

THE EFFECTS AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR BANDS IN THE HISTORY OF MUSIC. THE BEATLES AS OPINION LEADERS

V. BĂTRĂNU-PINȚEA¹ C. COMAN²

Abstract: *This article aims to highlight the effects that The Beatles have had over generations, mainly on the lifestyle of people who listen to this type music specifically. This characteristic leads to the creation of musical identities, which can greatly reduce socio-cultural barriers, as well as language barriers between fans that reside in different socio-cultural contexts. Mainly, we propose to emphasize that, regardless of the cultural background in which people live, the status of being a Beatles fan, can be a way in which people can exponentially reduce socio-cultural barriers. By interacting with some special communities on different social media platforms, for example, they will develop a sense of belonging, they can shape their overall lifestyle and build a self-image that can sometimes, in certain circumstances, change the trajectory of their lives.*

Keywords: *community, self-image, identity, habitus*

1. Introduction

Specifically, attributed to this article is the use of numerous possible means to discover and recognize how The Beatles have influenced different types of generations at such a rapid rate and with such a remarkable result in the end. We have tested accordingly, the element which comes from the impact on Japanese culture of The Beatles music, then from the comparative analysis with Romania and the impact of this country (n. Romania) on The Beatles music, a parallel or difference is made between the two chosen countries. It provides a much more precise perspective on the phenomenon itself, which is to be further exploited and analyzed. Through interviews and questionnaires, our goal is to find out the causes and factors that were the base for the rapid spread of this widely known cultural phenomenon, following discussions with many representative subjects from the two countries mentioned above, chosen as a case study, as a reference. It is to be noted that a number of 850 questionnaires gathered confirm or infirm some hypotheses which have been set previously.

¹ Transilvania University of Braşov, vlad.batranu@unitbv.ro

² Transilvania University of Braşov, claudiu.coman@unitbv.ro

The main highlight is also the revelation of the utmost importance of the great pop-rock bands in history and the assumption that a lot of awareness has been and still is, to some extent, generated by them. We need to focus and understand why The Beatles and other bands have been leaders in this type of music for years and years and will remain in our minds for a long time to come, as well as in people's general musical tastes. We also offer the relevant example of the bands that copy other popular bands, which are a kind of "copy" of real, notorious bands, mainly other passionate supporters or musicians who copy the specifics of a band and try to continue the tradition and musical habits started by the original bands (some strive to be like their idols).

One of the key points of this research is to profoundly analyze the critical elements regarding the self-image and not only, of The Beatles fans, but also the lifestyle they have adhered to over time, following the relation and interaction with this band. We have chosen to somehow categorize this process as a strong movement following the changes in one's style, behaviour and mentality created by one of the most popular bands in history.

These „music masters” managed to achieve extraordinary goals through the impactful lyrics they've expressed and shown, through numerous sales, through their special nature, including here their unusual appearance (at the time), from long hair, unacceptable at the time, the youthfulness, the aspirations and desires expressed through lyrics and words they enunciated before a big concert and so on. George Herbert Mead is the founder of symbolic interactionism as a fundamental idea, along with Herbert Blumer, although, interestingly, George Herbert Mead never truly, formally, published anything regarding symbolic interactionism.

George Herbert Mead's (1934) theory on social behaviourism, as mentioned above, it is extremely comprehensive and it focuses on the creation of a person's self-image, following direct contact (in most cases), with the social group that belongs to that respective person. In our case, a person who is clearly attracted to The Beatles and their music mainly, as are other people with identical or similar passions, would form a group with common interests, where they can share ideas and/or reproduce behaviours. Mead (1934) debates about the theme of symbolic interactionism, a micro-level theory that mainly emphasizes social relations between people in general.

2. Theoretical Framework

Regarding the theory, some sort of "starting point" should provide a relevant aspect for the analysis. Mead (1934) speaks and debates the theme of symbolic interactionism, a micro-level theory that emphasizes the relationships between people in a society. They communicate meaning through symbols, image and implicitly words / language. In qualitative research (through applied interviews), we know that “the theory has an appearance, it is expected that the information will be added continuously overtime” (Scârneci-Domnişoru, 2006, p. 137).

Ferdinand de Saussure, for example, said, “the linguistic sign has two faces that contain a sound image and a concept and the relationship between what is known as sign expression, that is, the significant and the signified” (Durst-Anderssen, 2008, p.2).

Following the Saussurian idea, we will try to find out, through the semiotics of language, what were the impact factors and why these factors are decisive or supportive for a person.

Therefore, it is relevant to acknowledge how music has manifested itself in such a powerful way that it has succeeded in establishing new behaviours or changing behaviours, while affecting different generations and establishing a new movement or a new cultural phenomenon. Through a set of theories that have studied this subject in particular. In general, in the simplest form, lifestyle is the way of life of a person, for example, or even a group. This is very important when combining the idea of lifestyle or concept with what George Herbert Mead, who is a person who develops his own conception of himself based on the interactions he has with a certain group decides to take part in. Moreover, in terms of musical identities, we are presented, by authors who have studied this phenomenon, the musical identity and the development of musical psychology, as well as the connection between them and how this process begins.

Music, without a doubt, creates, well noted by Hargreaves and Miell (2002), the concept of self, self-esteem and self-identity, which fits perfectly within the whole motive and ultimate goal of this research. Nowadays, self-esteem and self-identity attract a lot of attention in the world of research, because people and especially researchers want to understand how music, for example, has had an impact on culture and people's lives.

As some authors have remarked, "the theory of social identity is one of the most influential and far-reaching theories of intergroup relations and group processes" (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p. 34). Here arises the question, explained by Blumer (1966), whether the human being as an actor differs radically from the conception of man that dominates current psychological and social sciences, with reference to what the famous George Herbert Mead believed.

We could also mention here "the perspective of societal value, in terms of the power of any norm that is derived exclusively from its value for the culture in which it operates" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 65). In other words, the power the form that exists in a culture could have an impact on people's lives, the same people who belong to a certain culture. It is worth mentioning, when we talk about various lifestyles, there is a very important word that revolves around what people give meaning to their ways of living and seeing any phenomenon, but also how people act. They act for themselves as a "way of life," or, closer to the word some authors present us, the habit of a person, their own traditional action. We have explanations about the word habitus, which we know that "habitus is the multitude of elements that belong to the way of life that contains the orientations, options and lifestyles of historical collective subjects or individuals" (Scârneci-Domnișoru, 2009, p. 11), and completes the specific meaning with "habitus is an element of social practice".

We also focus on these issues that are developing not only for us, but also for other researchers and people interested in this topic, about how people build meanings and take different aspects and make them representative of each individual.

When it comes to fan studies, we recognize that fan studies come from a rich tradition of methodological discussions located at the intersections of media and cultural studies,

with its concerns about the public, the production of media texts and how texts, identities and industries. interact”(Evans & Stasi, 2014, p. 6), in the sense that fan studies have been around for some time and provide a solid basis for discussing the most important of interacting identities, which is a core issue for this article as a whole.

Principally, the objective is to establish the impact that The Beatles had on active listeners’ lives, how music moulded the people’s mentalities and/or lifestyles as a whole.

We must present some hypotheses that guided or gave a solid base to this research, which we thought fit well in the general idea of the research. These are the following:

- a) The Beatles moulded personalities, influenced humanity and helped people go through critical situations;
- b) The Beatles remained important in history not only because of their music, but also because of their emotional lyrics, and oftentimes philosophical lyrics;
- c) The Beatles represented a very strong economical basis in the world, especially for England at the time.

3. Materials and Methods Used

Regarding the method used, we have the qualitative research applied through interviews as well as quantitative, in addition to the interviews, of 850 questionnaires that were applied worldwide through the Google Forms platform, from where we took useful information in order to perform this analysis. A number of interviews were applied exclusively on Romanian or Japanese territory, to Romanian and Japanese Beatles fans. Questionnaires were gathered from Google Forms and generated graphically (through charts) and with Excel for a clearer and easier perspective, while the interviews were also processed with Excel using specific questions containing variables and certain coding (1 or 2, for example), so the tendencies towards a response can be seen easier. Results generated will be briefly presented.

The interview was applied to a small number of subjects (10 and 10) and focuses exclusively on Romanian citizens living in Romania and listening to pop-rock music and The Beatles, but also to Japanese respondents, mostly from “Meisei” University in Tokyo, listeners of The Beatles, including a professor who is a big fan of The Beatles. The interview will provide and can provide a much more credible and better basis for what we want to research, namely the impact of The Beatles on people's lives, the causes of this impact, the consequences and trends of people on everything related to this cultural phenomenon.

The most important research questions consisted in:

1. *What is the self-image of The Beatles fans?*
2. *What is the impact of The Beatles on the lifestyle of people from different socio-cultural backgrounds who have become fans of The Beatles?*
3. *What are the symbolic elements of The Beatles with a strong impact on fans?*

Here we have an example about the exceptions that claim that they (fans) do not remember exactly when they first heard about The Beatles, a fact confirmed by them. Some, on the other hand, have detailed how they were initiated into everything to do with The Beatles, although this was not necessarily mandatory and one of the most interesting answers was:

„ In 2016, at the beginning of that year, I was just surfing the internet (YouTube) and I was quite interested in how good their music is. So, I first listened to a list of songs and found them fascinating, beautiful, because The Beatles are ranked as top. So since then, the exploration I've done is more about albums, movies and some forms of documentation.”

Another interesting question was about the impact of The Beatles on the lifestyle of each person individually, the answers received were quite interesting, shown below:

"Knowing myself made me feel free."

„Yes. The Beatles are now a part of my lifestyle. I definitely think how I dress, talk, and behave has been influenced by The Beatles. Even many school projects of mine have been Beatles related. Usually if I discover something new I am interested in, there is somehow a small connection to The Beatles.”

"I just love The Beatles and I gave this love to my son ... who is now a big Beatles fan."

"They changed my hair, my clothes, my attitude, my desire to play the guitar"

"Yes, I learned that life must be lived to the fullest, it is too short for negative states"

"Apart from my family and friends etc., The Beatles are the thing I love most. A constant joy and source of mental stimulation.”

It was also found, unsurprisingly, that the people questioned are, to a vast extent, over 60 years old, which is considered normal, given the main context and time sequence in which The Beatles actually became notorious in the late '50s, early '60s. The Beatles music, once considered extraordinary, very fresh and new, advanced without difficulty until the 21st century, being still, especially after 1965, modern, attractive and interesting, according to the main standards of the current century, which also allows us to believe that many listeners are sympathizers of the band too.

The Beatles fans started listening to them at an early age. Some authors actually debate the subject of popularity and agree that "popularity is a psychological construct" (Cillessen, Schwartz and Mayeux, 2011, p. 26). All in all, we propagate, somehow, popularity, "helped" by other factors that cause us pleasure or arouse our passions and

interests. We also found out that the impact generated by The Beatles was mostly important for some of the respondents, others did not feel necessarily affected by this phenomenon started by the band itself. Almost all of the respondents declared themselves true Beatles fans and, depending on their preferences, highlighted a favourite song by The Beatles, after which they justified their choice accordingly, by explaining if, how and why this affected them one way or another. Regarding lyrics, it is not by chance that we choose a certain explanation, but because the "life" attributed to something, through simple sentences, the language system can propagate emotions, thoughts, feelings, wide-ranging soulful impacts among listeners, where we talk about music that contains lyrics too, like those of The Beatles. Oftentimes the "attitude over-emphasizes the activity" (Kocsis, Szekely & Sipos, 2016, p. 17), even when it comes to The Beatles.

We also know that the visions of some respondents were affected after the discovery of the band and their personal lives (better relationships with certain people, family) and / or professional horizons were opened for them (some started a musical career, sold records, created content about The Beatles etc.).

Finally, the questions related to establishing the process of theorizing the paper and the research part to a relatively complete extent were confirmed. Also, after analyzing the results, the hypotheses are confirmed and supported by the answers collected during the analysis. The interview was designed to have a representative group from both Romania and Japan and also the interview aimed to make the answers more authentic, rather than just sharing a few sets of questions to gather numerous answers based on this topic specifically and nothing else. The interview was more like a representative group (niche), of the already representative groups on Facebook that exist, for example, on social networks.

Surprisingly, Romanian respondent opinions are not very much different from Japanese opinions about the impact of the Beatles on their lives and also on their societies (as far as their answers go). Mentioning, again, that this comparison was specifically made in order to show how this impact reflects the best when the cultures are from total different poles of the world. Respondents also had the task, after answering questions about the Beatles, to choose between 3 favourite things (instrument, animal and plant) and explain their meaning and choice. Finally, there was a table with a scale from 1 to 6 (after Portrait Values Questionnaire - PVQ; Schwartz, 2003) which signifies the importance of certain statements given to respondents, whether or not a person looks like the respondent. As an example, a scale choice was regarding safety, "it is important for her (the person) to be safe, she wants safety", so some people agreed with this and marked safety for them as a very important aspect in their lives.

These questions were not related to the topic of The Beatles, but had a fairly large impact on the overall analysis of their answers (documents were collected and centralized after respondents completed the answers). In some cases, it was necessary to discuss issues, either by text or by telephone, with respondents who were not clear enough and needed further explanation. The Japanese nation, being almost entirely

Buddhist, Shinto or not believing/identifying with any religion can become more aware of the specificities of one or another person through a simple song, but as complex as mentioned by one respondent: Let It Be, this song offered him a much more refined idea about what religion is and what it means to people, but mostly facts about Christianity. As a Japanese person, finding out, through a song, facts about Christianity, models their perspective, as Asians, about their European counterparts.

4. Limitations

The limits of the research and implicitly of the paper are reduced to the impossibility of discussion, at this moment, with all respondents, but we also remember some questions that, unfortunately, were not necessarily superficial, but much too simple, without respondents providing elaborate answers. , although they were asked to do so (answers such as “I don't remember”, “No” or “I don't know”, etc.). At this time, although we believe that the number of responses has not been negligible (more than 8 interviews per country), in the future, there may be an increase in the number of responses that can be provided to further increase the accuracy of any research, not necessarily this one in particular.

Perhaps controlling respondents' response methods is a more effective way to control the accuracy of someone's answers, not to get the answers you want, but to motivate respondents to provide as many details as possible so that research could be as high from an informational and scientific point of view as possible. After all, the formal relationship between the researcher and the subject (s) must be close when conducting qualitative research.

5. Conclusions

We have found out that people share their passions through social platforms (eg. Facebook), through groups dedicated especially to fans of The Beatles, where they meet, interact, share ideas, thoughts, passions, some even meet in person post videos with them singing or presenting their Beatles collections and so on. We learned that The Beatles fans are cordially open to discussing their favourites, they feel comfortable in these types of discussions, they feel comfortable when they mention their favourite artists, they know valuable information and the history of their idols, and they don't shy away from being full of joy and desire to be somehow listened to and noticed as true fans of The Beatles. However, the Beatles did not necessarily have an impact on humanity due to the fact that they were good-looking, energetic or young. Of course, these factors contributed to the band's notoriety, but their lyrics, composed of beautiful and inspired phrases and words, in which people often found themselves in, had a huge impact on the world.

The application of research through scientific support revealed a number of things and phenomena already known, but other approaches were used to find out certain things

(habits, trends, ways of thinking, aspirations and thoughts). A series of proposals were made following the discussion with the respondents separately, but also following the feedback obtained from them after each one observed and consulted the questions related to the interview. Some respondents stated that there were not enough questions specifically wanted by them. Others said some questions were difficult to answer. Second, respondents were also advised to analyze several types of developments of The Beatles fans over time and to observe how the type of behaviour and manifestation changed in different periods.

Undoubtedly, the events came to shape the image of The Beatles over time, laid the foundations for their rise nationally and, finally, worldwide, changed behaviours, transmitted resonant ideas, gave clear messages about love, friendship, unity and peace and last but not least, they beautified the world, through artistic spirit and unimaginable talent. We cannot negate the strong musical ideology that The Beatles has implemented in many of our minds, the phenomenon which affected, statistically, the whole world, with some small exceptions of people that never heard about The Beatles (censorship, lack of radios or TVs, for example).

We might argue about the fact that The Beatles were actually a „brand”, a very strong and convincing one. We know that „not the trademark or common signs unify a brand, but its religion” (Kapferer, 1997, p. 33). Undoubtedly, The Beatles was one of the most powerful musical brands in history of mankind.

It is, probably, certain to say that when the world needed them the most, they appeared, full of talent, full of promise and most importantly, came up with something completely new for the time, which can be oftentimes a „double-edged sword”, mainly because people could have disagreed with their ideas and ways of expressing themselves through music, could have disagreed with their style and appearance (long hair), and could have even tried to boycott them (which happened once because of what John Lennon would say in an interview).

But focusing mainly on their music and appearance, they were open-handedly accepted and embraced as some kind of heroes that could spark up joy in people’s lives, which, unsurprisingly, happened, and it also happened in a very quick manner and short time.

6. Recommendations

A series of proposals have been made following the discussion with the respondents separately but also following the feedback obtained from them after each one observed and consulted the related questionnaire.

Firstly, some respondents stated that there were not enough answers to some questions or, on the contrary, there were certain answers that were difficult for them to choose, and they would like, if possible, to choose several options for one question.

Secondly, it was also recommended by the respondents that several types of evolutions of The Beatles fans over time should be analyzed and how the type of behaviour and manifestation have changed in different periods should be observed.

Finally, respondents recommended that the researcher develop either separate questionnaires for those who do not share the same passions related to The Beatles and apply them or apply the same type of questionnaire to those who listen little or have only heard of The Beatles to balance opinions and compare trends between different points of view and opinions. It was proposed that a comparative analysis between the classic pop-rock music type The Beatles and other "boy band" music groups currently existing should be made in order to extract and find similarities in behaviour, musical style and / or lyrics. . They also offered the example of analysis between music, from an attractive and full of talent period, and artificial music, extremely altered and processed of today, which, of course, offers a more or less subjective perspective on what is expected to be reported and analyzed later. Based on different research, we managed to establish our own and try to make the best of our expertise to come up with new concepts and/or ways to analyze this specific phenomenon.

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