

"Never Grow-Up": A Life Course Approach to Taylor Swift Fans

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The power of stereotypes April 5, 2025*

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Agenda

- Swift Research Hub in Portugal
- Context
- Research Goal
- Conceptual approach
- Data collection
- Preliminary findings
- Future research directions

Swift Research Hub in Portugal



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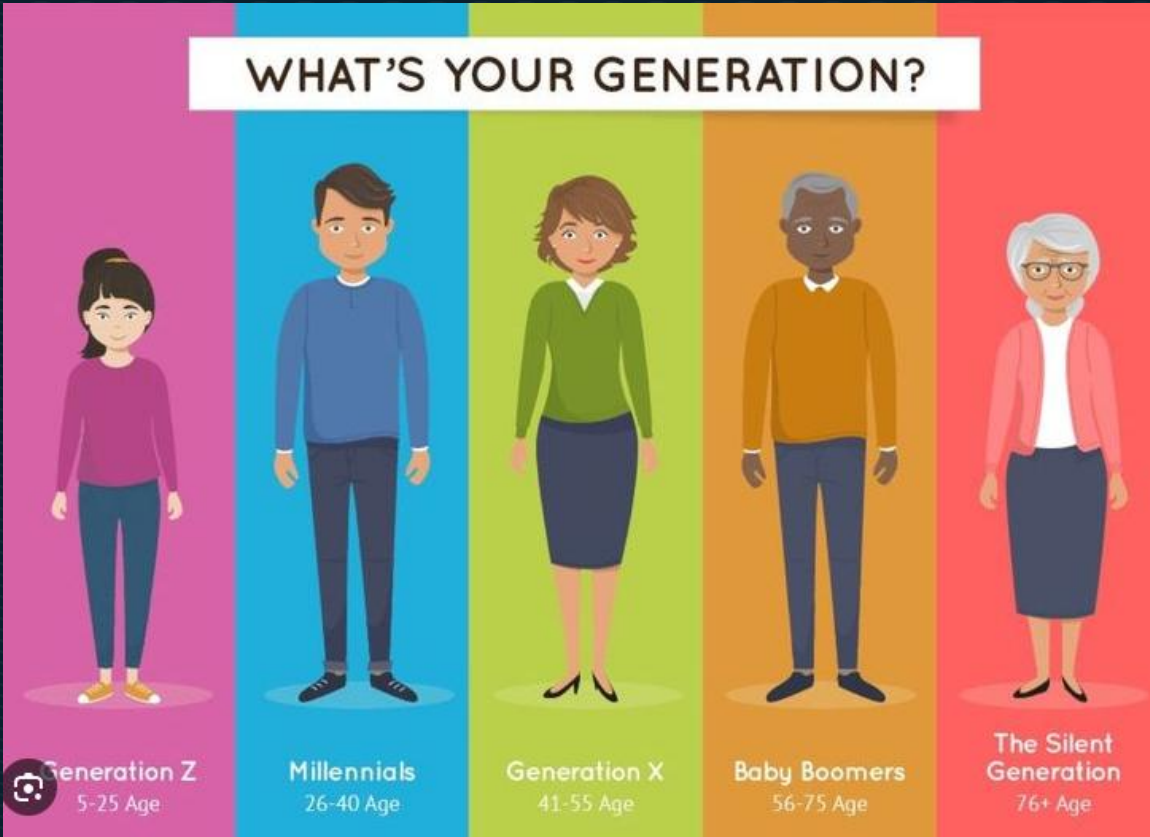
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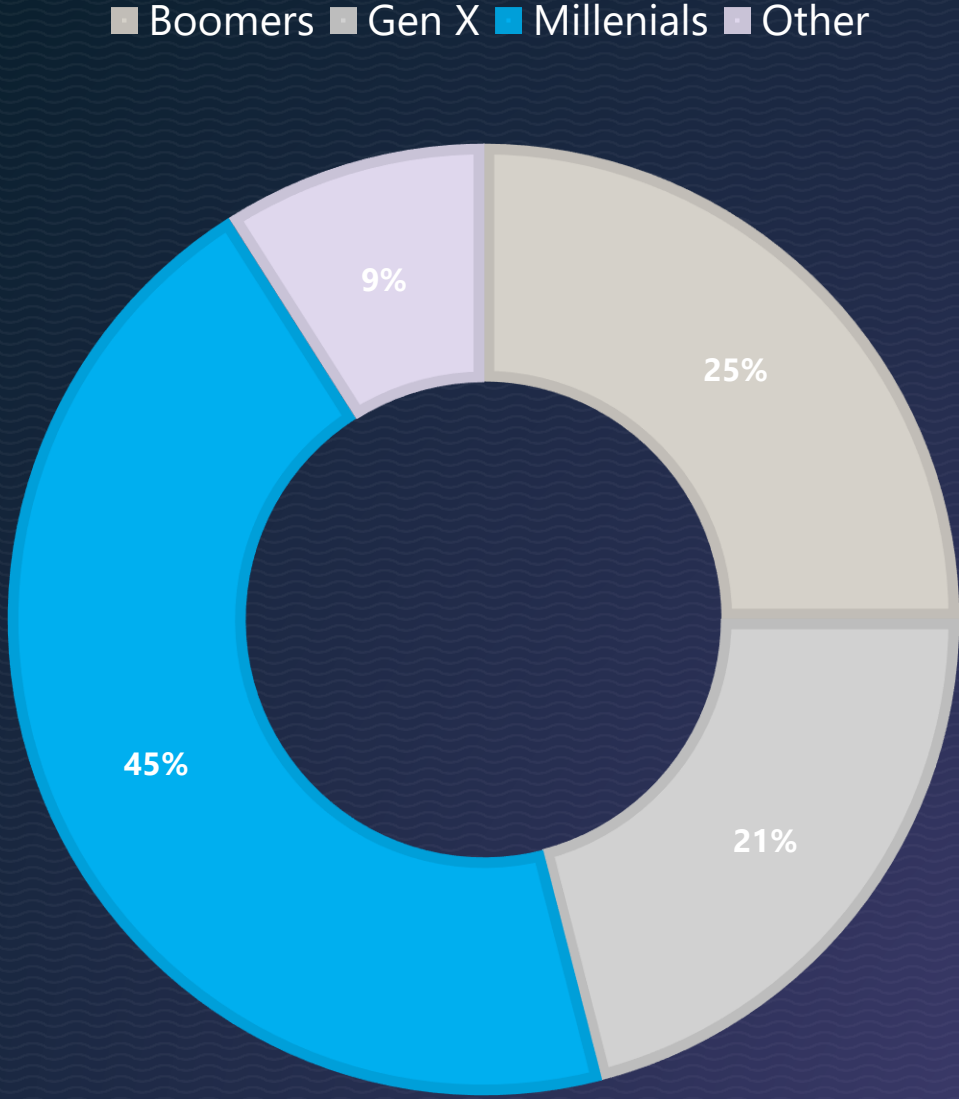
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Demographics Challenge Youth-Only Assumptions



TAYLOR SWIFT FANS BY GENERATION



Swifties are one of the most devoted fan bases in the world, and according to Statista (2023), 45% of Swift's US fans are millennials, 21% are Gen X, and 25% are Baby Boomers.

Demographics Challenge Youth-Only Assumptions



A Harris Poll from April 2024 registers 23% identifying as Millennials (ages 27-42), 21% as Gen Z (ages 18-26), and provided sample sizes suggesting significant numbers of Gen X (ages 43-58) and Boomers (ages 59 and older) among their respondents.

This poll provides a broader perspective, extending beyond just concert attendees, and reveals a **strong representation of older generations within the overall fan base.**

Further supporting this, a poll by El Pais in March 2024 showed that among those **who identified as a "fan" or "somewhat of a fan" of Taylor Swift, 34% were in the 30-44 age group, 30% were 45-64, and 25% were 65 or older.**

Research Goal

- This presentation explores how senior fans of Taylor Swift challenge age stereotypes and create intergenerational connections through their fandom.
- Data from diverse fan communities reveals how older adults find joy, meaning, and social engagement through their appreciation of Swift's music.



Conceptual Approach

Fandom



Significant milestones

Shaping one's identity

Social expectations

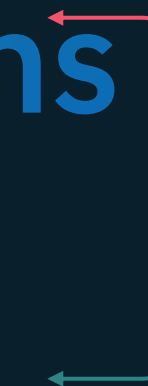


Age appropriate

Life events



Self



Conceptual Approach

Fandom



Source of continuity

Shaping one's identity

Emotional anchoring

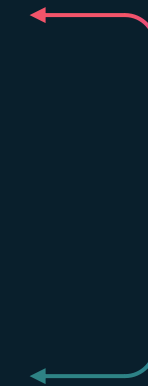


Course of Life

Meaning



Individual



Life Course Perspective and Fandom

This framework allows for a dynamic understanding of fandom,

Individual's relationship with Taylor Swift's music and the fan community is not static but is continuously shaped by their personal journey through life and the surrounding socio-cultural environment.

Harrington, Bielby (2010)



Most half of Taylor Swift's fans are middle-aged, often paying up big for tickets to her Eras tour. (Getty Images)

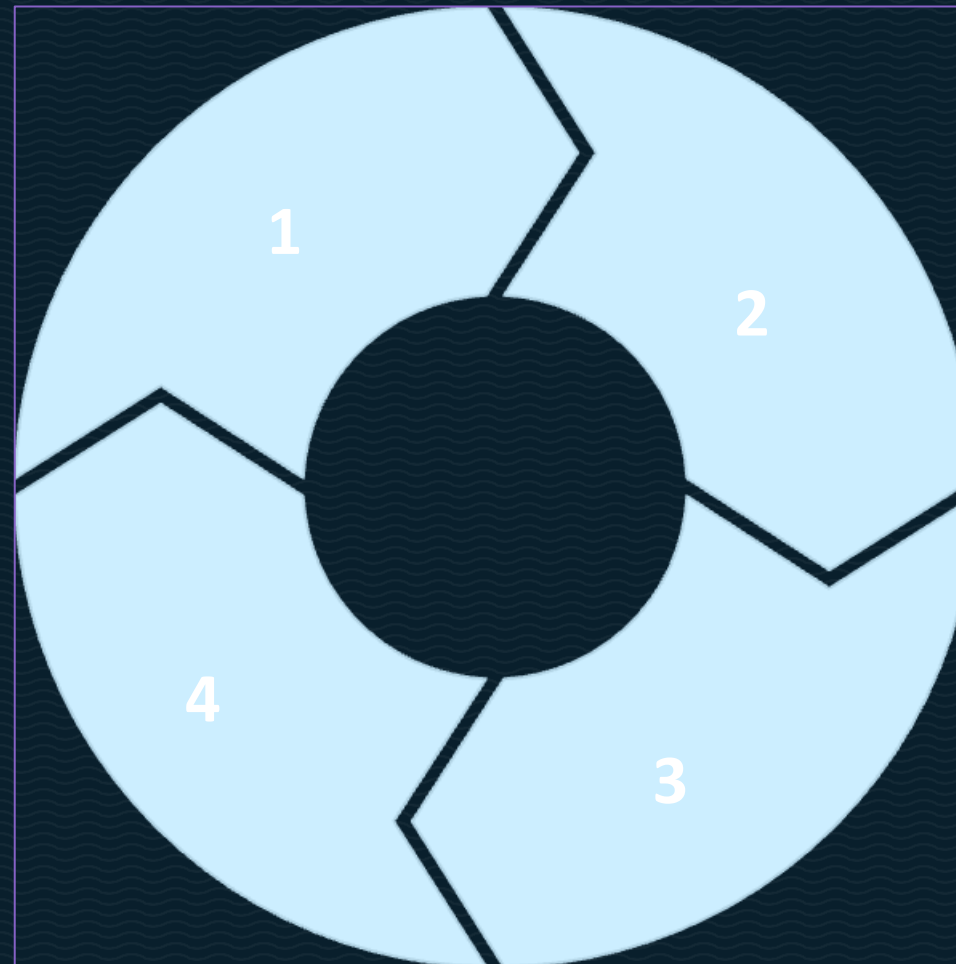
Thematic Categorical Analysis

Video content

Audiences present at Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour", various locations

Online Communities

Senior Swifties



Questionnaire

What the concert represented

Media Representations

News and posts

Life Course Perspective and Fandom

1. Aging in and with fandom **challenges stereotypes,**
2. Allows for **new forms of affect and agency,**
3. Emergence of **new role models for later life,**
4. Diverse fan base also provides for **intergenerational dialogue.**

1. Aging in and with fandom challenges stereotypes



Identity and Belonging

Age-Defying Identity

"I am now a fully fledged, unequivocal Swiftie at the age of 62."

Intergenerational Connections

"I don't talk to my friends about it... I just hang out with the teenage girls. They call me 'Swiftie mom'."

Blending Musical Tastes

"I still hold Dylan in a special place. But appreciating Taylor's work is a joy."

Preliminary Findings

1. Aging in and with fandom challenges stereotypes

Typology of Senior Swifties

Original Oldies

Fans who discovered Swift early in her career: "I've been a fan since I first saw her on CMT Videos."

Parent Swifties

Those introduced to Swift through their children on "long car journeys" or as concert chaperones.

Late Discoverers

"At 73, I didn't expect to find anyone new whose music I could love with passion."



Preliminary Findings

1. Aging in and with fandom challenges stereotypes



Ageist Attitudes

27% of men and 20% of women believe it's embarrassing for older adults to attend Swift concerts.



Resistance Through Participation

Roger Stock, 74, who grew up with the Doors and Grateful Dead, joined two Swift Facebook groups.



Intergenerational Bonds

Linda Fox, 74, bonded with her 16-year-old granddaughter through Swift's music after a tragedy.

2. Allows for new forms of affect and agency

Online Communities for Swift Fans Over Fifty



Facebook Groups

Dedicated groups like "Swifties Over 50" provide spaces where older fans share experiences without judgment.



Meetup Organizers

Senior fans coordinate pre-concert gatherings and friendship bracelet exchanges through online platforms.



Content Creators

Podcasts and YouTube channels by older Swifties analyze lyrics through their life experiences.



Intergenerational Bridges

Online forums facilitate connections between generations, with older fans mentoring younger Swifties.

Preliminary Findings

2. Allows for new forms of affect and agency Online Communities for Swift Fans Over Fifty

The screenshot shows a Facebook group page for "Swiftly over Fifty". The group is private and has 21,600 members. The cover image features Taylor Swift in a black hat and a floral arrangement with her name "Taylor Swift" written in cursive. The left sidebar lists various regional and thematic sub-groups like "Bridgerton Chat", "Florida", "Georgia and Surrounding Areas", "Minnesota Swiftly over Fifty", "NC/VA areas", "Pacific Northwest Swifties", "Swiftie Book Club", "Toronto", and "Western NU". The main content area includes a post creation box with a text input field, a poll icon, and an activity icon. Below the post box is a navigation menu with tabs for "Discussão", "Em destaque", "Membros", "Eventos", and "Conteúdos multimédia". An "About" section is visible on the right, describing the group as a politics-free space for Swifties aged 50+, where they share their love for Taylor's music and art.

facebook.com/groups/6888067924549287

Search Facebook

Swiftly over Fifty
Grupo Privado · 21,6 mil membros

Mais conversas neste grupo

- Bridgerton Chat**
Clica para entrar
- Florida**
Clica para entrar
- Georgia and Surrounding Areas**
Clica para entrar
- Minnesota Swiftly over Fifty**
Clica para entrar
- NC/VA areas**
Clica para entrar
- Pacific Northwest Swifties**
Clica para entrar
- Swiftie Book Club**
Clica para entrar
- Toronto**
Clica para entrar
- Western NU**
Clica para entrar

Swiftly over Fifty
Grupo Privado · 21,6 mil membros

+ Invite Share Joined

Discussão Em destaque Membros Eventos Conteúdos multimédia

Escreve algo...

Sondagem A sentir-me/Atividade

Em destaque

About
Swifties in their Fifties+ on a politics-free page, enjoying each other and our love for Taylor's music and art. We are always rooting for the best for her now and look forward to her endeavors ...with whatever she chooses to do! Join us to share your Swiftie experiences and favorite works of hers while making great connections with Swifties around the world! Ver

2. Allows for new forms of affect and agency

Concert Experiences: The Eras Tour & Older Swifties



Dancing Like Nobody's Watching

Many seniors report feeling decades younger during Swift's three-hour performances. The music transcends age barriers.



Bracelet Trading Traditions

Senior Swifties embrace fan customs like bracelet exchanges. These rituals create meaningful connections across generations.



Accessibility Challenges

Older fans navigate venue limitations with creativity. Many customize mobility aids with Swift-themed decorations.



Family Bonding

The Eras Tour has become a family affair. Many seniors attend with children and grandchildren.

2. Allows for new forms of affect and agency

Concert Experiences: The Eras Tour & Older Swifties

- Please complete the following sentence: For me going to the Taylor Swift concert represented...
 - **“Being able to see my favourite artist after 15 years ”**
 - **“Taking part in a moment of history and being in the safest and most joy filled environment imaginable ”**
 - **“A reclaiming of aspects of me I felt I had to hide for so long because I thought they were too feminine or uncool. I felt free at this concert.”**
 - **“A lifelong 'dream' coming through - I have been following her for 18 years, to finally see her live was superbly wonderful”**
 - **“A dream come true because I've waited more than half of my life for that.”**
 - **“A dream came true, and one of the best days of my life.”**

3. Emergence of new role models for later life,

Media Representation of Senior Swifties



Album Cover Recreation

The "Senior Swifties" project showcased residents recreating Swift's iconic album covers.



Fashion Inspiration

80-year-old Carol: "I wish I could wear outfits like Taylor Swift every day."



Speak Now Recreation

91-year-old Elizabeth chose to recreate the cover of Speak Now (Taylor's Version).

Preliminary Findings

3. Emergence of new role models for later life,



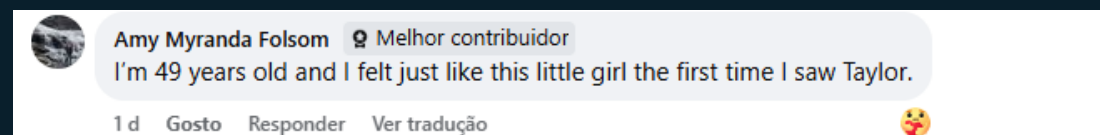
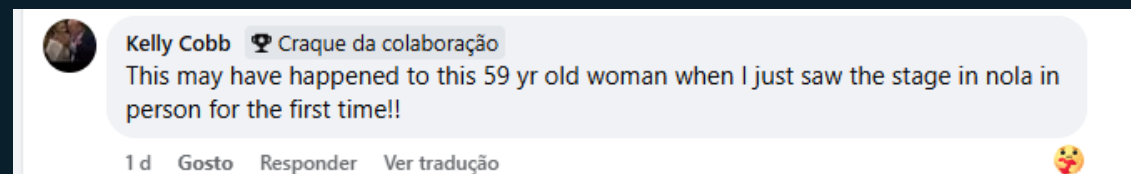
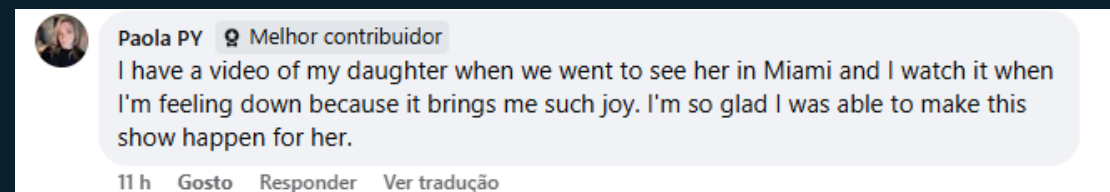
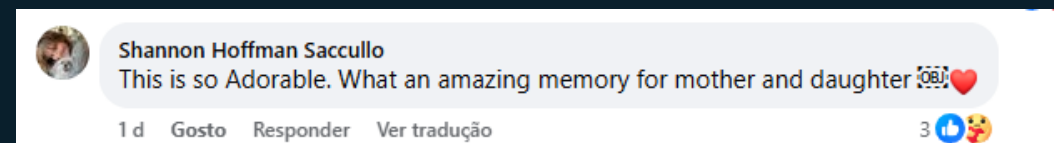
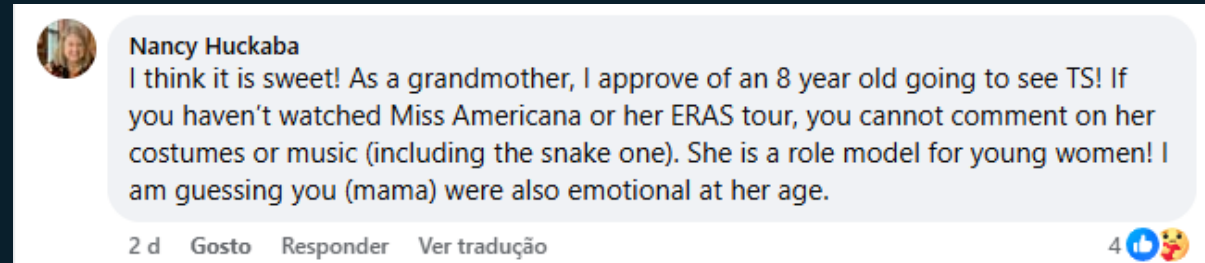
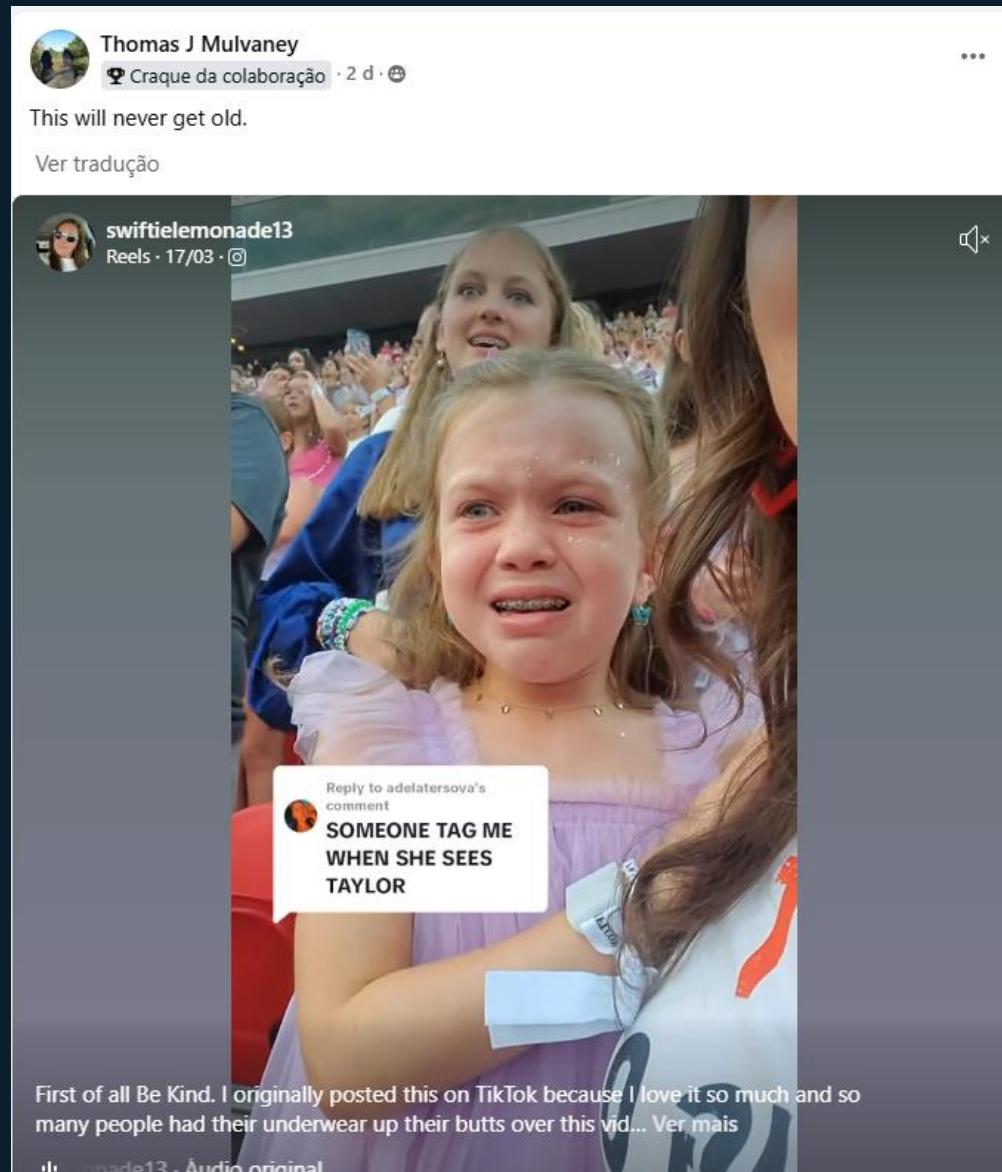
Jenny Ho, 53, has seen Swift 10 times and has been a fan since the release of the singer's *Red* album. Ho loves Swift's songwriting and says, "It's like poetry." She remembers seeing her first concert, the Police, in Honolulu, her hometown.



(From left): Christy Tew, 63, Connie Pittaro, 61, Julie Klaus, 67, and Mary Raser, 62, wore pink cowboy hats decorated with feathers and sparkles and said the younger concertgoers exchanged friendship bracelets with them.

Preliminary Findings

4. Diverse fan base also provides for intergenerational dialogue.



Preliminary Findings

4. Diverse fan base also provides for intergenerational dialogue.

Mother Daughter Vegas Trip to See Taylor Swift Eras Tour

While Vegas may be known for its bright lights, slot machines, gambling tables, nightclubs, my friend and I took our daughters there for something much more wholesome. We surprised them with a Vegas trip to see the Taylor Swift Eras Tour! *insert teenage girl screams here*! We packed up our friendship bracelets and eras tour outfits and headed out to Vegas as the biggest Taylor Swift fans!



Taylor Swift and my daughter: How 18 years of music became the soundtrack to our bond

LAURA TRUJILLO USA TODAY



Show Caption

Preliminary Findings

4. Diverse fan base also provides for intergenerational dialogue.



Amber Tellez (right), 46, and her daughter Charlotte Mitchell (left) are from Monrovia, California. Tellez, whose first concert was New Kids on the Block, logged on during a professional training class to get the Taylor Swift tickets for her daughter as a Christmas present. They are wearing Taylor Swift T-shirts and plenty of friendship bracelets.



Kim Hightower, 61, (center) says her first concert was KC and the Sunshine Band. She went to "The Eras Tour" with her daughters Kendall (left) and Lyndsey (right). Kim admires Swift's work ethic, commenting, "She works hard. She writes her own songs. She plays. She is good to the fans. She donates. It's her work ethic."

Preliminary Findings

4. Diverse fan base also provides for intergenerational dialogue.

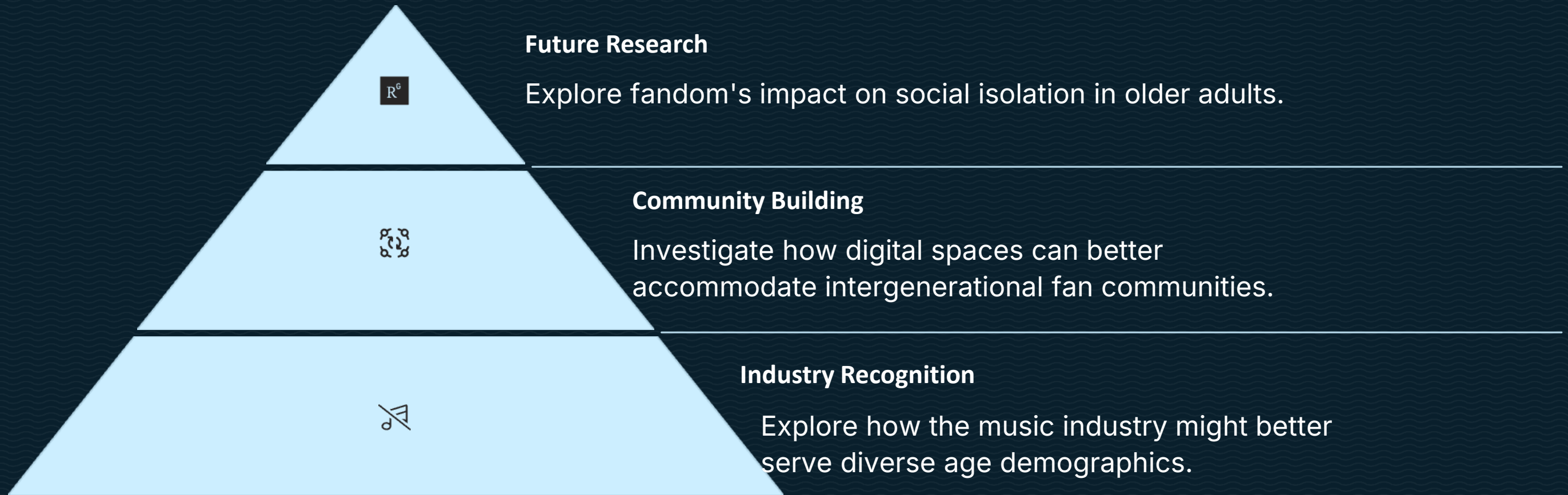


Megan Parma (left), 46, and her daughter Kennedy (right), 10, were dressed in black outfits accessorized with sparkly shoes, gold stars and gold heart earrings. The look was mostly inspired by Swift's *Midnights* album, but they pulled ideas from the entirety of Swift's discography.



Debbie Holt, 62, whose first concert was Journey, attended "The Eras Tour" with her four daughters and daughter-in-law. Holt's daughter got the tickets online. "I would have told her to spend more money. I had no idea. She only spent \$100 on each ticket. I would have spent lots more money than that."

Conclusions and Future Directions



Jean-Michel Espitalier



“From which it will be deduced that each here consists of an infinity of heres all nested in each other like matryoshka dolls”

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Thank You!

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