

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher mainly discusses the background of the research, providing context that establishes the foundation for the study. The introduction begins by presenting the broader field of inquiry and gradually narrows to the specific research problem. The chapter also articulates the research questions, the aim of the research, the research purposes, and the significance of the study, explaining how the findings may contribute to theoretical understanding or practical applications in the field.

1.1 Background of the Study

The digital music industry has undergone transformative changes in the last decades, evolving from physical sales dominance to streaming supremacy. This evolution has fundamentally altered not only how music is consumed but also how it is marketed and promoted. The rapid advancement of digital technology has profoundly transformed the landscape of the music industry. One of the most notable shifts has been the emergence and widespread adoption of music streaming platforms, which have increasingly replaced traditional methods of music distribution and consumption (Shin & Kim, 2025). Today, these services represent the dominant mode through which audiences across the globe access and engage with music, reshaping the economic models, production practices, and consumer behaviour within the industry.

Copywriting in modern arts represents a critical intersection between creative expression and market positioning. Contemporary artists must navigate the delicate balance between authentic artistic vision and strategic communication that resonates with audiences, critics, and potential buyers. The connection between musicians and their audiences has traditionally been characterized by a sense of intimacy. Artists frequently create and perform music that stems from deeply personal experiences and emotions. When listeners resonate with this music, it can

evoke a powerful sense of direct, emotional communication, as though a profound and personal exchange is taking place between the musician and the audience (Baym, 2018). The language surrounding artistic works, from gallery descriptions and artist statements to exhibition catalogues and digital content, increasingly functions as both an interpretive framework and persuasive text.

Marketing research can take advantage of useful tools developed in art history and cultural studies to investigate the poetics and politics of branding as a representational system, explore the visual genealogies of contemporary marketing communication strategy, and perhaps become more sensitive to representational politics (Newman, 2002).

Starting as a country singer coming from Nashville, she has developed and explored herself into multiple genres. Within 18 years in the music industry and working with Big Machine Records, Taylor Swift has released 11 original studio albums, 4 re-recorded albums, 5 extended plays (EPs), and 4 live albums. Her work has created so many masterpieces that have won many awards. Known as a country singer, she wanted to break her limits to become a versatile singer. As a result, she produced '1989' as a pop music album, and the most successful album supported by her career won many awards. But, '1989' hits were different; it surpassed the second album to spawn five or more US top-10 singles in the 2010s decade, and made Swift the second woman to have two albums each score five US top-10 hits. Its singles received heavy rotation on US radio over a year and a half following its release, which *Billboard* described as "a kind of cultural omnipresence that's rare for a 2010s album" (White, 2018). In every album that she releases, she always puts a teaser on all of her social media, except for these two, but in this research, the researcher highlights the album called 'folklore'.

According to Chart Masters (2023), Taylor Swift's "1989" in 2014, "Reputation" in 2017, and "folklore" in 2020 represent three distinct commercial milestones in her career, each achieving remarkable success but through different market conditions and timeframes. "1989" stands as Swift's best-selling album with

over 14.7 million copies sold, establishing it as a commercial juggernaut that dominated the mid-2010s music landscape with initial first-week sales of 1.2 million copies. “Reputation” followed as another massive commercial success, recently reaching 14.5 million units sold worldwide, Taylor Swift’s albums and songs sales, and achieving 1.2 million copies in its first week, folklore, Taylor Swift’s album, making it the world’s best-selling album after selling two million copies worldwide within one week of release. In contrast, Taylor Swift’s ‘folklore’ Album exceeded 1.3 million sales in 24 Hours (Aniftos, 2020), demonstrating Swift’s continued commercial power even during unprecedented industry challenges. While “folklore” achieved impressive first-week sales of 846,000 copies and became the best-selling album of 2020 with 2.2 million copies sold by January 2024, it has not yet matched the total lifetime sales of either “1989” or “Reputation.” However, “folklore” distinguished itself by winning the Grammy for Album of the Year and becoming one of Swift’s most critically acclaimed works, proving that commercial success and artistic recognition can manifest differently across her catalog. All three albums demonstrate Swift’s consistent ability to achieve million-plus first-week sales, with each representing different eras of her artistic evolution while maintaining her commercial dominance.

The album was released during COVID-19, during lockdown. She produced two albums and released them in a row, ‘folklore’, and continued with ‘evermore’. The release and promotion of Taylor Swift’s eighth studio album, ‘folklore’, on July 24, 2020, unfolded against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Since its launch, folklore has established itself as 2020’s best-selling album. The record achieved the top position globally, accumulating over 2 million sales worldwide and surpassing half a billion combined streams across audio and video platforms within its first seven days. The album reached the number one spot on iTunes in more than 85 countries and set records as the largest UK debut by a female artist in 2020, while also becoming Taylor Swift’s most-streamed first-week release in the UK.

The album's lead track, "cardigan," made an impressive debut at the top of Spotify's Global chart and earned the highest daily streaming numbers on the platform for 2020. The song also claimed the top position on iTunes' song rankings and became the most-added track on both Top 40 and Hot AC radio formats across the country. BBC Radio 1 in the UK immediately placed it on their A-list rotation.

According to Universal Music Canada (2020), Taylor Swift holds the unique distinction of being the sole female artist with seven albums that each achieved at least 500,000 sales in their opening week, spanning *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *RED*, *1989*, *Reputation*, *Lover*, and *folklore*. She also stands as the only woman in the 21st century to achieve five number-one studio albums in the UK. The *folklore* release marked both the highest first-week streaming numbers for any female artist in the UK during 2020 and Swift's personal best for opening-week UK streams. These accomplishments add to *folklore*'s impressive list of broken records. The album previously shattered Spotify's global record for opening-day streams by a female artist with 80.6 million plays and set Apple Music's record for most-streamed pop album in 24 hours with 35.47 million streams. The release also established new streaming records for indie/alternative music on Amazon Music both domestically and internationally.

The unprecedented nature of worldwide lockdowns and social distancing measures disrupted conventional album marketing strategies, compelling artists to fundamentally restructure their promotional activities within entirely digital environments. In this context, Swift's decision to employ a surprise release strategy for 'folklore', followed later by a similar approach with 'evermore', serves as a significant case study in crisis-era marketing innovation. Her work in the use of strategic copywriting and digital communication channels highlights how artists adapted their promotional practices to maintain engagement and visibility during a period of profound industry disruption.

Taylor Swift employed a strategically straightforward promotional approach for the release of her album 'folklore'. She announced the album through

coordinated, simultaneous posts across various social media platforms less than 24 hours before its midnight launch. This unconventional release strategy generated significant buzz, fueled by fan interactions and media coverage, potentially enhancing both album sales and streaming numbers through heightened anticipation and engagement. According to data published by *Billboard*, ‘folklore’ achieved the most successful album debut of 2020. Following its release, the album maintained the number one position on the charts for six consecutive weeks. It was ultimately recognized as the highest-selling album of the year, highlighting the commercial effectiveness of Swift’s release strategy.

This research will bring together our analytical findings to provide a holistic view of how copywriting functions as a creative instrument within marketing frameworks. By investigating the complex relationship between creative expression, strategic objectives, and ethical considerations in Swift’s promotional language, this thesis seeks to enhance our understanding of copywriting’s vital function in today’s marketing landscape. Through careful examination of the ‘folklore’ campaign, we aim to demonstrate how thoughtfully crafted language can transcend mere commercial persuasion to establish meaningful connections with audiences. Ultimately, this work contributes to expanding scholarly and professional perspectives on marketing communication by highlighting how creative copywriting serves as the essential bridge between brand objectives and authentic human connection during challenging circumstances.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

The problem formulation in this study is:

1.2.1 How are the copywriting approach for ‘folklore’ from Taylor Swift’s album promotion strategies on Instagram?

1.2.2 How is the copywriting formula strategically implemented on Instagram promotional platforms for the ‘folklore’ album?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is:

1.3.1 To examine how the copywriting approach for ‘folklore’ represents an evolution in Taylor Swift’s marketing strategy on Instagram.

1.3.2 To identify how copywriting formulas were strategically implemented on Instagram promotional platforms for the ‘folklore’ album.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This final assignment is expected to provide benefits, theoretical contribution, and practical contribution, as follows:

1.4.1 Theoretical Contribution:

This research is expected to advance digital communication theory by providing a deeper understanding of how digital copywriting functions as a strategic communication tool within the music industry’s social media landscape. Also, analyse how Taylor Swift’s ‘folklore’ album promotion demonstrates advanced copywriting strategies and provides readers with actionable insights into the intersection of theoretical marketing principles and real-world application in the music industry.

1.4.2 Practical Contribution

From a practical standpoint, this research will offer valuable insights for music industry professionals by identifying effective digital copywriting strategies for album promotion that can be implemented across various artists and projects. The study will provide comprehensive social media marketing guidelines that artists and their management teams can utilize to optimize Instagram content for maximum audience engagement.

1.5 Output

This research, intended for journal publication in SINTA 4-accredited public journals on Vol. 9 Issue 4, (July-August 2025): SATHET: (JURNAL SEJARAH, PENDIDIKAN DAN HUMANIORA), in the title of “Digital Copywriting Elements In Taylor Swift’s ‘Folklore’ Album On Instagram” that provides an insightful analysis of copywriting within popular modern arts. The study reveals previously unexplored connections between how necessary copywriting is in the digital music industry, especially the ‘folklore’ album by Taylor Swift in 2020. The article format will follow the standard format set by the chosen publisher.