

Engagement through participation: A study of online and offline fan behavior towards Indian Askin in 2019

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Abstract

The scope of this study is the discussion of the ways in which pop music artists in The Netherlands engage with their audiences both online and offline in recent years. The artists receive attention from a large online audience. Quite a number of them, however, encounter difficulties in finding and maintaining an offline audience that engages with their music. In scholarly literature, a common way to assess the differences in audiences is to measure the results of data analytics with respect to the audiences following an artist on social media and streaming services, and compare them with the results of the audiences showing up at club shows of a specific artist. This thesis shows that there is reason to doubt whether this assessment is appropriate. The thesis addresses a single case study, the Amsterdam based artists Indian Askin. The analysis of their online and offline activities offers insights into the ways in which digital engagement, that is measured via social media and streaming, is related to ‘real-life’ engagements of fans, measured mainly by ticket sales. The thesis concludes with suggestions to Indian Askin on how to encourage fans to interact and participate with the band as well as other members of the audience, with the goal of creating a larger, more loyal, dedicated and sustainable fan community.

Introduction

Pop music artists based in the Netherlands have received attention from a large online audience in recent years. Many of these artists, however, encounter difficulties in finding and maintaining an offline audience that engages in a serious way with their music.¹ The main objective of this thesis is to analyze the status of fan engagement towards pop musicians and to give suggestions for how to improve the audience dynamics. The thesis aims to contribute to the discussion of how pop music artists in the Netherlands engage with their audiences both online and offline. This project focuses on a single case study, being the band Indian Askin. It addresses the following research question: *How do online and offline engagement relate to each other in the case of the Dutch pop music band Indian Askin and their audience during 2019?* The research will cover the period of one year, from January 2019 until December 2019. I will exclude the period of the COVID-19 crisis in The Netherlands due to the cancelation of all live events and the limited available data related to the activities of these artists at the time I have started working on my thesis. I will also exclude the data from January, February and the first two weeks of March 2020 (the period before the COVID-19 crisis in the Netherlands), in order to make sure that the online posts that represent a large portion of my primary sources have been able to get their usual reach of audience responses.²

The first chapter will address the framework and is led by the sub-question: *How is online and offline popular music fan behavior being addressed in academic literature?* The framework represents academic discussions on the key concepts of fan culture and communities in relation to popular music, as presented by Mark Duffet, Patryk Galuszka, Arnt Maasø and others. Most of the scholarly publications are fairly recent, which is key to this subject since fan culture is changing rapidly in relation to the changes in types and forms of (social) media lately. The literature is suitable for the topic of the thesis, due to its focus on the behavior of fans towards the artists they adore.

The choice for Indian Askin is based on the observation that, of all the bands that collaborate with Day Four Management agency where I conducted my internship, Indian Askin has actively promoted their online and offline activities in 2019. The band had a busy agenda of offline activities, including performances at festivals and clubs during their tours, and there is sufficient data available - collected by Day Four Management agency - on the outcomes of

¹ I was able to make this observation during my internship at the artist management agency Day Four Management based in Amsterdam. Information on this agency can be obtained through <http://dayfourmgmt.com/>. All data presented through tables, figures and graphs throughout this thesis do not count in the word limit as appendices are not taken into word count either.

both online and offline fan engagements with this band. Indian Askin has been successful in selling out venues for their live performances, and was equally successful in establishing a strong connection with their fans online. In Chapter Two I will address the success of Indian Askin with respect to their offline performances, and focus on the sub-question: *how do fans engage offline with Indian Askin's performances?* I will answer this question by looking into their ticket sales and amounts of festival shows and club tours. An often-used method to research the differences in audiences is to measure the data in relation to the audiences following an artist on social media and streaming services, and compare this data with the results of the audiences showing up at club shows of a specific artist. This thesis states that there is reason to reconsider this method.

In Chapter Three I will focus on Indian Askin's online activities. I will examine the data of Indian Askin's profiles extracted from social media services like Facebook and Instagram, as well as analyze their Spotify statistics. The data will be discussed from the perspective of eventization, as theorized by Maasø and applied to the similar case study on the Øya Music Festival. In addition, I will focus on a qualitative social media analysis in which online engagement and social media research by Khamis, Ang and Welling, Duffet, and others will turn out be relevant. This chapter will address two sub-questions: 1) *How did audiences engage online with Indian Askin in 2019?* and 2) *How does Indian Askin adjust its marketing strategies to promote online some of their online and offline activities?*

The primary sources include data (that is, numbers of likes, comments, impressions etc.) from social media platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, as well as Spotify. I will use data as offered by Spotify since this is the main streaming platform that is currently being used by popular music artists in the Netherlands. These data will be examined through qualitative analysis, only.

The thesis will also include suggestions for strategies on how Indian Askin can increase engagement from fans towards them. The thesis will provide findings on a part of today's Dutch popular music scene that has not received scholarly attention yet. In this way, the research may offer a contribution to our understanding of the behavior of fans both online and offline in relation to Dutch artists, and specifically to Dutch popular music artists.

Chapter One: Research on Fan Engagement and Participation

This chapter will provide an overview of the scholarly discussions on fan engagement in relation to popular music. The overview will serve as a framework for my analysis in Chapters Two and Three. The discussion starts with the assumption that artists are searching for fans as part of their endeavors to earn an income by making music. The search for fans might be more effective and can be improved, if we have a clear understanding of how fans engage with an artist, what it takes to become a fan and how this relates to broader fan communities. I will start in section 1.1 with an outline of how individuals turn into fans. Next, I will address the topic of fan communities in section 1.2. These discussions are relevant to the extent that they contribute to our understanding of how fans originate and what their social structures are. The question as to how these practices intersect with social media and streaming services, and the question of what the best practices for artists might be, will be discussed in section 1.3.

1.1 Becoming a fan

Mark Duffet discusses the question as to how people turn into fans of an artist.³ Duffet does not make a distinction between fans of an actor or a music artist, yet, his findings are applicable to music artists as most of his findings originate from research on music artists. According to Duffet, the definition, research and understanding of fandom has to take off with the individual fans, since individuals turn into a fan on account of individual experiences. Therefore, analyzing fans in a larger quantity is problematic, as this is too monolithic and generalizing.⁴ In interviews with fans on the process of becoming a fan, fans often report of a certain moment in which they were turned on, even though they were not conscious of their conversion at that moment.⁵ The territory the fan enters after he realizes his own conversion, is what Duffet calls the ‘knowing field’, an emotional threshold bounded by affect.⁶

In these moments of conversion, pre-existing fans can serve as initiators, but they are not the reason why the new fan is converted and their role is confined to accelerating someone’s conversion.⁷ There is, however, an exponential effect to the number of fans, and this makes it more likely for people to encourage each other to become fans. Even though fandom starts as an individual experience, it can grow into a community and this formation can grow

³ Duffet, Mark. *Understanding fandom: an introduction to the study of media fan culture*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.

<https://utrechtuniversity-on-worldcat-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/oclc/857365319>. 211-212.

⁴ Ibid., 222-225.

⁵ Ibid., 260.

⁶ Ibid., 212-213.

⁷ Ibid., 260.

exponentially.⁸ The fans do not take up a role, they enter a group of emotional bounded thoughts and feelings which are shared within their fan community.⁹

The definition of a 'knowing field' related to fandom can serve as a frame for understanding fandom, which is relevant for understanding the fan behavior in relation to the case study. Duffet's theory serves a well-coordinated way to analyze how individual fans emerge. Yet, his theory is less informative if we want to analyze the motivations of large numbers of fans to attend offline performances of artists. As a consequence, we will have to focus on how these fans behave as a group, or within a community, in order to be able to detect the dedicated fans.

1.2 Fans within a community

Duffet draws a distinction between a fan base, being a collective that feels connected towards each other, and a fan community, that turns fandom into an offline practice by setting up conventions and networks. This is an important statement, since the distinction between the two marks a difference in engagement towards the artist. Online followers are under the label of fan base, as they do not necessarily visit shows but are interested in the band. However, a core part of the fan base can serve as the fan community.

The formation of fan communities is related to the fan's needs for a feeling of belonging.¹⁰ These communities bring a sense of belonging and often describe themselves as families, in which the members are looking after one another on the basis of mutual interests.¹¹ Moreover, a fan community functions to foster, facilitate and maintain fans.¹² Therefore, the community building around fans is key to having a dedicated and engaged group of fans. This should not be underestimated by artists and their business partners, as the fan community is crucial in creating loyal fans.

The internet serves as a necessary instrument, it facilitates both fan bases and fan communities through social media services like Facebook and Instagram.¹³ Fans interacting online consider their web-friends just as valuable as their offline friends.¹⁴ Therefore, offline events are not necessary for meeting fellow fans of the fan bases, since these online events and

⁸ Ibid., 260-265.

⁹ Ibid., 273.

¹⁰ Ibid., 394. – According to Duffet, the sense of belonging can be understood as corresponding to anomie, and feelings of alienation.

¹¹ Ibid., 398.

¹² Ibid., 393-399.

¹³ Ibid., 262-263.

¹⁴ Ibid., 387-388.

groups are sufficient for serving the fans' needs. Hence, the artist has to be engaged with fans online in order to help build their own fan bases and fan communities. By using the web as a communicative tool, fans arouse emotions and expectations, and they start to value their relationship with their idol as if the idol is a family member or close friend of theirs.¹⁵ This is prevalent in the case of Lady Gaga's fans, whom she has nicknamed as 'Little Monsters'. Melissa Click, Hyunji Lee and Holly Holladay, who have done research on this fan community, found how fans feel connected to Gaga through the internet.¹⁶ Especially Gaga's use of social media to communicate with fans, instead of using it primarily as a promotional tool, was highlighted by fans.¹⁷ Their research exemplifies the role of social media as a facilitator, and stresses the importance of social media use for artists as it can create loyal fandom, through social interaction and communication.

Online communities of fans do not just communicate with the artist. In addition, they produce content about the artist and will eventually monetize this. The net result is a rise in visibility for the artist online, which can grow into a small micro-economy, as Patryk Galuszka explains. Galuszka distinguishes five types of relationships between fans and artists, in which each example portrays a higher financial involvement: sponsors, co-creators, stakeholders, investors, and filters (embodied by virtual DIY record labels).¹⁸ These types of relationships demonstrate that fans are willing to take entrepreneurship upon them, and that the artist can get promoted and marketed throughout online fan communities.

In addition, these micro-societies include a certain hierarchy and social status, as is often the case in fan communities,¹⁹ regardless of whether the community is online or offline.²⁰ Click's Lady Gaga research exemplifies this: 'Little Monsters' distinguish themselves as more fanatic fans by using a nickname,²¹ and calling their idol 'Monster Mother', as they feel intimate towards her.²²

The appropriation of status and the formation of structures that lead to a micro-society within fan communities are characteristic for fan formations and demonstrate the ways in which social media offer new platforms for the interactions of artists and fans. This is why the roles of websites like Facebook and Instagram cannot be underestimated in their stimulation of fan

¹⁵ Ibid., 241.

¹⁶ Click, Melissa A., Hyunji Lee, and Holly Willson Holladay. 'Making Monsters: Lady Gaga, Fan Identification, and Social Media' in *Popular Music and Society* 36, no. 3 (2013): 360–367.

¹⁷ Ibid., 374.

¹⁸ Patryk Galuszka, 'New Economy of Fandom' in *Popular Music and Society*, 38, no. 1 (2015): 31-40.

¹⁹ Duffet: 400-401

²⁰ Roberta Pearson, 'Fandom in Digital Era' in *Popular Communication*, 8, no. 1 (2010): 91–93.

²¹ Click, Lee and Holladay: 369

²² Ibid., 371-372.

productivity and engagement for both fan bases and fan communities. They offer the fans the opportunity to engage with the artists, and they offer the artists the opportunity to communicate with fans on a personal level. As a result, fans will feel more intimate towards their idol.²³ Moreover, forms of direct communication blur the lines between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ friendships, and deepen the fan-celebrity relationship.²⁴ This shows us that the research of fandom has to take off with the individual fans, as Duffet stressed, and the engagement through social media communication by an artist should be individualized as well.

1.3 Connecting with fans

The question of how to start using these platforms to engage with fans was examined by Jeremy Wade Morris.²⁵ The new ways of connecting with an audience have proven to be useful, when taking into consideration that each platform requires a dedicated approach in order to collect and foster productive connections with fans. Elaborating on this vision, Morris claims that artists have to consider how they want to shape relationships with their audiences, and how they want to shape their engagement with the new platforms on which they form connections with their fans.²⁶ This is to say that an artist is in need of a tailor-made strategy for these complex social strategies. The blueprint design for this tactic is often executed by the artist and can be seen as a new relationship between artists and the music industry, the latter represented by managers and record labels. I will elaborate on the artist’s relation to social media in what is to come.

1.3.1 Social media strategies

Now, what should such a social media strategy look like? According to Susie Khamis, Lawrence Ang and Raymond Welling, consistency is a key part of branding.²⁷ This consistency comes to the fore in the look of the photos, and in the number of posts presented by a brand. Another valuable aspect in branding is found in the ways in which Instagram micro-celebrities, as defined by the same researchers, position and present themselves.²⁸ They create distinctiveness and consistency around their narrative, as it is portrayed via their posts. These

²³ Duffet: 385-386

²⁴ Click, Lee and Holladay: 365-367

²⁵ Jeremy Wade Morris, ‘Artists as Entrepreneurs, Fans as workers’ in *Popular Music and Society*, 37, no. 3 (2013): 273–290.

²⁶ Morris: 277-278

²⁷ Khamis, Ang and Welling, ‘Self-Branding, “Micro-Celebrity” and the Rise of Social Media Influencers’ in *Celebrity Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2017): 191-192.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

aspects are especially important in a time of media surplus.²⁹ Since so-called Instafame does not necessarily require association or affiliation with the established famous people or large companies, what matters primarily in Instagram is visibility and attention. The strategies and practices of micro-celebrities for achieving visibility and attention are relevant for popular music artists, just as well, for their bonding with fans.³⁰

Furthermore, the feeling of authenticity and expectations is important in creating a hype around an Instagram personality. This perception of an authentic account can be acquired by offering what the broader audience is most interested in, namely, insight into someone's private life and a sense of realness that is attached to their narrative.³¹ What Khamis, Ang and Welling describe as authentic is a form of individual branding that makes the audience feel dedicated and close to the artist. Many of Gaga's 'Little Monsters' describe the communication with their star as 'real'.³²

A study by Jari Salo, Mikko Lankinen and Matti Mäntymäki shows that fans within fan communities organized via social media stay dedicated and loyal to the group due to five main motives: a sense of affinity, reinforcement of social identity, participation, due to fan-generated content, two-way interaction between group members and access to fan-only content.³³ The content of the artist should play into the motives of fans who are there to bond with an artist. Therefore fan-only content, fan participation and two-way interaction are key in communicating through social media with fans. Moreover, the fine motives can be easily related to Galuszka's ideas on fan productivity. As Galuszka emphasized, fans are eager to become part of an artist's business and are willing to invest time and money into creating content themselves. This does not just create extra content and name spreading for the artist, more importantly, it brings fans into a family-like community bonded by a mutual interest in which they become productive.³⁴ Therefore, the inception of fan productivity can be found in stimulating fan involvement both online and offline.

Another result of the study by Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki is, that the artists should focus on the segmentation of fan groups, and examine each individual group for their needs. This information can be used to adapt the content for each specific group, raise expectations among the fans, and create a feeling of authenticity among them.³⁵ In return, this marketing

²⁹ Ibid.,193-197.

³⁰ Ibid., 198-199.

³¹ Ibid., 200-204.

³² Click, Lee and Holladay: 374-375

³³ Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki, "The Use of Social Media for Artist Marketing: Music Industry Perspectives and Consumer Motivations" in *The International Journal of Media Management* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2013): 37-40.

³⁴ Duffet: 398

³⁵ Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki: 39-40

strategy is likely to cause word of mouth marketing, which is likely to lead to and even increase offline engagement. In this way we have gathered several strategies and suggestions based on social media research that are interconnected to the previous theories on fan communities by Duffet and Galuszka. Even though the studies discussed in the present paragraph did not engage in depth with fans and their presence on social media, they show the same fan patterns of productivity and participation as we find in Duffet and Galuszka.

1.3.2 Festivals and Eventization of Music

Online engagement through social media can enforce growth in offline engagement, just as offline engagement via social media can enforce online engagement. Arnt Maasø has shown such a growth in offline engagement by examining the streams of artists that attended four consecutive editions of the Øya music festival organized annually in Oslo, Norway (2010–2013). This meant an average increase of 104% on the streams of the festival artists.³⁶ These festival peaks turn out to be temporary, three weeks after the festival the average increase of streaming was 7% higher than three weeks before the festival took place.³⁷ Not only festivals, also media activity associated with an artist can lead to temporarily high increases of streams. This brings Maasø to the conclusion that there is a certain “eventization of music listening” going on, whenever there is an event taking place. It does not make a difference whether they are planned or unplanned events, the events will enforce an increase in streams over a short period of time.³⁸

If festivals are important for a temporary growth of streams, then how should an artist use these festivals to their own advantage? Interestingly, Mark Leenders’ research shows us that brand equity is more important for festivals to keep a loyal following and therefore a steady number of visitors if compared with other factors like programming and ticket pricing. This is due to the aroused emotions regarding the expectations of whether the festival experience is going to be thrilling, just as the fun and excitement they may stimulate are key in deciding whether people are heading back.³⁹ Here we see a parallel, again, with the way in which Lady Gaga communicates, by arousing expectations and creating loyalty among her fans.⁴⁰ Whether

³⁶ Arnt Maasø, ‘Music Streaming, Festivals, and the Eventization of Music’ in *Popular Music and Society*, 41, no. 2 (2018): 158-164.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 165-170.

³⁹ Gursoy, D., E.R. Spangenberg, and D.G. Rutherford. ‘The Hedonic and Utilitarian Dimensions of Attendees’ Attitudes toward Festivals’, in *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 30 (2006): 279–94.

as paraphrased by Mark Leenders, ‘The relative importance of the brand of music festivals: a customer equity perspective’ in *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 18, no. 4 (2010): 298-300.

⁴⁰ Click, Lee and Holladay: 374.

these emotions are created via online or offline sources does not make a difference, the main point is to arouse expectations and create loyalty.

This theory implies that booked artists are relative in their importance to the effectivity in ticket sales of the festival, as long as the programming does not contradict the festival's niche, and the festival stays consistent and distinctive within its branding. If this is true, then visitors of a festival are fan of that niche and artists related to that niche. The number of people watching a show of a specific artist on a festival will not necessarily translate to an amount of online fan engagements with the artist, nor will the amount of people at a festival correlate to a single artist's club tour ticket sales. The differences between ticket sales for a festival, ticket sales for a club tour, and online fan engagements are important for understanding the differences between online and offline engagement for a single artist.

Leenders' suggestion for festivals is to consider how each choice in aspects effects the long-term consistency, distinctiveness and, hence, the sustainability of their brand. Long-term strategies for branding are key to having success, especially since these festivals take place once a year at most, and inevitably have a limited exposure.⁴¹ Leenders' suggestion is supported by research as presented by Mark Leenders, Frank Go and Pawan Bhansing. Their research showed how new niche festivals are usually more successful than broad targeted festivals.⁴² This is primarily due to the relative large capacities of these new festivals, a low threshold, and a promise of offering something new for a specific audience.⁴³ At the end of his 2010 article, Leenders speculates on the relevance of these findings for other cultural organizations, since they deal with a similar audience as the festivals.⁴⁴ The importance of distinctiveness and promises in branding, as articulated by Leenders, have been mentioned as a key part of branding by Khamis, Ang and Welling (2017), and confirm Duffet's ideas on fans functioning as a group after individual conversion.⁴⁵

On account of this survey of scholarship on festivals, two conclusions can be drawn with respect to marketing for cultural products, including pop music. First, it is important for an artist to elaborate on the strategy of choosing the right niche festivals to play, since these festivals are likely to be successful in sales for a longer period of time, due to a more loyal audience. Secondly, niche specification, distinctiveness, consistency and brand uniqueness in festival marketing are key for strengthening the relation of artists and fans.

⁴¹ Leenders: 300.

⁴² Leenders, Go and Bhansing, 'Success in the Dutch Music Festival Market: The Role of Format and Content' in *International Journal of Media Management*, 7, No. 3-4 (2006): 153-155.

⁴³ Ibid., 155.

⁴⁴ Leenders: 300.

⁴⁵ Duffet: 394-396.

1.3.3 Streaming research: Spotify

The concept of eventization of data is further catalyzed by the algorithms and playlisting techniques of Spotify. Spotify's recommendation algorithms focus on emotional levels and mood insights to suggest songs to its users. The parameters are measured via datapoints extracted from all sorts of media use on electronic devices. Apart from emotions and moods, location and other shared information are used to determine an individual's context, just as well. This is described as 'the contextual turn' by Robert Prey.⁴⁶ The turn exemplifies that personalized playlists are an important part of Spotify's catalog, and an instrument for categorizing listeners into a niche.⁴⁷ Since festival visitors are fan of a niche, they are part of a contextual turn, too. It is not just that streams get influenced by offline activities (as explained by Maasø), the algorithms are constantly developing, too, according to the actions performed by the user.⁴⁸

Now, to what extent do these systems portray a realistic view of the popularity of an artist? Spotify is pushing the idea of fast listening, a type of listening in which the consumer is cherry picking from the playlists. Yet, the criteria for including an artist on a playlist are ambiguous, and give rise to the questions of whether the artist is getting streamed for being in a popular playlist, or for being a popular artist. And due to this ambiguity, the playlisting of single tracks by Spotify makes it hard to offer reliable estimations of an artist's popularity. In line with this observation, Kjus has pointed out that most people still discover music via word of mouth from relatives,⁴⁹ and Duffet made the observation that internet and its platforms are facilitators but not a source for becoming a fan.⁵⁰

1.4 Qualitative data research approach

The qualitative analysis method that I will be using in Chapters Two and Three is the phronetic iterative approach as defined by Sarah J. Tracy.⁵¹ Tracy's method is to mark data by attributing

⁴⁶ Robert Prey, 'Nothing Personal: Algorithmic Individuation on Music Streaming Platforms' in *Media, Culture & Society*, 40, no. 7 (2018): 1091-1093.

⁴⁷ Eriksson, Maria, Rasmus Fleischer, Anna Johansson, Pelle Snickars, and Patrick Vonderau. 'How Does Spotify Package Music?' In *Spotify Teardown: Inside the Black Box of Streaming Music*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2018. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>. 115-137.

⁴⁸ O'Dair and Fry, 'Beyond the Black Box in Music Streaming: The Impact of Recommendation Systems upon Artists' in *Popular Communication*, 18, no. 1 (2020): 68-69.

⁴⁹ Yngvar Kjus, 'Musical Exploration via Streaming Services: The Norwegian Experience' in *Popular Communication*, 14, no. 3 (2016): 134-135.

⁵⁰ Duffet: 262-263

⁵¹ Tracy, Sarah J. 'Data Analysis Basics: A Phronetic Iterative Approach'. In *Qualitative Research Methods Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*, Second Edition, 208-35. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2020. 208-235.

them with ‘codes’.⁵² A code functions as a description of what we observe, and Tracy distinguishes primary and secondary-cycle coding. The first is meant to assign and develop codes to describe what we observe, whereas the latter focuses on interpretation by organizing, categorizing and synthesizing the codes from the primary-cycle.⁵³ The two cycles are our first steps in a qualitative analysis. The codes we assign in the secondary cycle are largely based upon concepts from the discourse that the given research is a part of. Therefore, knowledge of the specific research field study is key to being able to execute the secondary-cycle.⁵⁴ In addition to the secondary-cycle Tracy has included a third step of so-called hierarchy codes. They describe the umbrella of all second-cycle codes and put them in perspective to each other. Just like the secondary cycle, the code terms that are being used in the hierarchal part are often more related to the theory of the study.⁵⁵ The memos we write and process in our reports are key in the intersection of data and theory, and should address questions like: what are the characteristics of this code? What rough data are a good example of it? What conditions do these codes come with? What are the consequences of this code? How does a code relate to other codes?⁵⁶ As soon as we have gone in depth in these memos, we can use the answers and observations in our definitive research report.

By way of summarizing, this chapter concludes that people become fans on the basis of individual experiences and find likeminded people in fan bases and fan communities. Artist and their team can make it more likely for fans to convert from individuals to members of fan communities. This will lead to higher numbers of fans and therefore to a higher number of dedicated fans. We need the marketing theories of social media and offline events in order to be successful in our endeavors. The theories all point to key concepts that are likely to lead to success: distinctiveness, consistency, personality, participation and narrative. Besides, it is important for an artist to fit into a niche, in order to be able to create a loyal audience.

Research by Maasø, Kjús and Prey on streaming shows us that it is hard to derive value from streaming numbers. All of these platforms are highly sensitive to the eventization of music listening, and therefore do not give a realistic view of the actual offline popularity of an artist. Therefore, I consider it more reliable to focus on ticket sales for live concerts and events for a particular artist, since online engagement is of a temporary character only, as studies have

⁵² Ibid., 213-214.

⁵³ Ibid., 219-225.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 225.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 226.

⁵⁶ Tracy: 232-233.

demonstrated convincingly. Nonetheless, online platforms can contribute to spreading the name of an artist via social or streaming media, but it is not clear to what extent this promotion converts into the artist's popularity offline. I shall address these issues in the next two chapters by researching Indian Askin's case.

Chapter Two: Engagement Towards Indian Askin Offline

This chapter will focus on Indian Askin's festival and club shows over the period January–December 2019, in order to get a better understanding of offline fan engagement towards the band within their niche. The band has had the current formation since 2013 and has been growing in their fame since 2015. By now, Indian Askin is a well-known Dutch alternative band. They have released two well-received albums (*Sea of Ethanol*, 2016 and *Another Round*, January 2019), have played multiple successful club tours throughout the Netherlands and has been a familiar face on Dutch annual festivals since 2016. The band's success has been accompanied with a steady stream of media attention.

Offline engagement by Indian Askin fans is effectively measured by the number of visitors at club shows the band has played. The reason I focus on club shows is that I take ticket sales to mean that the visitor is primarily coming for the band, whereas festival visitors are usually fan of a niche, as we have seen in the previous chapter. In addition, I will discuss some of the festivals the band has attended in 2019, since the specific genre of the festival does have an influence on engagements towards the band, as Mark Leenders has shown.⁵⁷ By contextualizing my research findings, I can offer Indian Askin advice on how they can improve their offline fan engagement in relation to their live shows.

2.1 Festival shows

After the release of Indian Askin's second album, in January 2019, the band announced their presence at several spring and summer festivals. Eighteen out of fifty shows were taking place at festivals, including Appelpop, Zwarte Cross and Paaspop. It is interesting to have a look at the timing, the ticket sales and the character of some of these festivals to get an understanding of how these festivals had an influence on Indian Askin's offline audience. The festivals include niche festivals, mainstream festival, and high capacity festivals.

The three-day music festival Best Kept Secret (BKS) takes place in the third weekend of June. BKS is a direct competitor to Pinkpop, that happens in the second weekend of June. A major difference between the two festivals is their capacity and history. Pinkpop was first organized in 1970,⁵⁸ whereas BKS has presented seven editions since 2013.⁵⁹ Moreover,

⁵⁷ Leenders, Mark A.A.M., Joyce van Telgen, Gerda Gemser, and Richard van der Wurff. 'Success in the Dutch Music Festival Market: The Role of Format and Content' *International Journal on Media Management*, 7, no. 3–4 (2005): 148–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2005.9669431>.

⁵⁸ '50 jaar Pinkpop,' Pinkpop, accessed 2nd June 2020. <https://www.pinkpop.nl/50jaarpinkpop/>.

⁵⁹ Redactie. 'Uitverkocht Best Kept Secret kijkt uit naar eerste editie'. *Algemeen Dagblad*. 20 June 2013. <https://www.ad.nl/muziek/uitverkocht-best-kept-secret-kijkt-uit-naar-eerste-editie~a7f84835/>.

Pinkpop hosted 45.000 visitors per day in 2019,⁶⁰ whereas Best Kept Secret welcomed 25.000 visitors per day in 2019.⁶¹ If we take a closer look at the programming, we can see BKS mainly booking younger rock bands, whereas Pinkpop has a considerable focus on older bands. This implies that Pinkpop attracts an older audience due to their bookings of older artist and the fact that they are the oldest open-air festival in The Netherlands. Especially as this has been noted by journalists at the festival as well.⁶²

High capacity festivals like Zwarte Cross or Lowlands usually take place after June, and their planning of the festivals during the summer breaks enables these events to attract large crowds.⁶³ Other high capacity festivals like Pinkpop and Paaspop take place during the bank holidays of Pentecost and Eastern weekends in The Netherlands. The timing of BKS is at their disadvantage if compared with their direct competitor, Pinkpop. This explains why the total amount of tickets available on BKS is a lot lower than its competitors. BKS, however, does manage to sell out for four years in a row. This is to say that they have managed to create a substantial group of loyal visitors in a short period of time. Other festivals at which Indian Askin performed during 2019 confirm the niche character of this alternative rock band. Examples are Zwarte Cross, Welcome to the Village, These Go To Eleven and Pure & Crafted. In sum, Indian Askin has managed to get booked within its own niche, which matches Leenders' findings regarding the importance of branding your profile for having a loyal audience (see Chapter One).⁶⁴ It is more important for Indian Askin to foster loyal fans by playing at specified niche festivals, than it is to play at Pinkpop, as this festival does not create a more loyal audience for Indian Askin since they did not sell out and did not specify their niche to an effective amount.

This conclusion, however, is not to say that mainstream and/or high capacity festivals are irrelevant for Indian Askin. The band could expose themselves a lot more to mainstream festivals during their summer tours: only four out of the eighteen festivals they attended in 2019 fit this category. There are high capacity festivals that have specified their niche and have been

⁶⁰ Penders, Marcel, and Sandra Horrichs. 'Jan Smeets Tevreden over Pinkpop 2019, Op Kaartverkoop Na'. *ILimburg*. 10 June 2019. <https://www.limburg.nl/jan-smeets-tevreden-over-pinkpop-2019-op-kaartverkoop-na>.

⁶¹ Hoven, Gerrit van den. 'Best Kept Secret Geeft Alle 25.000 Bezoekers Een Gratis Bril Voor Speciaal Optreden Kraftwerk: "3D-Beleving Is Onmisbaar"'. *Brabants Dagblad*. 29 May 2019. <https://www.bd.nl/tilburg-e-o/best-kept-secret-geeft-alle-25-000-bezoekers-een-gratis-bril-voor-speciaal-optreden-kraftwerk-3d-beleving-is-onmisbaar~a2c45798/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>.

⁶² 'Pinkpop moet grote publiek weer lokken'. *Trouw*. 17 February 2005. <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/pinkpop-moet-grote-publiek-weer-lokken~b8f2adda/>.

⁶³ Zwarte Cross has been the biggest music festival of the Netherlands with a total of 220.000 visitors yearly and has been sold out for four years in a row: 'Geschiedenis,' Zwarte Cross, accessed June 2nd 2020. <https://www.zwartecross.nl/geschiedenis/2019-2/>.

⁶⁴ Leenders et al., 'Success in the Dutch Music Festival Market: The Role of Format and Content' in *International Journal of Media Management*, 7, No. 3-4 (2006): 153-155.

able to create expectations among their visitors as they have been able to sell out year after year. I am mainly referring to festivals like Down the Rabbit Hole, Lowlands and Parkpop where Indian Askin has not performed very frequently for the past years. The band could fit the line-up of these events and they would most likely be able to bond with a more loyal audience at these festivals. Therefore, it is relevant for Indian Askin to play at (these) high capacity festivals that sell out. Moreover, because of the observation that the artists are relative in their importance to the festival, as long as the artist does not contradict the character of the festival.⁶⁵ Then, it is likely that their presence at mainstream festivals will raise the number of loyal fans, and will stimulate the online streaming numbers, due to the effect of eventization as discussed by Maasø.⁶⁶

If Indian Askin wants to grow offline towards a more mainstream audience and improve their ticket sales, this might be achieved by extending the number of mainstream festivals they attend. This is not to say that the band has to reduce the number of niche festivals they play at. A more balanced presence at niche and mainstream festivals would increase their exposure to different types of audiences.

2.2 Club shows

An effective way to get insights into Indian Askin’s fans is by analyzing the ticket sales of club tours in 2019. Again, it is important to take into consideration that ticket sales at club tours offer us different information about offline fan engagement if compared to ticket sales at festivals. Indian Askin’s first tour was in February and March (eight shows), the second from October until December (twenty-two shows). Figure 2.1 lists all the shows and the capacity of the tickets for each show. The first tour sold out four out of eight shows and had an average sell percentage of 95,6%. The second tour sold out seven out of twenty-two shows with an average selling percentage of 75,9%.⁶⁷

Date	City	Capacity	Province	Sold	Sold in %
21 February 2019	Den Haag	300	ZH	279	93,00%
22 February 2019	Rotterdam	250	ZH	250	100,00%
23 February 2019	Landgraaf	175	LB	143	81,71%
1 March 2019	Utrecht	275	UT	275	100,00%
9 March 2019	Nijmegen	180	GL	180	100,00%

⁶⁵ Gursoy, D., E.R. Spangenberg, and D.G. Rutherford. ‘The Hedonic and Utilitarian Dimensions of Attendees’ Attitudes toward Festivals’, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 30 (2006): 279–94.

as cited in Mark Leenders, ‘The relative importance of the brand of music festivals: a customer equity perspective’ in *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 18, no. 4 (2010): 298-300.

⁶⁶ Arnt Maasø, ‘Music Streaming, Festivals, and the Eventization of Music’ in *Popular Music and Society*, 41, no. 2 (2018): 165-170.

⁶⁷ All information regarding the ticket sales of Indian Askin are provided by the management agency Day Four Management and are summarized in Figure 2.1.

14 March 2019	Amsterdam	350	NH	350	100,00%
15 March 2019	Eindhoven	350	NB	329	94,00%
16 March 2019	Hengelo	250	OI	241	96,40%
5 October 2019	Amersfoort	200	UT	200	100,00%
11 October 2019	Hoofddorp	250	NH	143	57,20%
12 October 2019	Dordrecht	280	ZH	157	56,07%
17 October 2019	Tilburg	700	NB	230	32,86%
19 October 2019	Middelburg	300	ZL	134	44,67%
26 October 2019	Enschede	300	OI	203	67,67%
1 November 2019	Hilversum	275	NH	184	66,91%
2 November 2019	Sittard	400	LB	156	39,00%
Bergen op					
7 November 2019	Zoom	700	NB	115	16,43%
8 November 2019	Vlaardingen	150	ZL	210	140,00%
9 November 2019	Lelystad	400	FL	99	24,75%
14 November 2019	Venlo	575	LB	198	34,43%
15 November 2019	Deventer	450	OI	306	68,00%
16 November 2019	Alkmaar	225	NH	225	100,00%
22 November 2019	Breda	100	NB	100	100,00%
23 November 2019	Groningen	450	GR	450	100,00%
29 November 2019	Uden	700	LB	146	20,86%
12 December 2019	Arnhem	150	GL	415	276,67%
13 December 2019	Leiden	200	ZH	200	100,00%
14 December 2019	Haarlem	350	NH	309	88,29%
20 December 2019	Amsterdam	650	NH	397	61,08%

Fig. 2.1: Ticket sales of Indian Askin's club shows in 2019

Furthermore, Figure 2.1 shows us that the capacities of the venues in the autumn tour were 40% higher than in the spring tour. The autumn tour was less successful in average ticket sales, the club capacities were too high, and the selection of shows per province in The Netherlands was unbalanced. Especially shows in Noord-Brabant (NB) and Limburg (LB) had disappointing numbers of tickets sold.

If we take a closer look at the specific cities, we can see that most of them are small in size. Especially concerts in Uden, Sittard and Bergen op Zoom did not sell enough tickets and all have under 70.000 inhabitants. The cities are not located in vast urban areas. Cities like Amsterdam, Leiden, Haarlem, Groningen and Rotterdam tend to work more into Indian Askin's favor and are located in more urbanized areas. Another aspect these cities have in common is that all have institutions for higher education (like conservatories, theatre schools or universities). Therefore, part of Indian Askin's current audience can be located in mostly urban areas and in cities that have institutions of higher education. These higher education institutions often cause group formations, such as student fraternities or group formation through student housing. These communities might not have Indian Askin as a subject of focus in their group (as opposed to fan communities focusing on a specific artist), but the individuals within these groups do make it more likely to attract each other to specific activities, i.e. concerts. This

confirms and expands Duffet's theory on group formation on the basis of a mutual interest.⁶⁸ Duffet states that fans clump together due to a shared interest in an artist, whereas I suggest that communities such as fraternities can be formed because of a mutual interest, but at the same time fraternities can motivate one another, for whatever reason, to visit another interest unrelated to their primary mutual concern.

Since we know the band has been able to sell out during earlier tours, we know there is a certain loyal part of the audience in places that can be defined on account of demographic criteria. Further research should focus on detecting these communities and getting a more precise view of where this loyal audience is located, what their interests are and how they communicate. This goes beyond the scope of the present thesis, unfortunately, as I am not focusing on demographic research. Nonetheless, we can try to map out Indian Askin's fan communities by motivating fan participation with the band to increase engagement.

2.3 Participatory method

Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki have shown that fans within a community stick together because of their participatory character towards the artist.⁶⁹ Therefore, if the band wants to maintain and increase their loyal group of fans, they will have to let them participate in as many ways as possible. This can be executed both online and offline. In addition, Galuszka's article shows how fans are willing to participate with an artist's business, and take on roles within a community. This is the ideal opportunity for bands like Indian Askin to engage offline with the audience that seems to be most loyal to them. Yet, the band should start out by setting up a strategy in which the suggestions of Khamis, Ang and Welling's regarding a distinctive narrative, consistency and intimacy are to be included.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the band should consider how they want to shape hierarchies in these communities because, as Pearson showed, these will appear to some degree, regardless of whether these communities are online or offline.⁷¹ Moreover, the strategy should contain segmentations of groups of fans, as this leads to a more detailed approach.⁷² In addition, they should reorganize their communication strategies, and see how they can use social media to interact with their fans and vice versa. The research findings

⁶⁸ Duffet, Mark. *Understanding fandom: an introduction to the study of media fan culture*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. <https://utrechtuniversity-on-worldcat-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/oclc/857365319>. 298.

⁶⁹ Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki, "The Use of Social Media for Artist Marketing: Music Industry Perspectives and Consumer Motivations" in *The International Journal of Media Management* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2013): 37-40.

⁷⁰ Khamis, Ang and Welling, 'Self-Branding, "Micro-Celebrity" and the Rise of Social Media Influencers' in *Celebrity Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2017): 193-197.

⁷¹ Roberta Pearson, 'Fandom in Digital Era' in *Popular Communication*, 8, no. 1 (2010): 91-93.

⁷² Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki: 39-40.

of Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki will turn out to be relevant here, as the band's posts and content need to play in to the fans motives for participation.⁷³ Khamis, Ang and Welling's theory comes into practice here by using personal, diverse and consistent content in their communication. Finally, a communication strategy can be more effective if it is based on research that includes information about the profile of their fans. This includes a time consuming, manual demographic research in which each individual fan should be investigated, in line with Duffet's suggestion of the individualistic approach towards fan research, as discussed in Chapter One.⁷⁴ The band and their team members should look into privacy regulations regarding these kinds of activities. Eventually this will lead to a detailed mapping of their fan base which will turn out to be relevant for the possibility of fostering more fans into this fan community and to maintain it as a participating part of their business.

Offline engagement with Indian Askin can be understood and improved via their club show ticket sales. The data of 2019 exemplify that part of their fans are in larger cities that are in urbanized areas with higher education around. However, I would like to argue that it is more accurate to put efforts into analyzing their already established but undetected fan community by having them participate. This participation method can be seen as a bait by which we can parse the band's catch. I suggest to take this analysis as the next step, in combination with adaptations in their tour schedule for both mainstream festivals, niche festivals, and club tours. On account of these steps, they will create a more loyal fanbase which will lead to higher ticket sales and a higher engagement of the fans towards the artist offline. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look into online engagement of fans towards Indian Askin.

⁷³ Ibid., 37-40.

⁷⁴ Duffet, Mark. *Understanding fandom: an introduction to the study of media fan culture*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. <https://utrechtuniversity-on-worldcat-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/oclc/857365319>. 260-265.

Chapter Three: Audience's Engagement towards Indian Askin Online

The present chapter will address the engagement of fans towards Indian Askin through online services, during the same period as the one under consideration in Chapter Two. I will analyze data from Spotify, Facebook and Instagram, as these are their primary tools of communication and music distribution. The analysis will offer insights into the extent of fan engagement towards the band through these online services, over the period of twelve months. Moreover, I will conduct a qualitative analysis of data about Indian Askin's activities online, by using Susan Tracy's qualitative analysis method of research as presented in Chapter One. The quantitative data that are provided alongside the qualitative data will serve as a substantiation of my qualitative-based argumentations. Finally, I will formulate lines of advice to Indian Askin on how to improve their social media and streaming efforts in the future.

3.1 Indian Askin's Eventization of Social Media

First, I will explain the terminology that is used within data analysis for social media. Organic reach is the total number of unique users who have seen the post under discussion, whereas organic impressions refer to the amount of times a post from a specific page appears on someone's screen.⁷⁵ The term "organic" indicates that these numbers of impressions include unsponsored posts only. "Engagement" refers to the number of people who got engaged with someone's page post, by leaving a reply on it, liking it or sharing it.⁷⁶ A formula to calculate an indicator that is commonly used, e.g. by Crowdmedia, is called 'engagement rate': $(E \div R) \times 100 = ER\%$.⁷⁷ In this formula I used the following abbreviations: E = engagement, R = reach, ER = Engagement Rate in percentage. The percentage shows us a slice of the number of users that have seen the post and engaged with it. "Crossposting" refers to a technique used on Facebook by page owners to share the same video on multiple channels. This way of sharing a video adds the views from each channel up onto each other, resulting in a peak in views, since each channel has its specific reach. Now, let us pay attention to the actual data from Indian Askin.

⁷⁵ Facebook. "What's the difference between Page views, reach and impressions on Facebook?." Accessed June 3rd, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/help/274400362581037?helpref=search&sr=1&query=impressions&search_session_id=49a944fedbce8c98217c60c7364ea015.

⁷⁶ Facebook. "Post Engagement." Accessed June 3rd, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/business/help/735720159834389>.

⁷⁷ Crowdmedia. "Facebook Engagement berekenen." Accessed June 3rd, 2020. <https://crowdmedia.nl/facebook-engagement-berekenen/#:~:text=De%20formule%20is%20heel%20simpel,hoger%20of%20juist%20lager%20wordt.>

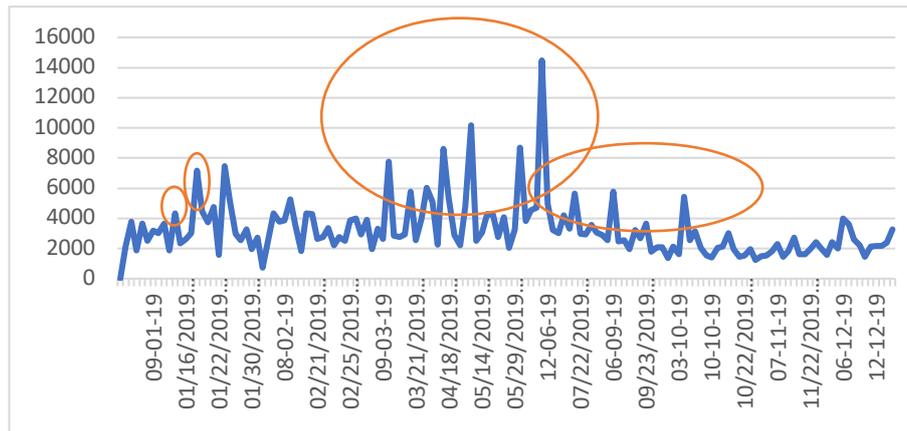


Fig. 3.1: Impressions (total count): per post over 2019

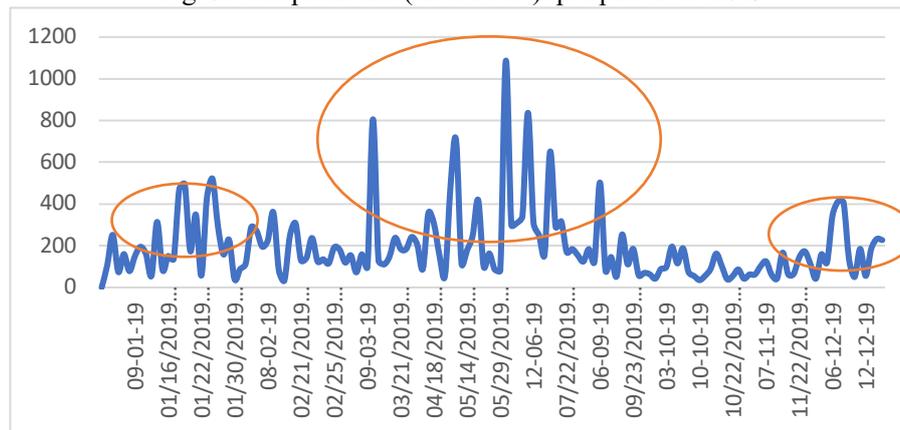


Fig. 3.2: Engagement (unique users): per post over 2019

In Figures 3.1 and 3.2 we can see some peaks in engagement and impressions. The first two peaks in both graphs are around the 18th and 25th of January 2019. The peaks coincide with the announcement of Indian Askin playing at BKS festival in 2019 (held in June), and the release date of their second album on the 25th of January. The peak on May 7th (in Figure 3.1 and 3.2) is related to their live radio show at 3FM, which led to Crossposting. The highest peak in impressions of 2019 was measured during Pinkpop (9th until 11th of June). This was not the highest peak in engagement – which was a weekend earlier, the 3rd of June, the day on which the band played at the BKS festival. This can be clarified by looking into the demographic of both festivals. As we have seen in Chapter Two, BKS attracts a younger, more niche crowd if compared to Pinkpop, and Indian Askin connects more effectively with BKS, on account of the band’s reputation as an alternative band. Due to these characteristics, it can be argued that the crowd attending BKS is more likely to connect and engage with Indian Askin. This argument is in line with the theory of Leenders, according to whom niche festivals are more likely to sell out due to their audience specification.⁷⁸ Therefore, BKS serves as a fine example of Leenders’

⁷⁸ Leenders et al., ‘Success in the Dutch Music Festival Market: The Role of Format and Content’ in *International Journal of Media Management*, 7, No. 3-4 (2006): 153-155.

theory in practice. Moreover, the argument confirms the conclusion of Chapter Two, namely that it is important for bands to choose the festivals wisely, in order to make sure that the bands are addressing the corresponding niche.

The high and low points of Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show us how the effect of eventization does not just effect streams, as Maasø showed, it has its consequence on social media impressions and engagement, just as well. The difference with streaming eventization is that, on social media data, we see peaks on the very specific dates that Indian Askin played a festival, whereas with streaming numbers we often see the effect being more spread out over a larger period of time around the festival day on which they performed. Visitors want to listen to a band's music before and after the event, but they care less about the content they share before and after the festival. Hence, the effects of offline events on online performances are not just limited to streaming, but also come back in social media data, albeit that these peaks in impressions and engagement are more pinpointed to the specific dates of the band playing a specific festival.

3.2 Indian Askin's Eventization of Streaming

The band's presence at Pinkpop had an influence on the growth in the number of followers on Spotify; between the 9th and 10th of June, the number of followers on Spotify show an increase of 6,97%, whereas the average increase per day prior to that moment was only 0,15% (see Figures 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

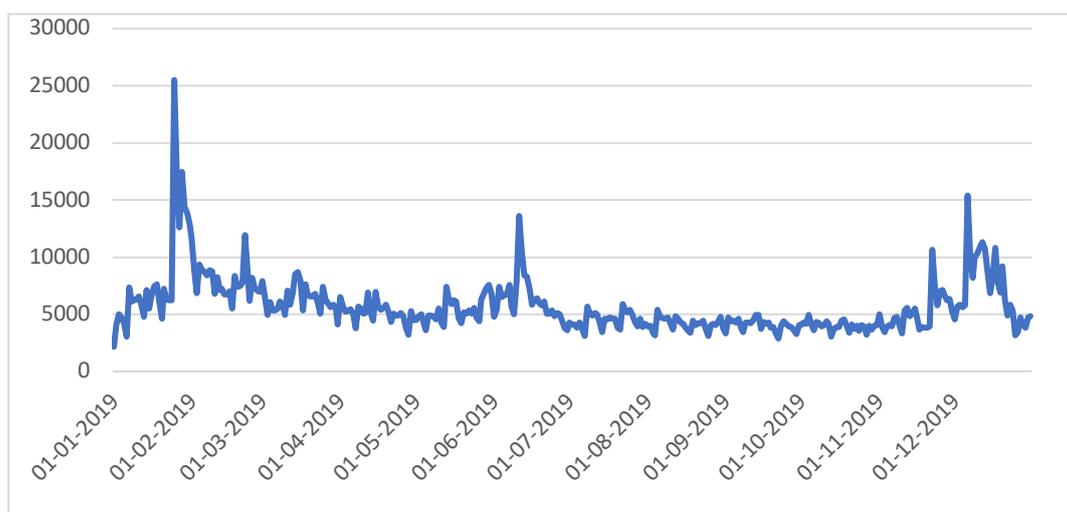


Figure 3.3: Total amount of streams on Spotify for Indian Askin over 2019

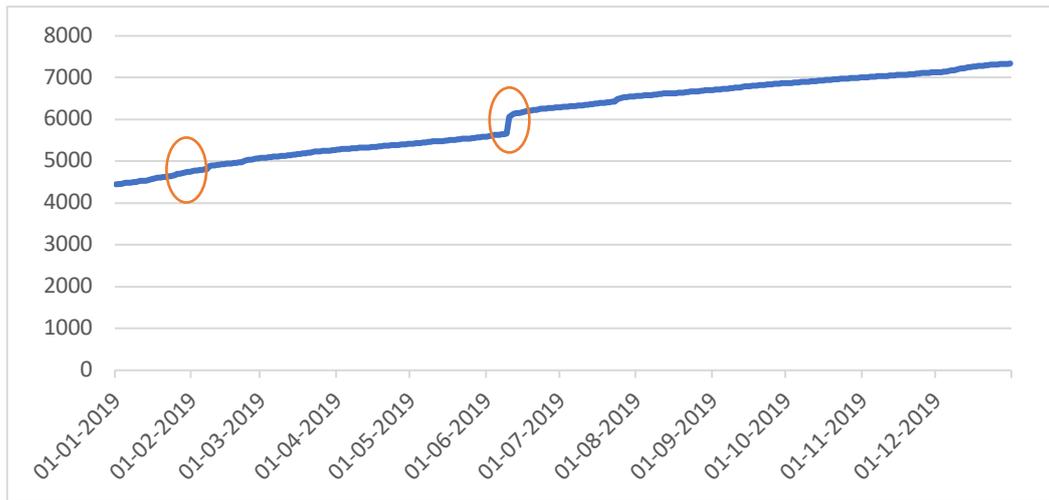


Figure 3.4: Total amount of followers on Spotify for Indian Askin over 2019

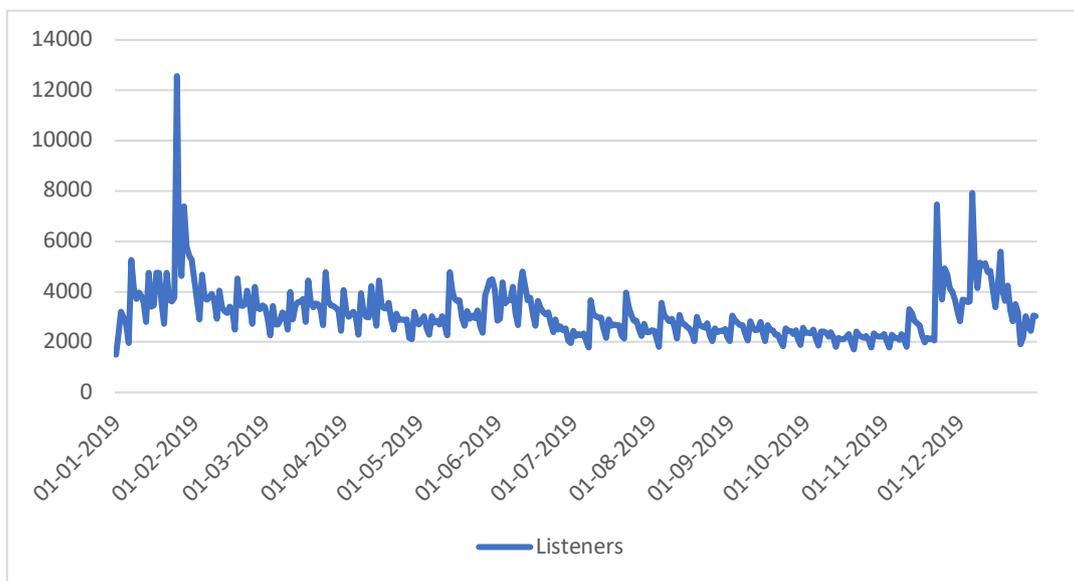


Figure 3.5: Total amount of listeners on Spotify for Indian Askin over 2019

When we compare this increase in followers to the increase in streams and listeners on Spotify, we see that there is a rise in listeners of 61,80% (Figure 3.5) and a growth in streams of 57,32% (Figures 3.3). The average increase per day is 4,54% in listeners and 4,19% in streams, which means that Pinkpop caused a growth of about thirteen times the average in both listeners and streams (Figure 3.3 and 3.5). Apparently, Pinkpop's visitors turned out to be more eager to start following Indian Askin after having attended the band's live performance at the festival. Furthermore, we can make the observation that the festival effects the streaming much longer, if compared by the number of listeners and followers; the day after the show, the streaming numbers still give an increase of 73,55%, whereas followers and listeners are quickly back to their average. The number of streams, however, does drop back to an old average in the days shortly after this major festival. This is not to say that a minimal number of long-term fans was

gathered by the band at Pinkpop by playing this show. The findings seems to contradict Maasø's theory since the Øya Music festival case shows an increase of streams, whereas the Dutch band mainly shows a large increase of followers. A possible explanation for this contradiction can be offered by pointing out that Maasø examined 319 artists and did not focus on a single artist before and after the festival.⁷⁹ Hence, Maasø's case is including a much larger scale and variety of artists, which makes his case broader and more inclusive if compared to the one example of Indian Askin.

Another observation can be made with respect to the beginning of 2019. On the release day (25th of January) of the band's second album the number of listeners increased by 234,76%, whereas streams increased by 309,51%. Followers only increased by 0,23%, not near the increase of the other two categories (Figure 3.4). The same trend appeared during the band's latest releases, in November and December 2019. These releases caused an average increase of streams of 19,6% over the period from 22nd of November to 6th of December, but this did not lead to a structural higher average of listeners either.

Playlist promotion is executed by labels and managers to get important songs in the most important playlists of Spotify, in order to increase the streaming numbers. This effect highly contributes to the increase of streams. Moreover, album releases are usually accompanied by marketing campaigns, as was the case in the release of *Another Round*. This explains why the streaming numbers of Indian Askin sky rocketed around the release date.

In sum, we can conclude that releases cause increases in streams whereas offline events mainly cause increases in followers, in the case of Indian Askin. Unfortunately, temporary stream peaks, whether from playlisting or events, do not lead to higher averages in streams. The most prominent reason for this short term effect is that visitors of a festival are fan of the niche that is addressed by the specific festival, whereas they are not necessarily fans of a specific band, as I explained in Chapter One.⁸⁰ Convincingly, O'Dair and Fry have shown how algorithms in social media and streaming services are being influenced by all kinds of activities, both offline and online.⁸¹ Therefore, algorithms are eventful as well, which makes the eventization exponential.

The number of streams on an artist's profile do not give a fair representation of engagement. Nevertheless, they do offer the artist an income, whereas followers do not. Since there are no alternatives for artists to make money out of streaming or distribution of music in

⁷⁹ Maasø: 158

⁸⁰ See page 17-18 in Chapter One

⁸¹ O'Dair and Fry, 'Beyond the Black Box in Music Streaming: The Impact of Recommendation Systems upon Artists' in *Popular Communication*, 18, no. 1 (2020): 68-69.

general, it seems most useful for an artist and the surrounding business partners to keep focusing on the combination of several parameters at once. Even though the music industry is aware of the fact that the Spotify streaming system is harmful to the music industry, streaming is nevertheless one of the few opportunities for artists to make money. Hence, playlisting will continue to be a (key) factor in increasing streams temporarily, and the offline events will keep their importance just as well.

As mentioned by Kjus, a highly effective way to get people to listen to the music and to eventually bond with an artist is still by “word of mouth” promotion.⁸² Khamis, Ang and Welling and Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki have shown that a personal, compelling, diverse, and consistent story online can make the difference in increasing the online engagement.⁸³ Moreover, if an artist manages to get fans to participate via social media, this will most likely lead to an increase of the community, and fans will remain interested. Eventually, they create a sense of belonging in this ‘knowing field’, as explained by Duffet. Next, we will take a closer look at the content and posts used by Indian Askin in 2019, in order to see to what extent Indian Askin can innovate and improve their online efforts to create more loyal and engaged fans.

3.3 Indian Askin’s Narrative Online

In order to analyze the postings of the band and the results of these posts, I distinguished several types of content and posts by using Tracy’s qualitative research approach.⁸⁴ The descriptions I give to the type of content that have been posted serve as the primary cycle, whereas the secondary cycle is based upon the type of posts. These cycles are eventually put into perspective by applying them to the literature, which results in a hierarchal cycle. The coding cannot be underestimated because they explain to what extent a message by Indian Askin online is (more) effective. The analysis is led by the most important findings from the analytic memos that are being guided by questions like: what is the consequence of type of posts and type of contents? How do these types relate to each other? What are the conditions under which these types of posts and contents are used?

⁸² Yngvar Kjus, ‘Musical Exploration via Streaming Services: The Norwegian Experience’ in *Popular Communication*, 14, no. 3 (2016): 134-135.

⁸³ Salo, Jari, Mikko Lankinen, and Matti Mäntymäki. ‘The Use of Social Media for Artist Marketing: Music Industry Perspectives and Consumer Motivations’. *The International Journal of Media Management* Vol. 15, no. 1 (8 February 2013): 23–41. And: Khamis, Susie, Lawrence Ang, and Raymond Welling. ‘Self-Branding, “Micro-Celebrity” and the Rise of Social Media Influencers’, *Celebrity Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2017): 191–208.

⁸⁴ Tracy, Sarah J. ‘Data Analysis Basics: A Phronetic Iterative Approach’. In *Qualitative Research Methods Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*, Second Edition, 208–35. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2020. 213-214.

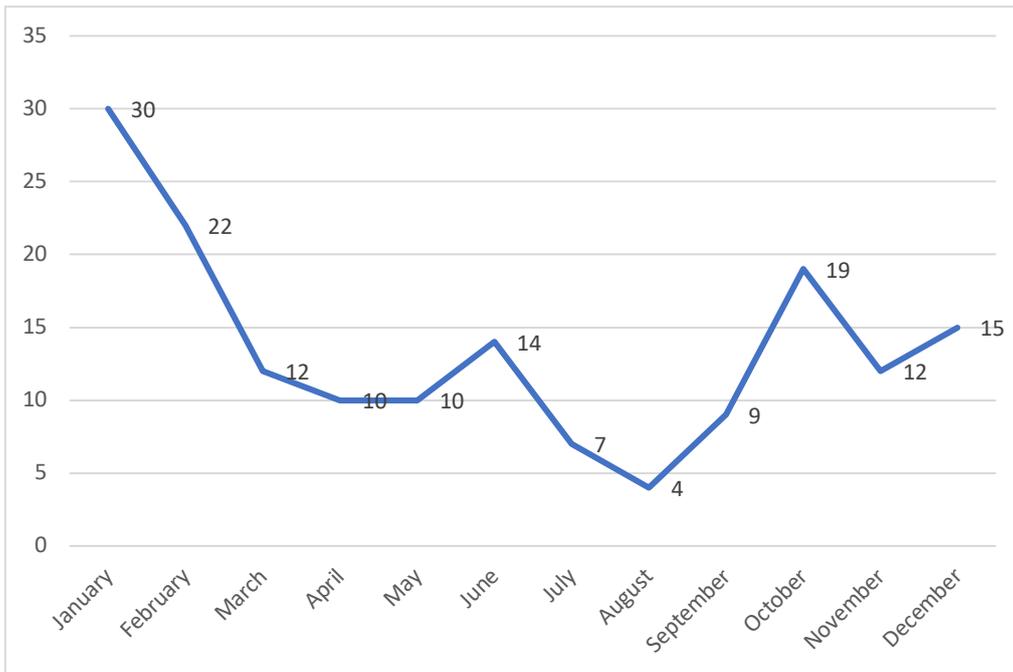


Figure 3.6: Total amount of posts per month by Indian Askin in 2019

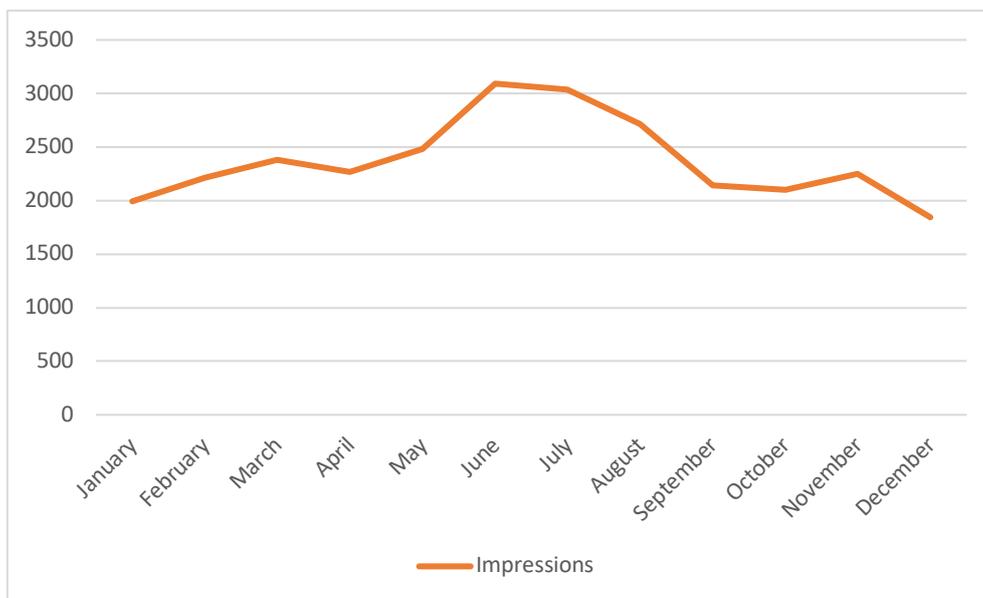


Figure 3.7: Average amount of impressions per month on Instagram

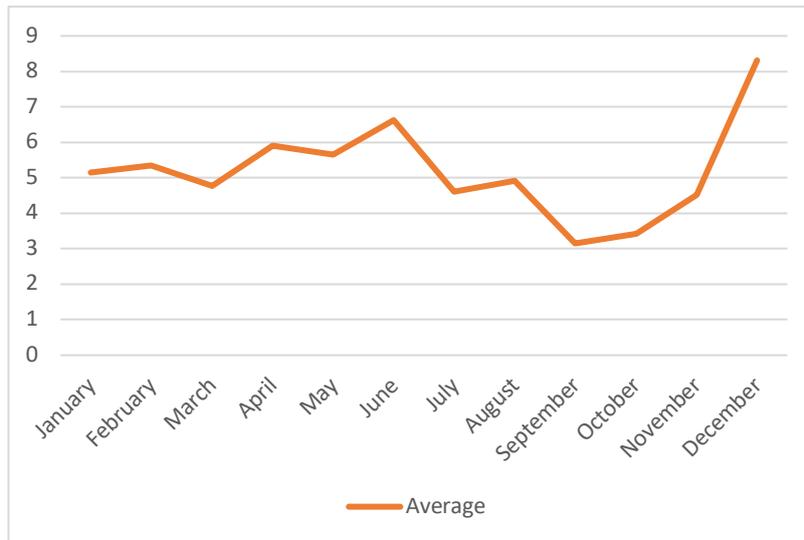


Figure 3.8 Average engagement rate per month on Instagram

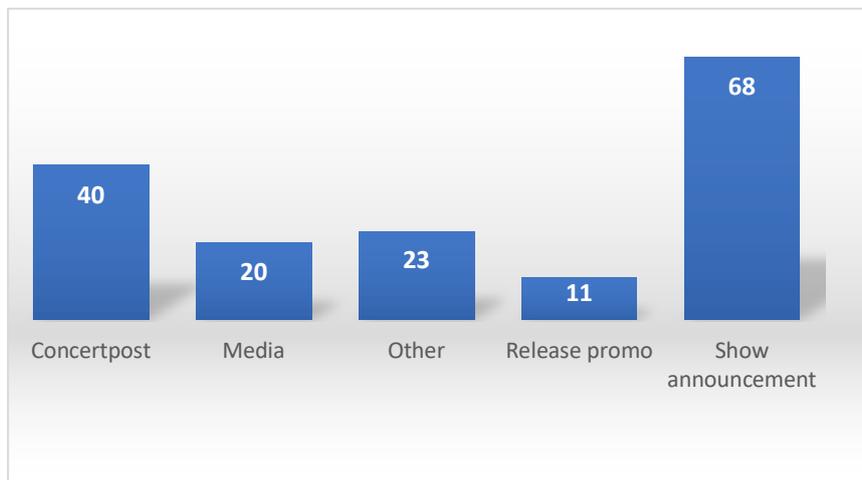


Figure 3.9: Total amount of different post types on Instagram

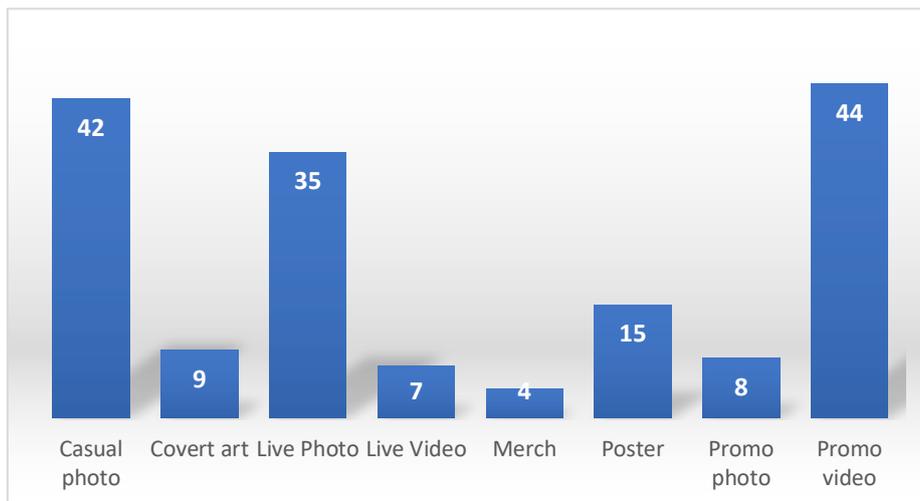


Figure 3.10: Total amount of different content types on Instagram

Type of content	Impressions	Engagement rate in %	Non-followers
Casual photo	2544	5,99	17%
Cover art	1998	5,54	11%
Live photo	2525	6,71	16%
Live video	2732	6,74	14%
Merchandise	2342	2,8	9%
Poster	2300	4,89	12%
Promo photo	2048	5,4	12%
Promo video	1849	3,73	13%
Total	2280	5,25	14%
Type of Post			
Concertpost	2480	6,58	16%
Media	2532	6,32	14%
Other	2488	5,36	18%
Release promo	1885	5,33	11%
Show announcement	2076	4,11	13%
Total	2280	5,25	14%

Figure 3.11: Averages in impressions, engagement rates (in %) and non-followers reached per type of content and type of post.

In Figure 3.6, the number of posts per month shows a fluctuating line which implies an inconsistent number of posts per month. January, February and October stand out with almost a post a day, whereas the other months show a substantially lower amount of posts per month. In Figure 3.7 and 3.8 we see the results on impressions per type of post on Instagram because of this surplus; the lowest numbers in impressions and engagement by audience per post have been measured in those three months. In March-May we see a much lower number of posts per month, which coincides with an increase in impressions and engagement (Figures 3.7 and 3.8). Khamis, Ang and Welling on brand consistency have stressed the importance of consistency earlier on, which is proven here.⁸⁵ However, there is more to learn from these graphs.

If we take a look at the types of content (in Figure 3.11), we see how personal, intimate content, including casual photos and live photos and videos, are more effective than promotional content. This fits with Khamis, Ang and Welling’s theory, stating that a certain amount of insights into personal life has a positive effect on the artist’s social media.⁸⁶ Furthermore, we observe how categories of release promotion and show announcement posts have the lowest averages in impressions and engagement. Moreover, in Figure 3.9 we learn that the post categories of release promotion and show announcement accounted for 79 out of the 164 posts on Instagram. Besides, we observe in Figure 3.10 that Indian Askin has posted 44 promotional videos, of which most were in the category of show announcement. The promotional videos show the lowest scoring category in impressions and have been the second to last in the average engagement rate (Figures 3.11). The results show a striking contrast with the quantity of the posts.

In January we see the band posting 30 posts. In this period there were 16 show announcements, which brought the engagement and impressions downwards in a crucial release month. In October, this trend is repeated, and even worse. A low point was reached when the band posted 19 times out of which 15 were promotional videos used as show announcement (see Figure 3.12 and 3.13). In combination with a low diversity, this resulted in the largest drop in both average impressions and average engagement (Figures 3.7-3.8).

Month	Casual photo	Cover art	Live photo	Live video	Poster	Promo photo	Promo video	Merch
January	10	4	4	1	1	5	5	0
February	9	0	1	2	2	2	6	0
March	2	0	2	0	2	6	0	0

⁸⁵ Khamis, Ang and Welling, ‘Self-Branding, “Micro-Celebrity” and the Rise of Social Media Influencers’ in *Celebrity Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2017): 193-197.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 200-204.

April	3	4	1	1	0	0	1	0
May	4	0	2	2	1	0	1	0
June	6	0	5	1	1	1	0	0
July	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	0
August	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
September	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	0
October	2	0	1	0	1	0	15	0
November	2	1	2	0	3	0	0	4
December	1	0	10	0	3	0	1	0

Figure 3.12: Amount of posts per category of content per month on Instagram

Month	Show			Release	
	announcement	Media	Concertpost	promo	Other
January	16	7	6	0	1
February	8	8	1	2	3
March	7	0	3	1	1
April	0	0	1	6	3
May	4	4	1	0	1
June	1	0	8	0	5
July	1	0	3	0	3
August	2	0	2	0	0
September	9	0	0	0	0
October	18	0	1	0	0
November	1	1	4	1	5
December	1	0	10	1	3

Figure 3.13: Amount of posts per category of post per month on Instagram

In sum, Instagram and Facebook posts have been used too inconsistently, and the diversity of types of posts and contents was unbalanced. The only period in which post- and content impressions and engagement peaked was during the summer, which can be related to the festivals and the eventization effect.

Content that motivates fans to interact with the band was lacking in the posts. This content has been demonstrated by Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki as valuable in order to maintain a steady fan base.⁸⁷ If fans stay active in a community that is based around a specific artist (as the research states), the fans are likely to become long-term active fans for the artist. These kinds of fans are priceless to an artist, to the extent that the artist aims at establishing a long-term relationship with this type of fans.

The sense of belonging is a driving force for individuals to participate in these fan communities.⁸⁸ The process of becoming a fan can be catalyzed by pre-existing fans mentoring new fans, but the process has to be initiated by the individual.⁸⁹ If social surroundings are indeed

⁸⁷ Salo, Lankinen and Mäntymäki, "The Use of Social Media for Artist Marketing: Music Industry Perspectives and Consumer Motivations" in *The International Journal of Media Management* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2013): 37-40.

⁸⁸ Duffet: 394.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 260-261.

key in becoming and staying a fan, and if social surroundings can accelerate the process of becoming a fan, this means that “anomie” may have a positive impact on the individual’s choice to long for a community, and to become a fan. Therefore, targeting on these senses could enforce a fan community and eventually result in a growth of the community, and dedicated fans. This expands my suggestion at the end of Chapter Two, pointing at the importance of an individualistic interactive attitude from Indian Askin towards their fans, in order to maintain and increase their fan community.

Furthermore, Leenders has shown how the loyalty of a visitor at festivals is more secured by having a niche audience. He subsequently speculates on whether this theory is applicable to artists.⁹⁰ There is reason to take his speculations as a realistic hypothesis, as the case study of Click, Lee and Holladay exemplifies. The Lady Gaga example is another case of fans searching for a feeling of belonging and presenting a specified niche on their own.⁹¹ This shows us how audience specification for artists can be successful in attracting a dedicated audience, in line with Leenders’ findings. Hence, Indian Askin can be advised to invest efforts in maintaining their fan base, since they are able to play for several sold out venues, and to create an even stronger one. Targeting fans at an individual level and specifying the band’s niche could offer ways for improving the size of their fan community.

Finally, the best way to know your fans is to meet them offline and to make sure they engage with you. Social media is still in development, including their algorithms. The rules as stated in this chapter likewise stay open for re-interpretation. The present field of research should be monitored in order to be able to keep up with current developments. It seems likely that the guidelines for fans to bond with an artist will not change rapidly. Based on the findings as discussed in Chapters Two and Three in relation to the theoretical framework, bands like Indian Askin have the potential and the possibility to establish a strong fanbase that aims to engage consistently with the band. This has been an uncharted territory for Indian Askin until now, but has clear potential for future success.

⁹⁰ Leenders et al., ‘Success in the Dutch Music Festival Market: The Role of Format and Content’ in *International Journal of Media Management*, 7, No. 3-4 (2006): 153-155.

⁹¹ Click, Lee and Holladay, ‘Making Monsters: Lady Gaga, Fan Identification, and Social Media’ in *Popular Music and Society*, 36, no. 3 (2013): 360–367.

Conclusion

This thesis started out with the objective to analyze the current status of fan engagement towards Indian Askin and to give suggestions for how to improve the audience dynamics for this specific artist. Online and offline engagement do not have a clear relationship towards each other in the case of Indian Askin and their audiences during the year of 2019. We can conclude, however, that these two parameters do influence each other. Offline events like festivals and releases have a profound impact on social media and streaming, and online events like playlisting on Spotify can influence the value of online numbers. It remains difficult, however, to measure online brand awareness in relation to offline engagement. Therefore, bands will have to improve the contacts with their fans and will have to focus on fan community building, in order to be able to establish sustainable and loyal fan communities. It is relevant for Indian Askin to keep investing time, energy and money into both online and offline efforts.

Fan engagement can be triggered by encouraging interaction between fans and artists. Participation of fans can secure long-term fandom, which is key to constructing a sustainable fan community. This fan community is most likely present in potential, since Indian Askin has been able to sell out tours. Several improvements can be made online for Indian Askin to move towards a more fan-friendly environment by being more diverse, consistent and interactive with the content and posts they provide for their fans.

Uncharted territory of the fan-artist relation can be found in genre specific research on fans and fandom. Throughout this thesis I have examined a Dutch alternative rock band. I have not been able to invest time in broadening my scope to other genres, due to the limitations of a master thesis. Genre specific fandom research can be valuable to the field of fan research in order to clarify the question, to what extent the genre is relative for fans to bond with an artist. If genres make a difference, this raises additional questions, including the question of which genres tend to have more active fan communities than others, and why this is the case. In the case of Indian Askin, further research over a longer period of time is needed to monitor their improvements, as social media strategies are continuously changing. Finally, it would be interesting to find out to what extent we can find music related arguments for fans to bond with Indian Askin. In any case, research on fans, fandom and on Indian Askin is far from over, this is just a start.

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