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Pop Star: Taylor Swift



"Right now, Taylor is untouchable. She is so far ahead of everyone else in the industry that she has become not only a powerhouse entertainer but also an important mover and shaker on the commercial side of the music business." - US-based media analyst, Mike Raia

Section 1.0 Introduction and Background

Career Length: 10 years
Record Label: Big Machine Records
Approximate Net Worth: \$280 million
Significant Revenue of 2015: 1989 Album and World Tour

In 2006 at 16, Taylor Swift began her music career with the self-written songs on the album *Taylor Swift* that was produced by Big Machine Records. In perhaps a coincidence or stroke of marketing genius, her single “Tim McGraw” aligned her with an established country music star and her pop-rock approach to country music and connection with teen girls involved an entirely new audience. Swift is now a global sensation with reported earnings of over \$1 million every day of 2015 and approximate net worth of over \$280 million. Recent financial success is largely in part to Swift’s fifth album, *1989* and the highest grossing world tour of 2015 by the same name. The tour was attended by 2,278,647 fans and earned \$250,733,097 in revenue. American Express, Xfinity and Keds are the corporate sponsors for the North American tour. Swift is the youngest and only artist to receive *Woman of the Year* twice and only female artist in history to spend six weeks or more at the No. 1 spot for three consecutive albums.

Swift has endorsements with products like Diet Coke, Keds, CoverGirl, LEI Jeans and Elizabeth Arden. Swift has her own fragrances: Wonderstruck, Wonderstruck Enchanted, Taylor, and Incredible Things and a collection of shoes for Keds. Swift is one of *TIME* Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World and she has, as First Lady Michelle Obama said at the 2012 Kids Choice Awards, “shattered every expectation of what a 22 year old can accomplish.”

Section 2.0 Use of Social Media Overall

“Take care of your fans,” country artists say, almost as a mantra, “and they’ll take care of you for life.” – LA Times on Taylor Swift

*data collected January 20, 2016. The nature of social media permits these numbers to fluctuate.

- Instagram: 63.4 million followers
- Twitter: 69.7 million followers; active since 2008
- Facebook: 74,004,220 likes; active since 2008
- YouTube: 17,969,711 subscribers; 7,773,830,225 views; active since 2009
- Google+: 2,741,491 followers
- Pinterest: 14.4 thousand follower

Taylor Swift manages her own social media platforms, but is speculated to have hired a team to help with the planning and execution.

Section 3.0 Summary of Strategic Analysis and Use of Social Media Overall

Strategy 1: Engage with Fans

Taylor Swift positions herself on social media as relatable yet influential by balancing post content between photos of bright lights, sparkly costumes and sold out arenas with videos of her cats, named Meredith Grey and Olivia Benson after television characters. Swift's musical content is self-written and got its roots from her high school diaries, creating an authenticity to her that was magnetic to fans. However, research on her background shows she always had big dreams and bright lights fueling her every move. With the rise of her fame, Taylor Swift has materialized that ever-existing dichotomy in her brand identity on social media by posting a balance of "celebrity" and "human" posts. The allure and accessibility of Swift's feed prompts fan interaction and engagement. Since she began using social media, Swift has become famous for actively responding to fan videos, comments, photos and more. Because of her relatability, fans are confident to reach out to her because they believe she's "just like them." Because of her public and often lengthy and thoughtful responses, more fans engage hoping to get a response. Engagement with fans promotes brand loyalty, and Swift understands her target audience's desires to feel appreciated and loved.

Strategy 2: Maintain Brand Consistency

Taylor Swift maintains a thorough brand consistency in her social media postings which leads fans to see her as a unit. This unified image across the different social media channels creates a reliability that is attractive to many fans. In the beginning of 2011 Swift bought her cat, Meredith Grey, named after a powerful female lead in a television show Swift is a fan of. In 2014, Swift got another cat that she named Olivia Benson for the same reasons. These cats quickly became the stars of her social media feeds on all platforms. Swift started a dating hiatus, a platform she was famous for, and began to be seen with more women. This started to focus her social media postings and even her music more on what she was doing with her "girl friends" and eventually, Swift coined the term "Squad Goals" to describe her growing network of powerful women in television, music, film, politics, dance, art, fashion and more. Swift capitalizes on the friendships with other big name celebrities to expand her franchise and build credibility. This public move toward a "girl squad" on her social media accounts positioned it to be an integral part of her 1989 World Tour. From baking cookies with Karlie Kloss, taking selfies with the cat version of Olivia Benson, or posing in front of a sold out arena with Idina Menzel, Taylor Swift had an intricate and long-running social media plan to maintain brand consistency with a unified vision of an empowered female.

Strategy 3: Encourage the Power of Words

Taylor Swift's music began from words scribbled down in her diary. In many interviews, songs and fan comments she alludes to her high school experiences of being bullied and this connects her on a personal level to a great number of her fans who are suffering similar experiences. Swift publicly acknowledges that she deals with conflict on her social media and strategically acts in response to these conflicts. Conflicts with Kanye West, Apple Music, Nicki Minaj and Spotify are among her most famous public controversies. Swift proves that she can

ignite change, forgive and mend with just the power of words. This is important to her fan base as previously mentioned of young teens, mostly women that are dealing with conflict every day and look to her for guidance and advice. While none of them have Kanye West interrupting them at an awards show or Apple Music reading a letter they wrote, her fans have bullies, negativity, mean people and disappointment. These negative experiences are similar at their core and create an idolization of Swift when she does show her more vulnerable sides to her fans. With this vulnerable side, fans are prompted to “help her” or support her by buying her music, going to her tours and consuming her merchandise. Swift uses words to mend conflict and pursue change and this just creates a more supportive consumer.

Section 4.0 Tactical Analysis

Engage with Fans

With the long-existing dichotomy in Taylor Swift’s identity of “human” and “celebrity,” she engages with fans to preserve this status. Swift is notorious for posting long, thoughtful comments on fans’ pages, sharing fan covers of her songs, and interacting in general. When she comments on fan photos like a long time friend, she creates a parasocial relationship that promotes loyalty to her brand. By using anecdotes, no makeup selfies and thoughtful comments, she makes her fans reach out to her more frequently in hopes of a response from her. Swift is most interactive with her fans on Tumblr, because of its personalization capabilities and blog community components. She admits to doing weird things on purpose sometimes just so her fans can make GIFs to share with her on Tumblr. Swift interacts with fans indirectly, by acknowledging them as a whole as in the tweet shown on the right. This allows every fan addressed to feel a personal connection and a “she’s talking to me” moment.



She also reaches out personally to fans with comments on their Instagram photos prompting them to personalize things for her, such as the sweater a fan knitted for her and gave to her mom during the 1989 World Tour in the Instagram photo to the right. She also began the hashtag #Swiftmas in 2014 and sent thoughtful gifts to many of her fans, personally writing them a letter. She tended to ship the gifts, but did make a few special appearances. Because of their presents from Taylor Swift, the fans flooded social media, increasing her brand awareness and generating interest.

Finally, she reposts and reaches out to fans that “experience” her music. She often reposts or takes a personal trip to visit her fans that sing covers of her songs, dance to her music or takes special attention to her as a person or artist.



Maintain Brand Consistency

The past two years have been the years of girl squads, crop tops and high waisted shorts/skirts, short hair, red lipstick and cats. Taylor Swift went under a successful rebranding since the 2009-2013 seasons of her career when she was primarily known as the heartbroken America's Sweetheart that dated big name boys and wrote songs about them. This rebranding was a thorough and strategic. As Swift shifted her music style to strictly pop, her social media strategy became evident that she was refocusing by her posts of what she was doing with her girl friends instead of just award shows, tours, boys and family. In an Instagram photo from the VMAs in 2015, Swift poses with her "girl squad" present in her "Bad Blood" music video.



The real-life friendships that Swift fostered with the stars of her music video were documented on her social media accounts such as this photo of Karlie Kloss and Swift on a road trip through Big Sur. This created an authenticity to the friendships that fans and consumers could respect and value before Taylor Swift used them in her star-studded music video for her song, "Bad Blood" from the 1989 album. The stars featured in the video and a part of her friend group promoted this album on their own social media accounts, successfully expanding the audience for Taylor Swift's brand.



California here we come, right back where we started from... ROAD TRIP!! @karliekloss

To generate awareness for the release of the video, Swift shared a countdown of poster inspired images of each of the stars featured in her video with a super-villain name and the release date on her Instagram page.



Encourage the Power of Words

Perhaps the most public controversy in Swift's career is when Kanye West interrupted her at the MTV Music Video Awards near the very beginning of her career when she won Video of the

Year for "You Belong with Me." Years later, Swift alludes to the conflict with a graceful heart on her social media page with posts about a mended relationship, joking vice presidential run in 2020 with West, a friendship bouquet and other hints of moving on. Swift uses short phrases and hashtags on Instagram to acknowledge a solved conflict and prompt fans to support her. "Awwwww Kanye West sent me the coolest flowers! #KanTay2020 #BFFS"



Photo courtesy of Taylor's Instagram



Swift dealt with a different kind of conflict when Apple Music updated their policies regarding the lack of pay for artists, writers and producers during a free three month trial period for their users. In a letter released on her social media platform, Tumblr, Swift expresses her opinion about the policies and takes action by removing her music from the streaming device. She goes on to say that she is writing not for herself, but for the musicians and artists that may not be as able to support themselves without those three months of payment for the use of their music. Her sentiments inspired change and Apple listened, changing their policies immediately and tweeting to Swift to publicly acknowledge the change. Swift uses her big fanbase, eloquent control of words and influence in the music industry to inspire change and insure the future of the music business as it exists in the digital sphere today.



*Taylor Swift uses Facebook as a linking service to send consumers to view her other social media platforms, specifically Instagram and Tumblr. Taylor Swift uses YouTube as a collection of her professionally produced music videos and few behind the scenes official videos.

Section 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude, Taylor Swift is well-versed and wildly successful in the social media realm because of her many tactics and strategies. Swift's social media efforts follow thorough awareness, acceptance and action objectives that translate to brand loyalty, album sales, merchandise sales and increased overall revenue. Articles have been written about Swift's social media tactics by Forbes, Business News Daily, LA Times, Meltwater and more that deem her the current ruler of social media. The reasons she rules social media are varied depending on the writer, but a special focus was put in this particular audit on her usage of Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr as these channels are Swift's most used platforms. The examined strategies include: engaging with fans, maintaining brand consistency and encouraging the power of words. These strategies are expanded by the tactics named in the previous section.

The meticulous planning of Swift's social media disguises itself as natural and unrehearsed, making it easy for fans to be attracted to her sites and feel able to reach out. Swift's openness with her fans proves her deep understanding of the millennial "sharing" culture and target publics. Her commodity is music, but Swift understands to sell music she must also sell her identity. Promoting album and song sales with the artistic integrity preserved by taking her music off streaming sites like Spotify was thought at first to be a detrimental move in her career. After all, streaming services are believed to be the future of the music industry. However, Swift has used social media to construct a loyal fanbase that strives to support her. She is transparent with her consumers on her social media about the reasons she makes certain business related decisions, in an "investor relations" style update. This transparency is just a small factor in the success of Taylor Swift's social media efforts.

Moving forward, Taylor Swift does not need to falter in her social media efforts to effectively maintain the engagement, consistency and influence of her accounts. The pre-existing strategies and tactics need to remain. However, some improvement could be made in Swift's future endeavors. Swift's Tumblr page is thought to be the most successful of her social media platforms because of its status as a tight-knit blogging community and her ability to interact and influence fans more personally. She actually created the platform one month before the release of 1989, by no coincidence I'm sure. With this pre-existing platform, Swift needs to start a regularly posting video or print blog documenting her travel experiences while on tour, her song-writing experiences in her off season, her girl squad hangouts or more of the pre-existing photo content on Instagram as an expansion. Another possible improvement could be creating some linked social media accounts for Meredith Grey and Olivia Benson, her cats. Taylor's photos of her cats always receive a lot of fan attention and she has even positioned them with brand personalities. This could present a future expansion into careers of their own in Meow Mix commercials and perhaps even movies. Meredith is very sassy and could hold a commentary on Twitter about life with Taylor, an inside look on her song-writing, tours, friends, performances and family. Olivia is very "scrappy" as Taylor once said in an interview with TV personality, Ellen. Olivia could play tricks on people and come up with a holiday pranking campaign similar to that of Jimmy Kimmel and Ellen's that could be a YouTube channel. The insight of Meredith

and Olivia could perhaps even be the subject for Taylor's pre-existing Tumblr page blog as previously suggested. These will be new tactics to expand on the strategies already in place: fan engagement, brand consistency and influence.

Additional Information

Instagram @taylorswift

Taylor Swift is the most followed celebrity on Instagram with 63.4 million followers. Swift is trailed by Kim Kardashian West with 58.6 million followers and Justin Bieber with 55.2 million. Of Swift's 63.4 million followers, approximately 40 million of them were from 2015 alone. Five of Instagram's "Most Liked Photos of 2015" were from Taylor Swift's account.

Twitter @taylorswift13

Taylor Swift is the third most followed celebrity on Twitter with 69.7 million followers. She follows Katy Perry with 81.5 million followers and Justin Bieber with 74 million. Taylor Swift coined the hashtag "#SquadGoals" and announced her 1989 tour on with a tweet "#The1989WorldTour is happening!" on November 3, 2014.

Facebook Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift is number 21 of the most liked Facebook pages. She posts around once a day and many of the Facebook posts are regenerations of existing Instagram and Twitter posts. Swift posted a release link to her op-ed for the Wall Street Journal about the music and music streaming industry on her Facebook page.

YouTube Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift is the sixth most viewed celebrity YouTube page. She takes seventh place in the most viewed YouTube videos of all time with "Shake It Off" at an average of 2,744,653 views a day. Swift also takes third with "Blank Space" at 3,962,704 views per day.

Tumblr Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift joined Tumblr in September 2014, a unique social media platform that encourages personalization. Her inaugural post was admittance to her fans about her lack of knowledge on the site. She asked her fans for help on how to use GIFs, reblog and more. This promoted engagement with fans and immersed her into the Tumblr community. Swift posted her grievance to Apple about its artist payment policy in a letter on her Tumblr June 21, 2015, effectively changing the company's policy.