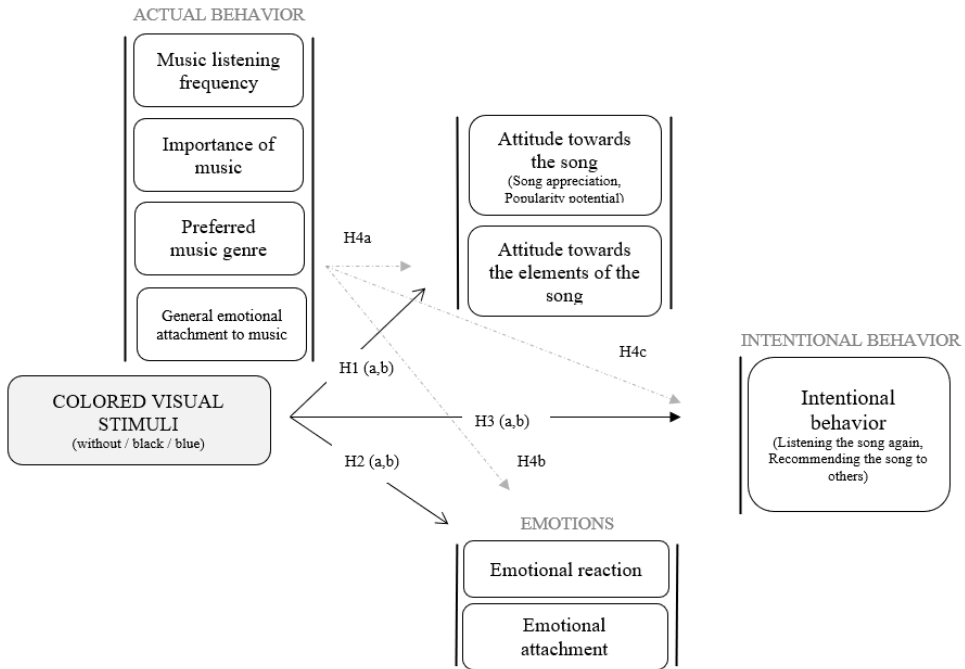
created (Appendix 3), each with a visual stimulus in a different color, to analyze whether there are general differences and also particular differences in terms of correlations in the way music is perceived.

Each group was requested to respond to a number of introduction questions (assessing actual behavior, their emotional state and the emotional attachment to music in general), listen to the song selected specifically for this experiment, and then rate it using the dependent variables listed below (attitude, emotions, and intentional behavior). The instrument was developed in Google Forms once more, allowing for the introduction of pictures for the treatment application as well as links to the music that respondents were requested to listen to with and without a visual stimulus.

To address the limitations of the first experiment, listening to the music is done concurrently with showing the visual stimulus, rather than successively, in the application of the experimental survey.

Simply put, the overall goal of the experiment is to see if introducing two distinct colored visual identity stimuli has an influence on how music is assessed in terms of the overall attitude, emotional reactions, and intentional or planned behavior, as well as to compare and contrast the two color conditions. The conceptual schema (Figure 3) is displayed in the graph below.

Figure 3. *Concept model for Experiment 2*



Three online questionnaires have been developed for the survey-based experiment, two for the experimental groups and one without a treatment for the control group. The questionnaires are similar, the only difference being the presence of the visual stimulus and its variety. The control group's survey has no visual stimuli, whereas the two experimental groups' surveys each feature a visual stimulus, specifically the cover artwork, one in black and the other in blue.

Sample

The respondents have been distributed fairly equal among the two groups (Table 9). There are 60 people in the control group (CG), 65 in the first experimental group (EG1) and 62 in the second experimental group (EG2), out of a total of 187 people. However, the gender distribution is not equal, with 80% ($n=48$) female respondents in the control group, 81,5% ($n=53$) in the first experimental group, and 80,6% ($n=50$) in the second, while the rest are male, other, or undeclared. When it comes to age, the distribution of respondents is

mainly in the range 18-25 ($n_{CG} = 46$, $n_{EG1} = 53$, $n_{EG2} = 41$), but with a more visible difference between *EG2*, with 66.1% respondents in this category, and *CG* and *EG1*, with 76.7% , respectively 81.5% of respondents in this interval.

In terms of what color stimulus was used in each group, it is vital to mention that *EG1* is the group where the black stimulus was used, while *EG2* is the group where the blue stimulus was used.

Table 9. *Sample overview for Experiment 2*

Socio-demographic variables	CONTROL GROUP (CG) n (%)	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 1 (EG1) n (%)	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2 (EG2) n (%)
Environment			
Rural	10 (16.7 %)	13 (20%)	15 (24.2%)
Urban	50 (83.3%)	52 (80%)	47 (75.8%)
Last graduated school			
Primary school	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0%)
Middle school	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	1 (1.6%)
Highschool	23 (38.3%)	28 (43.1%)	15 (24.2%)
Secondary school	2 (3.3%)	5 (7.7%)	7 (11.3%)
Vocational school	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.1%)	0 (0%)
Bachelor's degree	22 (36.7%)	25 (38.5%)	32 (51.6%)
Post-graduate	10 (16.7%)	3 (4.6%)	7 (11.3%)
Specialization			
STEM sciences	8 (13.3%)	8 (12.3%)	8 (12.9%)
Social science	52 (86.7 %)	57 (87.7%)	54 (87.1%)
Gender			
Females	48 (80%)	53 (81.5%)	50 (80.6%)
Males	10 (16.7%)	9 (13.8%)	12 (19.4%)
Other	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.1%)	0 (0%)
Undeclared	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0%)
Age			
18-25	46 (76.7%)	53 (81.5%)	41 (66.1 %)
26-30	9 (15%)	3 (4.5%)	8 (12.8%)
31-35	1 (1.7%)	3 (4.5%)	1 (1.6%)
36-40	1 (1.7%)	3 (4.5%)	4 (6.4%)
Over 40	3 (5%)	3 (4.5%)	8 (12.8%)
Income			
Less than 1000	23 (38.4%)	26 (40%)	16 (25.8%)
1001-1500	8 (13.3%)	8 (12.3%)	12 (19.4%)
1501-2000	8 (13.3%)	1 (1.5%)	6 (9.7%)
2001-2500	5 (8.3%)	11 (16.9%)	7 (11.3%)
2501-3000	2 (3.3%)	6 (9.2%)	9 (14.5%)
3001-3500	5 (8.3%)	6 (9.2%)	0 (0%)
3501-4000	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (4.8%)
Over 4000	9 (15%)	7 (10.8%)	9 (14.5%)

Randomization check

A randomization check was performed using the One-Way ANOVA test. The results show equal variance among groups on the importance of music

($F(2,184)=1.702$, $p=.185$), the preference for pop genre ($F(2, 184)=.071$, $p=.932$), the general emotional attachment to music ($F(2,184)=1.624$, $p=.200$), preference for blue ($F(2,184)=1.737$, $p=.179$), preference for black ($F(2,184)=1.570$, $p=.211$), and gender ($F(2,184)=.187$, $p=.829$).

Measurements

The actual behavior (Table 10) of the subjects is measured by using four control variables. The music listening frequency variable is measured on a 1 to 6 scale where 1 denotes *a few times a day*, while 6 denotes *never*. Music importance is evaluated on a 7-point scale, 1 meaning *not important at all* and 7 meaning *very important*. With regards to song genre evaluation, each of them, taken from the MPQ-R Music Preference Questionnaire (Nater, Krebs & Ehler, 2005), is scored on scales from 1 to 7, 1 meaning *not at all* in terms of preference and 7 meaning *completely*. The general emotional attachment to music is rated as well on a 7-point scale, 1 meaning *Strongly negative emotions* and 7 meaning *Strongly positive emotions*.

Table 10. Data overview for the actual behavior variables

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Frequency of listening to music	M=1.40 (SD=.741)	M=1.37 (SD=.698)	M=1.35 (SD=.726)	M=1.37 (SD=.718)
Importance of music	M=6.28 (SD=.865)	M=6.17 (SD=1.054)	M=5.95 (SD=1.093)	M=6.13 (SD=1.015)
Preference for Pop	M=5.20 (SD=1.582)	M=5.15 (SD=1.642)	M=5.10 (SD=1.302)	M=5.15 (SD=1.509)
General emotional attachment to music	M=5.88 (SD=1.043)	M=6.18 (SD=1.014)	M=5.92 (SD=1.029)	M=6.00 (SD=1.032)

The questionnaire also introduces a question to assess preferences for specific colors (Table 11), for each of them using scales of 1 to 7, 1 meaning *Not at all* and 7 meaning *Completely*.

Table 11. *Data overview for the color preference variables*

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Preference for black	M=5.30 (SD=1.710)	M=5.68 (SD=1.659)	M=5.15 (SD=1.854)	M=5.38 (SD=1.748)
Preference for blue	M=5.17 (SD=1.777)	M=5.69 (SD=1.334)	M=5.35 (SD=1.680)	M=5.41 (SD=1.609)

The actual emotional state is being considered as well (Table 12). In order to assess this, a series of emotions from the PAD model were used (Hall, Elliott & Meng, 2017), on scales from 1 to 7, where 1 is represented by the most negative valence of the item, and 7 the most positive. Based on them, a single variable was calculated, with Cronbach alpha=.906, $M=4.48$, $SD=1.311$.

Table 12. *The actual emotional state items*

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Unhappy-Happy	M=5.10 (SD=1.423)	M=4.88 (SD=1.536)	M=4.74 (SD=1.481)	M=4.90 (SD=1.482)
Annoyed-Pleased	M=4.87 (SD=1.455)	M=4.55 (SD=1.759)	M=4.68 (SD=1.480)	M=4.70 (SD=1.572)
Unsatisfied-Satisfied	M=4.85 (SD=1.645)	M=4.55 (SD=1.871)	M=4.68 (SD=1.677)	M=4.69 (SD=1.732)
Melancholic-Content	M=4.72 (SD=1.698)	M=4.38 (SD=1.926)	M=4.50 (SD=1.772)	M=4.53 (SD=1.800)
Despairing-Hopeful	M=4.70 (SD=1.587)	M=4.92 (SD=1.726)	M=4.77 (SD=1.674)	M=4.80 (SD=1.659)
Bored-Relaxed	M=4.47 (SD=1.662)	M=4.55 (SD=1.786)	M=4.52 (SD=1.597)	M=4.51 (SD=1.676)
Calm-Excited	M=3.83 (SD=1.659)	M=3.80 (SD=1.872)	M=3.56 (SD=1.733)	M=3.73 (SD=1.755)
Sleepy-Wide-Awake	M=4.15 (SD=1.665)	M=3.97 (SD=2.096)	M=3.87 (SD=1.645)	M=3.99 (SD=1.804)

Once the actual behavior variables are measured, the visual stimuli are introduced in the experimental group situation, as described in the following sections.

The next segment introduces the music that the experiment participants are asked to listen to. The chosen song has been successfully pretested for neutrality by conducting the first experiment. The question that assessed this

is “*How much did you like the song?*” where respondents used a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 denotes *Not at all*, and 7 denotes *Extremely much*. Regarding the distribution in the control group, the option with the highest percentage of responses was “Moderate” (29.1%), which is also the middlemost scale item. Moreover, 74.6% of the respondents chose the three middle items of the scale, ensuring the neutrality of perception.

The attitude variable is made of two separate variables, more specifically the rather general attitude with regards to the song and a more specific attitude, this time towards particular constituent parts of the song. As to the *general attitude towards the song* variable, two sub-variables are evaluated, more specifically song appreciation, together with popularity potential or possibility (Table 13). Therefore, two 7-point scales are designed, where one of them measures how much the participants like the song (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *Completely*), and the other one measures how probably is for the song to reach high popularity (1 = *not likely at all*, 7 = *extremely much*). In the case of the *attitude towards elements of the song* (the way a respondent likes a particular element of a song), 7 variables are scored on 7-point scales, 1 denoting *not at all* and 7 denoting *Completely* (Table 14). These scales were developed following the analysis of previous literature that addresses musical characteristics, such as rhythm, perceived quality or emotions (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Wapnick et al., 2009).

Table 13. Data overview for the attitude towards the song

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Song appreciation	M=4.35 (SD=1.459)	M=3.94 (SD=1.519)	M=4.37 (SD=1.571)	M=4.22 (SD=1.516)
Popularity potential	M=4.47 (SD=1.228)	M=4.14 (SD=1.629)	M=4.03 (SD=1.557)	M=4.21 (SD=1.471)

Table 14. Data overview for the attitude on the song' elements

Like song characteristics	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Message	M=4.55 (SD=1.512)	M=4.52 (SD=1.562)	M=4.44 (SD=1.522)	M=4.50 (SD=1.525)
Sound clarity	M=4.47 (SD=1.443)	M=4.48 (SD=1.795)	M=4.19 (SD=1.628)	M=4.38 (SD=1.630)
Voice	M=4.82 (SD=1.546)	M=4.91 (SD=1.739)	M=4.50 (SD=1.696)	M=4.74 (SD=1.665)
Melody	M=4.72 (SD=1.595)	M=4.42 (SD=1.648)	M=4.34 (SD=1.659)	M=4.49 (SD=1.634)
Rhythm	M=4.72 (SD=1.552)	M=4.32 (SD=1.724)	M=4.24 (SD=1.606)	M=4.42 (SD=1.636)
Originality	M= 3.95 (SD=1.556)	M=4.28 (SD=1.484)	M=3.95 (SD=1.654)	M=4.06 (SD=1.564)
Emotional value	M=4.38 (SD=1.698)	M=4.35 (SD=1.754)	M=4.13 (SD=1.806)	M=4.29 (SD=1.748)
Elements' appreciation (average)	M=4.514 (SD=1.164)	M=4.468 (SD=1.330)	M=4.255 (SD=1.403)	M=4.41 (SD=1.302)

In terms of emotions, both the particular feelings, called emotional reactions, and the overall attachment towards the particular song were assessed. The emotional reaction was analyzed using scales inspired and adjusted from Geneva Emotional Music Scales, by Zentner, Grandjean & Scherer (2008). Several additional elements considered useful were introduced based on Scherer's study (2005), namely *Amused* under *Joyful activation*, *Amazed* under *Wonder* category and *Disappointed* which was added separately, without being part of a larger category (Table 15). The scales use 7 points, where 1 means *I didn't feel the emotion at all* and 7 means *I felt the emotion to a very large extent*. The negative emotions have been reversed, and the element *Overwhelmed* is again used separately due to the low level of reliability in its original category, *Transcendence*.

Table 15. *Reliability analysis and overview for the emotional reactions*

Categories	Items	Cronbach Alpha	Control group M (SD)	Experimental group 1 M (SD)	Experimental group 2 M (SD)	Total M (SD)
WONDER	Moved Filled with wonder Allured Amazed	$\alpha = .784$	M= 3.10 (SD=1.313)	M=2.94 (SD=1.516)	M=2.95 (SD=1.333)	M=2.99 (SD=1.388)
TRANSCENDENCE	Fascinated	-	M=3.53 (SD=1.789)	M=3.15 (SD=1.835)	M=3.48 (SD=1.753)	M=3.39 (SD=1.793)
	Feeling of transcendence	-	M=2.73 (SD=1.666)	M=2.35 (SD=1.789)	M=2.34 (SD=1.536)	M=2.47 (SD=1.670)
OVERWHELMED	-	-	M=6.07 (SD=1.087)	M=6.29 (SD= .947)	M=6.19 (SD= .972)	M=6.19 (SD=1.001)
POWER	Strong Energetic Triumphant	$\alpha = .872$	M=3.77 (SD=1.539)	M=3.05 (SD=1.726)	M=3.40 (SD=1.721)	M=3.39 (SD=1.684)
TENDERNESS	Tender Affectionate Mellowed	$\alpha = .792$	M=3.26 (SD=1.423)	M=3.07 (SD=1.666)	M=3.12 (SD=1.550)	M=3.15 (SD=1.547)
NOSTALGIA	Nostalgic Sentimental Dreamy	$\alpha = .841$	M=3.67 (SD=1.624)	M=3.54 (SD=1.788)	M=3.46 (SD=1.706)	M=3.56 (SD=1.703)
PEACEFULNESS	Serene Calm Soothed	$\alpha = .743$	M=3.57 (SD=1.464)	M=2.98 (SD=1.562)	M=3.48 (SD=1.486)	M=3.34 (SD=1.520)
JOYFUL ACTIVATION	Animated Bouncy Joyful Amused	$\alpha = .793$	M=3.50 (SD=1.345)	M=2.85 (SD=1.418)	M=3.25 (SD=1.383)	M=3.19 (SD=1.402)
SADNESS	Sad	-	M=5.97 (SD=1.073)	M=5.194 (SD=1.130)	M=5.95 (SD=1.031)	M=5.95 (SD=1.074)
	Tearful	-	M=6.23 (SD=1.047)	M=6.31 (SD=1.089)	M=6.42 (SD= .967)	M=6.32 (SD=1.034)
TENSION	Tense Agitated	$\alpha = .725$	M=6.16 (SD= .909)	M=6.15 (SD= .939)	M=6.18 (SD= .954)	M=6.16 (SD= .930)
DISAPPOINTMENT	-	-	M=6.28 (SD=1.010)	M=6.26 (SD= .989)	M=6.42 (SD= .933)	M=6.32 (SD= .975)

The emotional attachment the particular song (Table 16) is assessed using a singular constituent (To what extent do you feel emotionally attached?), using scales of 1 to 7, one denotes Not at all and seven denotes Completely.

Table 16. *Data overview for the emotional attachment to the song*

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Emotional attachment	M=3.47 (SD=1.909)	M=3.05 (SD=1.789)	M=3.23 (SD=1.614)	M=3.21 (SD=1.770)

The intentional behavior part concludes the dependent variables measurements (Table 17). This section measures intentional or planned behavior towards *listening to the song again* (How much would you like to

hear the song again?), respectively for *recommending the song* (To what extent would you recommend the song to others?), using a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Completely*).

Table 17. *Data overview for the intentional behavior*

	Control group M(SD)	Experimental group 1 M(SD)	Experimental group 2 M(SD)	Total M(SD)
Listen again	M=4.20 (SD=1.821)	M=3.85 (SD=1.839)	M=4.05 (SD=1.674)	M=4.03 (SD=1.778)
Recommend to others	M=3.95 (SD=1.780)	M=3.75 (SD=1.929)	M=4.16 (SD=1.748)	M=3.95 (SD=1.819)

Stimuli

On the one hand, the color black conveys emotions and concepts such as elegance, modernity, feelings of power, sophistication, style, seriousness (Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011), more standard concepts, which allow us to attach to the song a visual stimulus related to a conventional brand. On the other hand, choosing a blue cover helps us to evoke emotions such as confidence, calm, wisdom, sadness, peace, sincerity (Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011; Mohebbi, 2014), these being more human concepts that can characterize a person or can personify a brand.

The independent variables are introduced separately, once for each experimental group, this time concomitantly with listening to the song, rather than successively. The treatment is a cover artwork attached to the song listened to by the respondents, made in two different colors, one for each experimental situation (Figure 4, Figure 5). The photos have been taken from Pexels.com, a royalty free photography database, and edited using Adobe Photoshop.

To ensure that the emotional value of the text does not contaminate the emotional value of the color, the song title, INHABITANT, was chosen by analyzing the ANEW (Affective norms for English words) database by Bradley & Lang (1999). The database comprises a list of words rated on 9-point SAM scales (Bradley & Lang, 1994) evaluating their valence, arousal and dominance. The word INHABITANT was chosen randomly with the

condition of possessing relatively neutral values in terms of valence, arousal and dominance ($VM=5.05$, $AM=3.95$, $DM=5.37$) in order not to contaminate the visual stimulus from an affective point of view.

Figure 4. *Stimulus for Experiment 2 -
Song artwork in black*



Figure 5. *Stimulus for Experiment 2 -
Song artwork in blue*



The experiment participants are then invited to listen to the music while looking at the cover artwork. A specific question has been designed to make sure that the subjects have accessed and listened to the music, asking them to identify the song's name from a list of three options. The only method to learn the name is to click on the link that plays the music automatically and watch the cover artwork. Any respondent who selects the incorrect response is instantly routed to the previous section.

Manipulation check

To ensure that the visual stimuli were perceived as intended by the groups, a manipulation check was introduced which proved to be effective. Specifically, participants had to choose the correct color of the visual stimulus used. To compare the effect of experimental conditions on participants' response, a one-way between subjects ANOVA has been conducted. The test does show that there is a significant effect of visual stimuli on responses at the $p<.05$ level for the conditions [$F(2, 184)=6.28$, $p=0.002$].

5. RESULTS

5.1 Results for the interview

5.1.1 Success

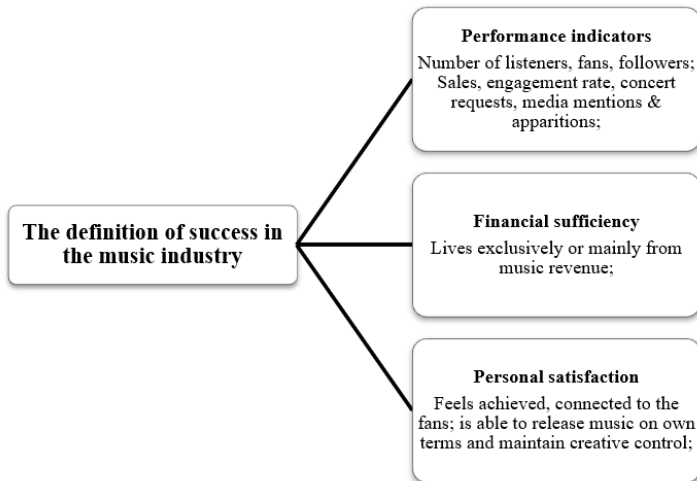
5.1.1.1 The definition of success

Success as an artist may be viewed from both a commercial and non-commercial angle (Figure 6). The number of listeners or other relevant metrics reflecting things like *"a large following on social media, a lot of music plays and views for videos and material in general, or recurring booking for concerts"* (R11) are evident first-hand indicators of commercial success. Therefore, it is possible to determine an artist's commercial success largely by hard data, such as the number of radio airplays, concert attendance, sales of the artist's music and tickets, mentions in the media, and even accolades earned. One might also discuss the social media engagement rate, appearances in the media, and followers on those platforms. Successful musicians are able to influence trends in the field and resist through time. They *"remain constant with the job and music"* (R9), work tirelessly to accomplish their objectives, and manage to make music their primary source of income. The way in which the artist and the music manage to reach potential fans is both a sign of and a fundamental requirement for commercial success: *"One able to connect with the audience, to consistently put on good music, and who is able to do it as a career without supplementing income from alternative sources"* (R12).

Second, experts contend that success can have both personal and non-commercial connotations, making commercial success not always the most significant kind of success. As a result, successful artists are those who are able to connect with their intended audience, fully commit to their work, *"who do not let themselves get overwhelmed by difficult moments"* (R7), make sacrifices or concessions, and maintain their authenticity. Additionally, according to this paradigm, success entails a committed fan following, no matter how big. From a personal standpoint, successful musicians release just the music they want to share, on their own terms, and are proud of their work. They are also satisfied with what they do and love their careers. Success for artists is fulfilling their own goals, regardless of how they are

mirrored in the marketplace. Therefore, "*any artist who sets and reaches their goals*" (R13). can be considered successful

Figure 6. *Defining success in the music industry according to the specialists*



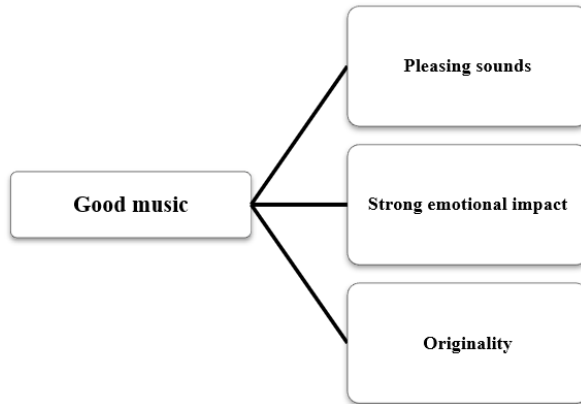
5.1.1.2 Good music

According to the general view, good music is essential to the artists' success and has multiple characteristics (Figure 7). According to the respondents, good music is primarily characterized from an emotional standpoint. It is "*something that encourages emotion*" (R13). The interviews mostly concentrate on the idea that good music makes you feel good, improves your mood, and stirs your emotions. While some answers place emphasis on the pleasant emotions that define excellent music, others say that good music instead manages to "*create a bridge of emotional connection between artist and listener*" rather than simply making people happy (R7). Good music is said to inspire listeners to express their emotions, whether they are joy, sorrow, nostalgia, or other sensations. In addition to the real feelings that good music evokes in listeners, another thing to discuss is an emotional bond between the artist and the audience as well as emotion as a release of energy, which

occasionally occurs through physical action, such as dancing. Most interview participants agreed that excellent music is enduring and unforgettable, indicating that *"good music is music that has the ability to transcend the message of the text and create a response."* (R7).

Aside from its ability to stir up feelings, one can also talk about the way good music sounds technically. As a consequence of this, qualities such as a memorable melody, complexity, and musical sophistication may be characteristics of good music: *"it is the one that impresses with its harmonic coherence, an instrumental technique executed correctly and has a message"* (R5). A high level of creativity and the existence of melodic hooks are qualities that define good music.

Despite the fact that the fundamental elements that make excellent music can generally be agreed upon, a significant portion of the respondents brought up the subjectivity of music and its function. Thus, music is *"a subjective tool of well-being, with a quasi-therapeutic role for a person and at the same time a way to release of what we call energy"* (R1). The notion of good music may vary from person to person and perhaps cannot be quantified. Because everyone has different tastes, something that emotionally moves one person may cause others to respond in a quite negative way. Similarly, although some audiences value technical expertise, other audiences are drawn in by upbeat, catchy music. The wide range of musical genres makes it clear that, while passion, memorability, and creativity can serve as the cornerstones of excellent music, ultimately, each person must choose what good music means to them.: *"It's always going to be a matter of taste. Most music is good, not all of it will be to personal taste"* (R13).

Figure 7. *Good music according to the specialists*

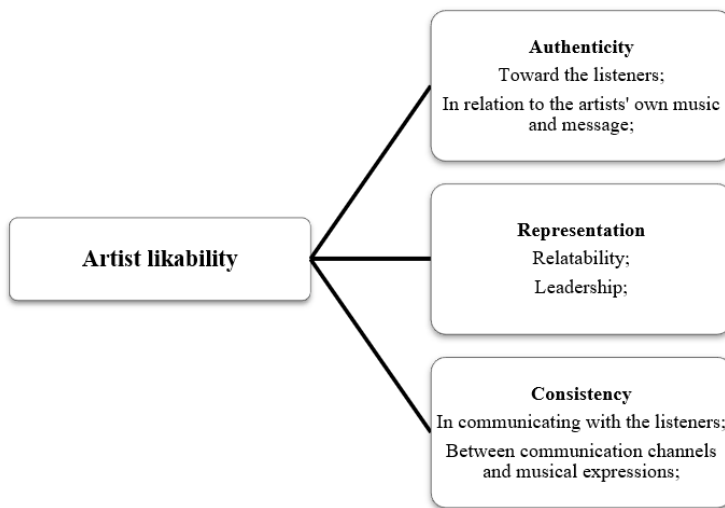
5.1.1.3 Artist likability

The overwhelming majority of people, when it comes to the admiration of the artist, agree that a performer who is well-liked by the audience is one who is able to effectively connect with the audience (Figure 8). A likeable artist is one that listens to their audience, is genuine with them, and has a mindset that they can relate to, *"one you can identify with"* (R6). The public must be able to relate to the artist's thinking and actions, which are mostly displayed in the media, online, and in any other interactions with fans. Additionally, for artists whose success is their top priority, waiting for fans to find them is not enough; instead, they must make consistent efforts to learn about their audience and their interests. An artist is said to be likeable if they *"have the ability to understand the audience and what kind of needs those around them have"* (R7). People will follow artists, relate to them better, and instantly find them likeable if they understand their audience and communicate properly: *"An artist can be liked by the public if he is charismatic; talent also speaks for itself; sincerity and communication with the public are important; the active involvement of the public in the execution of the artistic moment is essential."* (R5)

The specialists stress the mindset of the artist as well. They hold that for musicians to succeed in expressing their attitudes via music and

communication, they must be genuine and creative. Charisma is occasionally cited as a crucial component of effective communication. The performers who successfully compel others to want to follow them are the ones who win over the crowd, because they *“can represent something their followers aspire to”* (R11). Because of this, it is possible to establish a genuine relationship between artists and the public, which benefits both parties. This is because the artists, *“the more humane and closer to people they are, the better they are liked by the public”*.(R17)

Figure 8. Artist likability according to the specialists



5.1.1.4 Challenges to overcome

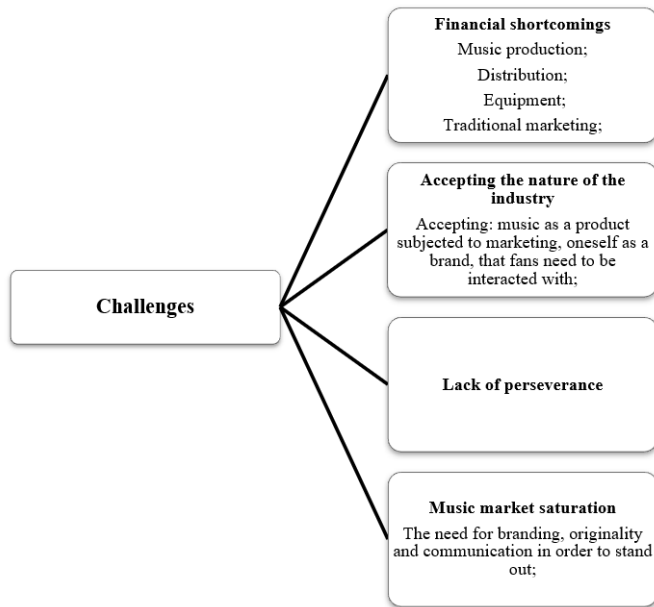
It is of high usefulness to see difficulties from the perspective of specialists. In addition to taking on traditional obstacles to stand out on the market, *“to stay relevant and create things that are the right balance between new and likeable”* (R11), there are a variety of internal struggles, some of which have more to do with giving in to and embracing market realities than with outside influences. First, if artists want to succeed, they must understand that any music, no matter how excellent, is not always enough given the oversaturation of the market and *“a lot of competition on platforms”* (R12). They must learn how to interact with the fans on a regular basis by talking to them,

providing them with entertainment, and forging a lasting relationship with them: *"For every genre, sub-genre, and even sub-niche genre, it's easy to find dozens, hundreds, and even thousands of artists who are doing something special. Artists need a story to stand out. They need to engage with their fans. They need that special 'X factor,' charisma, or magnetic personality to attract and keep their fans. Or they need to be savvy in other ways, whether it's being a whiz at digital marketing, the ability to ride trends or getting a first mover's advantage."* (R13).

Second, in order to concentrate on their work, artists frequently give marketing and branding strategies too little attention or even reject them.: *"the biggest challenge for an artist is to understand that art in general is saleable as well, by using classic marketing tools applied on it just as on any other product"* (R3). Effective branding, an online identity, and numerous promotional activities are necessary to spread awareness of the music and the image since, in terms of financial success, the musicians and their music may be viewed as a product as previously stressed.

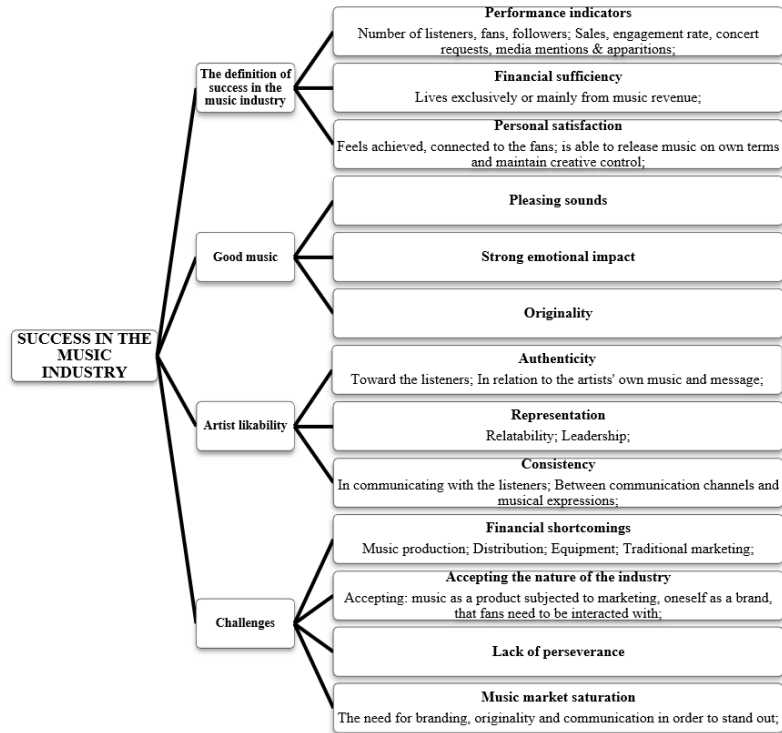
And last, experts believe that perseverance is a task that artists should take on. Long-term success may be attained via both the continuous release or performance of music, avoiding breaks that are too long, and through persistence in the music industry, particularly in the face of other internal or external obstacles. According to those who participated in the interviews, the road is continually difficult, and success *"sometimes is a difficult road and most give up until they get there"* (R7). As a result, artists can become disheartened too soon.

The saturation of the music industry is, as was already noted, the most significant difficulty from an outside perspective (Figure 9). The number of artists who have access to marketing and distribution methods is significant, which is a result of the internet and online platforms' explosive growth. As a result, obtaining record label representation is not required for them to reach a particular degree of success. The market is considerably busier and the traditional financial obstacles of music production—rehearsal space, equipment, records, and studios—remain in place, despite the fact that promotion may be more affordable and straightforward than in the past.

Figure 9. *Challenges in the music industry according to the specialists*

The music business is said to have several challenges that are particularly difficult to resolve, and these issues are tied to a number of causes such as *“being lucky, being at the right place at the right time”* (R8), becoming viral, word-of-mouth sharing or cultural and geographical differences.

Defining success in the music industry is a process that definitely involves a multitude of factors. Success in this case may be operationalized into performance measurements, financial stability, and personal fulfillment. In addition to this, it is constantly linked to the existence of great music, the likability of the artist, and the artist's ability to triumph through difficulties. Figure 10 provides a synopsis of all of the components of the success model based on the replies from the specialists.

Figure 10. An overview on success in the music industry according to the specialists

5.1.2 Branding

5.1.2.1 Importance of branding in the music industry

Branding is seen as a beginning point by the professionals that were interviewed, particularly for artists who have not yet established themselves in the marketplace (Figure 11). Because both the artist and the music may be considered to be products, marketing, especially when defined in terms of branding and the communication of brands, can be extremely important: *"Branding is the starting point and what gives continuity to the artist. In terms of marketing, the artist can be a product, and the product cannot become known without proper branding: What do you represent? What do you sell? Who do you sell it to? Solid branding means the concise definition of the product or artist and what it offers and how it differs from other products or artists."* (R1)

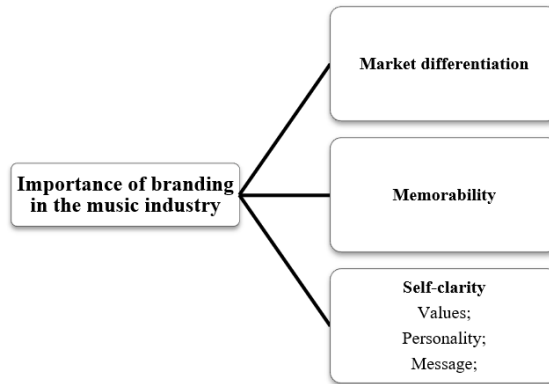
It is important to note that until brand communication in relation to other people is discussed, branding as a self-helping tool to the artists can be brought into attention, so that they can better understand themselves. Artists can benefit from having a clearer understanding of what they stand for and where they are headed in terms of their relationship with the general public and their efforts to promote their music by using the structure of a brand identity: *"I see it as a summary of your artistic essence exposed in a form attractive and familiar to the general public that aims to navigate the masses of art consumers to reach your audience"* (R18).

Nowadays, artists have to sell not just their music but also a whole package, which includes their image, and image is a very significant factor in this process.: *"branding is vital, whether it's logos, styling or appearance (outfits, makeup, hair etc.), a constant style of videos etc., it enhances awareness of the brand and makes them identifiable"* (R11). Therefore, having a clear identity will result in an image that is easy to recall, which will serve as a supplement to the musical product itself. Visual elements, which are considered to be an essential method of conveying the identity of a brand, are seen everywhere in today's society, particularly in relation to social networks and live performances. Therefore, artists are already brands, and it is imperative that they pay attention to how their reputation is communicated to the public, *"in order to reach the audience in the intended form"* (R5), through branding and the process of brand communication. Branding is crucial because it enables musicians to express their values, personality, or message clearly and logically, allowing them to stand out in the music market. This helps artists avoid uncertainty and ambiguity, which only work against them when they are attempting to become noteworthy.

It is interesting to note that one of the respondents had the opinion that with branding *"things become a business and they are more about the team behind the artist than the artist himself"* (R8). Therefore, branding must not take priority when an artist's primary objective is to create art in the hopes that it will naturally reach a listenership that sincerely values the musical uniqueness rather than to gain commercial success, financial success, or a large following. Additionally, it might be argued that while branding is crucial, there has to be a healthy balance; communication and marketing strategies

should emphasize rather than alter the artist's and the musical product's uniqueness and authenticity.

Figure 11. Importance of branding in the music industry according to the specialists



5.1.2.2 Brand communication tools

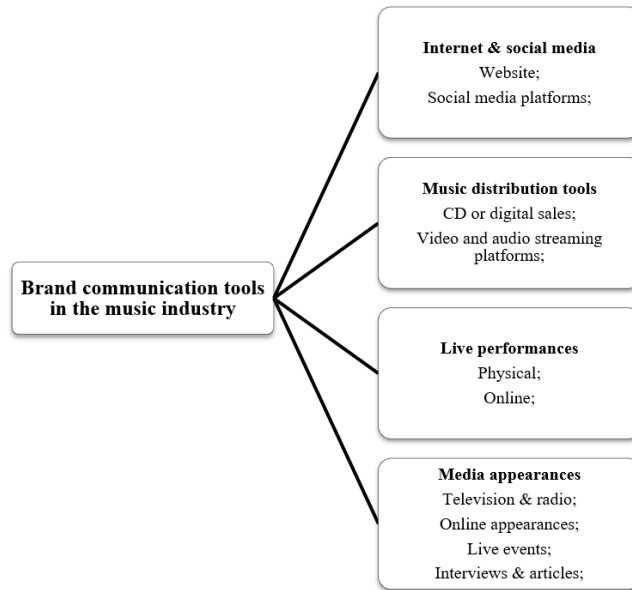
The focus of the respondents is mostly on social media when it comes to the brand's platforms of promotion and communication (Figure 12). Experts discuss the effectiveness of these platforms as well as the necessity for artists to be present there in order to survive, particularly on those where the target audience is located, in comparison to all other artists on the market: *"It depends a lot on how the target groups of the artist are outlined. Starting from these, you can identify potential listeners and, from there, find the right platforms"* (R10).

The platforms that are used the most are those that represent *"social media, by far. There's a market for everything there"* (R11). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Twitch are able to catch up and redefine online interactions between artists and fans because of their massive user bases. YouTube sits on the dividing line between the social media platform and the distribution network. Being a streaming platform that is included in the algorithm used to determine the music charts, it continues to be an effective promoter of both the brand through the use of vlogs and behind-the-scenes clips, and also the music itself. Streaming networks are notable as well, even

though they serve primarily as music distribution channels rather than ones for brand marketing. The specialists stress almost all main social media platforms out there, such as *“Instagram, TikTok, and all streaming platforms”* (R4), such as Spotify, Apple Music or SoundCloud, as parts that need to be included in the artists’ complete package.

Press releases, printed posters, merch, live performances, online articles, and media appearances are just a few of the other channels for brand communication that can be used willingly or unwillingly. These channels are frequently seen as logical and natural outgrowths of a musician who releases music to the market. Through these means, the public will frequently be exposed to the artists or their music without the artist having an actual say in this phenomenon. However, through their own advantage, they can strive to influence how brand communication is handled in these situations: *“Making it on music alone is tough. But if you can teach, podcast, write books, interact with your fans on social media to show they are appreciated, and so on, you can have a profitable and sustainable career. People align with the values of artists they interact with”* (R13).

Branding also depends on visual components like logos, images, and color combinations. Their constant shaping and presentation can make a difference between an ineffective brand and one that is successful. Branding components in the music business are frequently *“exactly those of the brands of products and services. You need a naming, logo, central values to transmit through your music and image”* (R10). The majority of these components may be found on a variety of supplementary branding touchpoints, including websites, social media profiles, and video and audio streaming services: *“Ideally, an artist should have an active and engaging social media presence as well as their own website where they can promote their own art and host an online store for merch”* (R16). No matter where they are discovered, it is crucial that they are well-built and reflect the same character and ideals. The interviewees stress that *“a visual support for music helps a lot; through videos, behind the scenes or photos you manage to get closer as a brand to your audience”* (R6). In order for these visual components to be really memorable and do justice to the brand identity and brand communication mechanisms, they must be developed as early as practical, controlled, and maybe revised over time.

Figure 12. Brand communication tools in the music industry according to the specialists

5.1.2.3 Emotional branding

According to experts, an artist's brand and brand communication plan should start with the artist's emotions when the music is being created in the studio: *"if all the elements that make up a product combine perfectly then the emotions get where they should and how they should"* (R3). This consistency does not always occur, owing to the complexity of people as well as the duality of some artists, more specifically due to the differences between the personal brand and the brand of the music product itself. Artists' personalities may not always be consistent with the messages they portray in their music. Although this may be a natural dissonance, some musicians make the conscious decision to market themselves by appealing to emotions that may not necessarily be their own, but which they believe will *"grab attention, create engagement, and develop a fandom"* (R15) by helping the audience identify with them more.

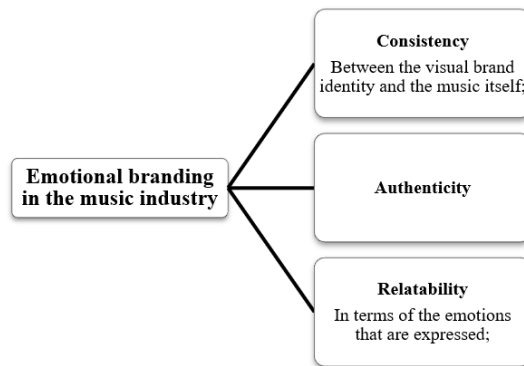
Top musicians are seen as being authentic and unafraid to present themselves as they are, which will be mirrored in the branding (Figure 13). When it comes to the precise emotions that are conveyed through public relations and advertising, experts think that ideas like joy, energy, and humor might be useful recommendations. Since everything may be subjective, a sad feeling in brand marketing may occasionally be more effective if the general audience can identify with it: *"First you create the brand and then you start to convey emotion through communication. If you don't have the attributes of the brand, you don't know what to communicate, so what emotion is right for your audience. So, the right emotion, applied to who needs leads to a larger base of followers or fans"* (R3)

People relate to emotional expressions in art, and a communication strategy focused on emotions may foster a connection between artists and the audience. These factors make emotional branding beneficial for artists. People who may not listen to artists' music but who can relate to the emotions expressed via communication might connect with them through feelings: *"emotions can be transmitted even through the online posts that the artist publishes. Depending on how they are written, posts can induce emotions, such as happiness or sadness, among fans. Emotions can be used in branding and communication to keep fans close to the artist"* (R9). As a result, what the artist wishes to portray through music may be supplemented or supported by emotions in brand communication. When artists wish to generate interest and communicate feelings that are specific to the society, such as rage or discontent with societal structure, things that many people can connect to, they can do it by using emotional branding.

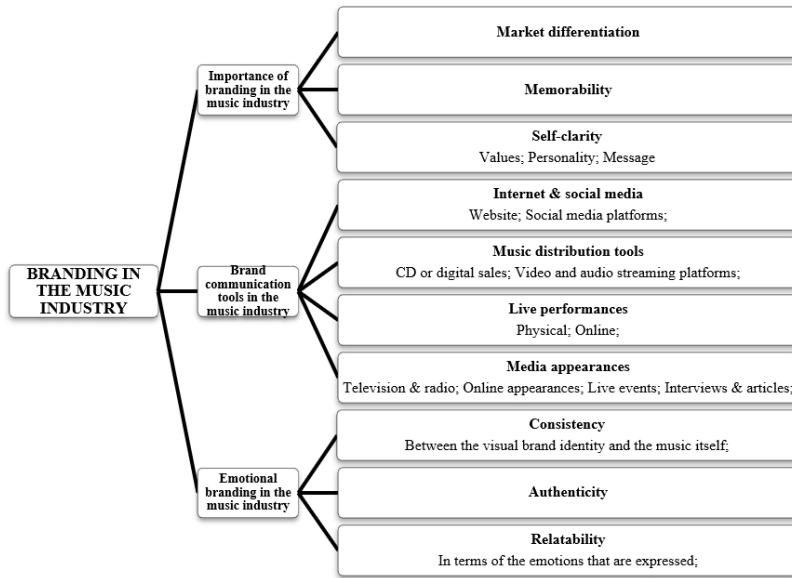
The emotions that the target audience is seeking for determine the effectiveness of emotions in branding and brand communication of an artist. *"Different artists convey different things"* (R11) and there are niches and audiences for almost everything. According to the interviewees, everything depends not only on the message and melodic lines contained in an artist's music but also on the message that artist wants to get through communication. For instance, even if musicians like Drake or Billie Eilish frequently convey more depressing ideas, their target audience connects with them pretty successfully, and this does not invalidate the value of positive and upbeat approaches at all.

It's possible that the role of emotion in artist branding also serves the function of bringing together a community of listeners of that music, which is beneficial for any artist: "Considering this dynamic, I believe that this phenomenon also has an important role in the formation of groups or communities because it contributes to the culture that group members define in the early stages and that they maintain later in the more advanced stages of the group's life, for its consolidation. I believe that the formation of a community is vital to artistic success. And emotion is the perfect binder to sediment the individuals who will represent the group members." (R18)

Figure 13. Emotional branding in the music industry according to the specialists



In conclusion, branding is extremely important in the music industry since it helps in developing a strategy for differentiation, it encourages memorability, and it explains one's identity. In addition, considering that social media has become the major means via which people communicate, the use of aesthetically pleasing components and emotionally charged branding can be able to assist the artist in establishing a connection with the audience. Figure 14 provides a summary of the major components of branding that were underlined by the professionals who were interviewed.

Figure 14. An overview on branding in the music industry according to the specialists

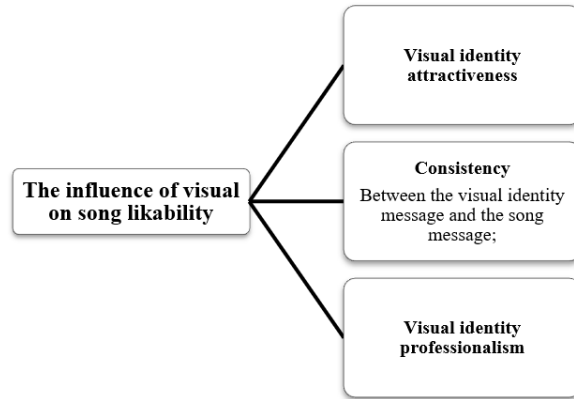
5.1.3 The visual influence on music perception

5.1.3.1 Song likability

Firstly, experts believe that a person's familiarity with an artist's look may add to their understanding of that artist's music as well as their motivation to know more about that music. If a person notices a consistent visual presence, especially on the internet, together with an attractive conventional visual style where a high degree of authenticity is apparent, they will be interested in knowing more about that artist's work. (Figure 15). This genuineness, in terms of visual elements, is helpful since it allows an artist to convey their ideas more accurately, and *“if you present yourself publicly, the public comprehends you, they are more compassionate with the way they perceive your music, although they might not like it.”* (R6)

When it comes to the influence directly, it has been hypothesized that visual stimuli might have a favorable effect on the way music is regarded, particularly when they are in tune with one another tonally. If the audience initially interacts with the graphic materials surrounding the artist and enjoys their tonality and meaning, there is a good probability that they will also appreciate the music if it delivers the same sentiments. An example suggests that beginner artist, when *"a new fan views your profile before listening to the music, it's crucial that your image is the way you want to be recalled"* (R14). It can be suggested that the absence of consistency in terms of the affect of the visual aspect and that of the music might make listeners confused. This confusion can be avoided, however, if the music itself compensates for the lack of consonance by having a high degree of likeability independent of the visual aspect. People may also be more lenient with the music if the visual and communication are both effective and consistent, according to another theory that has been put forward: *"Regardless how hard one tries to separate the person from the music, if one finds something appealing or disgusting about the artist, the music will be perceived similarly."* (R10).

Additionally, experts emphasize the significance of the focus that artists need to have on visual components since *"the image must replicate the artist's work"* (R9), so if the quality is low or if is not loved by the audience, it might impact the listener's opinion of how much they like the song while the artist's music is being played. A visual identity that is offensive or the absence of a visual identity could hinder music from finding the right public. This, in turn, makes it impossible to conduct a study of the music's visual effect because the audience might not even listen to the music.

Figure 15. *The influence of visual elements on song likability according to the specialists*

5.1.3.2 Perceived quality

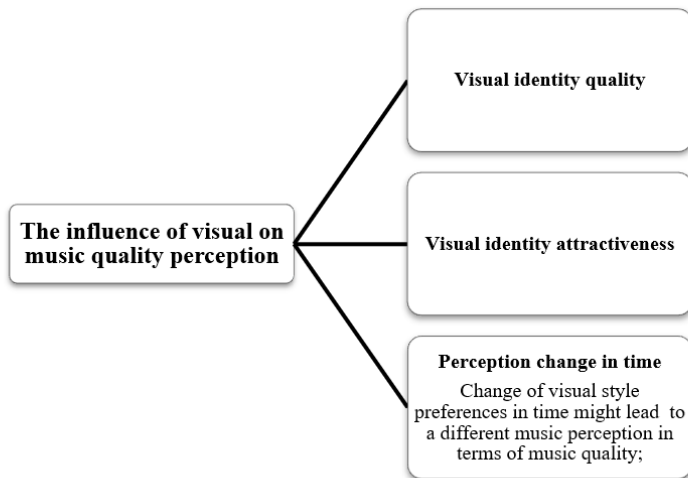
When it comes to matters of quality, nearly all experts are of the opinion that the auditory and the visual may interact with one another, because *“people are usually motivated by prejudice and music is no exception”* (R10). For instance, one interviewee's professional experience with music management suggests that the public might not be interested in listening to a song or people could question the quality of the song simply due to the fact that the promotional photos are uninteresting or unattractive: *“People did not listen to the music to have a correct opinion, or even if they listened, they did not take it seriously, because pictures were unprofessional”* (R1). They are unable to make the mental connection between this visual identity and the visual identities of some outstanding performers whose songs they regard to be of good quality and whose brand identities are clearly defined.

It has been hypothesized that aesthetically pleasing presentation of music might provide the impression that the music itself is of greater quality, which can have a beneficial effect. The visual is very essential, and sometimes people have a tendency to be driven by their preconceived notions or to move characteristics out from visual aspects to the music dimension. Listeners also have a tendency to transfer their opinions on the personality of an artist, which might be transferred from the visual aspect onto the music

and its perception: *“Partly, it has to do with forecast; people are projecting their emotions towards the artist as a person in the art they make. Hence, the general image of the artist can significantly influence the quality assessment, in a positive or in a negative way.”* (R16)

Having said that, experts think that some individuals eventually overcome the influence of visual stimuli, and that on long term, once the graphic component isn’t interesting anymore to them or is not in tone with the performer's present characteristics anymore, they are able to change their evaluations of the music's quality (Figure 16). The shift in quality perception is not only driven by an increase in visual stimulation (people might change their music preference or become uninterested) because *“retrospectively, music is always perceived differently”* (R13) and the image of the artist or the band can change as time goes by.

Figure 16. *The influence of visual elements on the perceived quality of music according to the specialists*

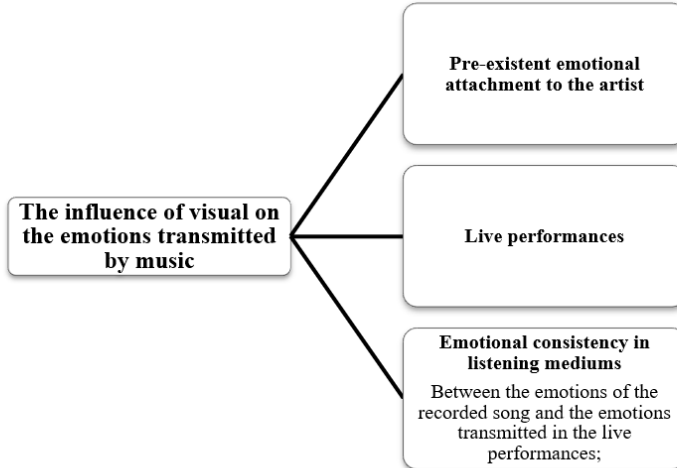


5.1.3.3 Emotions

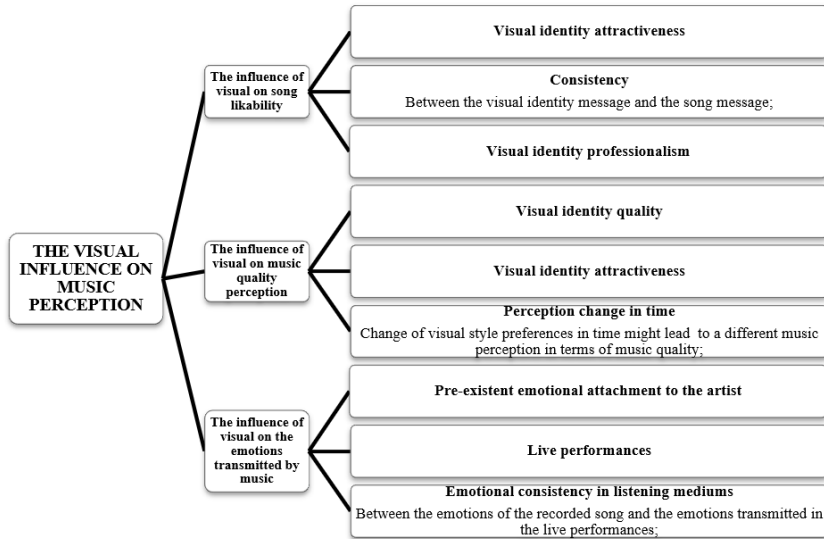
The opinions of the experts are more complicated when taking into account the impact that the image and the various visual aspects have on the feelings that are evoked while music is being listened to. It is noticeable that many professionals are of the opinion that the visual may amplify the feelings that are expressed through music. This is particularly the case in situations in which the degree of emotional connection with the artists and feeling like they are relatable are already strong. At times, *“people are keen on artists that reflect either who they are or who they want to be; it can help connecting to the music's emotions more”* (R14) and maybe experience those feelings more intensely. At the same time, in some cases, the professionals think that graphic elements can impact the amplitude of feelings much stronger in terms of video and live music performances, than the situations when people are consuming music on their own devices, such as the radio or smartphones: *“They are useful in conveying the artist's message; colors of music videos help convey dispositions, same when performing - stage setup, outfits etc.”* (R11). People may lose faith that the feelings that an artist expresses via their music are genuine if the feelings that are depicted physically or through a visually revealed story do not align with the emotions that are conveyed through their music.

The experts believe that the emotions that are communicated through branding and brand communication, which implicitly includes the use of visual materials, should be synchronized with the feelings that are communicated through music, just as they did when discussing the influence that other factors have (Figure 17). Some music artists might *“turn to specialists in order to combine, to synchronize these elements harmoniously”* (R7). Visually expressing emotions may be done most powerfully through the following aspects and channels: photos, video content, vlogs, social networking platforms, physical presence, and personal appearances: *“Obviously, the role of the visuals, videos, and storytelling, is to augment the music. These elements heighten the music's message, and you can get a thorough experience of that art. It is one thing when you just listen to the song and something different when you also see a video or pictures. The latter show you the artist's vision and help you understand the proposed emotion and message”* (R6).

Figure 17. *The influence of visual elements on emotions in the music industry according to the specialists*



The function that visual stimuli play in the music business is mapped out in an organized fashion in Figure 18. It is underlined that visual aspects are able to have a constant influence on the likeability of a song, the quality of music, and emotional responses, as perceived by music listeners.

Figure 18. *An overview on the visual influence on music perception according to the specialists*

5.1.4 Discussions and conclusions on the interview

An in-depth investigation into how people who work in the music business think about things like success and branding, as well as the role that visual aspects play in the industry, is the goal of these interviews. The data obtained conducting these semi-structured interviews showed that concepts such as music industry success, are debatable and versatile and are affected by a wide range of variables. In a similar manner, although the concept of good music is highly subjective, it is possible that it can primarily be recognized by originality, a powerful emotional resonance, and an appealing melody. Experts assert that visual stimuli can in fact have an effect on how songs are appreciated, the perceived quality of music, and emotions; however, these effects can be influenced by specific settings, as branding can help differentiate products in the market and imply a sense of authenticity.

The first research question (**RQ1**) addresses the challenges that musicians commonly face when seeking to define what constitutes success in the music

industry. According to the available data, there are two aspects to musical accomplishment. First, experts discuss commercial success. They hold the belief that monetary gains, increases in the number of listeners, and awards or public acclaim are all quantitative measures of an artist's level of commercial success. In addition to this, they stress the need of a strong advertising package as well as the professionalism with which artists respect promotional processes and break into the market as key markers of economic success. Second, it is often held that success in the music industry may be achieved on a personal as well as a creative level, and that it is denoted by a high degree of authenticity and uniqueness, in addition to reaching one's intended audience and cultivating a devoted following of listeners. The findings are consistent with previous research that says that "making it" in the business field, particularly through branding, has a multitude of facets, and that success may be defined in a variety of ways (Landa, 2006; Aaker, 2014; Beeching, 2010).

While discussing the challenges that artists have when attempting to break into the market, there are two points of view that need to be stressed. On the one hand, there is the common issue of money, which arises from the fact that it takes financial resources to create and promote music and identity. In addition, the oversaturation of the market makes it incredibly difficult to entice individuals to purchase products or services. Whether they are technical, financial, or addressing the market entry, the challenges that can arise during the process of building a music brand need to be taken into consideration from the very beginning of the process. This is supported by the research that has been conducted previously (Rogers, 2013; Haynes & Marshall, 2018). Therefore, artists have a responsibility to be conscious of the fact that these challenges will continue to hinder their efforts to achieve success. The interviews, on the other hand, provide an emphasis on the particular personal problems that characterize today's emerging artists. In order to achieve success, one must first acknowledge the reality that one's music, regardless of how good it may be in the eyes of the listeners, is not always enough to stand out and dominate in the music industry. One must also acknowledge the fact that the path is difficult and requires perseverance in order to achieve success.

The significance of branding is analyzed, as well as the proper method for putting them into practice, in the second research question (**RQ2**). According to industry professionals, branding is essential due to the fact that it enables distinction, memorability, and clarity in the market. Whether they want it or not, those who perform in public are automatically labeled brands in the eyes of the people. On the other hand, they have the freedom to choose the manner in which they interact with the general public as well as the tone and course of their marketing and communication efforts. It is necessary to strike a balance between the process of building a brand identity and keeping an artist authentic and free from a creative point of view in order to stop the promotional processes from having an effect on the music product. This will prevent the creative product from being distorted. The literature and recent perspectives of professionals provide support for the applicability and benefits of branding in the music industry. A notable focus is placed on the components of memorability and clarity (Morris, 2015; Meier, 2017, Lieb, 2018).

The third research question focuses on the impact that a musician's or band's visual identity has on listeners' perceptions of the song's likeability, perceived level of quality, and emotions elicited by the music (**RQ3**). To begin, in terms of a song's overall appeal, it is said that if elements such as tonality and personality of the visual elements are consistent with the songs, then they are successful in enhancing the music and increasing the appreciation that listeners have for it. This, however, is not something that can be guaranteed 100% of the time due to the complexity and subjectivity of both individuals and the artistic world. If the music is already characterized by a high degree of audience acclaim, the inequality between how the artist is presented from an affective or personality standpoint and what the music symbolizes is typically balanced out. The influence of visuals on the likeability of a song has also been validated by experimental studies (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Ellis, 2013), and the findings from the present study indicates particular information connected to brands and branding in the music industry.

Second, a lack of quality visuals may discourage viewers from checking out the music of an artist or even influence their opinion of how good the music is, as shown by a number of experts. On the other side, there is a possibility

that people will have a predisposition to connect music with a higher degree of quality if the song and the performer are presented in a nice manner. This is due to the fact that they have a tendency to be biased and extrapolate the positive aspects of advertising and marketing into their understanding of the music. Another hypothesis that provides evidence for this occurrence is the Halo Effect Idea (Thorndike, 1920; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), that states that a brand image may be influenced by a prior evaluation of other qualities of the same brand. The way in which music is perceived may be altered by a number of elements, which can occasionally function in a longitudinal fashion. Furthermore, the visual influence on perceived quality might shift over time as a result of listeners' psychological changes.

In conclusion, specialists believe that visual elements or stimuli have the potential to affect emotions and emotional connection. Having said that, additional circumstances are being brought to light. In the case of an already existing and powerful emotional connection to the artist, brand marketing techniques and visual presentations have a stronger probability of boosting the emotional experience of listening to music. According to research on the effects of visual stimuli, it is also believed that such an emotional response occurs more frequently when the public is exposed to the music performer, such as in videos and live concerts and performances (Moore, 2010). Additionally, whether the artists are physically present or not during the listening experience, it is encouraged that the discourse, the personality, and the behavior must match what they express through the lyrics and what the music emotionally represents. If this is not the case, viewers may have a different opinion on the sincerity and authenticity of the artists. This influence of consistency is supported both theoretically and experimentally by the research, which claims that the emotions, qualities, or values utilized in branding and brand communication need to correspond either with those that are anticipated or with the product (Trevor & Plazak, 2016; De Chernatony, 2010; Turri, Smith & Kemp, 2013; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009).

The current research chapter not only helps in bridging the gap in the literature by addressing the issue of visual identity significance in the field of modern music, but it also has significant business ramifications. The data from the interviews provides a succinct but thorough assessment of the key components that music industry professionals should take into account

while creating a solid and enduring music performer image. The variety of experts consulted through the semi-structured interviews, covering a variety of music and music communication branches, is what gives this research part its strength. At the geographical level, there are no major deviations in what concerns the answers of the specialists, but rather the differences are found at the individual level. However, it could be observed that at the level of foreign respondents, the answers were more concise, more practical, using more specific terminology. When it comes to the specialists living in Romania, a good part of the respondents offered sociological perspectives, but although they did not always use the specific terminology used in promotion in the music industry, they went deeper to explain some phenomena.

As previously mentioned and supported by the literature, the diversity of respondents' jobs in the industry is a realistic feature of the industry, where needs are flexible and constantly changing, where the industry workers have to continuously adapt, where work is not conventional and where the daily tasks change on a constant basis. In addition, geographical diversity does not represent a bias or an impediment, because a large part of the work activities take place online with artists from multiple geographical areas, and no questions related to culture, local industry or specific artists have been addressed to the specialists. These experts include music producers, A&R executives, artist managers, music webpage designers, radio directors, music journalists, music consultants, artistic career coaches, or music video producers. Moreover, the information gathered from the interviews can provide other communication experts as well as the artists themselves with some guidelines, details, and understandings on how visuals affect how music is perceived in the present-day setting. The information may be used to create communication plans that are both successful and respectful of the music product.

Subjectivism presents a risk in the interviews-based research when using a qualitative methodology, but, if it is properly acknowledged and approached, does not affect the validity of such research efforts (Kvale, 1994; Ratner, 2002). An objective viewpoint has been provided, nonetheless, by continually focusing on factors that the theory has previously addressed and on ongoing confirmation of the findings with the body of existing research.

Additionally, due to scheduling and geographic limitations, it was not possible to completely respect a clear direction on the respondents' jobs in the music business when contacting them. This disadvantage's benefit manifests in the great degree of replies' diversity, in accordance with prior diverse experiences. Additionally, by conducting more interviews, the findings are able to include perspectives that may not have been covered previously and will make an even better argument.

The current research chapter was constructed on the basis of specialized literature. This literature was then improved and refined through interview discussions with professionals who operate in different fields related to the modern music industry. As a consequence of this, when viewed from the perspective of the other research endeavors that have been undertaken for this thesis, the data that has been gathered may serve as a supplement for the operationalization of variables and the understanding of influence processes in music promotion and music branding communication fields. The concepts that have been discussed can also be developed further to create additional experimental designs that demonstrate a causal relationship between the utilization of visual stimuli and musical perception in both natural and controlled settings.

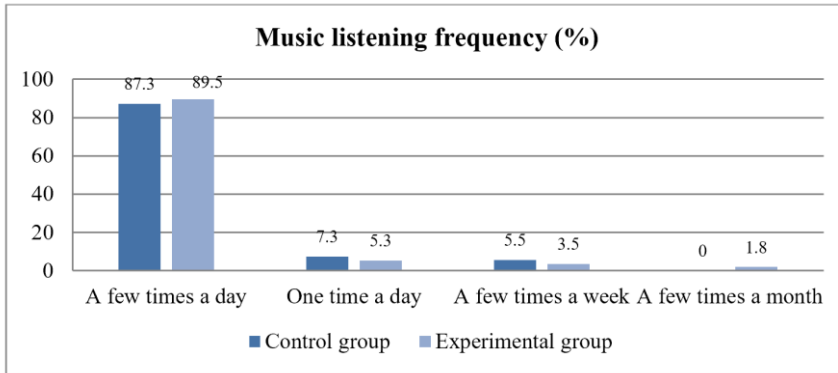
5.2 Results for the experiment

5.2.1 Experiment 1

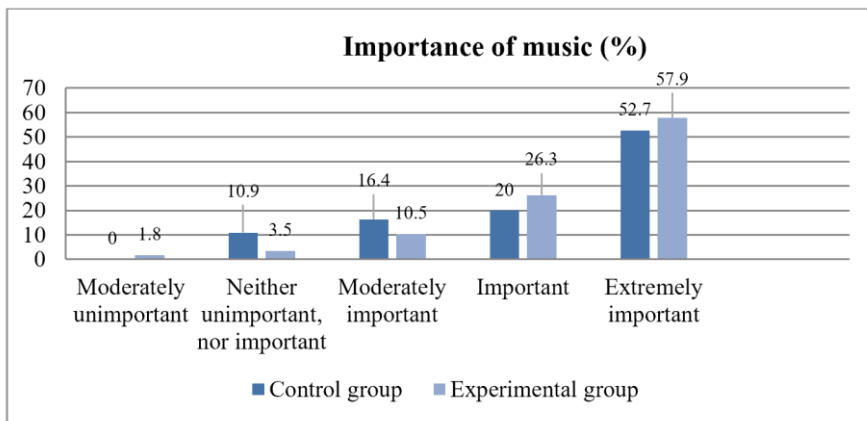
5.2.1.1 Descriptive analysis

An overview on the actual behavior

One of the first questions that the respondents were asked concerned the time that they spent when listening to music (Figure 19). It is clear that the two groups are quite comparable with regard to this particular aspect, as approximately ninety percent of those polled stated that they listen to music on a regular basis.

Figure 19. *Music listening frequency for Experiment 1*

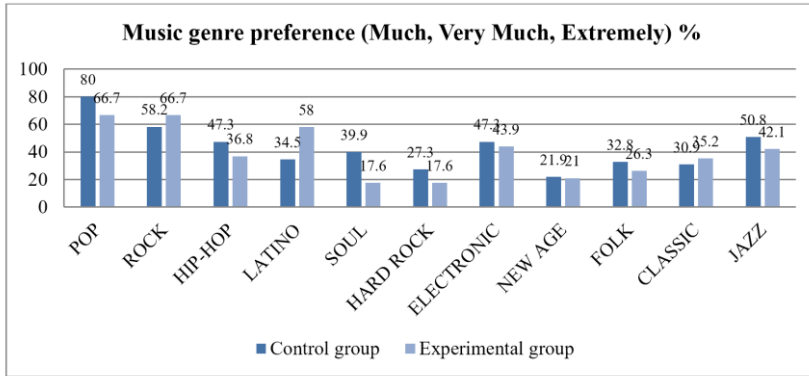
More than thirty percent of respondents from both groups rated music's significance in their lives as important or moderately important (Figure 20), and more than fifty percent of respondents from both groups rated music's significance in their lives as extremely important.

Figure 20. *Importance of music for Experiment 1*

In order to shed light on the musical tastes of the respondents, the responses from the more favorable items of the scale (much, very much and extremely) are compiled (Figure 21). According to this estimate, pop music is the category that is preferred more by both of these groups. When it comes to

latino music and soul music, there are significant variances between different groups, yet there is a diverse range of interests overall.

Figure 21. *Music genre preference for Experiment 1*



Concerning a general emotional attachment to music (Table 18), more than seventy-five percent of the respondents from both groups believe that they have an emotional attachment that ranges from moderately positive to strongly positive, and more than sixty percent of the total responses fall into the categories of positive and strongly positive.

Table 18. *General emotional attachment to music for Experiment 1*

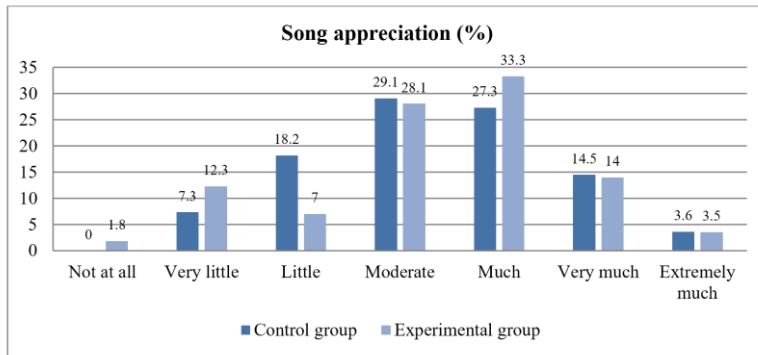
	Moderately negative	Neither negative nor positive	Moderately positive	Positive	Strongly positive
Control group	0%	23.6%	12.7%	38.2%	25.5%
Experimental group	1.8%	8.8%	21.1%	24.6%	43.9%

An overview on the attitude towards the song used in the experiment

In relation to the appreciation of music (Figure 22), it is interesting to notice that the distribution of responses between groups is quite consistent, with the exception of the categories *Little* and *Much*. A percentage of 18.2% of respondents from the control group gave the music a rating of *Little*

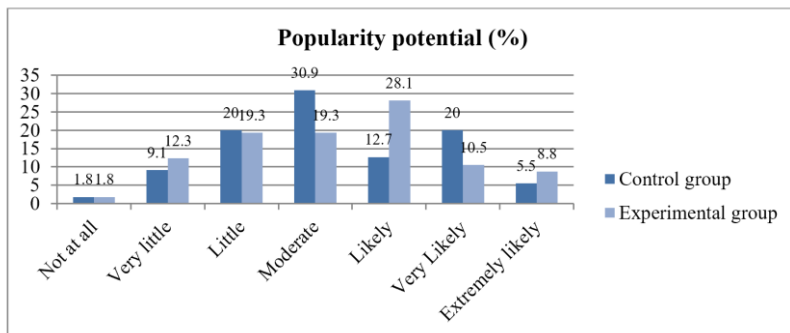
admiration, but only 7% of respondents in the experimental group indicated this response while rating the song. On the other hand, 33.3% of respondents from the experimental group enjoy the song *Much* whereas only 27.3% of respondents from the control group do so.

Figure 22. *Song appreciation for Experiment 1*



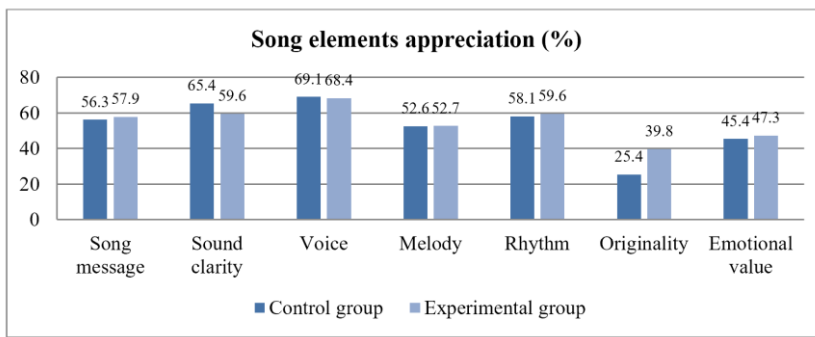
When taking into consideration the popularity potential that the respondents believe the song to have (Figure 23), and then adding the percentages of the positive aspects of the scale (*Likely*, *Very Likely*, and *Extremely Likely*), it can be observed that there is a gain in the experimental group. While only 38.2% of respondents from the control group selected these positive options on the scale, 47.4% of respondents from the experimental group did so.

Figure 23. *Popularity potential for Experiment 1*



The responses towards *Much*, *Very Much*, and *Extremely Much* were added together in order to get a view over the positive appreciation changes, and then a graph was generated using this data from both groups (Figure 24). Except for the response count on the *Originality* item, which shows that the experimental group has 14.4% more positive responses than the control group does, there were no other significant differences identified between the groups. When the stimuli are applied, the result is that a greater number of respondents believe that the music possesses a high degree of originality.

Figure 24. Song elements appreciation for Experiment 1

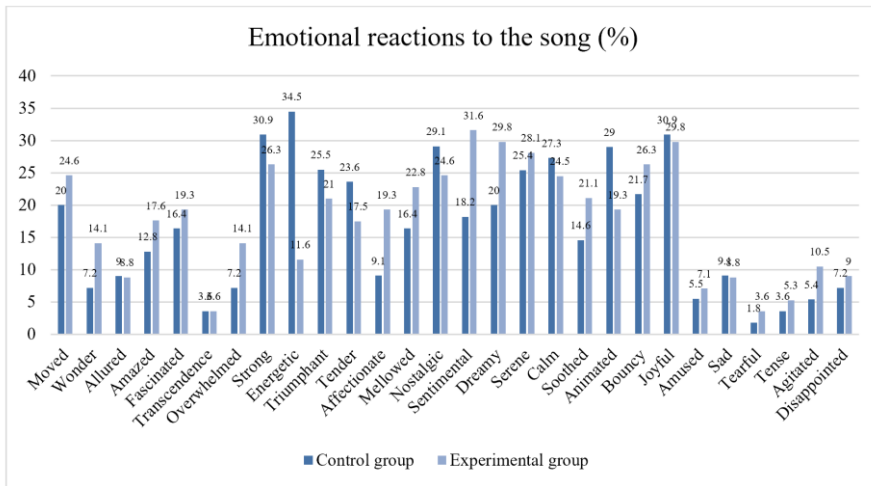


An overview on the emotions felt regarding the song used in the experiment

In the same manner as with the song characteristics, the most positive end of the scale was considered for the analysis of feelings (Figure 25). There are around four percent more responses received from the experimental groups in the categories of *Moved* and *Fascinated*. The presence of stimuli demonstrates a decline in the impression of feeling *Strong* after listening to the music, since there are more responses from the control group than from the experimental group itself. The control group reported feeling more *Tenderness* and *Nostalgia* than the experimental group by around an extra average of 5 percent in each category; however, the experimental group reported feeling more *Serene*. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the groups, albeit a difference that is less than three percent.

Results

Figure 25. Emotional reactions for Experiment 1



In the experimental group, there is a discernible decline of around 10 percentage points in all of the categories when looking at *Animated*, *Sad*, and *Tense*. Despite the fact that the stimuli are causing the respondents to feel less *Animated*, they report feeling fewer negative emotions after listening to the song, namely in the categories of *Sadness* and *Tension*. The *Bouncy*, *Wonder*, and *Sentimental* categories have all experienced considerable increases in the perceived intensity. Although there are a few more responses from the experimental group who feel *Bouncy* than there are from the control group, there is a more noticeable increase in the strength of the same group's feelings of *Wonder* and *Sentimental*. After the stimuli were presented, ten percent more of the respondents reported feeling *Affectionate*. It would appear that the stimuli were successful in lessening the feelings of *Overwhelmed* and *Agitated*. This is evidenced by the fact that less respondents in the experimental group chose high values for these two feelings. The experience of transcendence was unaffected by any alterations. The group in which no stimuli are introduced, on the other hand, reports somewhat increased levels of calmness and joy, but to a very little degree.

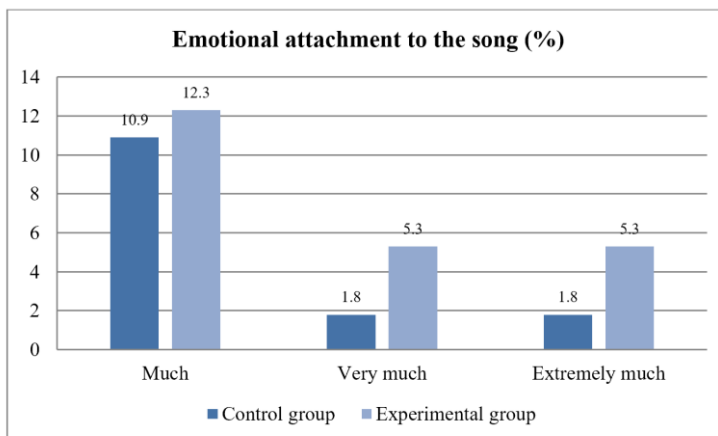
The *Tearful* and *Energetic* emotions both experience a reduction in their intensity as a result of the introduction of stimuli, with the *Tearful* emotion experiencing a little larger shift than the *Energetic* feeling. Even though these stimuli might make people feel slightly less *Calm*, as was previously

observed, it is now apparent that the intensity of the experience of being *Soothed* increases. A greater proportion of respondents from the experimental group thought that the song makes them experience the feelings of *Dreamy* and *Mellow* to a greater extent than those from the control group did so. The variations in high scores between the experimental and control groups are minor in the *Allured* category. The experimental group had just a 0.2% lower percentage of high scores than the control group.

There are minor variations in the responses provided by each group for the remaining four categories, but they are distinguishable from one another. Although the feelings of *Triumphant* and *Disappointed*, when experienced at a high intensity are felt a little less after the introduction of stimulus, the feelings of *Amused* and *Amazed*, when experienced at a high intensity, are felt a little more after the application of the visual stimuli.

At the positive points of the scale that measures the emotional attachment to the song (Figure 26), it can be seen that in both the *Very much* category and in the *Extremely much* category, 3.5% more answers were obtained in the experimental group compared to the control sample. The good tendency is likewise brought to light in *Much*, despite the fact that the gap between it and the control group is significantly narrower at 1.4%.

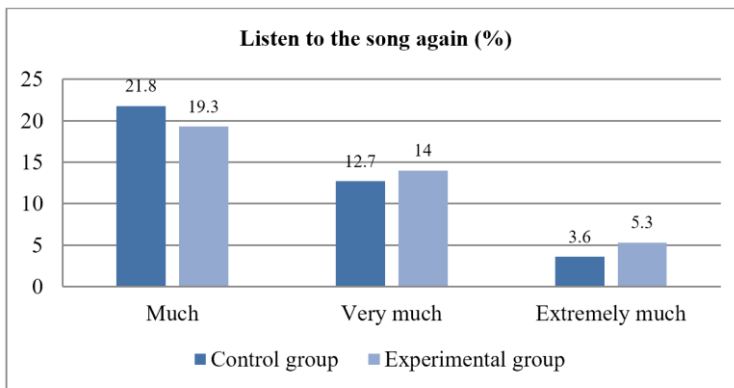
Figure 26. Emotional attachment to the song for Experiment 1



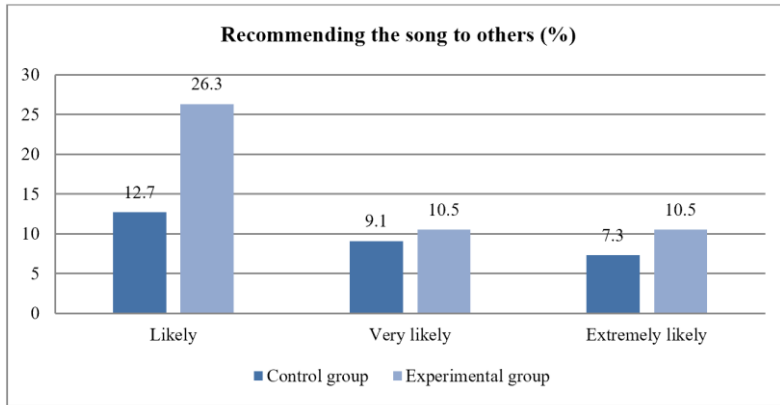
An overview on the intentional behavior regarding the song used in the experiment

Both the willingness to relisten to the song (Figure 27) as well as the willingness to recommend it to other people (Figure 28) are taken into consideration when analyzing intentional behavior. When looking at the points that are on the plus side of the scale, it can be seen that when it comes to the variable *Listening to music again* there are some variances, but they are not significant. There are more people in the control group who chose *Much*, answers that could have migrated to higher rating items where increases are already observed, in light of the fact that the number of respondents who selected *Very much* and *Extremely much* being slightly higher in the case of the experimental group than it is in the case of the control group.

Figure 27. Song relistening potential for Experiment 1



Across all three of the scale's positive criteria, the experimental group received a greater number of responses from people saying they would recommend the song to others. Even if the gains in *Very likely* and *Extremely likely* are slightly smaller, the increase in *Likely* is 13.6%.

Figure 28. *Recommending the song potential for Experiment 1*

5.2.1.2 Correlation analysis

Based on the descriptive analysis above, the present part of the paper aims to offer an overview of the correlations with reference to the hypotheses in order to highlight some potential links and trends between the variables and to test these assumptions.

The correlation of the presence of visual stimuli with the attitude on the song

The participants were asked to rate their level of appreciation of the song after listening to it. Although the responses are varied, most of them fall on the positive scale items, indicating that they generally liked the music. The distribution of the groups is comparable as well. Comparing the experimental group to the control group, there is a minor improvement in the experimental group's perception of the song's likeability (50.8% versus 45.4%). Regarding the song's particular elements, a similar trend is seen. Overall, more than half of the participants in all groups like those characteristics much, very much, or extremely much. Even though different results were anticipated, there is not much of a difference between the experimental group and the control group. Following an Independent Samples T-test, the presence or absence of a visual stimulus had no

discernible effects on attitudes towards the song the participants listened to ($t(110)=-.022, p=.983$), attitudes towards the elements that constitute the song ($t(110)=.166, p=.868$), or the possibility of becoming popular ($t(110)=-.031, p=.976$). In light of these data, the first hypothesis (**H1**) which states that *a song accompanied by visual branding stimuli, in comparison with the lack of them, determines a more positive opinion (H1a) on the song and (H1b) on the elements of the song.* has been invalidated.

In terms of other correlations between the various song elements, some useful data can be observed (Table 19). Thus, the likelihood that a song will become popular ($r=.617, p<.01$), its originality ($r=.630, p<.01$), and its melody ($r=.616, p<.01$), are all substantially, positively, and strongly connected with total song appreciation. All of the song's elements have meaningful relationships, with rhythm and melody having the strongest one ($r=.800, p<.01$). As a result, it can be said that all of these song's components are interdependent, and this allows for additional study.

Table 19. Correlation matrix for the presence of visual stimuli with the attitude towards the song

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Condition	1								
2. Song appreciation	.002	1							
3. Message	-.065	.535**	1						
4. Sound clarity	.025	.523**	.583**	1					
5. Voice	-.002	.569**	.505**	.565**	1				
6. Melody	-.076	.616**	.507**	.463**	.720**	1			
7. Rhythm	-.039	.593**	.485**	.513**	.649**	.800**	1		
8. Originality	.131	.630**	.500**	.398**	.533**	.608**	.601**	1	
9. Popularity potential	.003	.617**	.418**	.253**	.431**	.435**	.368**	.501**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

The correlation of the presence of visual brand stimuli with the emotional response and emotional attachment to the song

Data indicates that some emotions have been experienced to a greater extent than others on an emotional level. The respondents generally report feeling strong, energetic, and joyous after listening to the music, as well as nostalgic, emotional, dreamy, or serene.

Results

There are few distinctions between the experimental group and the control group in terms of the correlation between the visual stimulus and the emotion variables. An Independent Sample T-test revealed that there are just three areas where there are significant differences between the groups: wonder level ($t(110)=-2.346$, $p=.021$), tension ($t(110)=2.155$, $p=.033$), and tenderness ($t(110)=-2.479$, $p=.015$). The significance of the associations between the presence or absence of visual components prior to listening to the song and the aforementioned emotions is moderate (Table 20). In comparison to the control group, people who see the visual components express a higher level of the wonder feeling ($r=.218$, $p<.05$) and tenderness ($r=.230$, $p<.05$), but a lower tension level ($r=-.201$, $p<.05$) in relation with the experimental song.

In addition, 22.9% of the individuals in the experimental group and 14.5% of the respondents in the control group both express a significant emotional attachment to the music. However, no statistically significant difference between groups can be identified ($t(110)=-.346$, $p=.730$). Also, it seems that wonder, transcendence, power, tenderness, and nostalgia are considerably and moderately to strongly connected with the emotional attachment.

Table 20. Correlation matrix for the presence of visual brand stimuli with the emotional effect and attachment to the song

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Condition	1												
2. Wonder	.218*	1											
3. Transcendence	.180	.769**	1										
4. Power	.076	.680**	.611**	1									
5. Tenderness	.230*	.719**	.703**	.505**	1								
6. Nostalgia	.113	.598**	.677**	.534**	.774**	1							
7. Peacefulness	.092	.622**	.682**	.535**	.651**	.599**	1						
8. Joyful Activation	.078	.625**	.578**	.782**	.551**	.419**	.644**	1					
9. Sadness	-.170	-.501**	-.405**	-.211*	-.529**	-.425**	-.353**	-.298**	1				
10. Tension	-.201*	-.463**	-.393**	-.296**	-.457**	-.258**	-.191*	-.420**	.623**	1			
11. Overwhelmed	-.183	-.615**	-.623**	-.317**	-.693**	-.519**	-.451**	-.383**	.570**	.541**	1		
12. Disappointment	-.098	-.148	-.039	.017	-.138	-.027	-.053	-.057	.308**	.406**	.212*	1	
13. Emotional attachment	.033	.538**	.584**	.542**	.588**	.572**	.424**	.423**	-.171	-.221*	-.475**	.028	1

Note: * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

The abovementioned results suggest that the second hypothesis (**H2**) which states that *a song accompanied by visual branding stimuli, in comparison with the lack of them, determines a more positive (H2a) emotional reaction and (H2b) emotional attachment* is only partially validated. Only weak relationships

between the two groups' emotional responses to the music have been found, therefore, additional research under more regulated experimental circumstances is required.

The correlation of the presence of visual stimuli with the intentional behavior

Both willing to listen again to the song and wanting to recommend it are examined by the intentional behavior variables. A significant or very high percentage of individuals (about 38%), whether or not they view the visual elements, want to listen to the song again. The difference is greater when it comes to recommending the song to others. 47.3% of the experimental group would exhibit the same behavior, compared to 29.1% of the control sample who are likely to do so. However, neither the intention to play the music again ($t(110)=.062, p=.950$) nor the intention to recommend it to other people ($t(110)=-1.349, p=.180$) show any discernible differences between the two groups. Additionally, there is no discernible relationship between the presence or absence of visual stimuli and the intentional behavior (Table 21). However, a substantial correlation exists between the desire to give the song another listen and to recommend it to other people ($r=.826, p<.01$).

Table 21. *Correlation matrix for the presence of visual stimuli with the intentional behavior*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Listen again	-.006	1	
3. Recommend to others	.128	.826**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

In light of these results, the hypothesis (**H3**) which states that *a song accompanied by visual branding stimuli, in comparison with the lack of them, increases (H3a) the intention to listen to the song again and (H3b) the willingness to recommend the song* is invalidated. Reasons and interpretations can be based on the circumstances in which the experiment was conducted. Because the experiment was conducted online, there was little control over the respondents' actions, and it is not sure if they managed to pay attention to the song and the stimulus as long as intended.

The relationship between the presence of visual stimuli and the attitude, the emotions, and the planned behavior

A series of linear regressions have been carried out with the goal of identifying causal links between independent and dependent variables. The bivariate regression analysis is summarized in the table below (Table 22). Even while there are some important relationships, the data unfortunately prevent us from referring to strong relationships. The presence of visual stimuli has no discernible impact on how a listener feels about the song or the song's elements. The presence of visuals has a significant impact on three types of sentiments (wonder, tenderness, and tension) in terms of emotional responses. The strength of the correlations between the variables is, however, almost nonexistent. The findings also show that the presence or absence of visual branding items has no discernible impact on the emotional connection to the song. A similar conclusion may be taken for the song relistening intention and the intention to recommend the music to people due to the lack of a meaningful relationship.

Table 22. Regression analysis

		Independent variable (the presence/non-existence of visual stimulus)	
Dependent variables	Song appreciation		$F(1, 112)=.000, p=.983, R^2=.000, \beta=.002$
	Elements' appreciation		$F(1, 112)=.028, p=.868, R^2=.000, \beta=-.016$
	Emotional reaction	wonder	$F(1, 112)=5.503, p=.021, R^2=.048, \beta=.218$
		transcendence	$F(1, 112)=3.688, p=.057, R^2=.032, \beta=-.180$
		overwhelmed	$F(1, 112)=3.826, p=.053, R^2=.034, \beta=-.183$
		power	$F(1, 112)=.634, p=.428, R^2=.006, \beta=.076$
		tenderness	$F(1, 112)=6.148, p=.015, R^2=.053, \beta=.230$
		nostalgia	$F(1, 112)=1.418, p=.236, R^2=.013, \beta=.113$
		peacefulness	$F(1, 112)=.936, p=.335, R^2=.008, \beta=.092$
		joyful activation	$F(1, 112)=.672, p=.414, R^2=.006, \beta=.078$
		sadness	$F(1, 112)=3.276, p=.063, R^2=.029, \beta=-.170$
		tension	$F(1, 112)=4.644, p=.033, R^2=.041, \beta=-.201$
		disappointment	$F(1, 112)=1.067, p=.304, R^2=.010, \beta=-.098$
	Emotional attachment		$F(1, 112)=.120, p=.730, R^2=.001, \beta=.033$
	Listen again		$F(1, 112)=.004, p=.950, R^2=.000, \beta=-.006$
	Recommend to others		$F(1, 112)=1.821, p=.180, R^2=.016, \beta=.128$

The effect of actual behavior on the attitude, the emotions, and the intentional behavior

The following part investigates the actual behavior of the participants for observing any links between the presence or absence of visual elements and attitude, emotional reactions, and intentional behavior towards the song (music listening frequency, music importance, pop genre preference). The control group and the experimental group are compared in this regard during the analysis.

The participants in the two groups exhibit similar attitudes in terms of the song (overall appreciation, potential for popularity, and appreciation of the song's particular elements) (Table 23; Table 24).

As anticipated, there is a moderate correlation between the importance of music and music listening frequency, indicating that the more significant the music is to an individual, the more often they will listen to it ($r_{CG} = -.424$, $p < .01$; $r_{EG} = -.418$, $p < .01$). In the same manner, while the element of popularity probability or potential is notably linked with the element of song appreciation ($r_{CG} = .612$, $p < .01$; $r_{EG} = .622$, $p < .01$), the particular appreciation of songs' elements is notably correlated with the general song appreciation ($r_{CG} = .799$, $p < .01$; $r_{EG} = .667$, $p < .01$) and popularity potential ($r_{CG} = .624$, $p < .01$; $r_{EG} = .441$, $p < .01$).

Despite these correlations, no significant or notable link between actual behavior and the overall attitude towards the song or the song's particular elements could be observed. Therefore, the **H4a** sub-hypothesis (*When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, the actual opinion on music is positively correlated with the attitude to the song*) is invalidated.

Table 23. Correlation matrix for the actual behavior with the attitude towards the song (Control group)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Frequency of listening to music	1				
2. Importance of music	-.424**	1			
3. Preference for POP	-.067	.196	1		
4. Song appreciation	-.042	.157	.125	1	
5. Popularity potential	-.237	.179	-.028	.612**	1
6. Elements' appreciation	-.105	.259	.258	.799**	.624**

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 24. Correlation matrix for the actual behavior with the attitude towards the song (Experimental group)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Frequency of listening to music	1				
2. Importance of music	-.418**	1			
3. Preference for POP	-.172	.231	1		
4. Song appreciation	-.196	-.028	.127	1	
5. Popularity potential	-.157	.085	-.011	.622**	1
6. Elements' appreciation	-.213	.031	.211	.667**	.441**

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Results

When comparing the relationship between actual behavior and emotional responses and overall attachment to the song, the same parallels can be seen (Table 25; Table 26). There are no appreciable relationships between these factors, despite what could be predicted. The control group is an exception, as listening to music more frequently results in individuals feeling less sad about the song they are listening to ($r_{CG} = -.391, p < .01$). The liking for pop music and the joyful activation, however, are only weakly correlated ($r_{CG} = .276, p < .01$), and only in the control group. Without visual information, it indicates that the more one enjoys listening to the song, the more they favor pop music.

Table 25. Correlation matrix for the actual behavior with the emotional attachment and reactions (Control group)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Frequency of listening	1														
2. Importance of music	-.424**	1													
3. Preference for POP music	-.067	.196	1												
4. Emotional attachment	-.011	-.135	.165	1											
5. Wonder	.001	.009	.082	.683**	1										
6. Transcendence	-.041	-.035	.083	.601**	.846**	1									
7. Power	-.008	.069	.265	.632**	.643**	.656**	1								
8. Tenderness	.047	.014	.099	.577**	.677**	.645**	.497**	1							
9. Nostalgia	-.055	.070	.247	.515**	.523**	.496**	.477**	.682**	1						
10. Peacefulness	-.027	.151	.174	.433**	.634**	.684**	.553**	.683**	.575**	1					
11. Joyful Activation	-.045	.082	.276*	.513**	.592**	.646**	.843**	.550**	.371**	.649**	1				
12. Sadness	-.391**	.165	.186	-.152	-.434**	-.366**	-.067	-.489**	-.311*	-.381**	-.169	1			
13. Tension	-.219	.128	.057	-.292*	-.427**	-.490**	-.235	-.544**	-.256	-.273*	-.394**	.567**	1		
14. Overwhelmed	-.045	.018	.040	-.431**	-.729**	-.697**	-.394**	-.672**	-.351**	-.570**	-.449**	.518**	.605**	1	
15. Disappointed	-.194	.215	.090	-.109	-.010	.094	.074	-.058	.077	.127	.062	.109	.230	.144	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 26. Correlation matrix for the actual behavior with the emotional attachment and reactions (Experimental group)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Frequency of listening	1														
2. Importance of music	-.418**	1													
3. Preference for POP music	-.172	.231	1												
4. Emotional attachment	-.133	.172	-.088	1											
5. Wonder	-.093	-.065	-.024	.429**	1										
6. Transcendence	-.124	.033	.060	.582**	.670**	1									
7. Power	-.031	-.060	-.019	.470**	.731**	.559**	1								
8. Tenderness	-.135	.049	-.043	.613**	.736**	.733**	.518**	1							
9. Nostalgia	-.059	.040	.016	.612**	.616**	.821**	.596**	.843**	1						
10. Peacefulness	-.173	-.035	-.032	.424**	.602**	.678**	.504**	.628**	.630**	1					
11. Joyful Activation	-.035	-.205	-.188	.347**	.663**	.502**	.706**	.552**	.458**	.633**	1				
12. Sadness	-.022	.045	.185	-.178	-.534**	-.406**	-.333*	-.527**	-.483**	-.322**	-.386**	1			
13. Tension	.089	-.063	.098	-.167	-.454**	-.271*	-.346**	-.346**	-.232	-.086	-.436**	.640**	1		
14. Overwhelmed	.074	-.071	.052	-.509**	-.497**	-.545**	-.238	-.687**	-.619**	-.339**	-.320*	.580**	.467**	1	
15. Disappointed	.015	.080	-.111	.146	-.255	-.134	-.030	-.189	-.092	-.237	-.164	.443**	.535**	.242	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The information indicates that there are no significant differences between the two groups after the introduction of stimuli. Consequently, it can be

stated that the sub-hypothesis **H4b** (*When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, the actual opinion on music is positively correlated with the emotions*) is invalidated.

The intentional behavior (relistening and recommending) is finally connected with the actual behavior (Table 27; Table 28). Replaying the song and recommending it to other people are positively and quite strongly correlated. Additionally, this link is stronger when visual images are employed ($r_{CG}=.772$, $p<.01$; $r_{EG}=.889$, $p<.01$), indicating that visual cues can increase listeners' desire to share a music with others even when they already want to hear it again. However, there is no discernible increase when attaching visual elements to a song because all correlations between actual opinion or behavior and intentional or planned behavior display no significance. Accordingly, it can be stated that the sub-hypothesis **H4c** (*When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, the actual opinion on music is positively correlated with the planned behavior*), is invalidated.

Table 27. Correlation matrix for the actual behavior with the intentional behavior (Control group)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Frequency of listening to music	1				
2. Importance of music	-.424**	1			
3. Preference for POP music	-.067	.196	1		
4. Listen again	-.128	.130	.157	1	
5. Recommend to others	-.096	.208	.127	.772**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Table 28. Correlation matrix for the actual behavior with the intentional behavior (Experimental group)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Frequency of listening to music	1				
2. Importance of music	-.418**	1			
3. Preference for POP music	-.172	.231	1		
4. Listen again	-.039	-.047	.034	1	
5. Recommend to others	-.217	.085	.000	.889**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

The relationship between the attitude on the song and the planned behavior

By adding stimuli, the already positive and observable statistical relationships between attitude with regards to the song (overall song appreciation, popularity possibility or potential, and appreciation of particular song constituent elements) and the planned or intentional behavior (listen to the music again and recommending it) become even stronger (Table 29, Table 30), but only when analyzing the attitude in terms of the general song appreciation, and not in the case of particular song elements' appreciation. As an example, once the stimuli are incorporated, the correlation of song appreciation and the intention of song relistening rises

from $r_{CG}=.707, p<.01$ to $r_{EG}=.816, p<.01$. The association between intentional behavior and the attitude towards the song's elements is weaker when visual inputs are present. Thus, the fifth hypothesis (**H5**: *When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, in comparison with the situation in which they are missing, the relationship between the attitude to the song and the planned behavior is greater*) is only partially validated.

Table 29. Correlation matrix for the attitude towards the song with the intentional behavior (Control group)

	1	2	3	4
1. Song appreciation	1			
2. Popularity potential	.612**	1		
3. Elements' appreciation	.799**	.624**	1	
4. Listen again	.707**	.678**	.733**	1
5. Recommend to others	.783**	.716**	.722**	.772**

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Table 30. Correlation matrix for the attitude towards the song with the intentional behavior (Experimental group)

	1	2	3	4
1. Song appreciation	1			
2. Popularity potential	.622**	1		
3. Elements' appreciation	.667**	.441**	1	
4. Listen again	.816**	.692**	.574**	1
5. Recommend to others	.798**	.740**	.549**	.889**

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

The relationship between the emotional reaction and the intentional behavior

Data demonstrate that the correlation between emotional attachment and the intentional behavior (willing to relisten – $r_{EG}=.745, p<.01$ and recommending the song – $r_{EG}=.803, p<.01$) is higher for the control sample (willing to relisten – $r_{CG}=.713, p<.01$; recommending the song – $r_{CG}=.576, p<.01$). This shows that as the self-assessed attachment towards a song grows deeper as well, visual stimuli intensify the willingness to listen again and to recommend it to other people (Table 31; Table 32). Visual stimuli were only occasionally able to intensify intentional behavior in relation to certain emotions. Compared to the control group, the desire to listen to the music again is more strongly connected with the emotions of disappointment and transcended, and the desire to suggest the song to other people is more strongly correlated with the emotions of overwhelm, tenderness and nostalgia. As data shows, the sixth hypothesis (**H6**: *When a song is accompanied by visual branding elements, in comparison with the situation in which they are missing, the relationship between the emotions after listening to a song and the intentional behavior is greater*) is therefore partially validated.

Results

Table 31. Correlation matrix for the emotional reaction with the intentional behavior (Control group)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Listen again	1													
2. Recommend to others	.772**	1												
3. Emotional attachment	.713**	.576**	1											
4. Wonder	.567**	.585**	.683**	1										
5. Transcendence	.547**	.600**	.601**	.846**	1									
6. Power	.565**	.487**	.632**	.643**	.656**	1								
7. Tenderness	.494**	.480**	.577**	.677**	.645**	.497**	1							
8. Nostalgia	.629**	.451**	.515**	.523**	.496**	.477**	.682**	1						
9. Peacefulness	.531**	.580**	.433**	.634**	.684**	.553**	.683**	.575**	1					
10. Joyful Activation	.481**	.505**	.513**	.592**	.646**	.843**	.550**	.371**	.649**	1				
11. Sadness	-.233	-.237	-.152	-.434**	-.366**	-.067	-.489**	-.311*	-.381**	-.169	1			
12. Tension	-.184	-.156	-.292*	-.427**	-.490**	-.235	-.544**	-.256	-.273*	-.394**	.567**	1		
13. Overwhelmed	-.334*	-.329*	-.431**	-.729**	-.697**	-.394**	-.672**	-.351**	-.570**	-.449**	.518**	.605**	1	
14. Disappointed	.296*	.449**	-.109	-.010	.094	.074	-.038	.077	.127	.062	.109	.230	.144	1

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 32. Correlation matrix for the emotional reaction with the intentional behavior (Experimental group)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Listen again	1													
2. Recommend to others	.889**	1												
3. Emotional attachment	.745**	.803**	1											
4. Wonder	.305*	.371**	.429**	1										
5. Transcendence	.552**	.584**	.582**	.670**	1									
6. Power	.358**	.394**	.470**	.731**	.559**	1								
7. Tenderness	.421**	.502**	.613**	.736**	.733**	.518**	1							
8. Nostalgia	.498**	.561**	.612**	.661**	.821**	.596**	.843**	1						
9. Peacefulness	.323*	.379**	.424**	.602**	.678**	.504**	.628**	.630**	1					
10. Joyful Activation	.214	.238	.347**	.663**	.502**	.706**	.552**	.458**	.633**	1				
11. Sadness	.095	-.094	-.178	-.534**	-.406**	-.333*	-.527**	-.483**	-.322*	-.386**	1			
12. Tension	.104	.022	-.167	-.454**	-.271*	-.346**	-.346**	-.232	-.086	-.436**	.640**	1		
13. Overwhelmed	-.300*	-.439**	-.509**	-.497**	-.545**	-.238	-.687**	-.619**	-.339**	-.320*	.580**	.467**	1	
14. Disappointed	.383**	.296*	.146	-.255	-.134	-.030	-.189	-.092	-.237	-.164	.443**	.535**	.242	1

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

5.2.2 Discussions on the first experimental study

The current experiment, answering the fourth research question of this work (RQ4), seeks to find out whether visual stimuli have an impact in this scenario by addressing an unexplored territory in the literature about the impact of branding on how music is evaluated by people. In particular, the aim is to determine whether visual cues associated with a brand identity can influence perceptions of a song's qualities, emotional responses and attachment, and intentional behavior, which means willing to give the song another listen and willing to recommend it to other people. Nearly all of the first hypotheses have been proven false or only partially true. In this thesis, the use of stimuli did not result in a higher and more significant attitude with regards to the music and its components, despite the fact that studies such as the one of Gillespie (1997) and Boltz, Ebendorf & Field (2009) note that visual elements may determine improvements in appraisal.

This experiment did not demonstrate a significant improvement in emotional attachment or emotional response in the presence of visual stimuli. Boltz, Ebendorf & Field (2009) and Adams (1994) argue that other conditions, such as predetermined emotional values of the stimuli or prolonged exposure to the music and the visual aspects, may need to be met for the influence to occur. The findings show no increased intentions to recommend the song to other people or to relisten it when visual stimuli are introduced. Studies (Madison & Schiölde, 2017; Lee, Pritchard & Hubbles, 2019) indicate that listening to music repeatedly and music recommending have beneficial effects on the evaluation and overall success of music, therefore, more operationalization and experimental research are required to demonstrate the impact of visuals on intentional or planned behavior in the context of pop music. Additionally, there is no evidence of a stronger association between actual behavior and attitude on the song, specific emotions or feelings, or planned behavior when stimuli are present. However, there are larger positive relationships between the emotional attachment and intentional behavior and between attitude (general song appreciation and the potential for popularity) and intentional or planned behavior (willingness to replay the song and suggest it to other people).

Some of the results can be a consequence of the experimental procedure's limitations. First off, because this study is based on an online survey, there is less control over how much time people spend reading visual stimuli and listening to the entire song. It is possible that some survey participants skimmed the branding materials without understanding the main message. Consequently, a lab experimental method might be a better configuration. Second, the subjects have only had one exposure to the stimulus. With repeated exposures, it is probable that the outcomes will vary. Third, individuals might not have had enough time to become familiar with all of the visual materials and their contents. A single complicated visual input might be more effective in the overall scheme of things. Last but not least, the absence of visuals with a particular emotional valence may have caused further data to be overlooked that may have been helpful.

In spite of this, it is clearly evident that the vast majority of instances of such experiments being conducted were carried out utilizing videos as visual stimuli or the physical presence of the artists while they performed songs in

the studies that were reviewed in the literature. In this particular instance, the stimuli were stationary, and there was no attempt made to physically exhibit any artists. Instead, the focus was placed on getting as close as possible to the fundamental visual identity of a conventional brand. This notion, although it requires additional investigation, may show that a traditional brand identity does not have the intended effect. However, things could change if the visual stimuli become animated and human.

Despite these limitations, there are two ramifications for the business professionals. On the one hand, they can focus more on using visual components to foster emotional attachment. On the other hand, they can also point out that it might be beneficial to develop a visual aesthetic that the general public currently deems popular and that is already associated with songs that are highly regarded by the general public. Aside from the primary conclusions, it can be said that when a song is published with visual cues, as opposed to when no such advertising or branding visual materials are created, the public may perceive the song as being more original.

The findings provide some fresh perspectives for further study. In the initial stage, other variables in the visual branding materials can be examined in order to further operationalize the visual elements. Second, depending on the interests of the target audience, such studies can be carried out employing music from various musical genres. The impact of additional brand-related stimuli, such as narrative components, speeches, social media posts, or storytelling, could also be examined from a broader viewpoint.

5.2.3 Experiment 2

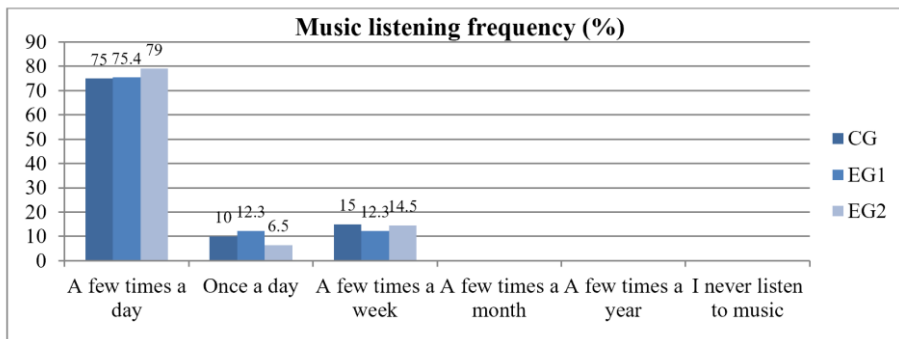
5.2.3.1 Descriptive analysis

An overview on the actual behavior

The actual behavior, operationalized by the frequency with which music is listened to, is meant to provide information about how often respondents listen to music, both for calculations and analysis of correlations in what will follow, as well as to have a first impression of possible differences in terms the control group compared to the two experimental groups.

Therefore, one of the first questions of interest that is part of actual behavior addresses the frequency with which respondents listen to music. As can be seen (Figure 29), most respondents, from all three groups, say that they listen to a music a few times a day. Moreover, in all three groups no person was found to choose the lower variants of the scale, those who do refer to the consumption of music monthly, annually or not at all.

Figure 29. *Music listening frequency for Experiment 2*

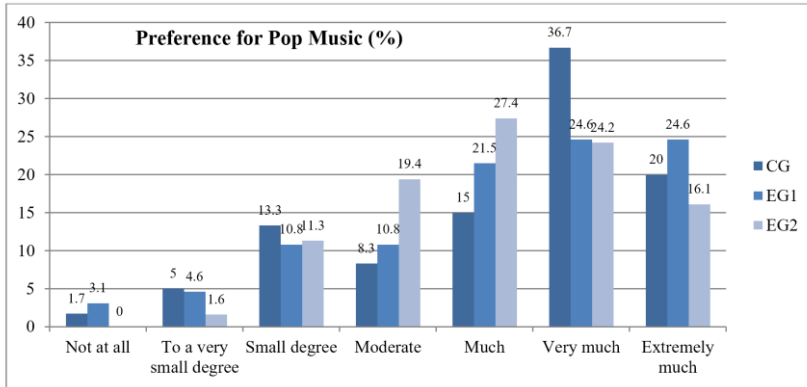


These data successfully illustrate that listening to music is an important habit in the lives of respondents and that it occurs in most cases on a daily basis. The differences between the groups are minor, suggesting that there is a correct distribution of respondents in terms of listening behavior.

The questionnaire also sought to find out the respondents' preferences in terms of musical genres. As mentioned in the literature, the pop music genre

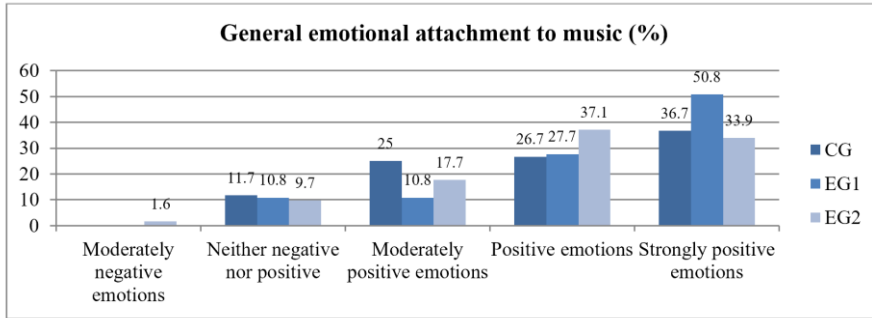
is of main interest to the current research and it is also the genre in which the song used falls. Because the theoretical support focuses on pop music as mass music, marketable, and because the experimental situation forced the choice of a genre whose branding seems natural, we chose to illustrate the analysis of preference for the pop genre (Figure 30).

Figure 30. *Preference for Pop Music*



As can be seen and as the literature claims, most respondents prefer pop music a relatively large extent. Both in the control group (71.7%), the first experimental group (70.7%), and in the second experimental group (67.7%) most respondents say they prefer pop music *Much*, *Very much* or *Extremely much*.

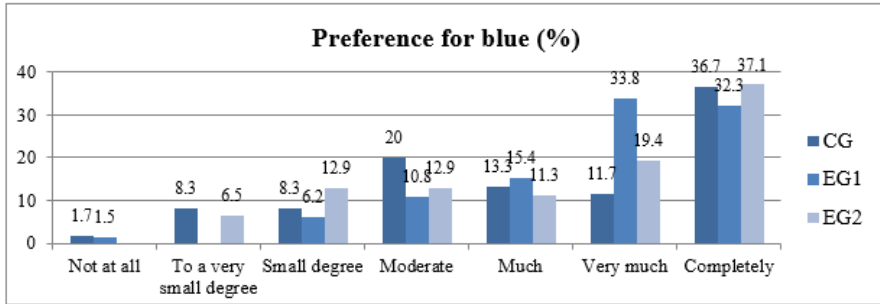
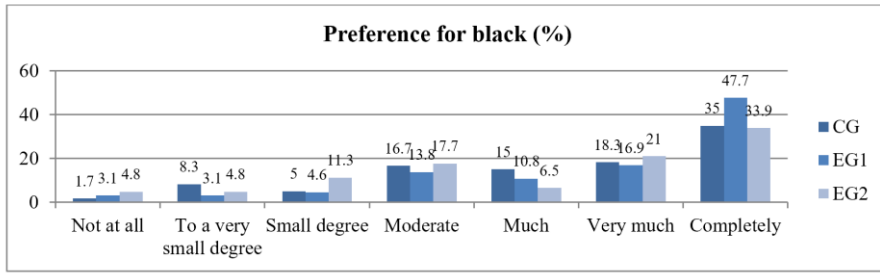
The general attachment to music is a noteworthy factor, meant to support and enrich the data obtained by analyzing some variables and correlations related to the emotion felt after listening to music. The averages of the analyzed data are displayed in the following figure (Figure 31).

Figure 31. *General emotional attachment to music for Experiment 2*

From the answers obtained, it can be seen that the vast majority consider that music arouses positive emotions, from moderate intensity to strong intensity. Again, the distribution of responses in the positive items of the scale is equal between groups, with 88.4% of the control group, 89.3% of the first experimental group and 88.7% of the second experimental group choosing items from this part of the scale.

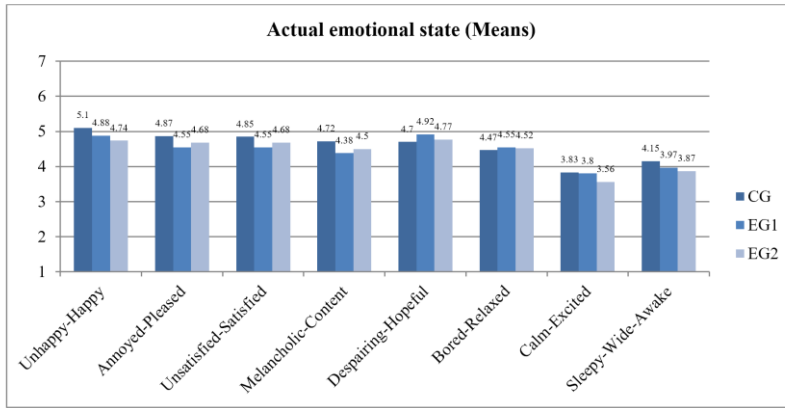
It is noteworthy that although the scale also includes the items *Negative emotions* and *Strongly negative emotions*, no respondent chose these options. This is intriguing and good to consider, in the context in which the emotional valences in the songs we listen to every day are very varied and a sad feeling can maybe provoke a positive emotional reaction.

Since the visual stimuli used in the experiment were made using blue and black, the following highlights the preference, from none to complete, of the respondents towards these two specific colors (Figure 32, Figure 33), as well as the comparison between the control group and the two experimental groups.

Figure 32. *Preference for blue***Figure 33.** *Preference for black*

The analysis of preferences for the colors blue and black is necessary to validate or invalidate the hypotheses that follow the effects of such variables on the attitude and behavior of respondents. Regarding the color distribution, it can be seen that the positive items of the scale (*Much*, *Very much* and *Completely*) were chosen more times in blue (CG=61.7%, EG1=81.5%, EG2=67.8%) than in black color (CG=68.3%, EG1=75.4%, EG2=61.4%).

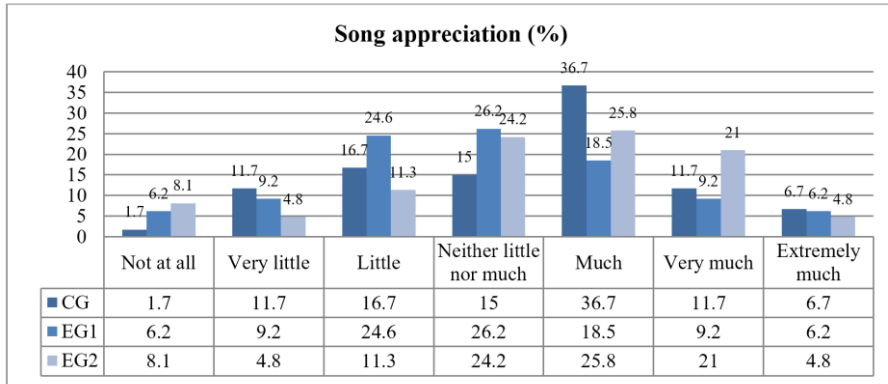
The actual emotional state (Figure 34) assesses the initial emotions of the respondents both to be able to later see if the initial emotions moderate the relationship of the colored stimulus with the attitude, emotions and behavior expressed, as well as to be able to observe if there is an emotional balance between the groups.

Figure 34. *The actual emotional state*

The actual emotional state is calculated and expressed through means, as it can be seen. As it can be observed, the emotions as a whole are balanced. Using the 7-point scales, it can be seen that the averages of the answers fall between 3 and 5, so there is no scale whose averages go towards one of the two extremes. In addition, this relative balance is also visible in the relationship between the control group and the two experimental groups. A very slight increase is indeed observed in the control group, compared to the other groups, but this increase is very small, and is not applicable for all the analyzed emotions.

An overview on the attitude towards the song used in the experiment

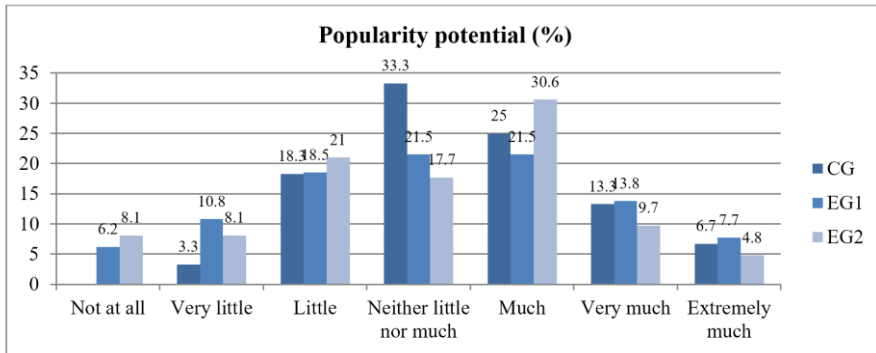
With the introduction of visual stimuli in the two experimental groups, the appreciation of the song is analyzed (Figure 35). Overall, the appreciation is a moderate-positive one in all three groups, but if we add up the percentages of the positive items of the scale for each group, we can better illustrate the differences in terms of appreciation.

Figure 35. Song appreciation for Experiment 2

Thus, 55.1% of the control group (CG) positively appreciated the song, while in the first experimental group (EG1), 33.9% chose these options, and in the second experimental group (EG2), 51.6% rated it positively. It is also notable that in EG2, more precisely the group with blue stimulus, there are the fewest negative answers with reference to how much they like the song (EG2 = 24.2%) compared to CG (30.1%) and EG1 (40%).

A general and incipient perspective on these data says that the introduction of colored stimulus could have a more positive effect on perception, at least by transforming negative responses into more neutral responses, but this is not true for the black stimulus situation. For a concise analysis of the effect and significance, a correlation analysis will be performed.

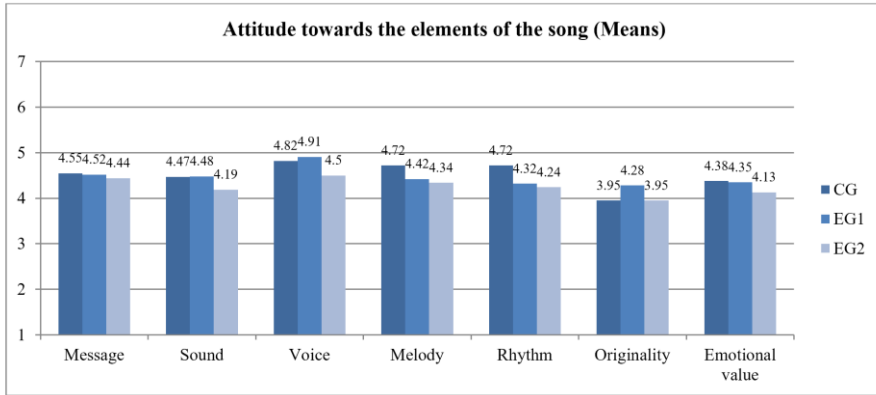
The popularity potential refers to the extent to which the respondents believe that the song they listened to has the potential to increase in popularity among the general public, highlighted in the following chart (Figure 36) where the frequencies of the responses on the 7 points of the scale used are displayed.

Figure 36. *Popularity potential for Experiment 2*

One can observe an equality between the three groups in terms of the average between the positive answers, more specifically *Much*, *Very much* and *Extremely much*. In CG, 45% of the answers fall into this category, in EG1, 43%, and in EG2, 45.1%. Therefore, the distribution is equal and there is no noticeable difference.

However, it can also be mentioned that in CG, the highest percentage was held by people who consider that the song has *Neither little nor much* popularity potential (33.3%), while in EG2, where there is a blue visual stimulus, the answers with the highest percentage are of those who believe that the song has *Much* popularity potential.

The breakdown into different musical characteristics (Figure 37) is necessary both due to the complexity of music and the need to operationalize it so that it can be consistently evaluated by all respondents, as well as to be able to later observe correlations regarding certain particular characteristics with other variables related to behavior and emotions, for example.

Figure 37. *Song elements appreciation for Experiment 2*

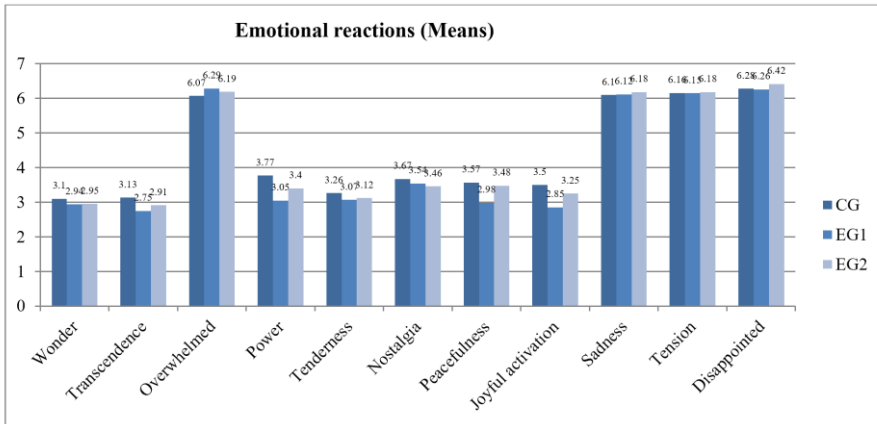
It is first of all notable a general middle evaluation of all the characteristics of the song. By calculating the averages, it can be seen that all items, on a scale from 1 to 7, are between 4 and 5, with the exception of *Originality* and *Rhythm* within CG and EG2, which are immediately below 4 ($M=3.95$). When comparing the groups, a small decrease can be observed in terms of the evaluation of these characteristics by the respondents, within the experimental groups compared to the control group. Experimental group 2, that is the one where a blue stimulus was used, has the lowest scores among the three groups, a fact that could suggest that the introduction of this color led to a decrease in the appreciation of these musical characteristics in the given context.

An overview on the emotions felt regarding the song used in the experiment

The emotional reaction (Figure 38) is also operationalized in several particular emotions. The emotions used, according to the mentioned scale, were subjected to an average calculation and regrouped in their own categories, with the exception of the elements of *Overwhelmed* and *Disappointment* which were left separate due to their low reliability scores within their initial groups.

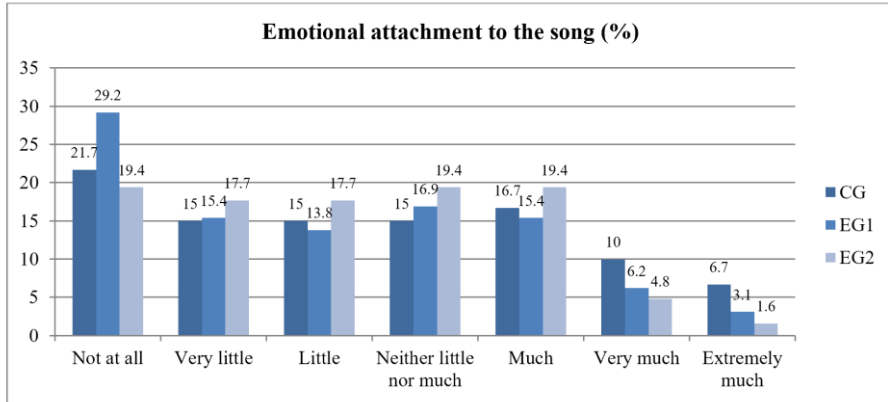
Results

Figure 38. *Emotional reactions for Experiment 2*



The figure shows a calculation of the averages of each emotional category, or separate emotions where applicable, as well as their comparison between groups. The reactions between the groups are relatively balanced, and there is no emotion where the differences are major. At the same time, within the framework of positive emotions, it is noteworthy to mention that in almost all cases, the blue stimulus has higher scores than the black one, but lower than the evaluations from the control group. So, it can be seen that although the blue stimulus can lead to slightly worse evaluations regarding the specific characteristics of the song, positive emotions are felt somewhat stronger, compared to the other groups.

Within the emotional attachment to the music variable, the evaluation of specific emotions is no longer followed, but rather the general emotional response that the respondents have after listening to the song. The following graph (Figure 39) illustrates these evaluations.

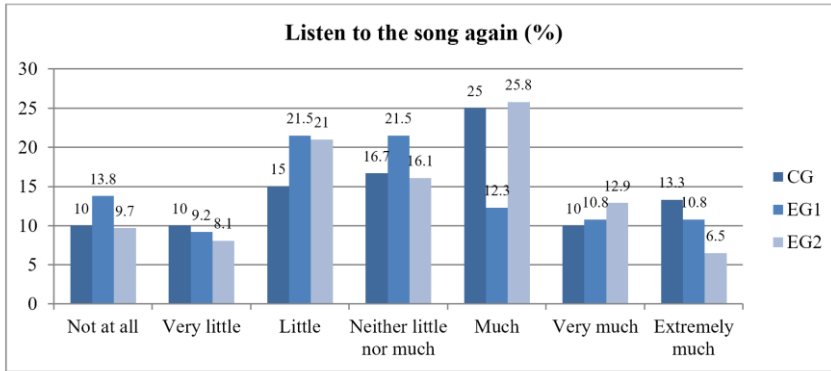
Figure 39. *Emotional attachment to the song for Experiment 2*

When asked if they feel an emotional attachment to the song being listened to, overall, it can be seen that there is no strong attachment to it. If we divide by groups and add the negative items and the positive items in a single percentage, more detailed data can be observed.

For example, in the category of negative answers (*Not at all*, *Very little*, *Little*) there is a relative equality between the answers of the three groups (CG=51.7%, EG1=58.4%, EG2=54.8%). In addition, on the positive side of the scale the results are relatively similar, but the scores are slightly lower for the experimental groups than in the control group (CG=33.4%, EG1=24.7%, EG2=25%).

An overview on the intentional behavior regarding the song used in the experiment

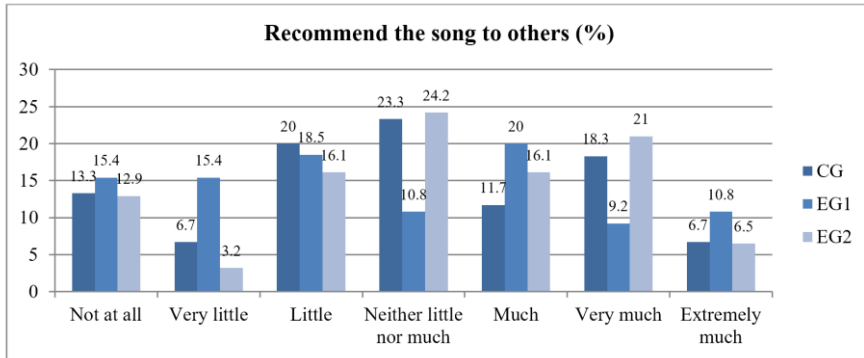
The first variable that is part of the intentional behavior is listening to the song again, through which the respondents answered briefly whether or not they would listen to this song again in the future. These answers are illustrated in the following graph (Figure 40).

Figure 40. *Song relistening potential for Experiment 2*

Regarding the respondents' willingness to listen to the song again, things are more interesting. Adding in the same way the percentages of the positive items (*Much*, *Very much*, *Extremely much*) it appears that with the introduction of the black stimulus, people give a lower score compared to the control group (CG=48.3%, EG1=33.9%). However, in the group where the stimulus used is blue, the evaluations practically rose approximately to the level of those in the control group (EG2=45.2%).

This information regarding the evaluations of the experimental group with black visual stimulus can be put in a clearer context by analyzing the negative part of the scale, which shows that most respondents with negative answers are in the same group, namely the EG1 group, where a black stimulus was used (CG=35%, EG1=44.5%, EG2=38.8%).

Intentional behavior is also measured by a second variable, which analyzes the will of the respondents to recommend the song to other people. This descriptive analysis is carried out similarly, by comparing both between the groups and between the items of the scales used in the evaluation of this variable (Figure 41).

Figure 41. *Recommending the song potential for Experiment 2*

This time, we can see an increase in positive evaluations when visual stimuli are introduced. Within the control group (CG), 36.7% of respondents say they would recommend the song to other people. When introducing visual stimulus, 40% of respondents would recommend the song when there is a black stimulus (EG1), and 43.6% would do so when the stimulus is colored / blue (EG2).

It is also worth mentioning that the highest percentage of negative responses, namely respondents who would not necessarily recommend other people's songs, is in the second experimental group (EG2=49.3%), where a predominantly black visual stimulus was introduced.

5.2.3.2 Correlation analysis

On the basis of the above descriptive analysis, the current section of the study seeks to provide an overview of the correlations with respect to the hypotheses in order to highlight certain probable connections and patterns between the variables and to evaluate these presumptions.

The correlation of the presence of visual stimuli with the attitude towards the song

The condition variable has been changed into a dummy one (the control group has been assigned the value 0 for absence of visual stimulus, while the other two groups have been assigned the value 1 for the presence of visual stimulus).

Due to the fact that there are now two groups, an Independent Samples T-test has been performed to compare the groups in terms of how much they like the song overall and how much they like its elements. To conclude that there is a significant difference between the groups, the significance level (p) must be lower than .05.

The findings demonstrate that there is no significant group difference with regard to liking the song ($t(185)=.839$, $p=.402$), the perceived popularity of the song ($t(185) =1.636$, $p=.104$), or the attitude towards particular song elements ($t(185) =.733$, $p=.464$). This indicates that there are no significant changes between the groups; the presence of a visual stimulus does not result in an improved attitude towards the song and the elements that make it up.

To verify the first hypothesis H1, some correlations are calculated, to observe and analyze the relationship between the presence of the visual stimulus and the attitude on the song, through the variables of song appreciation, song elements' average and popularity potential (Table 33).

Table 33. *Correlation matrix for the presence of visual stimuli with the attitude towards the song*

	1	2	3	4
1. Condition	1			
2. Song appreciation	-.062	1		
3. Song elements average	-.054	.683**	1	
4. Popularity potential	-.119	.601**	.589**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

At the level of the condition variable, there is no positive or significant correlation. Thus, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis (**H1**) is invalidated. Based on the present data, a song accompanied by a visual branding stimulus (cover) does not lead to a more positive attitude towards (H1a) the general opinion of the song and (H1b) the elements of the song.

Further analyzing the data, some moderate or moderately strong correlations can be observed. In this case, it is perhaps to be expected but notable to observe that there is a moderate to strong correlation between how people appreciate a song as a whole, and how they appreciate its individual musical elements ($r=.683, p<.01$). On the same note, song appreciation has a moderate but significant correlation with potential popularity ($r=.601, p<.01$). These relationships can draw new directions of analysis both in addition to the information obtained by validating or invalidating the hypotheses, and as independent information.

The compared correlation of the attitude towards the song with colored stimuli

In what follows, the differences produced by the introduction of two different colors are analyzed, in relation to the attitude towards the song. This variable, as seen in Table 34 and Table 35, is composed of song appreciation, song elements' average and popularity potential, correlated both with condition variables and with each other.

A One-Way ANOVA test has been performed to determine whether or not there are significant variations in the three groups' perspectives towards the song (liking the song and liking the particular elements of the song). The findings indicate that there are no noticeable differences between the two groups. It does not make a difference in terms of liking the song ($F(2,186)=1.644, p=.196$), whether or not they think the song has the potential to become popular ($F(2,186)=1.413, p=.246$), or in terms of how much they like the elements of the song ($F(2,186)=.689, p=.503$). Therefore, the presence of the stimulus (either black or blue) does not make a difference in this aspect.

An Independent-Samples T test is carried out so that a comparison may be made between the two test groups with the intention of determining the differences that exist between them. The findings in this instance also do not reveal any statistically significant differences ($t(125)=-.647$, $p=.519$ for liking the song; $t(125)=.375$, $p=.708$ for considering the song likely to become popular; or $t(125)=.876$, $p=.383$ for liking the elements of the song).

Regarding attitude correlations, it can indeed be observed that in the case of the colored stimulus ($r=.073$, $p>.05$), the correlation is a more positive one in the case of the song appreciation variable, compared to a black stimulus ($r=-.132$, $p>.05$). However, this correlation is not significant. In addition, the correlations in the case of the other variables are positive in the situation of the black stimulus, as opposed to the colored one. These correlations are insignificant, and they are also contrary to the expectations stated in the hypothesis.

Table 34. *Correlation matrix for the black stimulus with the attitude towards the song*

	1	2	3	4
1. Condition	1			
2. Song appreciation	-.132	1		
3. Elements' average	.031	.683**	1	
4. Popularity potential	.034	.601**	.589**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Table 35. *Correlation matrix for the blue stimulus with the attitude towards the song*

	1	2	3	4
1. Condition	1			
2. Song appreciation	.073	1		
3. Elements' average	-.085	.683**	1	
4. Popularity potential	-.084	.601**	.589**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Thus, hypothesis **H1.1** is invalidated, since the data suggests that the presence of a colored visual stimulus (cover), in comparison with a black-and-white one, does not determine a more positive attitude towards (H1.1a) the general opinion of the song and (H1.1b) the elements of the song.

The correlation of the presence of visual branding stimuli with the emotional effect and the song's emotional attachment

The condition variable, more precisely the presence of the visual stimulus, is in the following correlated with the emotional response, in order to observe if there are significant relationships with the average emotional reaction or with the general attachment to the song. The condition variable was turned

into a dummy variable. For this, the control group received the value of 0, meaning there is no visual stimulus present, while the two experimental groups received the value of 1, meaning visual stimuli are present.

Since there two groups are present, an Independent Samples T-test was carried out in order to see whether there are any significant variations between them in terms of their emotional reactions and attachment to the music.

For a difference to be present, the level of significance (p) must be greater than .05. For the emotional reactions to the song, the data are presented in the following table (Table 36). The level of power and joyful activation is the only area in which the groups vary significantly from one another. Therefore, it is possible to say that the presence of a visual stimulus (regardless of whether the stimulus is black or colored) causes a reaction at the level of these two variables.

Table 36. *Independent Samples T test (group differences / existing and not existing visual stimulus) for the emotional reactions to the song*

	df	t	Sig.
Wonder	185	.742	.459
Fascinated	185	.776	.438
Feeling of transcendence	185	1.484	.140
Overwhelmed	185	-1.132	.259
Power	185	2.100	.037
Tenderness	185	.665	.507
Nostalgia	185	.641	.523
Peacefulness	185	1.437	.152
Joyful activation	185	2.078	.039
Sad	185	.129	.897
Tearful	185	-.795	.428
Tension	185	.781	.436
Disappointment	185	-.361	.719

The findings indicate that there is no significant difference between the groups with regard to their emotional attachment to the music ($t(185)=1.200$,

$p=.232$). Therefore, the presence of a visual stimulus does not result in an improvement in the degree to which one feels attached to the song.

According to the correlations with the condition variable (Table 37), the presence of a visual stimulus next to a song does not determine a more positive and significant emotional reaction ($r=-.120$, $p>.05$), and no more positive or significant emotional attachment ($r=-.088$, $p>.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis **H2**, according to which the presence of a visual stimulus (cover) together with a song determines a more positive (H2a) emotional reaction and (H2b) emotional attachment on the subjects, is invalidated.

Table 37. *Correlation matrix for the presence of the visual stimulus with the emotional reactions*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Emotional reaction average	-.120	1	
3. Emotional attachment	-.088	.725**	1

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Again, the analysis of additional data from these correlations reveals additional information that may be useful both at the research level and at the practical level. In this case, a strong and significant correlation can be observed between emotional reaction average and emotional attachment ($r=.725$, $p<.01$). Specifically, the higher the assessment of the intensity of specific emotions calculated on average, the greater the general emotional attachment to the song. These data may suggest that the intensity of emotions, regardless of their type, may lead the listeners to a stronger emotional attachment to the song that is listened to.

The compared correlation of the emotional reaction, emotional attachment and colored stimuli

The results of a One-Way ANOVA test have been analyzed in order to observe whether or not there are major differences between the 3 groups in terms of the emotional reaction and attachment they felt to the music. The following table displays the emotional reaction to the song (Table 38). The

only case in which the results demonstrate significant differences are power and joyful activation.

Table 38. *One-Way ANOVA for the emotional reactions to the song*

	(df, N)	F	Sig.
Wonder	(2, 186)	.274	.761
Fascinated	(2, 186)	.838	.434
Feeling of transcendence	(2, 186)	1.096	.336
Overwhelmed	(2, 186)	.792	.454
Power	(2, 186)	2.918	.057
Tenderness	(2, 186)	.234	.791
Nostalgia	(2, 186)	.235	.790
Peacefulness	(2, 186)	2.753	.066
Joyful activation	(2, 186)	3.532	.031
Sad	(2, 186)	.011	.989
Tearful	(2, 186)	.499	.608
Tension	(2, 186)	.689	.503
Disappointment	(2, 186)	.479	.620

The participants' attachment to the music is not affected by the presence of the stimulus, regardless of whether the cover is in black or in color ($F(2,186)=2.769, p=.416$).

An Independent-Samples T test is carried out so that a comparison may be made between the two test groups to identify the differences that exist between them. The table that follows presents the findings of the listeners' emotional reaction in response to the music (Table 39). There does not appear to be any noticeable difference between the two. It is possible to arrive at the same result regarding the degree of emotional attachment one has to the song ($t(125) = -.593, p=.554$). Therefore, regardless of whether the stimulus is in black in color, this does not have an effect on how the song is experienced emotionally from a listener's point of view.

Results

Table 39. *Independent Samples T test (group differences / black-and-white stimulus and colored stimulus) for the emotional reactions to the song*

	df	t	Sig.
Wonder	125	-.037	.971
Fascinated	125	-1.034	.303
Feeling of transcendence	125	.051	.959
Overwhelmed	125	.580	.563
Power	125	-1.150	.252
Tenderness	125	-.163	.870
Nostalgia	125	.244	.807
Peacefulness	125	-1.828	.071
Joyful activation	125	-1.624	.107
Sad	125	-.068	.946
Tearful	125	-.610	.543
Tension	125	-.842	.401
Disappointment	125	-.924	.357

Another comparison between the two colors is made to see if there are significant correlations between the color and the emotions felt by the respondents, in terms of average emotional reaction or general emotional attachment to the song (Table 40, Table 41).

Table 40. *Correlation matrix for the black stimulus with the emotions*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Emotional reaction average	-.135	1	
3. Emotional attachment	-.080	.725**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 41. *Correlation matrix for the blue stimulus with the emotions*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Emotional reaction average	.017	1	
3. Emotional attachment	-.006	.725**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

As with previous correlations, the presence of a colored visual stimulus may indeed lead to a more positive correlation in the case of emotional reaction average ($r_{EG1} = -.135$, $p > .05$; $r_{EG2} = .017$, $p > .05$), but both correlations are very weak and insignificant. Thus, it can be noted that a visual stimulus in the form of a cover artwork does not produce effects in terms of emotional reaction average and emotional attachment, and the difference between the situation of a colored stimulus and the situation of a black stimulus is insignificant.

Therefore, the hypothesis **H2.1**, according to which the presence of a colored visual stimulus (cover), in comparison with a black-and-white one, determines a more (H2.1a) positive emotional reaction and (H2.1b) emotional attachment on the subjects is invalidated.

The correlation of the presence of visual stimuli with the planned behavior

The condition variable has been changed into a dummy one (the control group has been assigned the value 0 for absence of visual stimulus, while the other two groups have been assigned the value 1 for presence of visual stimulus). An Independent Samples T-test was conducted in order to determine whether or not there were any differences between the groups in terms of whether or not they intended to listen to the song again or whether or not they intended to recommend the song to other people. For a difference to be noted, the significance level (p) must be lower than .05.

The findings indicate that there is no significant difference between the groups, neither in terms of the intention to listen to the music again ($t(185) = .916, p = .361$) nor in terms of the intention to recommend the song to others ($t(185) = -.010, p = .992$).

This indicates that there are no significant differences between the groups; nevertheless, the presence of a visual stimulation does predict a larger desire to listen to the song again or to recommend the song to other people.

It is also necessary to perform a calculation of correlations between condition variables and intentional behavior, the latter being illustrated by the variables of song relistening and recommending it to other people, as can be seen in Table 42.

Table 42. *Correlation matrix for the presence of visual stimuli with the intentional behavior*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Listen the song again	-.067	1	
3. Recommend to others	.001	.858**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

According to the obtained data, it can be observed that at the level of condition variable, the correlations are neither strong nor significant. More precisely, the presence of a visual stimulus of the cover artwork type does not produce a notable effect in terms of a listener's willingness to play the song again ($r = -.067, p > .05$) and recommending it to other people ($r = .001, p > .05$).

Therefore, it is clear that the hypothesis **H3**, that suggests that *a song accompanied by a visual branding stimulus (cover) increases (H3a) the intention to listen to the song again and (H3b) the willingness to recommend it*, is invalidated.

Through observing the correlations outside the main hypothesis, a notable correlation can be observed, one confirmed by the first experiment as well. Specifically, there is a positive, strong, and significant statistical relationship between the listener's desire to listen again to the song and the desire to recommend it to other people ($r = .858, p < .01$).

This information suggests that the more often a listener wants to listen to a song, the more willing he is to recommend it to others. Although this may already seem obvious to the public, in the present situation it is confirmed by a statistically calculated correlation in a controlled experiment. Both variables refer to a strongly desired consumer behavior in the music industry, so in practice, specialists can try to control one aspect to influence the other or find explanations to different effects and tendencies on the market.

The compared correlation of the intentional behavior with colored stimuli

To find out whether there are any intentional behavior differences between the three groups, a One-Way ANOVA test was used (the willingness to listen again and to recommend the song to other people). The findings indicate that there are no significant changes (Table 43, Table 44). Both the inclination to play the song again to recommend it to other people are unaffected by the stimulus's presence, whether black or colored ($F(2,186) = .623, p = .537$).

An Independent-Samples T test is conducted to evaluate the differences between the two experimental groups. There are no statistically significant

variations in the results for the willingness to listen to the song again or the intention to recommend it to other people ($t(125) = -.647, p = .519$ and $t(125) = -1.246, p = .215$).

A further comparison between colors is made by calculating the correlations between each color and intentional behavior, in order to be able to see if there are differences between the way black and blue influence intentional behavior, more precisely the variables of willing to give the song another listen and to recommend it to other people.

Table 43. *Correlation matrix for the black stimulus with the intentional behavior*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Listen the song again	-.074	1	
3. Recommend to others	-.080	.858**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 44. *Correlation matrix for the blue stimulus with the intentional behavior*

	1	2	3
1. Condition	1		
2. Listen the song again	.009	1	
3. Recommend to others	.081	.858**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

If we analyze the correlations according to the type of stimulus used, black cover artwork and blue cover artwork, we will see that the colored stimulus produces positive correlations both in the case of listening to the song again ($r_{EG1} = -.074$, $r_{EG2} = .009$) and in the case of recommend to others ($r_{EG1} = -.080$, $r_{EG1} = .081$), as opposed to the situation with black stimulus. However, this effect is not relevant, because the correlations in both situations are weak and insignificant ($p > .05$), so these effects could have occurred by chance, and not necessarily as an effect of changing the color of the stimulus.

Thus, the data suggests that the presence of a colored visual stimulus (cover), in comparison with a black-and-white one, does not increase (H3.1a) the intention to listen to the song again and (H3.1b) the willingness to further recommend it. Therefore, the hypothesis **H3.1** is invalidated.

The correlation of actual behavior with attitude, emotions and intentional behavior when a colored stimulus is applied

A more complex correlation is the one between several sets of variables, when there is a visual stimulus, in the two different experimental situations.

Results

More precisely, in what follows (Table 45 and Table 46) the correlation of actual behavior with attitude, emotions and intentional behavior is analyzed, when blue, respectively black, are present.

Table 45. *Correlation matrix for actual behavior, attitude, emotions and intentional behavior when a black stimulus is applied*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Frequency of listening to music	1										
2. Importance of music	-.617**	1									
3. Preference for Pop	-.009	.111	1								
4. General emotional attachment	-.010	.233	.039	1							
5. Song appreciation	-.067	.085	.092	.109	1						
6. Popularity potential	-.142	.177	.091	.069	.591**	1					
7. Song elements average	-.187	.212	.250*	.056	.774**	.591**	1				
8. Emotional reaction average	-.292*	.127	.177	.087	.712**	.569**	.765**	1			
9. Emotional attachment	-.314*	.186	.003	.159	.633**	.668**	.619**	.752**	1		
10. Listen the song again	-.223	.143	.143	.083	.830**	.696**	.811**	.793**	.757**	1	
11. Recommend to others	-.222	.244	.106	.175	.661**	.712**	.730**	.758**	.723**	.822**	1

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 46. *Correlation matrix for actual behavior, attitude, emotions and intentional behavior when a blue stimulus is applied*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Frequency of listening to music	1										
2. Importance of music	-.453**	1									
3. Preference for Pop	-.124	.257*	1								
4. General emotional attachment	-.158	.375**	.263*	1							
5. Song appreciation	-.117	.077	.046	.354**	1						
6. Popularity potential	-.184	.049	-.026	.216	.712**	1					
7. Song elements average	-.026	-.007	.271*	.248	.666**	.629**	1				
8. Emotional reaction average	-.080	.026	.040	.281*	.639**	.692**	.753**	1			
9. Emotional attachment	-.055	-.049	-.151	.218	.607**	.702**	.582**	.760**	1		
10. Listen the song again	-.176	-.017	-.025	.278*	.717**	.817**	.683**	.768**	.803**	1	
11. Recommend to others	-.136	-.022	.015	.253*	.653**	.817**	.712**	.783**	.725**	.877**	1

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

At the level of the relationships between the variables used in the hypothesis, it can be seen that the colored stimulus produces some moderate effects in terms of the relationship between actual behavior and attitude, emotions and intentional behavior. The correlations obtained are positive and are stronger when the blue/colored stimulus is used just in terms of the general emotional attachment item of the actual behavior variable. Within the actual behavior variable, the correlation of general emotional attachment with preference for pop is positive and stronger when a blue stimulus is used ($r=.263, p<.05$) in comparison with the situation when a black stimulus is used ($r=.039$).

Moderate positive correlations that become stronger in the presence of the blue visual stimulus between actual behavior and the other variables are those between general emotional attachment and attitude, general emotional attachment and emotional reaction average, as well as general emotional attachment and listening to the song again. Among these, the correlation between general emotional attachment and song appreciation (an element of attitude) is the only one where the level of significance increases considerably at $p < .01$ ($r_{EG1} = .109$; $r_{EG2} = .354$, $p < .01$).

Another correlation it can be said that it is more positive and slightly significant in the case of the experimental situation with colored stimulus, more precisely the correlation between song elements average and preference for pop music. The experimental situation with blue stimulus ($r = .271$, $p < .05$) is more positive than in the case of the experimental situation with black stimulus ($r = .250$, $p < .05$). At the same time, the difference is negligible, so we cannot say that the stimulus produced a noticeable or very significant effect.

It can also be noticed that there is a result difference or improvement between groups in terms general emotional attachment to music, a single element of the actual behavior category, correlated with other variables. Simply put, the correlation between general emotional attachment to music and all the elements of the attitude category is positive and stronger in the situation with the blue stimulus than in the one with the black stimulus. In terms of emotions, the general emotional attachment to music correlates noticeably stronger with the emotional reactions average element, in the same way, when the blue stimulus is used ($r = .281$, $p < .05$), unlike the black stimulus ($r = .087$). Regarding intentional behavior, the general emotional attachment to music correlates more strongly with listening to the song again, in the blue situation ($r = .278$, $p < .05$), versus the situation of the group with the black stimulus ($r = .083$). Therefore, we can say that the hypothesis **H4**, which suggests that *when the visual stimulus (cover) attached to a song is colored, the actual opinions on music are correlated with (H4a) the attitude on the song, (H4b) the emotions, and (H4c) the planned behavior is only partially validated.*

Apart from the hypotheses, it can be observed that there are universally moderate and moderately strong correlations between different elements related to attitude, emotions and intentional behavior, at $p < .01$ level of significance. Although such correlations are generally expected to exist, especially within variables that fall into the same category, there are some more notable differences.

For instance, the correlation of song elements average and listening to the song again is strong and significant in both cases but is noticeably stronger in the experimental group with black stimulus ($r = .811, p < .01$) than in the case of the experimental group with blue stimulus ($r = .683, p < .01$). This suggests that when the cover artwork is black, the correlation between evaluating the elements of the song and the desire to give the song another listen is more intense than when the stimulus is colored, more precisely blue in this case.

Other positive increases in favor of the experimental situation with black cover artwork also appear in the correlations between song appreciation and song elements average ($r_{EG1} = .774, p < .01$; $r_{EG2} = .666, p < .01$), respectively song appreciation and listening to the song again ($r_{EG1} = .830, p < .01$; $r_{EG2} = .717, p < .01$).

An increase this time in favor of the blue condition is a slightly stronger positive correlation between popularity potential with listening to the song again ($r_{EG1} = .817, p < .01$; $r_{EG2} = .696, p < .01$) and recommending it to others ($r_{EG1} = .817, p < .01$; $r_{EG2} = .712, p < .01$).

If we consider the differences in favor of the experimental situation with blue cover artwork, we have three notable comparisons, regarding the correlation of certain elements with popularity potential. Thus, when we have a blue cover artwork, as opposed to a black one, we have stronger correlations between popularity potential and song appreciation, popularity potential and emotional reaction average, respectively popularity potential and emotional attachment.

5.2.4 Discussions on the second experimental study

This experiment aims to analyze the influence of visual elements on musical perception, when the visual stimulus is not represented by a complete visual identity, but this time by a single element, more precisely a song cover. In addition, the stimulus was branched in two directions, testing the influence both in a situation where the cover predominantly uses blue, and in a situation where the predominant color is black. Again, the tested variables relate to different characteristics of the music listeners, more precisely the attitude, as well as the behavior and emotions after listening to the song. Although in this case the stimulus was a single one, and not a set of multiple visual materials, the hypotheses are mostly invalidated, with the exception of a few significant moderate correlations.

Answering the fifth research question, (RQ5), it can concisely be said that the results do not suggest that a visual song cover can significantly influence elements related to attitude, behavior and emotional reactions in comparison with the case where the song is not accompanied by such visual material, and the color difference of the stimulus used does not produce important effects in terms of the present hypotheses but may produce some differences in terms of intentional behavior.

In terms of attitude towards specific elements or characteristics of a song, the literature suggests that the influence does happen (Iwamiya, 1994; Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005; Wapnick et al., 2009; Waddell & Williamon, 2017), but in the case of this experimental study, it is vital to acknowledge that the visual stimulus is a more static one. It also relates to a visual brand identity, situation that has not been covered by specialized literature so far. However, regardless of the hypothesis pertaining the difference between a stimulus and non-stimulus situation, the data reveal further valuable information. For example, the attitude towards the song as a whole has a moderately strong correlation with the attitude towards the specific elements of the songs. Furthermore, there is a moderately strong correlation of the attitude towards the song with the popularity potential. This information can again serve as an excellent basis for further testing, new hypothesis and also highlight new variables that affect how the music industry success works.

In terms of intentional behavior, the secondary data are nevertheless valuable both for future research and for their application in the practical industry, where the elements related to intention through re-listening, shared listening and recommendation can have an influence in achieving success and influencing music consumption behaviors (Madison & Schiölde, 2017; Lee, Pritchard & Hubbles, 2019). Even though there are not significant differences between groups in terms of intentional behavior, it is noteworthy that the sub-variables of intentional behavior turned out to be strongly correlated to each other.

In terms of emotion, the experiment has shown only weak improvements, for example between the two different variants of the color for the visual stimulus, so it has failed to validate the hypothesis. While some studies prove that the visual impacts the music perception in terms of emotion (Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005 Moore, 2010), there are also studies that had a negative outcome as well (Trevor & Plazak, 2016), suggesting that in some contexts, emotional influence might need secondary criteria in order to happen, for example emotional congruency between the music and the visual stimulus, or in this case, a different type of visual stimulus altogether. However, it is worthy to note that the data revealed that regardless of the presence of a stimulus, there is a strong relationship between general emotional attachment, and emotional reaction average, suggesting that sometimes, the strength of the emotions, no matter their type or valence, might improve the general emotional attachment. While it is known that a correlation does not necessarily imply causation, the information raises new research questions and also offers the music industry professional a tested insight on how perceptions work.

However, the invalidation of the hypotheses represents, on the other hand, a success in the efforts of further isolating the variables that can produce influences on musical perception. Since both when using a complex brand identity and when using a single static visual stimulus, most of the hypotheses are invalidated, it can thus be discovered and suggested that an efficient visual stimulus could perhaps be a dynamic one of video-type or consisting of a live presence of the artist. In addition, these results are in line with the suggestions of the literature, which, although it does not clearly state that static visual elements do not have an important effect, includes

mostly experiments whose success appears in situations where dynamic variables of this type were used (Adams, 1994; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Ellis 2013).

In addition, the data obtained manage to highlight other valuable information, more precisely different significant correlations, sometimes between the items of the same variable, therefore not influenced by the treatment, and sometimes even some moderate but significant differences between the situation where a blue stimulus is used and the situation where a black stimulus is used. For example, there is a notable and significant correlation in terms of the desire to give the song another listen paired with the willingness to recommend it to other people. This was also demonstrated in the first experiment, a fact that strengthens this possibility.

For the color black, some differences were demonstrated for several variables. For example, the results suggest that there is a strong correlation between how the individual elements of a song are evaluated and the desire to play the song again in the situations of both colors, but notably stronger where the stimulus is black. Also in favor of the black color, stronger correlations are observed between general song appreciation and song individual elements ratings, as well as between song appreciation with wanting to listen to it again.

When we talk about the aspects of intentional behavior that are associated with the color blue, we can see some correlations that are greater for this color compared to those associated with the color black. To be more specific, the color blue creates a stronger association between the popularity potential of a song and the intention to listen to it again, as well as a stronger correlation between the popularity potential of a song and the intention to recommend it to others.

This secondary experimental effort manages to successfully fill in some of the gaps of the first experiment, building a more specific tool that can be further used for a variety of singular visual stimuli experiments. A previous limitation of the procedure refers to the impossibility of perfectly controlling the time people spend looking at the visual stimulus. However, by using the visual stimulus during listening, and not before or after it, it is practically

possible to reduce this limit, and enrich the overall results of the experiments, this time having results coming from both situations in terms of how they interact with visual stimuli.

Another limitation, along with the ideas offered by the interviews with specialists, is the fact that there is no prior relationship between the participants and the artist. Although the lack of familiarity with the artist is in this case a vital condition for conducting the experiment as objectively as possible, the specialists suggest that the influence of emotion-boosted visuals could influence the perception of the music when there is already an artist-public relationship.

First of all, these results contour new research suggestions, eliminating some of the untested variables in the literature so far, thus offering, in comparison with the previous experiments in the literature and with the interviewed specialists, suggestions of new variables, such as analysis on other colors, or especially the analysis on more dynamic visual stimuli. In addition, the other analyzed data suggest that there may be differences in music perception when different colors are used in visual stimuli, especially regarding people's song relistening intention and recommending the song to other people, which can be very valuable for the specialists who design the artists' visual identities.

CONCLUSIONS

This doctoral thesis explored, explained and successfully tested variables from a multidisciplinary theme, which combines communication and branding with music. Simply put, the theme of this thesis is the influence that branding can have through visual identity on the way a song is evaluated or perceived by listeners. The oversaturation of the music industry market, as well as the development of the internet and promotion methods, turn variables such as visual identity into vital elements to be analyzed and used by specialists, to offer artists an additional weapon when outlining the promotion and market breakthrough strategies.

Thus, with the assumption that the appreciation of the musical product together with the efficiency of the way it is promoted are vital in achieving success, the present paper proposed the analysis not only of these concepts, but the influence that the latter can have on the first one. Practically, the work covers a very little explored gap in the literature, more precisely the way in which a visual identity, outlined and promoted through branding and brand communication, can influence the way music is perceived. When music is appreciated by listeners and branding and promotion are done efficiently, a synergy could be created, and besides the effect offered individually by each element, the promoted visual identity can influence the appreciation of a song. The literature analyzes and tests the effect of visual stimuli on the way music is evaluated or perceived, but not in a framework that simulates today's commercial music market, where visual stimuli can be represented by a visual brand identity of a music artist.

To cover this gap and test the assumptions, two big objectives were formulated. The first objective, that of discussions with specialists, was achieved through discussions with professionals from the music industry. This was performed through semi-structured interviews with 18 professionals from the music industry, having various positions, such as Artist Advertising & Management Executive, Music Industry Consultant, Music Business Founder, Music Producer or Music Journalist. These interviews were conducted to understand what success is made of for an artist, why and how is branding important for artists, and what influence can visuals have on musical perception.

The second objective, that of testing some concise hypotheses, was successfully achieved by conducting two experiments, with variables based solidly on the literature and the discussion with the specialists, to test if the visual can affect the way music is evaluated or perceived in the context of a fabricated visual brand identity for a fictitious music artist. The experiments were carried out by applying some experimental and control questionnaires where the participants perform the evaluation of a song, more precisely in groups where the music is accompanied by visual stimuli, and in groups where no visual stimulus is used. The main variables used in the experiments are actual behavior, attitude, emotions and intentional behavior. While the first experiment, applied to 122 people, tested the effect of an integrated or holistic visual identity, with several elements forming a general effect, the second experiment, applied to 187 people, used a single visual stimulus, the cover artwork of a song, in two color variants.

Therefore, achieving the objectives through these methods answered a series of research questions, the first three of which were answered through interviews with specialists. The first question (**RQ1**) aims to understand what the obstacles or challenges are that artists face when they achieve success, as well as how success is defined and interpreted. In this situation, the specialists were of the opinion that success can have several faces. While some refer to clear indicators, sometimes expressed numerically, by which success is measured, others are related to the connection with the public. With regard to actual indicators, several were brought to the front. Thus, success in terms of performance indicators can be given by high numbers in terms of music listeners, fans, i.e. loyal listeners, the number of followers on social networks, sales expressed financially or in number of albums and singles sold, the engagement rate on social media platforms and environments, the number of concerts or requests for concerts, as well as the number of appearances or mentions in the mass media.

Success is also, in the view of professionals, given by the artist's ability to self-support financially. Thus, artists can be considered successful when they reach financial sufficiency, and manage to live exclusively, or at least mainly, from the music they produce, perform or sell. A last facet of success is also given by the personal satisfaction that the artists feel. When the artists feel that they have achievements, when the relationship with the fans is solid and

healthy, but also when they want and are permitted to keep their authenticity and release music under their own conditions, then they can be considered successful.

In addition to success seen through the lens of the ways in which it can be identified and expressed, specialists highlight elements that contribute to success. First of all, it is highlighted that good music is an essential condition for achieving success. Although musical appreciation is subjective, the common points that define good music are the presence of pleasant sounds, the presence of emotional value in the melody, as well as the originality of the music. Besides good music, it is important that the audience likes the artist. Professionals identify several conditions for the artists to be pleasant. More precisely, it is important to be authentic both in relation to the fans and in producing the music, to be relatable in order to resonate with people, and also important to be consistent, both in communication with the fans and from the point of view of the released music and promotion strategy. Besides the definition of success, the clear identification of performance indicators, the production of good music, and the shaping of a pleasant image by the public, achieving success is also given by overcoming some challenges. Thus, what can prevent an artist from being successful is the lack of money or the necessary material resources, the lack of acceptance of the nature of the music industry, where marketing, branding and communication cannot be ignored, the lack of perseverance in the work they perform and in the promotion process, and also, very importantly, the oversaturation of the music market.

These assumptions that outline what success means are therefore very diverse, and this is also reflected by the literature in the field (Landa, 2006; Beeching, 2010; Aaker, 2014), from which it can be observed and suggested that success has many facets, that each person can have their own understanding of the concept, and that artists themselves decide what success means to them and what is the level that they must reach in order to consider that they have become successful.

The next research question (**RQ2**) refers to what branding means for an artist, what are the benefits, and how branding and brand communication are done efficiently. Regarding branding, the specialists provide information and

insights grouped under three main branches, the importance of branding for an artist, brand communication tools, as well as emotional branding. Firstly, the importance of branding for the music industry is analyzed. Thus, it is highlighted that branding and brand communication are useful because they offer differentiation on the already over-saturated market, by outlining and promoting a solid and authentic identity. In addition, an efficient branding can increase memorability, which means it helps the image of the artist to remain effectively in the public's memory, in addition to their actual music. In addition, branding proves to be useful also because it provides clarity to the artists, because when they follow the steps to outline a brand identity, they realize much more easily and concisely what their values and unique characteristics are, as well as the messages they want to transmit.

Secondly, in terms of brand communication, the specialists outline four major tools or sets of tools: the Internet and social networks, music distribution platforms, live performances, as well as appearances in the mass media. The presence in the digital space is therefore done through an artist website, as well as through constant presence on the relevant social networks. Regarding music distribution platforms, it is essential for the artists to sell their music physically or digitally and to upload their music to streaming platforms. Although these channels are basically sales or consumption channels, many elements related to the brand identity will be automatically present here as well, such as cover artworks, logos, biographies and descriptions. Another important tool is live performance. Although, again, this channel is one that primarily has the role of offering live music to listeners for consumption, they really make a difference in terms of brand communication, because the artist is seen live by the public, can interact with the fans, can use costumes and visual props, and can convey emotions through dance, gestures, mimicry, energy. Last but not least, media appearances are also a brand communication tool, more precisely television appearances, on the radio, in online media, at various events, in various interviews, as well as in blog articles or music reviews. Although some of these, such as reviews or articles on blogs, are not actively controlled or implemented by the artist, when the brand identity is solid and the communication is effective, they can practically be seen as a passive brand communication tool.

Thirdly, in terms of emotional branding, it can be seen how an efficient emotional branding must fulfill three criteria: consistency, authenticity and relatability. Consistency in this case refers to the emotional consistency or congruence between the music and the visual identity, as well as the consistency in the transmission of emotions over time. Authenticity refers to transparency and sincerity that must be noticeable in the emotional brand communication. Finally, relatability in this case means that the emotions conveyed by the artist must be understood by the fans and resonate with the emotions they feel.

The results are therefore in line with literature (Meier, 2017; Lieb, 2018; Borg, 2020), which suggests that branding is important and useful to the artist, that an efficient and emotional brand can be communicated on several channels, where some are general, and others are specific to music, as well as the fact that branding can contribute to success.

A research question (**RQ3**) that concludes the part of discussions with the specialists, is the one that wants to understand how a visual brand identity can affect the musical perception of listeners in terms of music appreciation, quality, as well as the emotional response. Thus, based on the literature in the field and the objectives, the specialists were consulted regarding general song appreciation, how music is perceived and evaluated in terms of quality, and emotions, from the perspective of how visual stimuli can influence them.

According to professionals, song likability can be visually influenced first of all when the visual identity is attractive. In addition, they suggest that consistency is also an important factor in this case for this influence to occur, more precisely that there should be consistency in the musical message and visual identity. In addition, it is suggested that visual stimuli can influence how music is perceived when the visual materials are professional, made efficiently, where the artist or specialist knows exactly what they want to convey through them. Regarding how music is perceived in terms of quality, the interviewed professionals suggest that if the quality of the graphic elements is high, this can have an influence on the way the music is perceived. This suggestion is in line with the Halo Effect (Thorndike, 1920; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), by which, applied to the present case, it is understood that a pre-existing perception of the quality of visual materials

can influence the perception of music from the point of view of its quality. In addition, the visual influence on the perceived quality of the music, according to the professionals interviewed, is subject to conditions related to changes that occur over time. For example, listeners can change their visual preferences and attitude towards the visual materials that would have influenced them initially. In addition, the visual materials that accompany a song can change over time, a fact that can alter perceptions again, even changing them.

In the last section analyzed by specialists regarding the visual influence on music, the part of emotions is put in the foreground. They believe that visual stimuli can influence emotions, especially when certain conditions are met. First of all, if there is a pre-existing emotional attachment to the artist, the visual materials could have a stronger influence on the feelings that arise when listening to the song. Besides that, one of the most efficient ways to introduce visual stimuli that influence emotions is in live performances, where the artists are visible, interact with the audience, expresses their emotions through body movement, gestures and mimic, influencing the participants' emotional evaluation of the song. Finally, the concept of consistency is again discussed, in this case understanding that the emotions in the recorded song must coincide with those transmitted in the live performance for the influence to take place, in this case by empowering the emotions transmitted by the song. This phenomenon is also suggested in the literature (Trevor & Plazak, 2016), according to which congruence could play a role in the process of influencing or transmitting emotion. Overall, the information provided by specialists confirms what experimental studies also reveal (Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009, Moore, 2010), the fact that the emotion felt when evaluating a song can be influenced by visual stimuli.

The next research question (**RQ4**), which was answered by testing the hypotheses of the first experiment, wants to discover how an integrated visual brand identity can affect the way the listener perceives music in terms of attitude, emotional reaction and intentional behavior, or their relation to actual behavior. The results of the experimental study totally or partially invalidate all the tested hypotheses. Simply put, visual stimuli in the form of a visual identity did not cause significant changes in attitude, felt emotions, intentional behavior and actual behavior. In the correlation of the variables

with actual behavior, no significant differences were observed, and in regards to attitude towards the song, it could not be demonstrated that the visual can have an influence on it when the visual stimulus is a set of images related to a conventional visual brand identity. Regarding the emotions, the presence of the stimulus did not manage to influence the emotion felt when listening to the song either. Regarding intentional behavior, although the results do not prove that the presence of a stimulus has any effect on song relistening potential or on willing to recommend it to other people, a strong correlation between the sub-variables of the same category can be noticed, which is present regardless of the presence of the visual stimulus. This can have implications both at the research level, by encouraging particular research, and at the industry level, as useful information for artists and managers.

The data reveal only partial validation, specifically some sub-hypotheses. For example, it seems like the presence of the visual stimulus can make people feel wonder and tenderness stronger than where no visual stimuli are used, while the level of tension decreases, but the changes are moderate. Moreover, the presence of visual stimuli might increase the correlation level between intentional behavior and attitude towards the song, but it is only a weak increase, and it is in terms of general attitude, not in terms of particular song elements. Likewise, visual stimuli can increase the song relistening potential and the likelihood to recommend it to other people, but only in terms of general emotional attachment to the song, and not much in the case of particular emotions.

The last research question (**RQ5**) tries this time to test the impact of the visual stimuli on perception when the visual stimulus is a singular one, the cover artwork of a song, in two different color variants, blue and black, having actual behavior, attitude, emotional reaction and intentional behavior as variables. Although this time the visual stimulus was a singular one, hypotheses could not be validated either, except for a few isolated and weak cases in the context of specific sub-variables related to intentional behavior. Better said, the presence of a cover artwork of a song does not significantly and generally influence how music is perceived in terms of attitude, emotions, intentional behavior, and actual behavior, and there are no significant differences between the color variants. Analyzing the relationship

between actual behavior, attitude, emotions and intentional behavior, it is observed that there is a difference between the groups, but only in what concerns intentional behavior. More precisely, the general emotional attachment to music seems to be more strongly correlated with wanting to listen to the song again in the group where the blue stimulus was used, compared to the situation with the black stimulus. Literature clearly states that there are differences between what colors transmit (Fehrman & Fehrman, 2004; Aslam, 2006; Wei-Lun & Hsieh-Liang, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011; Mohebbi, 2014), but in this case, the lack of other contexts, other types of visual stimuli, and conditions could be one of the reasons why stronger differences did not emerge. However, although this information is useful for research and industry, these differences are only moderate, and refer to isolated sub-variables, which is why the hypothesis as a whole cannot be said to be validated.

In analyzing the results of these two experimental studies, it is important to understand that there may be many other contexts and criteria necessary for this influence to take place, something mentioned both in literature (Adams, 1994; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009; Trevor & Plazak, 2016), as well as in the responses from the specialists that were interviewed for this work, who emphasize more dynamic stimuli, such as video or live performance. Another possible explanation, according to the specialists but also suggested by the literature (Adams, 1994; Boltz, Ebendorf & Field, 2009) is that the pre-existing emotional values in the visual stimuli can dictate how the influence happens or whether it happens at all. Although in the second experimental study, this factor was taken into account, that of pre-existing emotional value offered this time through the emotionally imbued colors, it might be necessary to integrate and identify these emotional valences more clearly and on more promotional materials, by respecting brand consistency.

Consequently, while the first research questions aimed at creating a concise and specialized informational framework with reference to success, branding and visual elements in the music industry, the last research questions aimed at the experimental testing of some hypotheses, which were mostly invalidated, but highlighted other correlations between variables, that attests to the fact that the elements related to the attitude towards music, the emotional response and the listening behavior are interconnected and

now represent an even more fertile ground for analysis. Moreover, the results successfully managed to clarify some of the previously obscure research paths and brought new variable ideas to light as well.

The specialized information obtained after comparing the answers to the interviews with the literature, as well as the suggestions resulting from the experimental analysis bring a great value in themselves, but the fact that the actual hypotheses were invalidated does not constitute a disadvantage either.

This can be seen as the success of a process of eliminating variables and isolating some that, following new tests, could prove their possible influence on the way listeners evaluate music. Such new variables could be live performances or videos, dynamic elements emphasized both by the literature and by the specialists from the interviews, but which were not part of the stimuli of this work, because in this case the influence was analyzed using a visual stimulus or set of stimuli that simulate and respect a conventional and tangible brand identity in a visual form, which includes unmoving elements such as logo, colors, pictures, and other non-dynamic graphic elements.

The analysis of this topic was made through an integrated approach that contains both concise theoretical branches, which crystallize together a consistent body of theory regarding the music industry, promotion methods and visual elements, as well as the empirical approach, through a combination of qualitative and quantitative efforts. What is clear is that the influence of the visual on the perception of music exists, supported both by specialists in the practical industry and by experimental research in the literature, and that the number of visual elements that can be considered and analyzed as visual stimuli in testing branding influence on music perception can be very large. With that in mind, the primary need or challenge for the future is to identify and test as many combinations as possible between various types of stimuli, methodological designs, and other circumstances, to discover if this influence takes place within a visual brand identity, and if so, to determine how strong it is and in what way affects the success of the music. The current work, in addition to providing a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual context based on specialized literature and the

practical experience of active professionals, has successfully experimentally tested some of these combinations of variables, filling one of the first big gaps in this specific field.

Based on the above presented conclusion, the paper's contributions are twofold: contributions for the academic field and contributions for the music industry.

On the academic side, the results primarily manage to provide valuable information with reference to the branding and music industry fields, improved by effective conceptualizations in the form of schemes and hierarchies of the main variables from the sub-fields of the main theme. Therefore, the work first of all offers a modern canvas of concepts and concept categories, while clear description of the music industry from a promotional point of view is offered as well. Secondly, the paper offers a concise operationalization of the variables that can be used in testing the perception of music and musical artists in a modern context, enriched and tested qualitatively through the expertise of specialists. This context represents the current music industry through the prism of branding and brand communication. Thus, both through the crystallization of the subject through the literature and through discussions with specialists, the provided ideas bring value to the academic field, practically constituting a conceptual basis for a large variety of potential qualitative or quantitative research, which can now be based on the new concepts and processes that this paper offer, information that is more faithful to the current music industry where an increasingly strong emphasis is placed on branding.

In addition, at the experimental level, the results obtained by testing the hypotheses offer clear data that can be used to draw further conclusions, get retested in different contexts or that can serve to generate new hypotheses. These results also have a high informational value for future experimental research because they manage to eliminate or recontextualize the variables that have been tested. Basically, through this elimination process, the information in this work can suggest new variables, such as unconventional, dynamic visual identities, with human presence and movement in them, in the form of video, for example. In addition, the experiments offer a new tool, in the form of unique web surveys, which can be improved or used as such

by researchers to test a variety of situations where visual stimuli influence perceptions of any kind. The web surveys developed for this work have a great potential for replicability, being at the same time flexible for new variables. These web surveys contain questions and scales that address both visual concepts and musical concepts, improved through manipulation checks, pre-testing and through literature review, being a unique hybrid practical tool that manages to logically link two apparently different fields.

On the practical industry side, the ramifications are also multiple. On the one hand, the specialists in the music industry as well as the artists themselves can use the tools and strategies outlined in this work for effective promotion and branding. This information is all the more effective as it is based not only on literature and experimental research, but also on the practical experience of other specialists in various music industry sub-fields. The variety of these sub-fields in which the respondents of the interview work, a trademark of today's music industry, is a strong point of this research. Artists and specialists can use these data, plans, schemes and concepts to generate efficient branding, brand communication, or advertising plans, taking into account the standards of efficiency and artistic authenticity stated in this work. In addition, the experimental research part of the visual influence can trigger the attention of those in the industry, using the information to make more efficient use of the elements of visual music promotion when releasing a song.

Both artists and those in the music industry can understand that although it is not always clear in what way the visual influence on music takes place, some correlations between attitude, various behaviors and emotions actually exist. They will understand that the way a person evaluates a song is a complex process that could be based not only on the isolated appreciation of the song but can also be influenced positively by the creation of a harmonious artistic image, composed of professionally made elements, congruent with the music from an emotional point of view, where originality is emphasized, and which are created in a such a way that they have sharing and recommending potential.

In addition to stating the separate contributions for the two fields, academic and practical, it is also vital to state a general contribution that this work

offers. While specialized literature sometimes offers isolated, very particular or laboratory situations, and in the music promotion guidebooks some of the information can sometimes be based on personal experiences or situations cherry-picked by music professionals with only a moderate degree of objectivity, the results of this work offer a set of information that reconciles and merges both sides. The results complement and correct each other, and parts of the information from the theory and from the qualitative research end up being experimentally tested, starting a prolific cycle that can continue through the analysis of new theories and information, and then through testing new relationships between variables.

Limits

The results of the present paper should be assessed in the light of their attached limitations as well. Therefore, limits can be identified both in terms of the sample, as well as limits regarding the methodology. One that stands out in the analysis of the qualitative part of this research, is the subjectivity of the answers and their interpretation. However, this is a universally known limit regarding research based on interviews, and if the interpretation is given objective perspectives and if it is constantly compared with specialized literature, the information obtained remains valid.

Another limitation of the interviews is the fact that consistency could not be maintained regarding the geographical location and the specific job that the respondents have in the industry. This is already motivated both by the availability of the contacted specialists, as well as motivated in the paper by relevant literature. More precisely, the industry is changing, many current jobs require activity with artists from multiple geographical areas, music professionals have unconventional work schedules and flows, responsibilities differ from one person to another, and the professionals need to possess a high degree of versatility and adaptability. The advantage in this situation is the diversity of answers from which common points and themes can be extracted, but nevertheless, even so, if such research were to be carried out either on a larger number of specialists, or on a better controlled sample in terms of location or job description, the results could obtain additional valuable information.

On the experimental side, the main limitation is the fact that the experiments were applied through a web survey. Thus, although the surveys contained manipulation check elements, it was not possible to fully control the time the respondents allocated to listening to the song, or whether they listened to the sample in its entirety or not. In addition, it cannot be guaranteed that the respondents kept visual contact with the visual stimuli for a sufficient time. This could be compensated by an experiment carried out in laboratory conditions.

In addition, a single exposure to visual stimuli, in both experiments, might not be enough for an influence to occur. As the experts pointed out in the interviews, sometimes the influence happens when the listener has already come into contact with the artist and his promotional materials, whether repeatedly, or in a single but longer contact.

Finally, a limit that is already mentioned during the work is that no face or body displaying stimuli were used, a situation that could have been achieved through using a video of an artist, in order to display different facial expressions, body movements or stage presence elements. However, this has not been performed in this current work since the objectives implied filling a gap in terms of a conventional visual brand identity, which contains rather static graphic elements.

Research perspectives

As it has already emerged along the way, the research perspectives resulting from this work are multiple. The work prepared a fertile ground to test new variables or types of visual stimuli, especially those related to video or live performance, as well as many possible mixes between new methodological designs, dependent variables, contexts, or even different methods of artist and music promotion in the music industry.

Therefore, new research can be born, through which new variables are identified, or where the relationship between the current variables gets to be tested even more in-depth. Such research can be both qualitative, by interviewing specialists and artists, but also quantitative, by generating new experiments to test causality between visual elements and musical

perception, both through web surveys as in the present case, as well as in laboratory conditions.

Among the variables that can be analyzed to test the influence of non-musical stimuli on musical elements in the context of brand identity and brand communication, some examples could consist of different posts and clips published on social media, speeches and conversations with fans, live performances, interviews, colors used in promotion and performance, press appearances, storytelling in visual, oral and textual communication, physical appearance, clothes, stage costumes, stage design or even props.

Specifically, at a qualitative level, interviews can be conducted with a larger number of specialists, and new concepts and variables can be approached. In addition, if the objectives of some potential research require such specificity, the interviews can be carried out with a set of specialists who occupy exactly the same role in the music industry. Besides interviews, other qualitative approaches can be case studies of actual artists present in the national or global music industry.

At a quantitative level, in addition to approaching new variables, concepts and audiences, more longitudinal experiments can be carried out, where a longer contact with visual stimuli is ensured, to see if familiarity produces different results. The possibilities are endless and can bring an extraordinary level of value for a better understanding of the non-musical reasons why we listen to music, go to a concert, follow an artist on social media and eventually become loyal fans

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Introduction for face-to-face interviews: Participating in this interview is voluntary, the data obtained are used strictly to serve the objectives of the paper, and you have the option to request your name to be anonymized. If most respondents choose this option, all answers will be anonymized for consistency. The answers will be analyzed together with those of the other respondents, so that their written interpretation will be done by paraphrasing and comparison, and only randomly and occasionally by direct quotations / in quotation marks, according to the academic standards of data interpretation. You have the right to stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the research.

Introduction for web interviews: Completing this interview survey is voluntary, the data obtained are used strictly to serve the objectives of the paper, and the link offers the option to anonymize the name. If most respondents choose this option, all answers will be anonymized for consistency. The answers will be analyzed together with those of the other respondents, so that their written interpretation will be done by paraphrasing and comparison, and only randomly and occasionally by direct quotations / in quotation marks, according to the academic standards of data interpretation. You have the right to stop completing the web interview survey at any time and withdraw from the research.

Q1. How would you define good music?

Q2. How do you think a crowd-pleasing artist is defined, apart from the actual music they release?

Q3. How would you define a successful artist?

Q4. What do you think are the biggest challenges today for an artist if they want to stand out in the music industry?

Q5. Do you think branding is important nowadays for artists? Why?

Q6. What do you consider to be the main elements in branding an artist?

Q7. What are the most effective promotion and brand communication channels for an artist today?

Q8. What emotions do you think most top artists convey through the way they communicate and promote?

Q9. How can these emotions used in branding and communication help the artist?

Q10. Do you think that the image of the artist (as well as its consistency) can in any way influence the level of appreciation of the public towards the actual music of the artist?

Q11. Do you think that this image can influence the perception of the quality of the artist's music?

Q12. Regarding emotions, do you think that the image of the artist can have an effect on the kind and intensity of emotions that the listener feels when listening to his music?

Q13. Where do you think the personality of the artist and the emotions conveyed are most easily observed, apart from the music itself?

Q14. Do you think it is more effective: a predominantly happy image (happiness, optimism, delight), or a predominantly sad image (sadness, rebellion, nostalgia)?

Q15. What do you consider to be the major trends and industry differences between the Romanian and the global music market?

Q16. What main activities and elements do you think should be in an artist's ideal brand strategy and identity? (we can refer to visual identity, social media, speech, interaction, merch, website, etc.)

Q17. What importance do you think the colors used can have in the visual identity of an artist?

Q18. Which colors do you think help the visual identity of an artist the most and how can they differ from one artist to another?

Q19. Do you think a logo is useful for an artist?

Q20. Storytelling: how necessary is it and why?

Appendix 2 – Web-survey for the first experiment

Introduction: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop completing it whenever you want. The data obtained are and will remain anonymous and confidential, and will not be interpreted individually, but statistically cumulated with the answers of other respondents, strictly for the purpose of this research. Thank you!

Q1. How often do you listen to music?

- a) A few times a day
- b) Once a day
- c) A few times a week
- d) A few times a month
- e) A few times a year
- f) I never listen to music

Q2. How important is music in your life? (1 = Not important at all, 7 = Very important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Importance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q3. To what extent do you prefer the following musical genres? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

Genre	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rock	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hip Hop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Latino	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soul	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hard Rock	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Electronic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New Age	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Folk	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Jazz & Blues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q4. In general, does music produce negative emotions or positive emotions to you? (1 = Strongly negative emotions, 7 = Strongly positive emotions)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
General feeling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Experimental surveys: Next, we present the music artist Darius Pop, his story, and some visual elements from his promotion strategy.

Control survey: -

Experimental survey: We invite you to listen to the new song by Darius Pop. The song can be listened to by accessing the following link: <http://>

Control survey: Please listen to the following sequence from a song: <http://>

Q5. What is the title of the song you just listened to?

- a) Everyday
- b) Pain
- c) Bliss

Q6. Do you somehow know the name of the artist singing the song?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q7. If yes, write it down: _____

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Q8. Do you somehow know what is the life story of the artist whose song you listened to?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q9. How much do you like the song you listened to? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q10. How much did you like the following elements of the song? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

Element	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Song message	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sound clarity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Voice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Melody	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rhythm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Originality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional value	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q11. To what extent would you like to listen to the song again? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Listen again	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Q12. How likely do you think the song is to become popular? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Popularity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13. To what extent would you recommend the listened song to others? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recommend	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q14. To what extent do you feel the following emotions after listening to the song? (1 = I didn't feel the emotion at all, 7 = I felt the emotion to a very large extent)

Emotion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Moved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fascinated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strong	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tender	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nostalgic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Serene	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Animated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tense	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bouncy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Filled with Wonder	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Sentimental	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Affectionate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overwhelmed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agitated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling of Transcendence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Calm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Joyful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tearful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soothed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Energetic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dreamy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mellowed (Softened-up)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Allured	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Triumphant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Amused	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disappointed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Amazed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendices

Q15. To what extent do you feel emotionally attached to the song? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Attachment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q16. Environment you live in: a) Urban b) Rural

Q17. Last graduated school:

- a) Primary
- b) Middle
- c) Highschool
- d) Secondary school (Post-highschool)
- e) Vocational school
- f) University (Bachelor's)
- g) Post-graduate (Master's, Doctorate)

Q18. What profile or specialization are you studying/following or have studied/followed? _____

Q19. Gender:

- a) Female
- b) Male
- c) Other
- d) I don't want to declare

Q20. Age: _____

Q21. Please tell me approximately, in what range is your monthly income, in your local currency:

- a) less than 1000
- b) 1001 - 1500
- c) 1501 - 2000
- d) 2001 - 2500
- e) 2501 - 3000
- f) 3001 - 3500
- g) 3501 - 4000
- h) more than 4000

Appendix 3 – Web-survey for the second experiment

Introduction: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop completing it whenever you want. The data obtained are and will remain anonymous and confidential, and will not be interpreted individually, but statistically cumulated with the answers of other respondents, strictly for the purpose of this research. Thank you!

Q1. How often do you listen to music?

- a) A few times a day
- b) Once a day
- c) A few times a week
- d) A few times a month
- e) A few times a year
- f) I never listen to music

Q2. How important is music in your life? (1 = Not important at all, 7 = Very important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Importance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q3. To what extent do you prefer the following musical genres? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

Genre	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rock	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hip Hop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Latino	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soul	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hard Rock	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Electronic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New Age	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Folk	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Jazz & Blues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q4. In general, does music produce negative emotions or positive emotions to you? (1 = Strongly negative emotions, 7 = Strongly positive emotions)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
General feeling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q5. To what extent do you like the following colors? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

Color	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Turquoise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Yellow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pink	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Red	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purple	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orange	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gray	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Q6. Using the following pairs, choose how you currently feel.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Unhappy / Happy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Annoyed / Pleased	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unsatisfied / Satisfied	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Depressed / Content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Miserable / Cheerful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bored / Relaxed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Calm / Worried	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sleepy / Awake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Experimental survey: In this part, you will be able to listen to a short piece from a song that hasn't been launched yet along with the cover artwork. Please follow the link to the song and the artwork and give it a listen: <http://>

Control survey: In this part, you will be able to listen to a short piece from a song that hasn't been launched yet. Please follow this link to the song and give it a listen: <http://>

Q7. What is the title of the song you just listened to?

- a) Everyday
- b) Pain
- c) Bliss

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Q8. Do you somehow know the name of the artist singing the song?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q9. If yes, write it down: _____

Q10. Did the song you listened to have an artwork/cover? If yes, what color was it? If there wasn't any, choose the last option.

- a) Blue
- b) Red
- c) Black
- d) White
- e) There wasn't any artwork / haven't seen any artwork

Q11. How much do you like the song you listened to? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q12. How much did you like the following elements of the song? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13. To what extent would you like to listen to the song again? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Q14. How likely do you think the song is to become popular? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q15. To what extent would you recommend the listened song to others? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q16. To what extent do you feel the following emotions after listening to the song? (1 = I didn't feel the emotion at all, 7 = I felt the emotion to a very large extent)

Emotion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Moved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fascinated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strong	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tender	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nostalgic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Serene	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Animated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tense	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bouncy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Filled with Wonder	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Sentimental	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Affectionate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overwhelmed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agitated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling of Transcendence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Calm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Joyful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tearful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soothed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Energetic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dreamy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mellowed (Softened-up)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Allured	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Triumphant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Amused	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disappointed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Amazed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendices

Q17. To what extent do you feel emotionally attached to the song? (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Attachment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q18. Environment you live in:

- a) Urban
- b) Rural

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- a) Primary
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- a) Female
- b) Male
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Q22. Age: _____

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- g) 3501 - 4000
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