

Brand Revitalization through Social Media Management in the Music Industry: The Case of a Country Singer in the USA

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Abstract

Brand revitalization refers to the strategic process of reclaiming lost brand value to reverse declining trends and restore competitive advantage. While widely discussed in business and management literature, its application within the music industry remains underexplored. This qualitative study addresses this gap by examining the social media strategies used to revitalize the brand of a U.S.-based country music artist, following the seven-step framework proposed by Dev and Keller (2014). Drawing on insider access to the artist's management team, the research employs an in-depth single case study to analyze a rebranding process implemented across multiple digital platforms, supported by structured brand management and content strategies. The revitalization effort combined the restoration of legacy materials with the creation of emotionally engaging content - including photos, videos, and narrative storytelling - aimed at expanding the fanbase and reinforcing the artist's authenticity. The findings illustrate how a multidimensional, data-informed approach - integrating brand positioning, storytelling-based marketing, systematic digital optimization, and the careful sequencing of social media initiatives - can successfully reposition an artist's brand, generating renewed visibility, stronger engagement, and cross-media outcomes such as increased streaming, radio play, and traditional media attention. The study further highlights the transient and adaptive nature of social media-driven brand revitalization, which demands sustained strategic management to ensure long-term effectiveness. Overall, this research contributes theoretical and practical insights into how legacy music brands can be revitalized through integrated, multidimensional brand strategies.

Keywords: Brand Revitalization, Social Media Management, Music Industry, Country Music.

JEL classification: M31.

Introduction

Brand revitalization refers to the strategic process of reclaiming lost brand value and reversing declining trends to regain and bolster competitive advantage (Keller, 1999). Within business and management research, brand revitalization has garnered considerable attention, especially for organizations confronting market shifts or challenges to relevance (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, a recent literature review (Tripathi et al., 2020) reveals a distinct gap: relatively few studies address brand revitalization from a robust managerial or strategic perspective, particularly those that provide actionable frameworks or empirical evidence relevant to real-world decision-making. The authors emphasize that much of the extant literature remains conceptual or focused on case-based narratives, lacking comprehensive, practice-oriented models. This consideration looks applicable within sectors like the music industry, where brand identities are complex and dynamic.

In the music industry, artists face unique pressures, such as rapid changes in consumer trends, digital disruption, and evolving media platforms, which make brand revitalization both critically important and methodologically distinct (Passman, 2021). Despite its importance, the topic has received scant dedicated research, with the existing literature primarily focusing on established acts or paradigmatic cases, rather than offering systematic, empirically grounded insights, especially related to specific genres such as country music (Negus, 2019). In addition, the role of fan engagement and community participation in the co-construction of artist brands remains under-theorized, despite emerging contributions that highlight the value of participatory labor in shaping music branding (Baym & Burnett, 2009). Similarly, strategic brand building rooted in core values - an approach well-established in corporate contexts (Urde, 2003) - has yet to be fully explored in the context of individual artists navigating genre-specific markets like country music.

A particularly relevant dimension for contemporary brand revitalization is the role of integrated social media management. Social media channels now operate as interconnected ecosystems where content curation, timing, and cross-platform synergy play central roles in shaping audience perception and engagement. Scholars have highlighted that effective social media management requires a strategic combination of audience targeting, content personalization, and the alignment of brand storytelling with platform-specific affordances (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Gensler et al., 2013). In the context of music branding, this entails not only frequent content posting but also the deliberate orchestration of formats - short-form viral clips on TikTok, visual storytelling on Instagram, long-form video on YouTube, and community-building posts on Facebook. By leveraging the unique strengths of each platform in a coordinated manner, artists can enhance their visibility, stimulate participatory engagement, and ultimately reinforce brand loyalty across diverse audience segments.

The objective of this study is to contribute to the understanding of brand revitalization within the country music industry through the strategic management of social media, as applied to a real-world case study. The study is guided by the following research question: What are the key strategic drivers for revitalizing the brand of a country music artist? Unlike previous research, this study adopts a dual perspective: the external viewpoint of academic scholars and the internal viewpoint of a professional practitioner due to the fact that our research team is composed of two academics and a digital social media analyst who worked as part of the communication staff of the United States country singer featured in the case study. The inclusion of a practitioner from the artist's communication staff as part of the research team constitutes a further strength, as it allowed for a hybrid perspective combining academic interpretation with insider knowledge.

The study is structured into three main parts: 1) a review of the scientific literature on brand revitalization through social media and traditional communication channels within the country music industry; 2) the qualitative methodology employed in the research; and 3) the analysis of findings and discussion. Finally, the conclusion outlines the main results achieved, the study's distinctive scientific contribution, the critical issues encountered, and future directions for further investigation.

1. Brand revitalization and social media: Theoretical foundations

1.1. Meanings and approaches in brand revitalization

Brand revitalization is a strategic response to the erosion of brand equity, often initiated to restore a brand's competitive advantage and cultural relevance in a saturated or evolving marketplace (Keller, 1999; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). It refers to efforts made by organizations to reenergize brands that have lost their market traction due to shifts in consumer behavior, technological disruption, or internal misalignment. Some scholars have stressed the

necessity of aligning revitalization strategies with emerging cultural and technological trends, advocating for an integrated approach leveraging both digital and traditional media (Gensler et al., 2013).

Different approaches are adopted by organizations to revitalize their brands depending on the specific contexts they operate - strategic intent, health of the brand and product category (Tripathi et al., 2020). These approaches can be grouped into two main branches: managerial and market approaches.

1) Managerial approach. This dimension examines the role of leadership in initiating and steering the revitalization process, for instance by showing managerial efforts in transforming a brand into a heritage brand (Dion & Mazzalovo, 2016). This is especially true for artists seeking to modernize their brand without alienating long-standing fans. Entrepreneurial ventures such as licensing deals, brand partnerships, or even buy-back of rights can represent strategic moves to reclaim brand control and refresh market perception. Some scholars discuss strategic and tactical opportunities for managers to revitalize brands, such as acquiring favorable perception towards brand-refresh, association with relevant goals, and new usage situations (Wanink & Huffman, 2001). In corporate contexts, revitalization often arises from a strategic vision promoted by brand managers or entrepreneurs (Ikeda, 2001).

2) Market approach. This dimension focuses on consumer attitude toward brand revitalization and product/service rejuvenation. Consumer attitudes can be influenced by socio-cultural perspective and depending on consumer collectives (Närvänen & Goulding, 2016); nostalgic advertisements impact participation of customers in bringing dead brands alive (Gilal et al., 2020). In the music industry, combining the past and present for a retro brand has an effect on customer behavior, with nostalgia proneness acting as a moderating factor in the relationship between retro branding and consumer behavioral intentions (Hallegatte et al., 2018). Product extensions, genre fusions, and strategic collaborations (e.g., with mainstream or indie artists) can serve to reposition the artist within broader market segments (Chektan & Keller, 2014; Cooper et al., 2015). Some authors (Merlo & Perugini, 2015) discuss how innovation in content (e.g., concept albums, acoustic reworks) plays a pivotal role in brand renewal.

While brand revitalization has been widely discussed predominantly in marketing literature (Tripathi et al., 2020), a significant gap exists concerning its application within the creative and entertainment industries, particularly in music (Porto & Borges, 2024).

Some researchers and consultants have proposed and applied various brand revitalization processes (e.g., Light & Kiddon, 2009; Murane, 2012, quoted by Dev & Keller, 2014). By encompassing previous research, Dev & Keller (2014) articulate a comprehensive seven-step model for brand rejuvenation that will also serve as the analytical backbone for the case study in this paper. These seven steps include: 1) conduct a brand audit - recognize the need for revitalization and evaluate whether the problem is rooted in brand awareness, brand image, or product relevance; 2) determine the brand positioning - redefine the brand's value proposition and audience; 3) establish the brand platform - compare value proposition with competitors and implement Key Performance Indicators; 4) brand beliefs - identify the beliefs that lead the new brand; 5) evoke the brand experience - develop target customers to match their needs/expectations; 6) develop the brand voice - create the language and tone to target customers; 7) launch the brand - tactics and tools chosen for brand revitalization, measure and adjust to monitor performance and adapt. This structured roadmap provides both theoretical clarity and managerial applicability, especially in dynamic environments like the music industry where brand trajectories are increasingly volatile.

1.2. Artist as brand: A shift in the music industry

In the music sector, artists function not merely as entertainers but as brand identities (Kerrigan et al., 2011). These identities encompass values, aesthetics, and storytelling elements that audiences recognize and emotionally invest in (Click et al., 2013; Labrecque et al., 2011). The move toward personal branding, a process of curating one's public image, has further intensified under the influence of digital media (Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2017). Nowadays, the artist is no longer simply a promoter of music releases but is positioned as a multi-dimensional "brand persona" whose personal story, authenticity, and interactions become the primary vehicle for engagement (Marshall, 2015; Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). In this model, successful revitalization is less about reintroducing a specific album or single and more about cultivating sustained interest in the artist's broader identity - musical, personal, and even ideological (Gensler et al., 2013).

For country artists, leveraging narratives around authenticity, community, and resilience - core values of the genre - has proven effective in re-engaging audiences, as well as building cultural relevance in increasingly diverse and fragmented markets (Watson, 2014). Social media has enabled artists to project these values directly, bypassing gatekeepers and fostering deep, direct connections with fans (Baym, 2018). In particular, the cultural expectations of authenticity, narrative, and locality expected by country music artists require that branding and rebranding efforts preserve the emotional and cultural bonds established with fans (Peterson, 1997; Fox, 2004).

1.3. Social media and brand revitalization

The communication layer represents a critical vector of brand revitalization. Studies have underscored the role of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) in rebuilding brand loyalty (Ali, 2019; Li et al., 2019). These tools facilitate not just broadcasting, but interaction, dialogue, and co-creation. Real-time fan feedback, participatory content (e.g., duets, challenges), and live sessions humanize the brand and deepen emotional resonance (Gensler et al., 2013; Jenkins, 2006). For example, releasing "behind-the-scenes" footage or "day-in-the-life" vlogs can position the artist as relatable and transparent-key drivers in perceived authenticity (Marwick, 2013).

In other words, social media platforms are not only dissemination channels but also spaces for continuous identity construction and co-creation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The social media branding process involves creating affective value (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), in which emotional resonance with followers - achieved through intimate storytelling and behind the scenes content - revitalizes brand affinity. As Marwick & Boyd (2011) explain, artists use platforms like TikTok and Instagram to establish parasocial relationships, whereby fans feel personally connected to public figures.

In this context, visibility is algorithmically driven and temporally unstable (Hearn, 2008; Marwick, 2013). While a viral TikTok video can dramatically amplify an artist's exposure, this effect may be fleeting without sustained strategic engagement (Baym, 2018). Therefore, brand revitalization in digital spaces must extend beyond isolated campaigns to include content continuity, platform synergy, and audience monitoring (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Lomborg & Mortensen, 2017).

Recent studies define agile branding or marketing agility as the organizational ability to adapt swiftly across multiple communication channels - from short-form video to streaming platforms - while maintaining brand coherence (Pöhlmann et al., 2024; Kalaiganam et al., 2021). In the context of a country music artist, this means translating traditional storytelling into TikTok formats, reinforcing personal traits via Instagram aesthetics, and using YouTube for deeper long-form engagement, all aligned under a consistent brand identity.

1.4. Temporality and volatility of digital success

Porto & Borges (2024) highlight that while digital tactics offer high short-term visibility, the sustainability of this success remains precarious. Algorithmic shifts, platform fatigue, and content saturation mean that revitalization is not a one-off campaign but a continuous investment. Artists must adopt a brand stewardship approach, constantly adapting their message and aesthetics to evolving trends while safeguarding their core identity. Moreover, as pointed out by Jenkins (2006), the boundaries between digital and traditional media are increasingly porous. A well-received social media campaign can trigger cross-media effects-increased radio play, invitations to TV appearances, or features in print magazines-thus revitalizing the brand across the full media ecosystem (Napoli, 2011; Couldry, 2012).

1.5. From product-centric to persona-centric branding

Another emergent theme in the literature is the transition from product-centric to persona-centric branding (Holt, 2004; Gandini, 2016). Rather than focusing solely on individual releases, artists are now encouraged to build and promote a consistent persona, which in turn drives the success of future products. This aligns with Keller's (1999) distinction between brand image (what people associate with the artist) and brand awareness (how often the artist is top-of-mind). Strategic revitalization must work on both fronts: visibility and depth of association.

Leonard (2007) and Meier (2019) remind us that brand identity is not neutral. Gender, race, and class all influence how rebranding is perceived and whether it is embraced or rejected. For instance, a female country singer who modernizes her look or collaborates with pop artists might be praised for innovation or accused of betraying tradition. These dynamics must be carefully managed through audience listening and message calibration.

In summary, brand revitalization in the music industry is a multifaceted process, informed by managerial decisions, market adaptations, and communication strategies. Drawing on Dev & Keller's (2014) seven-step model and supported by recent contributions related to social media management, this literature review provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing real-world brand revitalization cases and to be operationalized in the case study of a U.S.-based country singer. We aim to understand how digital branding tools not only restore visibility but also reconstruct long-term audience connection, by considering that few studies have systematically investigated the communication actions of artists' brands that lead to significant results (Osorio et al., 2020). Specifically, our study is addressed to deepen the key strategic drivers for revitalizing the brand of a country music artist in the USA through social media management and to provide new insights for academics and practitioners engaged with managerial perspectives.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design and methods

The methodology adopted in this study is based on a qualitative, interpretative approach centered on an embedded case study, which is considered particularly suitable for exploring complex and context-dependent phenomena such as brand revitalization in the music industry (Yin, 2018). In fact, the case study approach enables the examination of real-life dynamics in a bounded setting and allows for the integration of multiple sources of evidence, including interviews, digital content analysis, and direct observation (Stake, 1995; Eisenhardt, 1989). Specifically, the focus of the analysis is a U.S.-based country music artist who engaged in a structured brand revitalization process through strategic social media management.

This methodological choice is motivated by the exploratory nature of the research question, which seeks to identify and understand the strategic drivers behind brand

revitalization within a specific creative and cultural context. The case study is particularly appropriate in situations where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined, and when the aim is not generalization but rather analytical insight (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Data were collected through a combination of qualitative techniques, including semi-structured interviews and dialogue with key stakeholders, content analysis of social media posts (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook), and internal documentation related to the rebranding strategy. This multi-source approach enhances the study's construct validity and provides a richer, triangulated understanding of the processes involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

We conducted six interviews with: the artist (Respondent 1, R.1), the artist's marketing manager (R.2), the artist's tour manager (R.3), and some record label executives representing labels A, B, and C (R.4, R.5 and R.6). The semi-structured interviews with the artist, the marketing manager and the tour manager served as the starting point for the data collection process, initiated in October 2018. Subsequently, interactions with these three key respondents continued until December 2022 through focused, dialogic exchanges on narrower thematic areas rather than formal interview sessions. The other three semi-structured interviews with record label executives were conducted in December 2020.

The interview protocol was focused on five main thematic areas: 1) the artist's career history and discography; 2) personal interests and creative attitudes; 3) the structure and dynamics of the country music industry; 4) the artist's relationships with record labels and radio networks; and 5) ongoing projects related to catalog reissues and artistic development.

The interview protocol was flexible rather than rigid. The increased flexibility resulted from the longitudinal continuity of the study, conducted over several years, which allowed for iterative engagement with the key respondents. Specifically, the first three interviewees addressed all five thematic areas, while the interviews with record label executives were limited to areas 1 and 5.

A distinctive feature of this research lies in the dual role of one team member, who also worked internally as the digital social media manager for the artist. This "practitioner-researcher" position provided privileged access to internal insights and data, enabling a deeper understanding of the internal dynamics and branding strategies at play. Such a collaborative research design aligns with recent developments in qualitative inquiry that advocate for co-constructed meaning and contextual depth (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Nicolini, 2009). The empirical investigation follows an inductive logic, allowing theory and data to interact iteratively, as recommended in interpretive case study research (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Additionally, the study draws on literature concerning insider research and action research methodologies, recognizing the benefits and challenges of conducting research from within the organization (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

2.2. Data collection and data processing

The operational approach to this case study involved structured observation and iterative data analysis. We began with a comprehensive assessment of the artist's digital footprint, combining qualitative methods such as interviews with key respondents and quantitative data derived from key performance indicators (KPIs), including social media metrics and streaming numbers. Social media performance was closely monitored across platforms, and each managerial initiative followed a cyclical process of testing, measuring, optimizing, and re-launching, a model consistent with agile marketing frameworks (Heath & Heath, 2010). We also conducted a competitive landscape analysis of peer artists in the country music genre, identifying benchmarks in terms of follower growth, engagement rates, streaming numbers,

and cross-platform presence. This contextual study allowed us to position the artist accurately within the current market and identify underexploited opportunities.

The already mentioned key performance indicators (KPIs) guided our strategic adjustments throughout the project. These included fanbase expansion, engagement rates, content views, growth in music streaming, concert ticket sales, and merchandise revenue. Additionally, we evaluated fan responses by analyzing the quality of interactions, sentiment in user comments, and the overall effectiveness of specific communication tactics. Importantly, as already stated, the research team also included a digital analyst embedded in the artist's actual social media management team. This internal-external dual perspective enabled access to non-public data and real-time strategic adjustments, adding a layer of practitioner insight that complemented the academic analysis.

2.3. Framing the artist within the country music landscape

The artist at the center of this case study is a country music singer from the USA who rose to prominence in the 1990s, during a period of significant expansion for the genre. That decade marked the emergence of a new generation of performers who successfully captured public attention and achieved considerable success in both sales and radio play. From the outset of his career, the artist benefited from strong radio support, a critical factor in the country music landscape, where genre-specific stations continue to serve as powerful gatekeepers and promotional platforms. Radio exposure not only amplifies visibility but also drives tour attendance and album sales.

However, every artist inevitably experiences a life cycle, and their radio airplay tends to diminish over time. Once an artist falls off the radar of these stations, regaining traction becomes increasingly difficult. Many stations erect entry barriers that favor younger, trend-aligned performers, often sidelining artists perceived as 'legacy acts' or outdated. This context rendered the artist's attempted comeback especially challenging, yet also uniquely valuable for studying brand revitalization via digital platforms.

Following a highly successful phase in the 1990s, the artist entered a period of gradual decline in the early 2000s, with his last hits emerging during that time. Following the termination of the contract with the record label, there was a long period of inactivity. During these years, the artist joined social media, but with an overall limited impact. He grew a decent following on Facebook, had a rather modest presence on Instagram, a neglected YouTube channel, and was absent from TikTok.

3. Results and discussion

Following the theoretical framework, we implemented the 7 steps analysis of Dev and Keller (2014) to the case study of a US country singer addressed to clearly showcase a complete process to brand revitalization, see Figure 1.



Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Source: Dev & Keller, 2014.

3.1. Brand audit

This initial phase focused on evaluating the health of the artist's brand. Indicators pointed to a clear decline: there had been no significant chart or radio success since the early 2000s, as stated by an executive representing record label A (R.4). Moreover, the last official music

release also dated to that decade, as pointed out by an executive representing record label C (R.6).

The marketing manager (R.2) highlighted how the majority of online content relied on outdated visuals (images and videos from the 1990s) projecting an obsolete image. Social media presence was weak, with Facebook being the only relevant channel. Other channels were significantly underperforming. The YouTube channel had a minimal following and lacked a structured content strategy; uploaded videos were of poor audio and video quality. Instagram had a modest following, but with extremely low engagement - likely affected by a previous acquisition of fake followers, which tends to hinder organic visibility (Marwick, 2013). The artist was absent from TikTok, and the overall lack of attention to Instagram and TikTok could be explained by the older demographic of the core fanbase (35+).

According to an executive representing record label B (R.5), streaming data were equally underwhelming, confirming the artist's marginal position in the current music scene. The artist and his marketing manager (R.1 and R.2) pointed out how communication was predominantly one-directional, especially via Facebook, with minimal attention to monitoring audience feedback or interaction. As Labrecque et al. (2011) argue, effective personal branding requires two-way communication and feedback mechanisms. The absence of these reduced the artist's ability to adjust messaging and strategy in line with audience expectations. Overall, brand awareness, image, and relevance were all compromised.

3.2. Determine the brand position

We analyzed the brand's perception among country music fans and defined the strategic direction for its evolution. According to the tour manager (R.3), the artist still held some brand equity, especially among long-time country music fans and nostalgic listeners (Hallegatte et al., 2018). However, he lacked relevance for younger generations raised in the digital age. The prevailing perception was that of a legacy act, a "90s country artist", as highlighted by all respondents.

The idea behind the new positioning was to present the artist as a timeless country music legend, working on two main fronts: 1) valorizing the existing repertoire while producing new music, encouraging the rediscovery of past hits as well as introducing them to new music with more contemporary sounds (Beckers et al., 2020); and 2) using social media to depict the artist's daily life in order to attract and engage fans who could relate to his lifestyle (Baym, 2018).

The objective was to reposition the artist not merely as a "legacy act" but as a culturally relevant figure capable of resonating with both longtime fans and new audiences.

3.3. Develop the brand platform

Next, we defined the strategic foundations of the revitalized brand - its core values and emotional promises to the audience. The intended positioning portrayed the artist as a genuine, hard-working country musician grounded in family, tradition, and authenticity. We aimed to humanize the artist: someone relatable, down-to-earth, and deeply connected to fans through direct interaction and social media presence. The brand identity was further enhanced by crafting a modern aesthetic that retained traditional values while appealing to younger audiences.

Insights gathered from all interviewees helped to conduct a competitive analysis, by mapping the country music scene and categorizing artists into distinct groups: leaders, legacy acts, emerging talents, and declining acts. The analysis drew on multiple indicators, including radio airplay success, touring performance, follower counts across major social platforms, and, especially, streaming data. Within this framework, four artists were identified who were

frequently associated with the case study artist: their careers had followed a broadly comparable trajectory up to 2018. At the time of the analysis, the metrics observed for these artists, particularly those pertaining to social media and streaming, showed a high degree of alignment.

3.4. Establish the brand belief

At this stage, the focus shifted to identifying the guiding values on which to build the artist's new brand identity, defining how the artist should communicate, behave, and engage with his audience.

The analysis of the artist's personality along with the perceptions already held by fans, derived by conversations with R.1, R.2 and R.3, highlighted authenticity, humility, and accessibility as key traits - qualities that distinguish engaging artist brands from distant celebrity personas (Holt, 2004).

The artist needed to project gratitude and sincerity, and position himself on an equal footing with his fans. This approach aligns with findings by Li et al. (2019), who emphasize how active audience engagement and emotional alignment foster brand loyalty.

These brand beliefs were translated into guidelines for all future communication and interactions, serving as a compass for all published content and for the artist's overall image. The goal was to ensure that every post or interaction reflected this identity, strengthening the emotional bond with fans and reinforcing the perception of an artist worthy of their support.

3.5. Evoke the brand experience

To translate the revitalization strategy into concrete audience engagement, a series of tailored interventions were defined for each platform. The primary goals were to strengthen the artist's digital presence, enhance the visibility of his musical catalog, and cultivate a more authentic connection with fans (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Gensler et al., 2013).

On YouTube, we carried out a full channel overhaul:

- Music videos and key older tracks were remastered in high definition and re-uploaded, leveraging the platform's preference for high-quality content in its algorithmic promotion.
- New content, such as live performances or acoustic covers, was strategically produced and uploaded, resulting in increased engagement and renewed audience interest (Merlo & Perugini, 2015).

On TikTok, we prioritized short-form, authentic content drawn from everyday moments: family life, life on the ranch, music rehearsals, and spontaneous performances. A central focus was fostering fan participation through features such as duets (split-screen videos with fans), video responses, and personalized comments, initiatives shown to enhance parasocial interaction and build loyalty (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Abidin, 2016).

Facebook and Instagram strategies emphasized consistency and emotional storytelling. We increased the frequency and quality of posts, highlighting both the artist's personal life and musical identity. Posts included informal acoustic sessions, behind-the-scenes clips, and promotional content for tours and streaming releases. This multi-platform integration allowed for a richer brand narrative and stronger community cohesion (Pihl, 2013).

3.6. Develop the brand voice

Establishing a tone of voice fully consistent with the brand identity previously outlined became a crucial aspect of the branding process. The communication style was intentionally crafted to reflect humility, approachability, and light humor - qualities aligned with the artist's

real image. Research shows that voice consistency enhances brand trust and fosters deeper emotional connection (Labrecque et al., 2011; Holt, 2004).

This tone was enacted through various content formats. For instance, the artist recorded reaction videos to fan covers, praised emerging creators, humorously engaged with trends or with videos using his own songs, and commented on user-generated videos. These practices not only improved the artist's accessibility and status, but also empowered fans to feel acknowledged and engaged in the artist's life (Gensler et al., 2013). The strategy successfully fostered a community-centric environment, in which fans were not just spectators but active participants in the artist's story - a dynamic consistent with theories of co-creation and participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006).

3.7. Launch the new brand

The launch of the new brand was developed gradually. The first phase, initiated in 2019, prioritized the revitalization of the YouTube channel with the aim of restoring and enhancing the existing content. In subsequent phases (2020–2021), efforts expanded to Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok with targeted content strategies aimed at engaging both legacy fans and younger digital-native audiences (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The outcomes were significant:

- YouTube subscribers increased by 2100% in four years;
- Facebook followers increased by 30% in over three years;
- Instagram followers increased by 225% in over three years;
- TikTok has become the artist's second-largest platform in terms of followers.

Beyond fanbase growth (+180% across all platforms), the strategy produced measurable gains across key performance areas:

- Streaming: the artist's most popular track experienced a 230% spike in Spotify and Apple Music streams following the viral use of the song in three user-generated TikTok videos. These findings align with Maheshwari's (2023) claim that TikTok has become a central driver of streaming, radio airplay, and chart performance. The latest music release outperformed comparable artists by 470% in terms of average streams, while YouTube views increased by over 3,100%.
- Live concerts: average attendance per concert rose by 36%;
- Merchandise: per-show merchandise revenue grew by 500%;
- Industry investment: the artist signed a contract with a leading Nashville label, accompanied by robust promotional and financial support;
- Traditional media: the artist's radio airplay increased significantly for the first time in years (+53% in 2022 compared to the previous year) and was featured in a range of print and digital music publications.

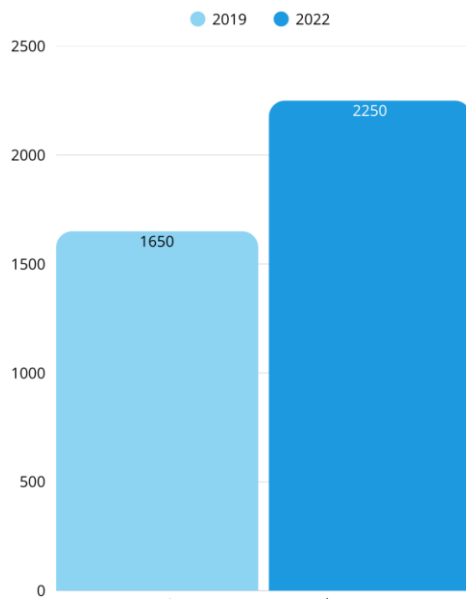


Figure 2. Average concert attendance (n° of concertgoers)
Source: Internal data provided by marketing manager

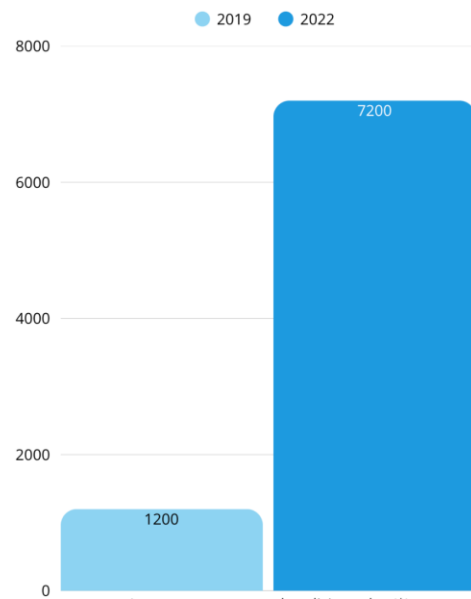


Figure 3. Average concert merchandising sales (\$)
Source: Internal data provided by marketing manager

These results presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3, demonstrate that a strategic and sustained brand revitalization process, when rooted in social media engagement and consistent brand messaging, can drive not only digital performance but also reintegration into the broader cultural and commercial landscape of the music industry (Porto & Borges, 2024; Ali, 2019).

3.8. The key drivers of brand revitalization

To address the research question that guided this study, the key strategic drivers for revitalizing the brand of the country music artist through social media can be identified as a combination of interconnected factors operating across multiple dimensions of brand management, marketing, and product strategy.

First, a brand management strategy was developed, combining a redefinition of the artist's brand positioning with a comprehensive restoration of previous content. This dual focus enabled the brand to reconnect with its historical audience while also laying the foundation for renewed cultural relevance. From a marketing perspective, the strategy placed particular emphasis on narrative management. The goal was to highlight the artist's authentic personality in order to reinforce core values such as authenticity, humility, and audience proximity - critical elements for establishing long-term emotional bonds with fans (Labrecque et al., 2011; Holt, 2004).

Another pillar of the strategy was the systematic optimization of social media platforms and digital tools. The artist's online presence was strategically restructured to maximize the unique affordances of each platform, thereby enhancing user engagement and facilitating outreach to new audiences (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Equally important was the role of sequencing and timing. The revitalization plan was executed through a clearly defined sequence of actions, ensuring consistency and coordination across platforms and content formats. The deliberate decision to begin with the restoration and promotion of existing content, before introducing new material, created a coherent and polished digital ecosystem. This allowed newly acquired users to encounter a well-organized and compelling brand narrative, encouraging deeper exploration and, for some, rediscovery of the artist.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the literature on brand revitalization by addressing a critical gap in research concerning its application within the music industry, and particularly in the context of country music artists. While previous studies have discussed brand rejuvenation in traditional business and marketing settings (Keller, 1999; Dev & Keller, 2014; Tripathi et al., 2020), few have provided empirical insights into how legacy music brands can be strategically revitalized through social media. Our research responds to this gap by presenting a detailed and operational case study that documents, step by step, the integrated process of rebranding an established artist whose visibility and cultural relevance had diminished.

Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative single-case design, combining academic rigor with insider access provided by the participation of a social media analyst embedded in the artist's management team. This hybrid approach allowed for the triangulation of multiple data sources, including social media metrics, content analysis, and internal strategic documentation. The methodology enabled a comprehensive understanding of both the strategic intentions and the operational practices that underpin successful brand revitalization campaigns in the digital era.

The results show that effective brand revitalization requires a multidimensional strategy that encompasses brand positioning, narrative construction, content management, and careful sequencing of social media initiatives. The study highlights the importance of restoring and optimizing past content before introducing new material, creating a cohesive and engaging digital ecosystem for both existing and new audiences. It also emphasizes the role of storytelling in conveying authenticity, humility, and audience proximity, which are essential in fostering long-term emotional connections and enhancing brand loyalty.

From a managerial perspective, the study illustrates how an integrated and data-informed social media strategy can generate tangible outcomes - including significant fanbase growth, improved streaming performance, increased concert attendance, higher merchandise revenue, and renewed attention from traditional media outlets. Beyond these results, the study highlights several key drivers for decision-makers and managers. A central factor is the coordinated and continuous involvement of marketing professionals and social media managers, whose expertise is essential not only for managing the artist's catalog and social media exposure but also for guiding the artist's individual behaviors that can directly influence fan perceptions.

The effectiveness of social media-based brand revitalization lies in its multidimensional nature - the ability to integrate multiple promotional, narrative, and commercial tools into a coherent strategy. The focus should not merely be on applying social media management techniques, but on recognizing and orchestrating the multidimensional components inherent in any brand revitalization process. Such a process requires: 1) a brand management strategy centered on the artist's positioning (or, in other cases, the product/persona); 2) a marketing strategy grounded in storytelling and emotional engagement; and 3) systematic optimization of the product or service offered across platforms.

These findings suggest that a complex set of multidimensional social media-driven activities can extend well beyond digital engagement, producing cross-media visibility and concrete commercial benefits. This represents a key managerial implication for managers, scholars, and practitioners alike: successful brand revitalization demands not only technical and analytical skills but also intuition, sensitivity, and an ability to observe and interpret emerging audience and industry dynamics. Nevertheless, the study presents some limitations. Its single-case design restricts the generalizability of the findings, and the focus on one music genre and national market may limit the applicability to other cultural or geographic contexts. Moreover, the transient nature of social media-driven success underscores the need for longitudinal analysis to evaluate the sustainability of brand revitalization strategies.

Future research could expand this investigation by conducting comparative case studies across genres or by employing mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative performance modeling. Scholars might also explore the interplay between social media algorithms, fan engagement patterns, and brand equity evolution over time. By addressing these areas, future studies can build on the operational and theoretical contributions of this research, deepening our understanding of how legacy artists can successfully navigate the challenges of digital brand revitalization.

Author Contributions

This article is the result of a collaborative effort by all three authors. Specifically, Rita Cannas was responsible for writing Sections 1 (*Brand Revitalization and Social Media: Theoretical Foundations*) and 2 (*Methodology*); Lorenzo Floris authored Section 3 (*Results and discussion*); and Daniela Pettinao wrote the *Introduction* and *Conclusions*.

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