

MARKETING STRATEGY STUDY · LIVE NATION ENTERTAINMENT ·

The Fan Who Disappears.

What the psychology of live music says about how Live Nation's data advantage can enhance fan loyalty.

Aarianna Goswamy · Portfolio Work · May 2026

The Argument in Three Sentences

The business problem: *Live Nation's 500 million Ticketmaster accounts and 151 million annual fans translate to more first-party data than almost any entertainment company on earth. Yet the company communicates with fans almost entirely through ticket purchase prompts. Between shows, the fan effectively disappears from Live Nation's world.*

The psychological insight: *Fans do not form identity around Live Nation. They form it around artists and live music itself. Live Nation is the infrastructure or pipeline through which fan identity is expressed. But it captures none of that identity for itself. Five well-established psychological frameworks explain why this gap exists and why it persists.*

The recommendation: *Live Nation should build a year-round fan relationship product that is about who the fan is and not what they should buy next. Three specific, buildable recommendations follow from the psychology. Together they offer a shift from being viewed as a transactional platform to being accepted as fan identity infrastructure.*

01. The Business Context

Scale Present. Depth to be built.

Live Nation is one of the largest entertainment companies in the world by revenue. In 2024 it generated \$23.16 billion in total revenue, and promoted over 50,000 events, which attracted 151 million fans to live shows globally. [\[1\]](#) Ticketmaster processed approximately 637 million tickets, with 78% of all fan interactions occurring through online transactions. [\[2\]](#)

The financial picture is strong. Concerts generated \$19 billion, or 82% of total revenue. Sponsorship and advertising grew 9% to \$1.2 billion. Average net per-fan spending at amphitheaters increased 9% year-on-year. VIP ticket premiums at major festivals grew over 20%.

[\[3\]](#)

151 million fans. 500 million accounts. \$23 billion in revenue. And largely promotions to them between shows.

But beneath these numbers sits a structural tension that financial metrics do not capture. Live Nation's relationship with its fans is almost entirely event-triggered. Fans interact with the company when they want to attend something. Outside of that cycle, the company has no meaningful presence in their lives.

This is not a technology problem. Live Nation has access to extraordinary first-party data. This ranges from complete attendance histories to purchase behavior to location to genre et al. Thus, the data to build a year-round fan relationship exists.

The Antitrust Context

This study is written in the immediate aftermath of a landmark moment for the company. On April 15, 2026, a federal jury found Live Nation guilty of operating as an illegal monopoly. [\[4\]](#) In September 2025, the FTC separately sued Live Nation and Ticketmaster, alleging that Ticketmaster hid the mandatory fees (which are as high as 44%) and thereby earned \$16.4 billion in excess fees from 2019 to 2024 and [\[5\]](#)

This matters for the study because it highlights the *structural incentive problem at the core of the loyalty gap*. From a fan viewpoint, it appears that Ticketmaster's prioritises conversion over transparency. This is the right commercial strategy, but it may be diluting consumer trust. This choice optimises for transaction volume rather than relationship depth. *Understanding why Live Nation communicates the way it does requires understanding the incentive structure that produces that communication.*

02. Understanding The Psychology of Fan Identity

Why Fans Belong to Artists, Not Platforms

To understand why Live Nation's data advantage has not closed the loyalty gap, it is necessary to understand how fans actually form identity around music. This is a question of consumer psychology, and the answers have significant implications for what Live Nation could and should be doing differently.

Five well-established psychological frameworks, applied to Live Nation's specific situation, point toward a solution.

FRAMEWORK	CORE INSIGHT	APPLICATION TO LIVE NATION
Self-Concept Theory (Rentfrow & Gosling)	Music = identity signal. Fans ARE their taste.	Fan identity attaches to artist, not platform. LN is not pertinent to the fan's self-narrative.
Peak-End Rule (Kahneman)	Memory = peak moment + ending.	LN owns the ending (as fans exit). Artist owns the peak. Memory of LN thus becomes transactional (parking etc).
Psychological Ownership (Pierce, Kostova & Dirks)	People value what they shape, invest in, control.	Fans feel ownership over artists they discovered. LN offers zero mechanism for this investment.
Parasocial Relationships (Horton & Wohl)	One-sided emotional bonds with performers feel real and durable.	LN facilitates the space for parasocial bonds but can do more to nurture them between shows.
Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger)	Contradiction between belief and behaviour is resolved by changing one of the two.	Fans complain about LN fees but attend anyway. Identity value of attendance overrides resentment. This suggests fragile loyalty.

Framework 01: Self-Concept Theory

Music as identity, not entertainment

Research by Rentfrow and Gosling establishes that music preference is one of the most powerful and consistent signals of personal identity. People use music not just to entertain themselves but to define, express, and confirm who they are. This is why fans describe themselves as “a Radiohead person” or “a festival person”. The music signals something they are. It is an important basis of identity formation.

The implication for Live Nation is structural. *Fan identity attaches to artists and experiences, not to the platform that sells access to them.* When a fan buys a Taylor Swift ticket through Ticketmaster, the identity act is attending Taylor Swift. Ticketmaster is the mechanism, and no more part of the fan’s self-concept than the road they drove to the venue on.

Live Nation sits between the fan and their identity confirmation every time a ticket is purchased. But it never becomes part of that identity.

This is not inevitable. Spotify has demonstrated that a platform can become part of a listener’s musical identity. Spotify Wrapped, the annual data story that tells each user what their year in

music looked like, is now a cultural event that fans share, discuss, and use as identity signals. “I’m a Taylor Swift super listener on Spotify” is a self-concept statement. “I bought 12 tickets through Ticketmaster” is not.

Framework 02: The Peak-End Rule

Who owns the memory of the experience?

Daniel Kahneman’s peak-end rule establishes that people do not remember experiences as a continuous whole. They remember two specific moments: the emotional peak and the ending. The rest of the experience recedes, or blurs, into general impression.

For a concert-goer, the peak is almost always a specific moment in the show. Perhaps a particular song, or a crowd moment, or a connection with the artist. The ending of the Live Nation experience, however, is receiving a receipt email, navigating a parking exit, or being reminded of the service fees charged at purchase.

Live Nation owns the logistics of the ending but has ceded the emotional peak entirely to the artist. While this is somewhat inevitable, particularly given framework 1, this should not be counted as a failure of execution, or an inherent part of the nature of the business. It can be viewed as a failure to *deliberately design* for building loyalty. The ending of the fan experience is an opportunity to extend the emotional peak and deepen the memory, thus beginning the next relationship cycle.

The peak-end design question: *What would it look like if the post-show communication amplified the peak moment rather than confirming the transaction? How about: a personalised setlist for the show you attended, or a note from the artist or maybe even some memory artefact. The technology to build this exist, and they are all within the realm of the possible for the company.*

Framework 03: Psychological Ownership

Why fans feel the artist is theirs

Research by Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks on psychological ownership establishes that people feel ownership (a sense that something is “mine”) over things they have invested in, shaped, or controlled. This feeling is an emotional claim (distinct from legal ownership).

For instance: fans who discovered an artist before they were famous, who followed their trajectory across multiple albums, who attended early club shows before stadium tours, feel that the artist is partly theirs. This sense of ownership is one of the most powerful drivers of fan loyalty. It is also entirely independent of any commercial transaction.

Live Nation creates no mechanism for this kind of psychological investment. The fan-to-platform relationship is: pay, attend, leave. There is no way for a fan to feel that Live Nation belongs to them, or that they have shaped it, or that their history with it means something beyond purchase volume. Compare this to a sports club, where fans feel genuine ownership of the team's success, suffer when it loses, and pass their loyalty to their children. That depth of ownership is available to Live Nation through its concert attendance data. It should plan to build it.

Framework 04: Parasocial Relationships

The emotional bond that survives every transaction

Horton and Wohl's foundational work on parasocial relationships (extended by decades of research on celebrity, fan culture, and digital media) describes how audiences form one-sided emotional bonds with performers they feel they know personally.

These bonds are extraordinarily durable. They drive repeat attendance, merchandise purchase, online community participation and form the kind of fierce loyalty that makes fans queue for three days for a ticket.

The parasocial relationship is the *single most valuable asset in Live Nation's ecosystem*. It is the reason fans pay \$400 on the secondary market for a \$100 face-value ticket. It is also what made 86% of fans keep their tickets during COVID cancellations rather than requesting refunds.^[6]

Live Nation can do more to nurture it. The company facilitates the physical space where parasocial connection is confirmed. But it builds no infrastructure to maintain that bond between shows. Spotify, by contrast, has constructed an entire product ecosystem around deepening the parasocial relationship. It uses data to form an intimate (personalized) relationship with listeners.

2% of an artist's monthly listeners on Spotify are "super listeners". They drive over 18% of all streams. ^[7] Spotify has identified, named, and built tools specifically for the 2% who are most parasocially invested. Live Nation has no equivalent. Its most loyal fans appear to be invisible in its data architecture.

Framework 05: Cognitive Dissonance and the Fragility of Resentment-Based Loyalty

The contradiction that holds. Until it doesn't.

Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory describes the psychological discomfort that arises when a person holds two contradictory beliefs or when their beliefs contradict their behaviour. People resolve this discomfort by changing one element. This is usually the belief, and not the behavior. This is especially so when the behaviour is driven by strong motivations.

Many Live Nation fans are textbook examples of this cognitive dissonance. They state publicly that they hate Ticketmaster's fees, resent the lack of alternatives, and find the pricing practices exploitative. And yet, they then buy tickets, and attend in record numbers, by paying 1.8x face value on the secondary market for shows they could not get primary tickets for. [\[8\]](#)

The resolution mechanism is identity. The fan does not stop being a Taylor Swift fan, or a live music person, or someone who goes to concerts because of these complaints. This is because that identity is more important to them than their resentment of the platform fees. Here, stated preferences contradict revealed preferences because the identity value of attending overrides the resentment.

This creates a loyalty that is durable but possibly fragile. It holds as long as the identity value of the experience is high enough. However, it may not hold forever.

The April 2026 antitrust verdict, the FTC lawsuit, and the sustained public anger at Ticketmaster pricing represent an accumulation of resentment. If a credible alternative to Live Nation's platform emerges (or if the antitrust remedies force meaningful structural change) the fans who have been absorbing their cognitive dissonance may find the identity cost of that absorption no longer worth bearing.

There is hence also a strategic urgency to bridge loyalty gap. Thus far, Live Nation did not have a fan relationship because perhaps it has never needed one. The monopoly position absorbed the resentment. That may change, and hence the company needs to respond.

03. The Data: What We Can Show

The Comparison That Matters

Live Nation and Spotify occupy adjacent positions in the music fan’s life. *Spotify is where fans experience music daily. Live Nation is where fans experience music at its peak intensity.* One has built a year-round fan relationship. One has not.

The data gap between them is instructive:

DIMENSION	LIVE NATION	SPOTIFY
Audience size	151M fans / 500M accounts	626M monthly active users
Fan data depth	Purchase history, attendance dates, location	Listening behaviour, mood, time-of-day, social graph
Identity product	Most current fan touchpoints remain transactional.	Wrapped, Super Listener status, Fan Study
Year-round touchpoints	Mostly promotional emails for upcoming shows	Daily. Playlists, discovery, personalized radio
Fan segmentation	Buy-once vs. multi-buyer (implicit)	Casual listener → Active → Super Listener (explicit, named)
Parasocial tools	None. The fan-to-artist bridge is absent	Artist Clips, Countdown Pages, behind-the-scenes content. Collaborative & Shared Queues for fans to form peer-to-peer bonds
Loyalty mechanism	Presale access via credit card partner	Superfan identity confirmation, exclusive data stories
Revenue per relationship	Transactional at event cycle	Compounding through streams, podcasts, audiobooks, merch etc.

The Communication Gap in Numbers

78% Fan interactions with Live Nation occur through online ticket purchases. [2] The communication model is: buy ticket → receive confirmation → receive reminder → attend → receive receipt.

85% Live Nation’s marketing spend was allocated to digital channels in 2024. [9] Almost all of it targeted at driving ticket purchase conversion. None of it reported as directed at building fan identity or year-round engagement.

9% Average net per-fan spending increase at amphitheatres in 2024. VIP premiums grew over 20% at major festivals. [3] Live Nation is already discovering that fans will pay more when the experience is deeper.

\$82.6B Spent by consumers on Ticketmaster between 2019 and 2024. [5] The FTC found Ticketmaster's own internal research showed consumers were less likely to purchase when shown true upfront costs. Yet this pricing approach was persisted with-conversion chosen over trust.

The Spotify Contrast

Spotify's approach to fan engagement is worth examining in detail because it demonstrates that the psychological frameworks described in Section 02 are not theoretical and that they are actionable with the same type of data Live Nation already holds.

- Spotify Wrapped has evolved from an end-of-year data summary into a full fan identity platform. [10] It gives fans a personalised narrative of their year in music that functions as an identity document. It has become something fans share, discuss, and use to signal who they are. It is not a promotional email. *It is a self-concept artefact.*
- The super listener framework explicitly names and honours the 2% of fans who drive 18% of streams. [7] Spotify does not treat all fans identically. It identifies depth of investment and reflects it back to the fan. This is psychological ownership in product form.
- Artist Clips, Canvas, and Countdown Pages build and maintain parasocial relationships between fans and artists throughout the year and not just around release events. [11] Spotify has made itself the infrastructure for the ongoing parasocial bond, not just the point of transaction.

The critical observation: Spotify does not own the live experience. Live Nation does. Spotify has 626 million users but none of them have ever been to a concert through Spotify. *Yet Spotify has a deeper year-round fan relationship than the company that has facilitated 151 million live fan experiences.*

The data to build what Spotify has built is sitting in 500 million Ticketmaster accounts. The barrier is not technical.

Why Live Nation Has Not Solved This

The incentive structure explanation is the most important and least discussed reason for the loyalty gap. Live Nation's Ticketmaster division is the highest-margin part of the business and its revenue is almost entirely transaction-fee based. Every dollar Ticketmaster earns is earned at the moment of purchase, not in the relationship that precedes or follows it.

This means that investment in year-round fan engagement does not have an obvious revenue line in the Ticketmaster business model. This may be because this costs money and reduces the salience of the transaction by making the relationship about more than buying. The company has 500 million fan accounts and no financial incentive to treat them as anything other than future ticket buyers.

The antitrust verdict might prove to be the catalyst for change. If Live Nation is required to divest Ticketmaster, or if meaningful pricing transparency is mandated, the fee model becomes less reliable. The year-round fan relationship may become a durable source of competitive advantage.

04. Three Recommendations

Building the Year-Round Fan Relationship

The following three recommendations are grounded in the psychological frameworks discussed in Section 02 (and made possible by the data infrastructure Live Nation already holds). They are designed to be buildable (not remain theoretical), and each is linked directly to a specific psychological mechanism.

They are *not* a loyalty points programme. Instead, they are a fundamental shift in what Live Nation thinks its product is. *The idea is to move from ticketing platform with concerts attached, to a fan identity infrastructure with ticketing as one of its functions.*

01

The Concert Archive

Psychological mechanism: *Psychological Ownership: Fans value what they can see, shape, and share*

Every Ticketmaster account holds a complete concert attendance history. Live Nation should transform this into a personal fan identity artifact. Like a visual, timeline-based record of every show attended, every artist seen, every year it happened. Not a purchase history, but a life document. The fan who has seen Radiohead seven times in four countries should be able to see that, share it, and feel that Live Nation is the keeper of something that matters to them.

What Live Nation should do: *Build a 'Fan Archive' feature in the Ticketmaster app. Free, Visual, and Shareable. It should tap into every Wrapped-adjacent cultural moment. This costs almost nothing to build from existing data. And creates a matchless touchpoint that only Live Nation can offer.*

02

The Artist Bridge

Psychological mechanism: *Parasocial relationships that deepen the bond between fan and artist through data*

A fan who has attended the same artist five times is a super fan. That information currently sits unused in Ticketmaster's database. It should flow, with consent, to the artist's team, to the fan's own profile, and ideally into an artist-to-super-fan communication channel. The artist sends a message to their most loyal live fans before a new tour. The fan receives it because Live Nation has identified them as someone for whom this connection is meaningful. The parasocial bond is the asset. *Live Nation owns the proof of it.*

What Live Nation should do: *Partner with artist management teams to create a 'Super Fan' programme built on live attendance data. Not streaming data but live attendance, (which Spotify does not have). This is Live Nation's unique data advantage. Use it to facilitate the artist-fan relationship.*

03

The Between-Show Layer

Psychological mechanism: *Use self-concept theory to give fans a space where their musical identity lives year-round*

Spotify owns listening identity. Artists own emotional identity. Nobody owns the lived history of fandom itself. *Live Nation needs a year-round content and community product that exists independently of upcoming shows.*

This would be a fan identity platform where attending concerts contributes to a fan profile. Where community forms around artists and venues and where the relationship with Live Nation is about who you are as a music fan and not what you are buying next. This is the hardest recommendation to build and the most important one. It is also the one that directly addresses the cognitive dissonance problem: if Live Nation becomes part of a fan's identity, the resentment toward its fees has somewhere else to go.

What Live Nation should do: *Invest in a fan community product. Use concert attendance as the credentialing mechanism - you were there, you belong here.*

What it could look like: a fan profile that accumulates over time. This is not a purchase history, but a concert history: the artists you've seen live, and the venues you've been to, or even the years you've been going. This forms a record that says something about who you are and what you've committed to. Within that profile, could lie a community layer- fans who have seen the same artist, been to the same venue, attended shows in

the same era. This is not a generic social network, but a highly specific club, credentialed by real attendance.

Between shows, the product gives fans something to do with their identity that isn't buying another ticket. They can build their profile and connect with other fans, or engage with content about artists they've seen and relive shows through setlists. *The platform becomes the place where the fan's live music identity lives continuously, not just around purchasing cycles.*

The credentialing mechanism (you were there, you belong here) matters because it creates something streaming platforms structurally cannot offer: **scarcity**. Being a Spotify super listener is about volume of consumption. Being a fan who has seen an artist five times live is about investment, presence, and commitment. *That distinction is the basis of a community worth joining.*

*The first platform to own this will be extraordinarily difficult to displace. This is not because the technology is hard to build, but because the attendance data that makes it credible takes decades to accumulate and belongs **exclusively to Live Nation.***

Bottomline: *Live Nation owns the most emotionally intense moments in music fandom but not the continuity between them. The suggestions above offer a mechanism for doing exactly that.*

05. Why This Study Exists

This study was written by me as a recent psychology graduate who spent over a year handling inbound customer calls for Arc'teryx. This is a role that required listening carefully to what customers were actually saying beneath the surface of their stated questions.

That experience produced a particular orientation that helped me realise that consumer behaviour is almost always more psychologically interesting than it first appears, *and the gap between what companies think their customers want and what those customers actually need is usually where the most interesting opportunities live.*

Live Nation is a company with an extraordinary asset - the live music experience. However, it needs to define what that asset actually is. *It is not a ticketing operation with concerts attached. It is one of the few platforms in the world where millions of people regularly have the most emotionally intense, identity-confirming experiences of their lives.* The fact that those people largely resent the company that makes those experiences possible is not inevitable.

The psychology is not difficult to understand. The data is not hard to access. What is required is a shift in how the company understands its own business. *To move from transaction infrastructure*

to fan identity infrastructure. This study is an attempt to map what that shift looks like, grounded in frameworks that have been tested across decades of consumer psychology research.

Most brands try to discover their customers through research. Live Nation has 500 million of them in a database. The fan who disappears between shows is not gone. They are waiting to be seen.

Sources

Public data only.

[1] *Live Nation FY2024 Annual Results: \$23.16B revenue, 151M fans, 50,000+ events.*

<https://www.livenationentertainment.com/2025/02/live-nation-entertainment-reports-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-2024-results/> [Official earnings release]

[2] *Live Nation marketing strategy: 78% online transactions, digital-first approach.*

<https://matrixbcg.com/blogs/marketing-strategy/livenationentertainment> [MatrixBCG analysis, November 2025]

[3] *Live Nation 2024 per-fan spending data: amphitheater +9%, VIP premiums +20%*

<https://matrixbcg.com/blogs/target-market/livenationentertainment> [MatrixBCG customer demographics analysis]

[4] *Federal jury finds Live Nation guilty of operating as illegal monopoly*

<https://news.pollstar.com/2026/04/29/why-concert-ticket-prices-wont-drop-if-live-nation-and-ticketmaster-are-split-up/> [Pollstar, April 29 2026 — verdict April 15 2026]

[5] *FTC sues Live Nation and Ticketmaster for deceptive pricing: \$16.4B fees, internal research findings*

<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-sues-live-nation-ticketmaster-engaging-illegal-ticket-resale-tactics-deceiving-artists-consumers> [FTC official press release, September 2025]

[6] *86% of fans retained tickets during COVID cancellations:*

<https://www.brandvm.com/post/ticketmasters-marketing-strategy> [Brand Vision Marketing, Ticketmaster strategy analysis]

[7] *Spotify super listeners: 2% of monthly listeners drive 18% of streams:*

<https://musically.com/2025/11/27/fan-study-by-spotify-for-artists-fans-make-it-possible-and-we-have-the-data-to-prove-it/> [Spotify Fan Study via Music Ally, November 2025]

[8] *Concert resale markups averaged 1.8x face value in 2024; primary ticket price data:*

<https://news.pollstar.com/2026/04/29/why-concert-ticket-prices-wont-drop-if-live-nation-and-ticketmaster-are-split-up/> [Pollstar market analysis, April 2026]

- [9] *Live Nation 85% digital marketing spend 2024*: <https://portersfiveforce.com/blogs/marketing-strategy/livenationentertainment> [Porter's Five Force marketing strategy analysis, December 2025]
- [10] *Spotify Wrapped 2025 (fan identity platform, Super Listener stories)*: <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2025-12-03/wrapped-for-artists-songwriters-creators-authors-advertisers/> [Spotify Newsroom, December 2025]
- [11] *Spotify 2025 recap (Artist Clips, Canvas, Countdown Pages, concert discovery features)*: <https://artists.spotify.com/en/blog/the-2025-spotify-for-artists-recap> [Spotify for Artists, December 2025]
- [12] *Rentfrow P.J. & Gosling S.D. The do re mi's of everyday life: The structure and personality correlates of music preferences*: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.6.1236> [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003]
- [13] *Kahneman D., Fredrickson B.L., Schreiber C.A., Redelmeier D.A. When more pain is preferred to less: Adding a better end* <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1993.tb00589.x> [Psychological Science, 1993 — peak-end rule]
- [14] *Pierce J.L., Kostova T., Dirks K.T. Toward a theory of psychological ownership in organizations* <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4011995> [Academy of Management Review, 2001]
- [15] *Horton D. & Wohl R.R. Mass communication and para-social interaction* <https://doi.org/10.1177/003235755600300401> [Psychiatry, 1956 — foundational parasocial relationship paper]
- [16] *Festinger L. A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=3850> [Stanford University Press, 1957]

Portfolio work. May 2026. This study uses publicly available data and published academic research. It does not claim access to Live Nation internal data.