

THE END PRODUCT OF THE IMAGINE DRAGONS' AND LADY GAGA'S MUSIC, OR THE NATURE OF MARKETING MIX IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT. It is a fact that consumer behaviour changes according to the decisive events that occur in people's lives. More precisely, they buy different products or services when events such as marriage, childbirth or the loss of a family member occur. Music, on the other hand, is a service product which use does not change depending on what events occur in people's lives. In fact, there are songs that are required at weddings, christenings and funerals. This article examines first of all (a) what defines the songs of Imagine Dragons and Lady Gaga, more specifically (1) the source of their emotions in their songs, (2) what these songs provide beyond emotions and how these things materialize, (3) what they convey to society, as well as (b) how marketing mix elements are represented in the music industry.

Key words: *music, marketing-mix, Imagine Dragons, Lady Gaga, end product, personalization*

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Introduction and Review of Literature

Music has been an integral part of society for many centuries, as “approximately 70,000 years ago, all music was popular, in so far as it was shared and enjoyed by all members of a society” (Blacking, 1981, p. 9), therefore songs – as many other products/services - have taken various forms. According to research by North, Hargreaves and O'Neill, listening to pop music is far more popular than listening to classical music. In fact, listening to classical music offers only one perceived advantage over pop music: the positive perception of music by teachers and parents regarding listening to this genre (North, et al., 2000). However, the question arises: what is the impact music can have.

(A) Music products not only provide light-hearted feelings or entertainment but also, in many cases, have deep thought-provoking content. There are even songs that can have a drastic impact on people's lives. The (perhaps) best example of this is the song *Gloomy Sunday* by the Hungarian lyricist Pál Jávör. The song has also attracted the attention of singers/bands like Billie Holliday, Marianne Faithfull, Sinead O'Connor, Björk, Sarah McLachlan, Diamanda Galas, Heather Nova, Sarah Brightman, Sarah Vaughan, Matt Forbes and Tunes of Down. According to some, the song can be linked to 17 suicides in Hungary and up to 200 worldwide (available at: <https://retrolegends.hu/2013/12/10/szomoru-vasarnap-agyilkos-dal/>). It is true that there are many questions about the song, but it is also a fact that *Gloomy Sunday*³ also had a profound influence on Rezső Seress (composer/performer), who committed suicide in 1968 (at the second attempt), and this song has been added to music history as a “suicide” song (Horváth, 2015, available at: <https://www.szeretlek-magyarorszag.hu/az-ongyilkosok-himnusz-a-volt-a-szomoru-vasarnap/>).

(B) A song, or even a melody, has the ability to take us back in time, and consequently, one of its peculiarities is that it recalls the

³ My darling come on last Sunday,/There will be a priest, a coffin, a catafalque, a cerecloth./Even a flower will wait, a flower and a coffin./Under blooming trees this path will be the last./My eyes will be open to see you last time./ Don't be afraid of my eyes, giving my blessings even if I will be dead ... (Lyricist: Jávör Pál, composer/performer Seress Rezső)

past (there are many comments on YouTube that support this statement). Furthermore, music appears as an opportunity in the lives of those people who are no longer able to express their needs through words and gestures, so music can make a significant contribution to the acceptance of the aging process (Hays, 2005). Hays and Minichiello's research has shown that in the lives of older people (aged 60 years and older), music is nothing more than "ways of understanding and developing their self-identity; connecting with others; maintaining well-being; and experiencing and expressing spirituality" (Hays and Minichiello, 2005, p. 437).

(C) A musical work can influence our mood and we can choose a song based on our mood, but listening to music is also common during other activities (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2007), because music (more and more) is used as leisure goods, as a resource of everyday life (North, et al., 2004). Music offers people an alternative way of solving everyday problems (Hays, 2005): "music therapy could reclaim music for everyday life as a central force in humanizing culture" (Ruud, 2008, p. 58).

(D) Nor can we overlook the fact that the content of a video clip made for a particular song can influence the formation of social values. Based on Wallis's research, he concluded that "significant gender displays primarily reinforced stereotypical notions of women as sexual objects, and to a lesser degree, females as subordinate and males as aggressive" (Wallis, 2011, p. 160),

(E) Music can also play a significant role in the process of socialization, as it may be one of the most popular topics when two people who do not know each other initiate conversation (Rentfrow and Gosling, 2006).

(F) The relationship between music and politics is not new either. The relationship between these two is defined by dimensions such as "the organization of the link, its legitimation and its cultural performance" (Street, et al., 2008, p. 269).

(G) A melody has a well-defined role in the economic sphere, as a melody plays an important role in the promotion of a given product, because "music is increasingly used as a stimulus in the retail environment as well as in radio and television advertising" (Bruner, 1990, p. 94).

Material and Method(s)

- The end product refers to (1) the emotions⁴ that come from listening to a song, (2) all the phenomena it provides beyond the emotions, and (3) its message.
- Songs by the band Imagine Dragons and singer Lady Gaga were included in the analysis. They were chosen because (1) the performers are relatively young⁵, (2) have special characteristics, (3) they are one of the best known representatives of the alternative rock band and the pop genre, (4) both Dan Reynolds and Lady Gaga are songwriters and (5) both genders are thus represented.
- Older and newer (2018) songs were selected in case of both artists. The song *It's Time* by the Imagine Dragons (because it helped Dan Reynolds get over the time he was struggling with depression and anxiety), (available at: <https://kozepsuli.hu/5-dolog-amit-tudnod-kell-az-imagine-dragons-zenekarrol/>), as well as the song entitled *Natural*. On the other hand, the song *Bad Romance* by Lady Gaga was included in the analysis, because this song can be considered her *ars poetica* (Kiss, 2012) as well as the *Shallow* song.
- Content analysis was based on the YouTube video-sharing website.
- Only English comments were analysed.
- The song reviews were collected on the same day (21.08.2019), collected by the same person in order to eliminate multiple perspectives that would lead to distortion.
- In case of each song the first 300 comments served as the basis for subsequent content analysis. In addition, only those comments with explicit content were analysed, either referring to the song or to the video clip.

⁴ The basic emotions defined by Paul Ekman form the basis of the analysis, which are: joy, sad, angry, surprised, fearful, disgust (available at: <https://asszertivakademia.hu/erzesek-listaja/>).

⁵ We chose the younger generation because their songs are obviously aimed primarily at young people and can thus influence the formation of social values.

- Comments referring to the rating of the song or the video clip were not included in the analysis, as the following points of analysis were taken into consideration: (1) what emotions are triggered, (2) what they provide beyond emotions, and (3) what is the most important line in the lyrics (quoted lines were included in the analysis; they were clearly related to the content of the song; they were not part of the communication between comment writers).
- The terms used in the analysis, namely: band, singer and performer are considered of equal reference, as well as the musical product refers to songs and video clips - as the complexity of musical productions and their creative execution is becoming increasingly important in the music industry.
- At the beginning of data collection:
 - the Imagine Dragons *It's Time* (Official) song had a total of 425.386.580 views, and 73.449 comments; while the *Natural* (Official) song had a total of 270.233.150 views, and 125.033 comments,
 - Lady Gaga's song *Bad Romance* (Official) had a total of 1.092.398.732 views, and 806.611 comments, while the song *Shallow* - performed together with Bradley Cooper (in the movie *A Star is Born*) - had a total of 134.585 comments and a total of 666.294.231 views.

Results and Discussions

The elements that determine marketing are also important in the music industry. Not only the classic marketing mix elements (product, price, distribution, promotion) but also the extended marketing mix elements (people, physical evidence, processes, consumer/other consumer) have their justification.

The first step was to analyse the songs of Imagine Dragons and Lady Gaga. The content analysis was followed by a detailed analysis of the collected data, which can be used to more precisely outline the nature of each marketing mix element in the music industry.

The end product of the songs and video clips of Imagine Dragons and Lady Gaga

(1) The Imagine Dragons alternative rock band was formed in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2008 (available at: https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagine_Dragons). The mix of tribal and electronic sounds gives the band a unique touch of rhythm (available at: <https://antropos.hu/imagine-dragons-alternative-rock-nevadabol/>). They also give concerts in arenas, stadiums, but (for them) it is “nicer” to perform in front of a smaller audience, because they get closer to the audience (available at: <https://starity.hu/magazin/58331-9-erdekesseg-amit-nem-tudtal-az-imagine-dragons-zenekarrol/>).

In the next section the songs of Imagine Dragons: *It’s Time* and *Natural* are presented, with reference to the end products.

Table 1. The end products of the songs and video clips of Imagine Dragons: *It’s Time* and *Natural*

It’s Time	Natural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • causes sadness (1)⁶, • provides happiness (2), • touches emotionally (1), • triggers feelings with physical signs: tears (4), chills/goose bumps (1-1), • gives hope (1), • provides emotional support (9), • provides positive things (2 - specific things have not been identified by the comment writers), • contributes to the understanding of life/ helps to understand the meaning of different things (1-1), • gives you the opportunity to forget (to forget the responsibilities of adulthood -1), • gives strength (2), • motivates (2), • contributes to mental health (1), 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides feelings (a) which are close to tears (1), (b) with physical signs: goose bumps (1), • motivates (1), • provides energy (2), • provides help in the process of finding/accepting one’s true self (1-1), • presents the dark reality (1), • refers to the possibility of a fresh start and its achievability (1), • points out that nothing happens without consequences (1), • suggests that being a hunter is better than being chased/being the prey (1), • draws attention to the fact that deprivation of emotion appears as an opportunity for survival (2).

⁶ Frequency of occurrence in comments

It's Time	Natural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brings back the good old days (1), • refers to the inseparability of heaven and hell (1), • refers to the importance of staying true to ourselves (6), • refers to the inseparability of home and true love (1). 	

Source: Comments on YouTube regarding Imagine Dragons' music products: *It's Time and Natural*

In our opinion:

- in the song *It's Time* the possibility to restart life is an eternal opportunity, even if someone is already at the bottom of the pit. The importance of letting go in life is also apparent in the lyrics of the song ("*Don't look back*") in order to stay true to ourselves. The Imagine Dragon admits that the road we choose or the road which is assigned to us is a lonely one, and that loneliness will become more and more powerful and stronger, but faith helps prevent destruction of the self. The video clip of the song is a true reflection of the song. To throw light into the earth, like a seed, does not mean multiplying light but destroying it (there is no heaven without hell).
- in the song *Natural* they bluntly suggest that everything we do has a price or comes with a consequence. Letting go, being free of emotions, being separated from external factors is probably the only way we can protect ourselves from the world around us. They openly express their opinion that the role of the predator ensures survival. The song draws attention ("*Cause this house of mine stands strong*") to the power of faith in ourselves, however, its main theme is the conflicting process of searching and finding ourselves. The directness of the lyrics is also reflected in the video clip of the song, as the video clip also bluntly announces the inevitability of death. There is nothing artificial or fake about how they confront their fans with the reality.

The songs of Imagine Dragons do not manipulate reality, the singers do not write songs, nor do they make video clips that depict the sunny side of life. Their songs have a deep moral to tell, but at the same time there is something elusive in these songs that grabs the attention of the audience (at least those who love their songs).

(2) Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, aka Lady Gaga, an Italian-born American singer-songwriter and actress, made her 2008 debut with the album *The Fame*. Provocative behaviour is not far from the singer, and it is present in the content of her songs as well as in her video clips. Clothing is also very important for Lady Gaga. Lady Gaga has elevated her style to a level that has already become a personal trademark (her dress made of raw beef, commonly referred to by the media as the meat dress, stirred controversy worldwide). Together with the Yale University, she was present at the Emotion Revolution Summit in 2012, where she gave a lecture to young people on the importance of emotions (available at: https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Gaga). According to Kiss, “Lady Gaga is constantly revealing her attraction and rejection (...) towards the rejected, marginalized, non-aesthetic cultural backgrounds, fields and beyond all these she expresses a form of sexual distortion” (Kiss, 2012, p. 39).

In the next section the songs of Lady Gaga’s *Bad Romance* and *Shallow* are presented, with reference to the end products.

Table 2. The end products of the songs and video clips of Lady Gaga:
Bad Romance, Shallow

Bad Romance	Shallow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides feelings with physical signs: goose bumps (1), • teaches (1), • helps finding one’s true self (1), • depicts society (definition of ahead of this time (4), • refers to total acceptance (1), • draws attention to equality (1), • emphasizes that there is no constraint in relationships: “<i>I want your everything as long as it’s free</i>” approach/principle (1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • touches emotionally (3)/hits deep (1)/makes break in every emotion (1), • provides feelings with physical signs: tears (6), chills/goose bumps (1-3), • suggests a feeling that heaven is near (1), • provides feelings to make life enjoyable (1), • provides support (1).

Source: Comments on YouTube regarding Lady Gaga’s music products *Bad Romance* and *Shallow*

According to our opinion:

- the song *Bad Romance* shows “bad romance” as a real need. The video clip for the song is more than surprising. The woman is portrayed as an object of use, emphasizing male dominance.
- in the song *Shallow*, the desire for more, the thirst for change appear as realistic needs, because even in best times there is the desire of something else, in worse times there is fear. One of the hardest fights we can fight in our lives is about how to overcome the fear of ourselves (the state of “*And in the bad times, I fear myself*”). The video clip illustrates an eternal theme: love being not pain free. The motorcycle appears as a symbol of freedom and the wedding as one of the most important moments in life. The whole video is characterized by naturalness and clarity.

Lady Gaga has undergone a major transformation. While at the start of her career she was more about to “shock” her audience, her latest song with Bradley Cooper is characterized by true naturalness. The question is whether Lady Gaga has consciously cultivated this change or simply immersed the audience into the process of personal transformation. However, it can be noted that this change has been received as a kind of surprise.

Classic and extended marketing mix regarding music products

(1) Service product: the songs of Imagine Dragons (*It's Time, Natural*) trigger happiness or sadness in the same way. The analysed musical products/songs give hope, provide support, strength and energy; at the same time they contribute to understanding life, they also motivate and help forgetting the hard times, as well as help finding or accepting ourselves. They also point out that: (a) to be true to ourselves: to keep the values that define us, not to give up for anyone, for anything, (b) there is no heaven without hell, (c) all actions have consequences (s), but the opportunity to restart is always there, and (d) one of the prerequisites for survival is to be free of emotions, and being a hunter is better than being the hunted or the prey. Lady Gaga's music productions

(*Bad Romance*, *Shallow*) provide support, also teach and help us, the audience, to find ourselves. The song *Bad Romance* draws attention to equality and the song also implies full acceptance of life and society around us. Interestingly, happiness and sadness did not appear literally as concepts in the comments. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the songs would lack any emotion. All in all, listening to any song can encompass many forms of human behaviour, as it evokes basic emotions, provides support, triggers motivation, educates people, and gives strength. At the same time, in our opinion, one of the most important value/end product of a song is nothing else than hope giving. In addition, a song can draw attention to certain things, and by becoming aware of these will help to understand/accept ourselves and the outside world as well.

(2) Price/charge: the impact of changes in the technology environment is not negligible as far as the application of price/charges in the music industry is concerned. Of course, this does not mean that this classic marketing mix element no longer plays a role just because it requires a different approach. However, paying for attending a concert is just as costly, and the price of the ticket can even predict the quality of the concert.

(3) Distribution: placement can be very important as it has to be the optimal solution for the consumer/customer (Vorzsák, 2005). Music outlets, record stores used to play a significant role in the music industry, however, their role has declined nowadays, despite the fact that there are stores selling vinyl records to those interested. Changes in the technology environment have also influenced these marketing mix elements (YouTube), and selling concert tickets has moved to online platforms as well. Consequently, defining the nature/intensity of the relationship between price/fee, distribution and technology is necessary.

(4) Marketing communication: communication in the music industry is very intensive and very diverse. The media, especially the social media, play an important role in fostering the relationship between performers and the audience. In addition, Lady Gaga's theatrical invitations that she meets, as well as being featured in fashion shows, are part of the communication channel. Furthermore, the actors in the music industry are part of the communication with every step they take. Lady Gaga, for example, tattooed "Little Monsters" on her arm in February

2010, in order to ink her love for her fans. Little Monsters is the name given by Lady Gaga to her fan base. Lady Gaga donates to the needy (victims of the Haitian disaster) or helps fight AIDS and HIV with Cyndi Lauper. In 2011, she set up a foundation (with her mother) to prevent abuse and suicide. Since 2016, she has been fighting online bullying. Protecting and supporting young people is also a priority in Gaga's life (available at: <https://starity.hu/sztarok/lady-gaga/eletrajz/>). Imagine Dragons founded the Tyler Robinson Foundation in 2013 to help families who are financially unable to meet the unexpected costs of childhood cancer. However, they also support other charitable foundations (GLAAD, Love Loud Foundation, Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, Musicians on Call) and advocate for issues such as: cancer, civil rights, health, LGBT (available at: <https://www.looktothestars.org/celebrity/imagine-dragons>).

(5) People: the band members, the crew and staff they work with, the backup singers all influence the quality of the musical productions, but the frontman is the one who gives the direction. And one of the greatest assets of a performing artist is his or her personality (apart from the basic attributes, of course), because they can make marketable what they represent. For the service to be successful and for consumers to leave the concert contentedly, something else is needed besides the average and usual. Different from the average may be the performance, the dance choreography or the various show elements. Lady Gaga's concerts (at least so far) are not characterized by modesty. At the same time, we have to mention the fact that there are performers who impress the audience with their simplicity and clean presentation. We could also say that the personality of the performer really defines the quality of the performance, something that differentiates itself from other performers.

(6) Consumer/other consumer: in the case of a concert, service provision and consumption are inseparable and occur simultaneously. What is more, there is an interaction between the service provider and the consumer, and thus the consumer becomes a co-supplier who devotes time and effort, which is an input without which service delivery cannot take place and becomes meaningless (Vorzsák, 2005). In the case of concerts, the role of other consumers and other spectators is not negligible

as they are also involved in the creation of the service. Consequently, the impact of the behaviour of other consumers on the quality of services perceived may be significant. However, one should not ignore the fact that the judgment of a particular concert/song can be quite biased. The subjectivity, the effects that exert their validity, and the way they are experienced depend heavily on the consumer / customer. Bon Jovi's concert (July 21, 2019, Bucharest) has given satisfaction as well as provoked dissatisfaction among the audience (ProTV - News).

(7) Processes: in the music industry, processes are nothing more than ways for the performers to convey their message to the consumer/client and refer to the way the performers can make their message part of the service product. The extent to which consumers/clients engage in the process is highly dependent on the performer, and more specifically the extent to which he/she uses active client policy.

(8) Physical evidence: the physical environment is the environment in which the service is provided. In the music industry, the need of "being part of it" is still fulfilled the physical environment, whether it is a stadium, a concert hall or a theatre. Of course, the nature of the concert has a great influence on the choice of physical environment, but the nature of the physical environment also affects the nature of the concert. In addition, physical evidence, such as various show items or even the performer's attire, can contribute to the impression of perceived quality. A concert that is organized in a stadium has a different character compared to one that is organized in a smaller venue, thus the level and intensity of the impressions felt by the clients may be altering. Both the Imagine Dragons and Lady Gaga organize large and small concerts/performances in order to get closer to the audience and create an intimate atmosphere.

Conclusion

In the present study we tried to define what music performers would like to convey by their songs and what consumers/customers find and feel when listening to a song. However, we believe that this approach is not justified in this form, as consumers are able to

personalize the song by reading between the lines, interpreting the message from their point of view, since the interpretation of the song depends primarily on their experience, and these experiences may never match those of the artist, even if they are very similar. Due to the individual approach in the music industry there is no mass marketing, segmentation or even niche, as the unique interpretation of any song makes each song very personal and needs a unique and personal approach of the consumer. However, there are times when the message of the songwriter is accurately decoded by the target audience: see Dan Reynolds testimony that the song *Natural* is about finding yourself and about being able to stand up and face any difficulty (Ivánczi, 2018, available at: <https://shortscore.net/2018/07/18/natural-friss-dallal-jelentkezett-az-imagine-dragons/>). Consequently, the end product of a song is determined by the customer, but the personality of the artist/lyricist is also required in order to become a potential end product.

Based on the research it can be concluded that:

- the end products of Imagine Dragons' songs are the following: (1) emotions: happiness and sadness, (2) providing things without which there is no progress/ development: hope, oblivion, support, strength/energy, motivation, mental health, understanding processes in life, finding one's true self, and (3) consolidating the importance of loyalty to oneself and preparing for the outside world, and as a result, there is a chance of survival,
- the end products of Lady Gaga's songs include: (1) providing things without which there is no progress /development: support, learning, finding one's true self, and (2) accepting the importance of equality.

According to the analysis, the end product of Imagine Dragons and Lady Gaga's songs is all about finding one's true self. Interestingly, even though the Imagine Dragons is an alternative rock band that has a lower popularity, (taking into consideration the number of songs included in the analysis - and the number of comments is even much lower), it has still provided more end products (at least based on the analysed comments) than Lady Gaga's songs.

Nowadays, it is a real challenge if a band/singer wants to differentiate themselves from their “competitors”. Imagine Dragons employs a version of rawness that conveys their views and messages that sets them apart from other alternative rock bands, but at the same time it is not offensive, nor discouraging (at least not for its fans). Lady Gaga, on the other hand, creates shocking and surprising phenomena in order to differentiate herself from other artists. Indeed, everyday life events act as source of these songs, and the message of one song can be found in the lyrics of other songs as well, but that does not deprive them of their value, as in such cases they play the role of reinforcement advertising.

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