

ROCK ON! FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BRAND EQUITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMEBACK ROCK GROUPS

François Marticotte, ESG – UQAM, Canada
Damien Hallegatte, UQAC, Canada

ABSTRACT

The global industry of popular music has generated more than \$ 18 billion in 2008 (IPI, 2008). These revenues come primarily from the sale of music (on physical media and digital) and show tickets. Artists are at the heart of this activity. If the technology leads to adverse effects (e.g. illegal downloading), it can also propel almost anybody to international stardom. The recent cases of Paul Potts and Susan Boyle, contestants of the TV show Britain's Got Talent and internationally mediated through social media, are clear examples. Conversely, the leading bands and performers of previous decades continue to be a part of everyday audiophile. This applies, for example to dead stars (eg, Elvis Presley, James Brown, John Lennon) and to those who have decided to withdraw from the spotlight (e.g. Tina Turner, Simon and Garfunkel, ABBA). Although the place of marketing in music is debated (Kubacki & Croft, 2004), it is clear that major music bands of international fame such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, are SMEs generating millions in revenues each year. These bands are commercial brands. These groups, and others, have a presumed strong brand equity. The Rockband phenomenon (e.g. video games) for instance, thrives on these brands and help them expand promoting these groups towards younger fans who would have otherwise ignored the existence of these groups.

This research is particularly interested in the phenomenon of groups that have experienced the peak of their fame decades ago and who decide, after a long absence, to make a comeback (e.g. The Police, Spice Girls, Kiss). With the increasing number of baby boomers, this wave of returns may be exacerbated. More specifically, the main objective of the study is to consider factors that can influence the brand equity and thus increase the chances of a successful commercial comeback.

This study is based in the retrobranding (Brown, Sherry & Kozinets, 2003), the nostalgia (Wildschut et al., 2006) and the attitude towards the past (Holbrook and Schindler, 1994; Sierra & McQuitty, 2007) literature. Will the fans from the past (e.g. die-hard fans) react positively? Will new listeners find these comeback bands outdated? More specifically, this research focuses on factors, directly related to the band, that might influence consumers' decision to buy a concert ticket or a new album. It is presumed that the intention to purchase will be determined by the band's current brand equity as judged by the consumers. It is argued that the brand equity of the group may be altered by:

- Artistic content: (1) delivering of the old classics songs that the group was known for (revisited or complete reproduction), (2) mix of old and new songs, (3) launching of new songs;
- Members in the band: the presence (of) the former band's leader(s) vs. absence of (the) band's leader(s)

Those variables are presumed to potentially affect the elements defining what the band is (was) all about (e.g. the band DNA --> the brand DNA) and thus, its brand equity. The managerial implications of this research are numerous. For example, it will estimate how the components of the product constituting the band (the group members and songs) will influence the price of tickets for shows, the size of the venues where the band will perform, the duration of the tour, the countries visited, the relevancy of launching a new CD, merchandising, etc..

References available on request
