

# Understanding online behaviour of rock music fans

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## Summary

Online social media is known to be one of the most important ways that music fans communicate with each other to maintain, express and enhance their identity as fans. This paper looked at the posts to a forum dedicated to the rock band Metallica. They were able to find posts from all four categories of rock music fan-type: 'Casual, Loyal, Die-hard and Dysfunctional', each of which has distinct needs and expectations from their engagement with the band as fans. The paper ends with advice to marketers about how these segments can be best catered for.

## The researcher studied postings to a fan forum over the course of one month in 2010

They used a technique called netnography to study the content of postings to the forum. In all they looked at just over 1,500 posts, which they filtered down to 113 for in-depth analysis. About one fifth of the postings were from Casual fans, who were looking for concert tickets or looking for information from other fans. Loyal fans (just under half of postings) used the forum to talk about maximising their experience of concerts and to brag about getting good tickets. Die-hard fans (one quarter of postings) shared their opinion of quality of shows and recordings. The forum activity of Dysfunctional fans (12 per cent of postings) mostly described their many efforts and sacrifices made to see the band.

# Marketers should understand the different types of rock fandom

Casual fans are attracted by outdoor concerts and festivals, where the overall fun atmosphere of the experience is important. Loyal fans might opt for bundled or packaged events with other relevant bands or experiences. Die-hard and Dysfunctional fans mustn't be alienated, but also might be tempted by VIP packages. The paper acknowledges the need for more research with larger datasets.

## Keywords

**observation** **fans** **forums** **music** **online**

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