

Between music consumption and collective action: belonging and identity in Taylor Swift's Brazilian fandom

Entre o consumo musical e a ação coletiva: pertencimento e identidade no *fandom* brasileiro de Taylor Swift

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ABSTRACT: *This article investigates participation, belonging, identification, and social mobilization in Taylor Swift's Brazilian fandom. Drawing primarily on studies of participatory culture and fandom, Social Identity Theory, and discussions of parasocial relationships and fan activism, the study aimed to describe how Brazilian women who identify as Taylor Swift fans experience these different dimensions of fandom participation and how they coexist within the community. A cross-sectional, descriptive online survey was conducted with 6,152 women fans recruited through convenience and snowball sampling, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that 89.5% considered being a fan part of their identity, 79.4% felt that they belonged to a community, and 35.2% had participated in mobilizations influenced by the fandom. Social media were the primary means of interaction. The findings indicate that the fandom connects music consumption, meaning-making, digital sociability, and collective action while encompassing different modes and intensities of participation.*

Keywords: *fandom; Taylor Swift; music consumption; social identity; collective action.*

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RESUMO: *Este artigo investiga a participação, o sentimento de pertencimento, a identificação e a mobilização social no fandom brasileiro de Taylor Swift. Com base principalmente em estudos sobre cultura participativa e fandom, na Teoria da Identidade Social e em discussões sobre relações parassociais e ativismo de fãs, o estudo objetivou descrever como mulheres brasileiras que se identificam como fãs de Taylor Swift vivenciam essas diferentes dimensões da participação no fandom e como elas coexistem na comunidade. Foi realizada uma pesquisa online, descritiva e transversal com 6.152 mulheres fãs, recrutadas por meio de amostragem por conveniência e bola de neve, e os dados foram analisados por meio de estatística descritiva. Os resultados mostraram que 89,5% incorporaram a condição de fã à sua identidade, 79,4% sentiam que pertenciam a uma comunidade e 35,2% haviam participado de mobilizações influenciadas pelo fandom. As redes sociais foram o principal meio de interação. As conclusões indicam que o fandom conecta o consumo de música, a construção de significados, a sociabilidade digital e a ação coletiva, ao mesmo tempo em que abrange diferentes modos e intensidades de participação.*

Palavras-chave: *fandom; Taylor Swift; consumo musical; identidade social; ação coletiva.*

Introduction

In contemporary digital culture, few practices illustrate transformations in media consumption as clearly as fan participation. Communities formed around a shared interest in a product, narrative, or cultural figure are known as fandoms. Rather than mere groups of admirers, fandoms are spaces in which content related to the object of admiration is interpreted, recirculated, and incorporated into fans' everyday lives. Thus, being a fan involves making meaning, sharing content, and interacting with people who find in the same object a source of identification (LUNDY; JENKINS; VAN DEN BULCK, 2020). Fandoms therefore offer a valuable lens for understanding how media and consumption intersect with sociability, identity construction, and community formation.

Among the largest contemporary music fandoms is that of American singer Taylor Swift. Known as Swifties, her fans form a predominantly female, transnational community that follows the artist's musical output, public career, and related content. Their participation extends beyond listening to her songs: on social media, fans interpret lyrics, follow releases, share experiences, create content, and organize collective action (LEDBETTER, 2025; MORRIS, 2025). This dynamic aligns the fandom with Jenkins's (2009) concept of participatory culture, in which consumers also contribute to the circulation and reinterpretation of media products. In Swift's case, such involvement is fostered by musical narratives about relationships, loss, coming of age, and women's experiences, which fans may connect to their own life experiences.

Beyond cultural participation, fandoms can provide resources for identity expression, mutual recognition, and the formation of social ties. Interacting with people who share similar interests can lessen perceived isolation and validate experiences that may go unrecognized in other contexts (GROENE; HETTINGER, 2016; REYSEN *et al.*, 2022). In music fandoms, songs, lyrics, and artist-related narratives can offer symbolic repertoires through which fans interpret emotions and make sense of their own experiences (FISKE, 1992; LEDBETTER, 2025;

MORRIS, 2025). This does not mean that fandom necessarily produces psychological benefits; rather, it indicates that music consumption and community participation may acquire significant affective meanings.

The communication and organizational skills developed in these spaces can also be mobilized for social and political causes. Engagement initially built around a cultural product or celebrity may facilitate the circulation of information, fundraising, and campaign organization (BROUGH; SHRESTHOVA, 2012). Liska (2025), for example, analyzed how Argentine Taylor Swift fans mobilized fandom symbols and practices in the digital campaign against then-presidential candidate Javier Milei, ‘Swifties do not vote for Milei’ (*‘Swiftie no vota Milei’*), demonstrating that forms of participation associated with popular culture can spill over into political action.

Despite growing scholarly interest in Swifties, large-scale quantitative studies that jointly examine different dimensions of this experience remain relatively uncommon, particularly in Brazil. The relationships among music consumption, interaction with other fans, belonging, identification, affective experiences, and social mobilization therefore remain underexplored in the Brazilian context. Against this background, the study was guided by the following question: How do Brazilian women who identify as Taylor Swift fans experience and describe different forms of participation in the fandom, particularly in terms of interaction, belonging, identification, affective experiences, and social mobilization? Accordingly, the study aimed to describe these dimensions of fandom participation among Brazilian women fans and to examine how different modes and intensities of involvement coexist within Taylor Swift’s Brazilian fandom.

Fandom, cultural consumption, and women’s identities

In media studies, fandoms are understood as cultural formations in which consumption is not limited to passive reception. Fiske (1992) notes that fans appropriate the products of mass culture, reinterpret them through

their own experiences, and assign them new meanings. Jenkins (1992), in turn, shows that fan communities develop knowledge as well as creative and collaborative practices related to the objects they consume. Being a fan therefore involves not only following a particular product or public figure, but also producing interpretations, relationships, and social practices around them.

With the expansion of digital platforms, these activities have become more intensive and visible. The distinction between consumption and participation has grown less rigid, as those who consume a work can also comment on it, recirculate it, transform it, and help sustain the community organized around it. Jenkins (2009) refers to this form of consumer engagement in the circulation of content and the production of meaning as participatory culture. In music fandoms, it may include interpreting lyrics, creating videos and other materials, sharing information, organizing campaigns, and attending events. These practices extend the consumption experience beyond individual listening and contribute to the construction of shared codes, memories, and narratives.

Participation in fandoms, however, is not socially evaluated in the same way for all audiences. Jensen (1992) observes that fans have often been portrayed as excessive, deviant, or psychologically disturbed individuals. Such characterizations fall particularly heavily on women, whose enthusiasm for artists and popular culture products is frequently interpreted as irrational or childish. Rather than being recognized as consumers capable of producing knowledge and interpretations, women fans may be treated as “second-class” participants who supposedly lack cultural competence (NISBETT, 2018).

In response to this delegitimization, women have increasingly and actively negotiated the meanings associated with being a fan. For example, in a study of members of fandoms associated with the so-called Korean Wave, Maulina, Surya, and Wibawa (2025) found that participants sought to distance themselves from stereotypes about fans and construct a collective identity perceived as mature and critical. The community was not merely a space of consumption, but also one of knowledge

acquisition, discussion, and the legitimation of culturally devalued interests. In this way, an initially individual interest can become a shared practice and a resource for identity expression.

Taylor Swift's fandom is part of this dynamic. Swifties follow the artist's musical output and public career, but they also interpret lyrics, share information, and create content related to the experiences represented in her songs. Ledbetter (2025) describes how Swift's music provides symbols and narratives that foster the convergence of meanings among fans. Morris (2025), in turn, emphasizes how introspective lyrics and narratives of youth and coming of age help recreate, in digital spaces, an atmosphere akin to adolescent "bedroom cultures."

Taylor Swift's openness about her struggles with body image and eating disorders has been found to have a positive impact on her fans (POPE; ROSE, 2024). Furthermore, recent research (*e.g.*, POYIL, 2025) suggests that shared experiences within fandoms may foster collective resilience, enabling fans to support one another in the face of challenges.

By relating songs to their own experiences, fans use a cultural product as a resource for interpreting personal situations and communicating feelings. This does not mean, however, that the fandom is homogeneous or equally welcoming to everyone. The predominance of White, middle-class women identified in surveys conducted in the United States raises questions about representation and about the possibilities for belonging among fans who do not fit this profile (KAPLAN, 2023). The fan experience should therefore be understood both as a form of cultural participation and identity expression and as a practice shaped by social differences and inequalities.

Belonging, identification, and mobilization in the fandom

Fandoms can be understood through identity-based approaches, including Social Identity Theory. This theoretical framework holds that part of an individual's self-concept derives from their affiliation with social groups and categories (TAJFEL; TURNER, 1979). Applied to fandoms,

this perspective helps explain how a cultural preference can be incorporated into a person's self-definition. The statement "I am a Swiftie" may express more than an appreciation of Taylor Swift's music: it can also indicate recognition of the symbols, memories, and practices shared by a community. The stronger the identification with the group, the greater the importance that being a fan tends to assume in one's self-concept and self-presentation to others (WANN; ROYALTY; ROBERTS, 2000). This does not mean that every admirer develops a strong fan identity, since music consumption and community belonging are related but not equivalent dimensions. A person may feel a strong connection to the music and follow the artist's career without interacting frequently with other fans.

Conversely, interacting with people who share the same interest can foster mutual recognition and the formation of a collective identity. Groene and Hettinger (2016) emphasize that fan identity may be associated with a sense of community, particularly when the group validates interests that receive little recognition in other contexts. Reysen *et al.* (2022) likewise found associations between fandom identification, helping behaviors among members, self-esteem, and well-being. Fans construct a collective identity through a shared interest in Swift's music, which functions as a social symbol of belonging.

Belonging thus arises from the perception of occupying a recognized place within a group. Interactions within the fandom may create opportunities for friendship, the exchange of experiences, and social support. These ties, however, should not be assumed to follow necessarily from being a fan. Fan communities encompass different modes and intensities of participation, ranging from predominantly individual listening to daily involvement in groups, events, and cultural production practices.

In addition to its communal dimension, fandom has an affective dimension related to the appropriation of media products. By linking songs and narratives to their own life trajectories, fans may use them to name feelings, validate experiences, and find comfort at particular moments. Taylor Swift's compositions address themes such as relationships,

loss, insecurity, coming of age, and autonomy, providing repertoires with which some listeners may identify (LEDBETTER, 2025; MORRIS, 2025). The meanings assigned to these narratives arise not solely from the content of the songs, but also from fans' appropriation of them in personal and collective contexts.

It is also important to note that an affective connection with a celebrity may take on parasocial characteristics. Parasocial relationships are one-sided bonds in which audience members perceive closeness to or familiarity with a media figure despite the absence of reciprocal personal interaction (HOFFNER; BOND, 2022). In Taylor Swift's case, autobiographical lyrics, interviews, social media posts, and information about her life may foster the sense that fans know the artist and understand her experiences. This perceived closeness should be distinguished from ties among fans: whereas a parasocial relationship refers to a connection with the celebrity, community belonging derives from recognition and interaction within the fandom. The two dimensions may coexist, but they are not necessarily equivalent.

Participation in a fandom may also move beyond consumption and affective identification to acquire a civic dimension. Brough and Shresthova (2012) argue that competencies developed in fan communities, such as content production, information circulation, and participant coordination, can be mobilized for political and social action. In such cases, the repertoires, ties, and communication infrastructures built around a cultural product are redirected toward campaigns, fundraising, or collective demonstrations. Taylor Swift, for example, promoted activism during U.S. election cycles from 2018 to 2024 and has explicitly advocated for women's rights, among other causes (DRIESSEN, 2022; RAHMAWATI, 2024).

Fan activism, however, is not an automatic effect of a celebrity's political stance. Fans interpret and recirculate messages and may embrace, transform, or reject them. The Argentine campaign "*Swiftie no vota Milei*," analyzed by Liska (2025), illustrates how an identity initially associated with music consumption can be activated in a situated political

mobilization. Fans themselves used fandom symbols and practices to construct a collective position within a specific electoral context. Similarly, Chen and Shu (2025) argue that Swift's advocacy for gender equality resonates with fans and strengthens their sense of agency and community identity.

Identification, belonging, affective closeness, and mobilization are therefore distinct, though potentially interconnected, dimensions of fandom participation. A fan may identify strongly with the artist without interacting with the community; may participate in collective practices without becoming politically involved; or may mobilize relationships and competencies developed in the fandom for social action. Attending to these differences avoids treating Swifties as a homogeneous group and enables a more precise examination of how media consumption, affect, and collective participation relate to one another.

Methods

Study design and participants

This quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive study was conducted through an online survey. The sample comprised 6,152 women who identified as Taylor Swift fans and ranged in age from 18 to 47 years ($M = 22.46$; $SD = 3.67$). The inclusion criteria were self-identifying as a woman and as a fan of the singer, being at least 18 years old, and providing informed consent. Individuals who did not meet these conditions were excluded. A convenience sample was recruited through snowball sampling.

In this study, "Taylor Swift's Brazilian fandom" does not refer to a single formally bounded fan community, group, or platform. Rather, the term is used broadly to designate Brazilian participants who self-identified as Taylor Swift fans and who may engage with the fandom through different online and offline spaces and with varying degrees of interaction. Participants were therefore not

required to belong to any specific fan club, social media group, or organized community.

Instrument

Data were collected using a questionnaire comprising closed-ended items about participants' experiences in the fandom, along with sociodemographic questions. Specifically, the items examined length of participation; motivations for joining; engagement with community activities; frequency and primary mode of interaction with other fans; activities undertaken; sense of community belonging; perceived influence of the music on emotions and well-being; use of the fandom as a resource during difficult times; incorporation of being a fan into one's identity; perceived connection with Taylor Swift; perceived understanding by the artist through her music; participation in social mobilizations; and causes associated with the fandom. The sociodemographic questionnaire collected data on age, state of residence, and educational attainment.

Procedures

Data were collected in March 2025. The research invitation and survey link were disseminated primarily on Instagram and X/Twitter through fan networks related to Taylor Swift and were subsequently circulated by participants through snowball sampling. These platforms were recruitment channels rather than boundaries defining the fandom under study. The questionnaire assessed participants' primary mode of interaction with other fans in broader categories, including social media, dedicated online forums or groups, and in-person events; it did not identify the specific social media platform used by each participant for fandom interactions.

Before accessing the questionnaire, participants were presented with information about the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidential treatment of the data, and the exclusive use of the data for scientific purposes. Only those who indicated their consent were

given access to the remaining questions. All closed-ended items required a response. Consequently, there were no missing data for the quantitative variables, and all 6,152 participants were included in the analyses. Data were exported from Google Forms and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 23, with descriptive statistics calculated.

Ethical considerations

The project was approved by a Research Ethics Committee (approval No. 7.468.764; CAAE no. 87329925.2.0000.5184). The study complied with Resolutions No. 466/2012 and No. 510/2016 of Brazil's National Health Council, which govern research involving human participants, including research in the humanities and social sciences. Participation was voluntary and contingent upon informed consent; the data were treated confidentially and used exclusively for scientific purposes.

Results and discussion

The sample comprised 6,152 women aged 18 to 47 years ($M = 22.46$; $SD = 3.67$). Approximately 80% were between 18 and 25 years old, and the most frequently reported age was 18 (14.1%). Participants came from different Brazilian states, with the greatest concentration in the Southeast: São Paulo (28.6%), Rio de Janeiro (13.6%), and Minas Gerais (9.2%). Regarding educational attainment, 43.4% had some university education, 20.8% had completed secondary education, 20.5% held a university degree, and 13.3% held a *latu sensu* postgraduate certificate, master's degree, or doctorate. The predominance of young women with access to higher education may reflect both the composition of digital fan spaces and the recruitment conducted through these networks.

Participation and interaction in the fandom

Regarding the frequency of interaction with other fans, 34.4% reported interacting rarely; 27.3%, a few times per month; 17.6%, daily;

16.0%, weekly; and 4.6%, never. Thus, 60.9% interacted at least a few times per month, whereas 39.0% did so rarely or never. This distribution shows that self-identifying as a fan does not necessarily entail frequent community participation for everyone: the fandom encompasses practices ranging from individual activities, such as listening to music and following releases, to intensive forms of sociability and cultural production.

Identification with the music and lyrics was the most frequently reported initial motivation for joining the fandom (96.57%), followed by admiration for Taylor Swift's personality and career (66.52%). Directly community-oriented motivations were less common: 17.58% selected interaction with other fans, and 8.74% selected the desire to be part of a group. Engagement with causes supported by the singer was reported by 15.9%, and interest in merchandise and exclusive content by 4.68%. Because participants could select more than one response, the percentages do not represent mutually exclusive categories.

These data suggest that fans are drawn to the fandom primarily through identification with the artist's work and career, while sociability may become relevant at a later stage. The centrality of the lyrics is consistent with Morris (2025), who emphasizes the role of introspective and coming-of-age narratives in fans' identification with the artist.

Social media were identified by 89.4% of participants as their primary means of interacting with other fans, while 3.9% cited in-person events and 3.0% cited dedicated forums or groups. Among the activities undertaken (with multiple responses permitted), the most common were following and interacting with the singer's social media posts (90.7%), wearing themed accessories (63.9%), attending Taylor Swift concerts or related events (59.2%), and purchasing or collecting merchandise and memorabilia (52.0%). Participants also reported supporting or taking part in fandom-related social campaigns (43.8%), making themed accessories or items (27.4%), participating in online groups or forums (25.5%), and creating content such as videos, fan art, covers, or fan fiction (7.2%).

These practices underscore the centrality of digital platforms to sustaining the community, but they also show that the fandom is not exclusively virtual. Online interactions are intertwined with event participation, the acquisition and production of objects, and forms of collective engagement. Friendship bracelets, for example, can simultaneously function as consumer goods, markers of identification, and resources for interaction. This diversity is consistent with the participatory culture described by Jenkins (2009) and Lundy, Jenkins and van den Bulck (2020), in which consumers contribute to the circulation and reinterpretation of media products and fandoms tend to inspire creative production and participation in communities of fans with similar interests.

Belonging and identification

A sense of belonging to a community was reported by 79.4% of participants, and 89.5% considered being a Taylor Swift fan part of their identity. These findings are consistent with Social Identity Theory, according to which group affiliation can become part of the self-concept (TAJFEL; TURNER, 1979), and with research linking identification with an object of interest to the incorporation of fan status into self-definition (WANN; ROYALTY; ROBERTS, 2000).

The high levels of identity and belonging nevertheless coexisted with the finding that 39.0% of participants rarely or never interacted with other fans. This descriptive comparison suggests that identification may be sustained both by community practices and by an individual's relationship with the music and the artist's career. The data thus indicate distinct modes of involvement and counter any representation of the fandom as a homogeneous group.

Affective experiences and perceived closeness

The perceived influence of the music on emotions and well-being was considered positive by 98.3% of participants, while 1.2% reported no

perceived influence and 0.5% reported a negative influence. When asked about difficult situations, 45.4% responded that the fandom had helped them on some occasions; 26.8%, always; 4.4%, once; and 23.4%, never. Thus, 76.6% perceived that the fandom had contributed in some way to coping with these moments, albeit with varying frequency. These results are consistent with Poyil's (2025) discussion of how shared experiences within fandoms can foster collective resilience and mutual support among fans facing challenges. Although the present study did not directly measure these constructs, the finding is compatible with this broader pattern.

A personal connection with Taylor Swift, despite the absence of personal contact, was reported by 76.8% of participants, while 96.7% stated that they had felt understood by the artist through her music. Narratives about relationships, loss, insecurity, and coming of age may provide repertoires to which fans relate their own experiences (LEDBETTER, 2025; MORRIS, 2025). The responses are also consistent with perceived parasocial closeness, that is, a sense of familiarity with a media figure without personal reciprocity (HOFFNER; BOND, 2022).

Social mobilization

Participation in a campaign or mobilization influenced by the fandom was reported by 35.2% of participants. Although this was not the experience of the majority, the percentage shows that, for more than one-third of the sample, practices and ties built around music consumption extended into the civic sphere. Fan communities can develop competencies in information circulation and participant coordination that may be directed toward social and political action (BROUGH; SHRESTHOVA, 2012).

Among the causes perceived as associated with the fandom, 91.3% selected women's rights and 57.8% selected politics and elections. Because the question allowed multiple responses, these associations

could overlap. The centrality of women's rights may be related to the incorporation of feminism into the artist's public image (DRIESSEN, 2022). As Chen and Shu (2025) argue, Taylor Swift's advocacy for gender equality resonates positively with fans, strengthening their sense of agency and community identity. However, critics have argued that Swift's feminism privileges the experiences of White, heterosexual, middle-class women and only partially incorporates an intersectional perspective (LEE; OH, 2020).

Limitations

Despite the relevance of these findings, the results should be interpreted in light of the study's nonprobability sampling design: participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling in fan networks. This procedure encouraged the self-selection of people interested in the topic and prevents the findings from being generalized to all Brazilian fans. The cross-sectional design and use of self-reported responses also preclude causal inferences about music consumption, participation, belonging, and well-being.

In addition, the questionnaire was developed for this study and did not use validated scales of social identity, well-being, social support, or parasocial relationships. The results describe specific indicators and may not capture the intensity or ambivalence of participants' experiences. The absence of information on race, sexual orientation, and other social dimensions is another significant limitation that precludes an intersectional analysis. Future research should employ validated scales, more diverse samples, and qualitative, mixed-methods, or longitudinal designs, as well as compare different fandoms.

Conclusion

This study examined forms of participation, belonging, identification, affective experience, and social mobilization among 6,152 Brazilian women who are Taylor Swift fans. Fans were drawn to the fandom

primarily through identification with the music and lyrics, while digital platforms constituted the main space for interaction. For most participants, being a fan formed part of their identity and was associated with a sense of belonging to a community, although a substantial proportion rarely or never interacted with other fans. This coexistence highlights the fandom's heterogeneity: forms of involvement ranged from predominantly individual relationships with the artist's work to intensive practices of sociability and collective action.

Participants also attributed positive affective meanings to the music and the fandom, and more than one-third of the sample had participated in mobilizations influenced by the fandom, indicating that practices and ties built around music consumption may extend into the civic sphere. Taken together, however, the findings suggest that identification as a fan, community belonging, interaction with other fans, affective closeness to the artist, and engagement in collective action should not be treated as interchangeable dimensions of fandom participation. Although these experiences may coexist, they do not necessarily occur with the same intensity or among the same proportions of fans. The study shows that individuals may identify as fans and feel a sense of belonging to the fandom while interacting only rarely, or not at all, with other fans.

The study's specific contribution to fan studies lies in empirically documenting this heterogeneity in a large sample of Brazilian women fans, a context still underrepresented in research on Taylor Swift's fandom. Rather than approaching fandom participation as a homogeneous experience, the findings point to different ways of being and participating as a fan, from primarily individual engagement with music and the artist to community interaction and collective mobilization. In doing so, the study contributes to a more differentiated understanding of the relationships among media consumption, identity, belonging, digital sociability, and collective action, while also challenging stereotypes that reduce female fandoms to irrationality or immaturity.

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