



Constructing Persona and Identity in Charli XCX's Brat Album

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Abstract: This study examines how Charli XCX constructs and performs persona and identity in her 2024 album Brat. In contemporary pop music, persona functions as a performative self that mediates between an artist's private identity and public image. While previous studies have explored musical persona and identity in popular music, limited attention has been given to the analysis of a full hyperpop album that integrates lyrics, vocal delivery, and production as a cohesive character construction. Addressing this gap, this research aims to analyze (1) how persona and identity are constructed in Brat, (2) the recurring emotional and character traits that define Charli XCX's performed self, and (3) how the album reflects her identity in relation to themes of fame, vulnerability, and digital culture. Using a qualitative method, the study applies textual and interpretive analysis to all fifteen tracks of Brat, treating the album as a cultural text. The findings reveal that Charli XCX presents a fluid and shifting persona that oscillates between confidence, rebellion, insecurity, and emotional fragility. These traits are reinforced through minimalist lyrics, varied vocal performances, and experimental electronic production. The study concludes that Brat functions as both a personal and performative work, demonstrating how contemporary pop albums serve as spaces for identity construction through sound, voice, and cultural expression.

Keywords: *persona, identity, character analysis, hyperpop music, Charli XCX 'Brat album*

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, popular music has been a way for musicians to show, negotiate, and perform their identities. Hyperpop as one of pop genre is a relatively new genre of music stemming from traditions of electronic dance music and queer and

trans music and performance as developed in the 1970s and 80s. This genre is dominated by trans musicians and fans and is rooted in rhetoric of trans embodiment and the embrace of illegibility and resistance against cisheteronormativity. Hyperpop, as a genre by and for trans individuals, functions as a space of world making that

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destabilizes and reorients gendered readings of the body by exploring gender as a space of possibilities beyond that of the rigid Western gender binary.(Cloyd, , 2025). Cloyd adds in his thesis that hyperpop rose to mainstream fame in 2020 during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, with many established experimental pop artists gaining notoriety overnight, and many new musicians and producers joining their ranks from the growing interest in the genre. Here in this study notably, is Charli XCX, a hyperpop vocalist in“ Brat album which was released in June 2024.

Charli debut started in the year 2000s and the music industry has shaped her into a renowned hyperpop artist. She is a singer, songwriter, record producer at the same time that's why the study of her persona in this research becomes quite significant and quite relevant with the previous research about hyperpop. Modern researchers have complemented their long - standing interest in personal self - views or identities (we use these terms interchangeably) with investigations of social identities.(Mead, 1985) Pop music is more than just fun to listen to; it is also a cultural place where personal experience, emotion, and societal purpose come together. The process of forming a cultural identity can be obtained through internalization that forms conformity.(Christianto, 2023). In this setting, identity is not only reflected but also actively produced through performance, sound, visual aesthetics, and public presentation. Artists often craft distinctive personas that facilitate audience engagement with music as a medium of narrative self-expression and cultural positioning.

In literary studies persona and identity are the main discussion that is examined by researchers. A persona is a produced voice that functions as a mediating character rather than a precise representation of the author (Abrams & Harpham, 2015; Booth, 1983). This paradigm can be used to study Charli XCX's hyperpop lyrics, where the lyrical "I" serves as a staged figure affected by digital culture and technological mediation. Her hyperpop persona represents a post-human

subjectivity characterized by emotional exposure and artificial sonic manipulation, in line with contemporary ideas of identity as performative and digitally embedded (Butler, 1990; Hayles, 1999). Thus, Charli XCX's lyrical identity functions as a literary construct that questions authenticity and selfhood in the context of digital popular music culture (Harper, 2017).

Previous and the newest research about Charli XCX is “Postdigital Music Marketing in the Brat Era of Charli XCX: Identity, Transmedia Storytelling and Cultural Phenomenon” employed by Perez-Rufi, it examines the marketing campaign surrounding Brat (2024), the album by British artist Charli XCX, with the aim of understanding how a musical brand is constructed through expanded cultural strategies and transmedia storytelling. (Pérez-Ruff et al., 2025). The research about Charli XCX above doesn't reflect the literary study, but it is about Charli XCX in Marketing Communication study.

The following researches are about previous related literary research on persona and Identity, they are; Gaga: Notes on the Management of Public Identity by Gaga, it discussed how the persona of the person born as Stefani Germanotta was created and subsequently maintained in a variety of ways related to her naming as Lady Gaga. (Gaga & Star, 2020), Celebrity of Instagram and Endorsements: Shaping and Constructing Social Identity by Zinaida et al, it explored how endorsements by celebrities on Instagram play a role in the formation and development of social identities among users (Zinaida et al., 2025), Here We Go Again: Cyclical Fandom, Persona and Identity by Fan et al, this article addresses a gap in fan studies literature by exploring the persona of cyclical fans who watch scripted television programs. (Fan et al., 2025), Exploring Content Creator's Digital Identity Formation via Social Media Platforms by Benitez et al, this research explores the formation of digital identity among Filipino content creators on TikTok. The study involved 21 Filipino content creators, aged 20 to 46, who were interviewed via an online platform (Benitez et al.,



2024), The Impact of Market Place Persona Based Neuromarketing on Brand Identity and Consumer Attitude on SDG's by Pasaribu, the purpose of study is to investigate the impact of persona-based neuromarketing on brand identity and consumer attitude in the digital marketplace, with the aim of understanding how neuromarketing principles can enhance consumer engagement and marketing effectiveness. (Pasaribu et al., 2024).

The first four previous researches are similar topic about persona and identity, but they are different object of discussion. The first object of discussion is about the singer, Lady Gaga, the second one is about celebgram, the third one is about fans who watch scripted television programs, and the fourth one is about the content creator in Tik Tok. The fifth one is about the persona in Neuromarketing study, while in Constructing Persona and Identity in Charli XCX's Brat Album is a study about persona and identity with the object discussion is the hyperpop singer Charli XCX, and lyric of the song in Brat Album released in 2024. This study is unique because it studies all 15 songs from Brat and uses a combination of textual and interpretive analysis. It focuses on how identity and persona are shaped not only through what is said, but also how it is sung and produced. The novelty of this study lies in its object (a full modern pop album), its method (multi-layered analysis), and its purpose (to understand persona and identity in music). This makes the study meaningful for deeper discussions in music, pop culture, and identity studies.

There are two main subject discussions in this study; persona and identity. This study analyzes the contemporary academic literature regarding identity, persona, and hyperpop music. It is emphasizing the intersections of these concepts within modern popular music studies. The review is structured thematically to establish a theoretical and cultural foundation for the examination of identity construction and persona performance within the hyperpop genre. This section begins by looking at several theories about identity. Second, it looks at writing about persona in the fields of music and media studies. Third, it looks at what

experts are saying right now about hyperpop as a musical and cultural phenomenon. Ultimately, the chapter integrates these components to identify critical research gaps that necessitate the present inquiry.

This research contributes to the existing body of literature on popular music studies, identity theory, and performativity by offering a focused analysis of Charli XCX's persona in Brat. The study engages with and expands upon key theoretical frameworks, including; Musical Persona Theory (Auslander, 2006), which examines how artists construct and performs identity in a way that mediates between their private self and public image. Authenticity and Self-Representation in Music (Frith, 1998; A. Moore, 2002), which explores how musicians negotiate perceptions of authenticity and artistic credibility.

Music

Music has been studied not only as an art form but also as a social and cultural practice. According to Merriam (1997), music can be understood through three main aspects: sound, behavior, and ideas. This means that music is not only the arrangement of sounds, but also the way people perform it and the cultural meanings attached to it. In the same way, Blacking (2000) argues that music is "humanly organized sound," emphasizing that music always reflects the society and culture that produces it. From a semiotic perspective, Tagg (2012) explains that music communicates meaning through what he calls "musical signs," which are patterns of sound that listeners learn to interpret emotionally and culturally. These signs allow music to function as a language of emotion, even though it does not have fixed verbal meaning. Similarly, Cook (2000) states that music should be seen as a form of discourse, where sound, performance, and context combine to produce meaning.

Character in Music

It is not merely a set of expressive traits but a central, structured feature embedded within musical form, capable of conveying distinct moods, personas, and dramatic identities

(Kolisch, 1993). Especially in concept albums or stylized performances, character refers to the constructed narrative figure that an artist adopts or portrays through lyrical content, vocal delivery, and visual presentation. According to (Barthes & Heath 1977), characters in media function as signifiers embodying particular emotions, ideologies, or social roles through their representation. In popular music, character construction allows an artist to convey emotions, conflicts, or thematic narratives that may or may not directly align with their personal identity. These characters may recur across multiple songs, evolve throughout an album, or even shift dramatically between different projects. (Middleton 1990) notes that pop musicians often adopt different character roles as a means of storytelling or thematic exploration, allowing for dynamic shifts in tone, voice, and emotional intensity.

Character and Emotional Traits in Music

In music, character and emotional traits are expressed not only through lyrics but also through vocal style, performance, and production choices. These traits help create a musical "persona", a version of the artist that can feel real, fictional, or a mix of both. (Frith (2017) explains that music is not just a medium for expressing identity, but also a way to actively perform it. The emotions and characteristics portrayed in a song shape how listeners understand the artist's identity and message. One common emotional trait in music is confidence. (Song et al. (2012) highlight that faster tempos, strong beats, and bold vocal deliveries are effective in conveying feelings of confidence and power in music. This is often paired with assertive lyrics and steady rhythms that emphasize control and self-assurance.

Insecurity and self-doubt often appear in lyrics that question self-worth or depict personal comparison, with corresponding musical elements such as soft, hesitant vocal lines and subtle, subdued production. (Ali & Peynircioğlu 2006) suggest that the combination of reflective lyrics and gentle melodies can effectively evoke feelings of sadness and emotional insecurity.

Some songs also communicate emotional exhaustion or numbness through repetitive vocal phrasing and monotonous production choices. (Wirth 2013) emphasizes that such elements can create a sense of detachment or weariness, mirroring emotional burnout or fatigue in both sound and mood.

In contrast, anger and frustration are often conveyed through loud, forceful vocals, rapid tempos, and intense, layered production. (Curtis & Bharucha 2010) found that certain melodic intervals, such as minor thirds, and sharp, high-energy instrumentation can heighten the expression of emotional intensity like anger. Another widely explored emotional state in music is longing or desire. (Lahdelma & Eerola 2015) explain that specific harmonies such as minor seventh chords and rising melodic lines are frequently used to evoke nostalgia or yearning, especially in love songs or sentimental pieces.

Playfulness and irony also appear in many pop songs through exaggerated vocal tones, lighthearted melodies, and humorous or sarcastic lyrics. Songs like Lou Reed's Perfect Day and Stevie Wonder's Village Ghetto Land demonstrate how irony emerges from the contrast between light melodies and serious or dark lyrical content (J. G. Moore, 2024). Upbeat rhythms and catchy hooks are particularly effective in expressing playful, cheerful, or ironic emotions, making songs feel fun and accessible.

Finally, sadness and grief remain some of the most powerful emotional states in music. (Juslin & Laukka .2004) emphasize that listeners can recognize sadness through slow tempos, soft dynamics, and melancholic harmonies, as these musical elements closely mirror the emotional cues we perceive in speech and body language during sorrowful moments.

Musical Persona

Persona in music refers to the public, sometimes fictional, character an artist adopts, which is recognized by audiences and often becomes integral to how identity is expressed and



perceived (Fairchild & Marshall, 2019). Musicians present musical personas, influenced by setting, appearance, and manner, influenced by their genre and audience (Auslander, 2020). Unlike “character,” which may appear as a role within a specific narrative, persona is a more encompassing, semi-fixed image that bridges the artist’s public presentation and their perceived private self. (Auslander, 2006) defines musical persona as a “theatrical self” a curated image that artists construct and perform both in recordings and live settings. This constructed self allows artists to explore emotional, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions that may not directly align with their personal identity.

According to (A. F. Moore 2012), musical persona is shaped through a combination of sonic, visual, and textual elements. These include vocal delivery, instrumentation, lyrical style, album artwork, fashion, and even social media behavior. The persona becomes a lens through which the audience interprets the music, constructing expectations and meanings based on consistent traits presented by the artist across various platforms. (Frith 2017) adds that the key to understanding persona lies in how listeners interpret the voice and not just what is said, but how it is delivered. Vocal tone, phrasing, production effects, and emotional inflection all contribute to how persona is formed and received. In this way, persona becomes both a creative tool and a performative act constructed by the artist but completed by the audience.

In conclusion, persona in this study is understood as the performative identity that Charli XCX constructs through sound, visuals, and public behavior. It is a layered, semi-fictional image that expresses complex emotional and cultural ideas, mediating between the private self and the public performer.

Musical Identity

Popular music has shaped identity through its meanings, values, and the media, influencing the way people listen, perform, and engage with music in everyday life (Frith, 1998). While “character” and “persona” refer to constructed

representations within a specific artistic frame, “identity” encompasses the broader discourse surrounding how artists and audiences alike define and express themselves in relation to music, gender, culture, and technology. Hall et al. (2013) argues that identity is not a fixed essence but a process of becoming shaped by context, discourse, and representation. In music, identity is constructed through an ongoing negotiation between the artist’s self-expression and the cultural meanings assigned by the audience, industry, and media. For Charli XCX, identity is not presented as a singular truth, but as a fragmented, shifting self continuously performed and redefined through sound, lyrics, visuals, and digital interaction.

A. Moore (2002) and Hawkins (2017) emphasize that musical identity is fluid, constructed not only through personal narrative but also through genre choices, production aesthetics, and visual codes. This aligns with the postmodern understanding of identity as hybrid and performative, especially in digital environments where boundaries between private and public selves are increasingly blurred. Musical identity is deeply tied to emotion and cultural context. Tagg (2012) explains that musical elements such as rhythm, harmony, vocal tone, and instrumentation function as “musical signs” cues that tell the listener how to feel and how to understand the artist’s character. These signs help shape how identity is experienced and interpreted. In pop music especially, where image and personality are important, identity construction is often intentional and strategic.

Theoretical Perspectives on Identity

Identity has been thoroughly investigated in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. Identity essentially relates to a person's understanding of their self-concept, self-definition, and acknowledgment by others in social contexts. Psychological perspectives often characterize identity as an element of the self-concept, encompassing personal attributes, values, and roles that evolve over time. Journals such as *Self and Identity* emphasize identity as a

dynamic construct shaped by internal processes and external social interactions. From a sociological standpoint, identity is deeply intertwined with social roles and group membership.

Identity theory asserts that individuals harbor many identities simultaneously, which are activated in diverse contexts according to social expectations and interactions. Joseph and Morgan (2021) emphasize the problem of identity labeling, highlighting that identities are simultaneously self-defined and externally attributed, and comprehended by others. The dual process of self-identification and social recognition is particularly relevant in artistic and performance contexts, where identity is continuously negotiated between artists and audiences.

Persona as Performance in Music and Media

Persona pertains to the presentation, performance, and mediation of identity, particularly in artistic or public contexts, whereas identity is more broadly characterized as one's self-perception. In musicology and performance studies, the word "persona" is often used to describe the image that an artist creates for their fans. People see persona as a significant and intentional way of showing who they are, not as a fake façade. Hansen's trans medial approach to pop personae shows how musical identities are established on many different platforms, like live shows, sound recordings, interviews, social media, and visual styles. From this point of view, persona comes from the stories and signs that people see and interpret together. This idea stresses that authenticity is mediated and negotiated, which goes against the idea that there is a clear line between the "real" artist and the "performed" character.

Marshall, Moore, and Barbour (2020) say that an artist's persona is a structured public performance that happens across different media platforms and affects how people see, understand, and keep an artist's identity. This paradigm posits that persona is a dynamic construct shaped by audience engagement, dissemination, and

reiteration, rather than merely an aesthetic facade. It emphasizes the relational and procedural dimensions of celebrity identity by residing at the intersection of performance, publicity, and reception. Deflem (2019) examines the social function of names in the establishment of creative reputation, endorsing this perspective. The symbolic power of an artist's name, which acts as a cultural signifier that establishes recognition, validity, and celebrity status, is closely connected to their public persona. So, persona is more than simply performance; it also comprises bigger systems that make and keep people aware of things.

Hyperpop as a Cultural and Musical Trend

Hyperpop is a new type of music that has exaggerated digital production, distorted vocals, synthetic textures, and a mix of different styles. Although its auditory characteristics have been extensively analyzed in music journalism, scholarly investigation of hyperpop remains comparatively scarce. Current research indicates that hyperpop is profoundly integrated into internet culture and mirrors extensive changes in music production and consumption.

Luce (2021) defines hyperpop not as a genre separate from pop tropes, but as an increased and self-aware interaction with them. The prefix "hyper-" comes from the Greek word "huper," which means "over" or "beyond." It doesn't indicate that there is no genre; instead, it means that there is a stronger and more subversive link to it. Hyperpop emerges through exaggeration, distortion, and reconfiguration of pop structures, positioning itself relationally in relation to mainstream pop. Luce (2021) posits that this orientation may be perceived as an alternate or even queer interpretation of genre, undermining rigid artistic confines while staying intrinsically linked to the societal logic of pop music. Cultural assessments characterize hyperpop as encompassing excess, artificiality, and emotional intensity, attributes frequently regarded as reactions to digitally mediated subjectivity. New academic research shows that hyperpop is linked to queer and trans identities. It suggests that



distorted voices and synthetic soundscapes can be used as expressive tools for those who don't fit into traditional gender roles.

This study examines the current academic literature pertaining to identity, persona, and hyperpop music, focusing on the intersections of these notions within modern popular music studies. The review is organized topically to provide a theoretical and contextual basis for analysing identity formation and persona performance in the hyperpop genre. The chapter initially examines theoretical frameworks on identity. Secondly, it examines literature pertaining to persona within the realms of music and media studies. Third, it analyses current scholarship on hyperpop as a musical and cultural phenomena. Ultimately, the chapter consolidates these elements to pinpoint significant research deficiencies that warrant the current investigation.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a combination of textual analysis and interpretive analysis. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011) qualitative research is used to understand the meaning individuals give to their experiences and how those meanings are expressed in a social or cultural context. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because it focuses on meaning, emotion, and interpretation, rather than numerical data.

Techniques of Collecting Data

The technique used to collect data in this research is document analysis. Bowen (2009) states that document analysis is effective in research where textual and audiovisual materials form the core data, particularly in studies related to media, identity, and representation. This method is suitable for qualitative research that analyzes written, recorded, or visual material. In this study, the main documents being analyzed are Charli XCX's Brat album lyrics and other relevant supporting sources. The data is categorized into primary and secondary sources as follows:

Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary Source data consists of textual and audiovisual materials directly related to Brat, including: song lyrics from the album Brat, songs from the album Brat, visual materials (album cover, promotional imagery, music videos) Interpreted for aesthetic and symbolic meaning, public statements by Charli XCX (promotional interviews, social media posts, press materials). The Secondary Source sources are used to provide context and scholarly insight into Charli XCX's character, persona and the identity within Brat. These include: academic literature, Studies on musical character, persona and identity. music journalism and, reviews and articles discussing Brat and Charli XCX's artistic identity.

Techniques of Analyzing Data

This study uses textual analysis and interpretive analysis. These methods allow the researcher to examine not only the written lyrics but also the sound, voice, and emotional expression within the songs. They are: Textual Analysis. Textual analysis is used to carefully study the language, structure, and meaning in the album's lyrics. It helps the researcher look closely at how words and expressions are used to show emotions, attitudes, or ideas. This technique allows the researcher to identify recurring themes, metaphors, patterns, and stylistic choices in the lyrics of each track. As McKee (2003) explains, textual analysis is a way to interpret cultural texts and understand how meaning is created and communicated. The steps are: collecting and organizing the lyrics Official lyrics of all 15 songs from the Brat album are collected from Genius.com, reading the lyrics closely: each lyric is examined for key phrases, metaphors, and symbolic meanings related to identity and persona, identifying recurring traits emotional expressions such as jealousy, confidence, insecurity, and longing are noted, classify the recurring trait.

The researchers sort the lyrics into categories, showing the different sides of Charli's character, Interpret the lyrical meaning. The lyrics are analyzed to understand how Charli XCX performs different versions of herself. In this

study, the lyrics of all fifteen tracks from Charli XCX's Brat are examined as texts. The analysis pays attention to how language reflects identity, persona, and emotional tone. It focuses on key expressions, repeated phrases, and the narrative in each song.

Interpretive Analysis

Interpretive analysis is used to understand the deeper meaning behind the lyrics, vocal delivery, and production style. This approach focuses on how the songs express emotions, ideas, and identities beyond just what is written. It allows the researcher to explore the symbolic meaning of musical elements and how listeners might interpret the performance of persona. As Schwandt (2007) explains, interpretation is not just about describing data but understanding how people give meaning to their experiences. The steps are: listening to all 15 tracks carefully and repeatedly. The researchers listen closely to all 15 tracks to observe tone, rhythm, and vocal effects, analyzing vocal delivery such as changes in tone (e.g., sharp, soft, angry, playful) and vocal techniques are identified to explore emotional expression, analyzing production style: the beats, synths, sound design, and pacing are examined to understand how they reflect or enhance the lyrical meaning, interpreting emotional expression: the researchers reflect on how the sound and vocal

performance communicate deeper emotional meaning., connecting sound and identity. The final interpretation focuses on how music, voice, and lyric together create a “character” or persona in each song. This method is useful for analyzing how Charli XCX’s vocal tone, performance style, and sound design contribute to the construction of her pop persona. The researcher interprets how the songs reflect themes like insecurity, confidence, fame, jealousy, and emotional exhaustion not only through words but through sound and delivery.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This section presents the findings based on the data collected through document analysis. The data consist of the lyrics, vocal delivery, and production characteristics of all 15 tracks from Brat, the sixth studio album by Charli XCX. In this section, the data are presented as a descriptive overview without interpretation or analysis.

Character, Persona, and Identity Construction

The first finding concerns how Charli XCX constructs her character, persona, and identity in Brat. This process can be observed through the combination of lyrical themes, vocal delivery, and production style across all 15 tracks. Each song contributes to the creation of a specific persona or emotional character that reflects different aspects of Charli’s artistic self. The following table summarizes these elements:

Table 1. Character Construction

Track Title	Lyrical Themes	Vocal Delivery	Production Style	Constructed Persona
<i>360</i>	Confidence	Rhythmic	Catchy, electronic	Bold, self-aware icon
<i>Club classic</i>	Nightlife culture	Energetic, playful	club beats, fast tempo	Party-girl, carefree
<i>Sympathy is a knife</i>	Jealousy, insecurity	Detached, fragile	Harsh, industrial	Vulnerable, emotionally unstable
<i>I might say something stupid</i>	Social anxiety	Soft, hesitant	Shimmering, minimal	Self-conscious and insecure
<i>Talk talk</i>	Longing for communication	Fragile, repetitive, anxious tone	Upbeat with soft synths	Nervous, anxious

Track Title	Lyrical Themes	Vocal Delivery	Production Style	Constructed Persona
<i>Von dutch</i>	Defiance, rebellion, sarcasm	Sharp, cocky, sarcastic	Distorted, glitchy industrial	Defiant, bratty, rebellious persona
<i>Everything romantic</i>	<i>is</i> Poetic, stylized beauty	Poetic, dreamy delivery	Atmospheric, chaotic	Detached, ironic observer
<i>Rewind</i>	Nostalgia, regret	Soft, reflective	Bright, playful, glitchy	Reflective and vulnerable character
<i>So I</i>	Grief, mourning	Soft, fragile, mournful	Ambient, sparkling, minimal	Honest, grieving self
<i>Girl, confusing</i>	<i>so</i> Rivalry, conflict, comparison	Detached, conflicted	Subdued, electronic	Confused, self-aware persona
<i>Apple</i>	Reflection, family ties	Tired, resigned	Hypnotic synth loops	Introspective,
<i>B2b</i>	Emotional exhaustion, repetition	Weary, looping delivery	Repetitive beats	Trapped, dependent character
<i>Mean girls</i>	Rebellion, pride	Fierce, chant-like	Heavy, demanding	Bold, unapologetic
<i>I think about it all the time</i>	Anxiety	Soft, hesitant	Minimal, tender production	Thoughtful, fragile self
<i>365</i>	Escapism, hedonism	Detached playful	but Repetitive, high-energy bassline	Carefree party persona

Overall, the table shows that Charli XCX uses a wide range of lyrical strategies, vocal techniques, and production choices to build a persona that is bold, ironic, vulnerable, and rebellious. Rather than presenting a single, stable image, she shifts between multiple characters to express different dimensions of her identity.

In addition to sound, the album's visual presentation reinforces its constructed persona. As Auslander (2006) notes, visual representation is part of how identity is mediated in pop music. The Brat album cover featuring a bright lime green background with small, lowercase, pixelated text reflects a stripped-down, anti-glamour aesthetic. This minimalist visual language contrasts with mainstream pop conventions and suggests a persona that is both hyper-aware and intentionally abrasive. Promotional materials such as low-resolution press photos and social media graphics further support the image of a pop figure who resists polish while still crafting an intentional look.

These visuals, although minimal, support the sonic and lyrical choices that define Charli's evolving artistic identity.

Discussion

This section presents the discussion of the findings in this study. The discussion uses textual and interpretive analysis to explore the data collected from the album Brat. Each major point in this section is based on the research limitations and is discussed in detail, supported by relevant theories related to character, persona, and identity construction in music.

The Construction of Character, Persona, and Identity.

This section discusses how Charli XCX constructs her character, persona, and identity in the Brat album. Through the use of lyrics, vocal delivery, and production style, she presents different aspects of herself, both in her personal life and in her public image. The discussion begins with the analysis of lyrics, which serve as

the foundation of her self-expression in this album.

Lyrical Themes

Lyrics are a primary tool for artists to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences. The lyrics in *Brat* are raw, self-aware, and often full of contrast. Charli writes in a way that blends humor, sadness, sarcasm, and directness. Her words reveal a deep understanding of how a pop star's image can be shaped both by herself and by the world watching her. In each song, the lyrics build a version of Charli that is either exaggerated, emotionally true, or somewhere in between.

In the opening song, "360", Charli immediately shows a bold and self-assured character.

Lyric 1:

When you're in the mirror, do you like what you see?

When you're in the mirror, you're just looking at me.

This line turns confidence into performance. She doesn't just say she's beautiful or talented, she says that when others look at themselves, all they see is her as they've been unconsciously impacted by her widespread image. This highlights the bold, confident side of *Brat*'s party-girl persona, which will later be contrasted by her more vulnerable and insecure aspects. She's comparing herself to a legend, an icon and a moment like she's become part of everyone's identity whether they like it or not which she implies with the lyrics: I'm everywhere, I'm so Julia

Lyric 2:

I'm everywhere, I'm so Julia

Here, she positions herself as a pop icon, fully aware of her influence. This shows a version of Charli who is confident and self-aware. The way she uses a cultural reference (Julia Fox) makes the song feel stylish and current. Her persona here shows her as a trendsetter, while her identity revolves around success and recognition.

This confident theme continues in the song "Von dutch". In this song, Charli presents herself as rebellious and unapologetic. She sings: It's alright to just admit that I'm the fantasy / You're obsessing, just confess it 'cause it's obvious / I'm your number one

Lyric 3:

It's alright to just admit that I'm the fantasy / You're obsessing, just confess it 'cause it's obvious / I'm your number one

Her character here is defiant and playful, using sarcasm to assert her dominance. This represents Auslander (2020) idea of a musical persona as a deliberate performance meant to project certain qualities to the audience. Her identity reflects financial success and independence, showing her pride in being provocative and powerful.

In contrast, Charli also reveals emotional vulnerability in songs like "Sympathy is a knife". Here, she explores jealousy and insecurity through lines such as: Cause I couldn't even be her if I tried / I'm opposite, I'm on the other side

Lyric 4:

Cause I couldn't even be her if I tried / I'm opposite, I'm on the other side

This lyric presents her as a fragile character affected by comparison and doubt. She talks about another girl, maybe someone her boyfriend is close to, or maybe just someone she sees as a threat. She doesn't say who it is, and that vagueness makes it more relatable. The persona she performs here is one that is afraid of being replaced, who feels like she's not enough.

Even more intense is this line from the second verse: Why I wanna buy a gun? / Why I wanna shoot myself?

Lyric 5:

Why I wanna buy a gun? / Why I wanna shoot myself?

This shows the darkest part of her inner voice the version of herself that is volatile, self-destructive, and spiraling. In this moment, Charli's persona stops performing and shows a raw emotional truth. It's a deep contrast to the earlier bragging and confidence. The lyrics take the listener to a place of emotional crisis, showing how unstable identity can feel under pressure. In another line she sings: I feel all these feelings I can't control / Oh no, don't know why / All this sympathy is just a knife (Why?).

Lyric 6:

I feel all these feelings I can't control / Oh no, don't know why / All this sympathy is just a knife (Why?)

She expresses in this song that insecurity can easily overtake you even when you know it doesn't make sense, and you don't know why.

Her identity here highlights personal emotional struggles, showing what A. F. Moore (2012) describes as musical identity shaped by personal reflection and honesty.

She further explores complex social relationships in the song “Girl, so confusing” Charli sings:

Yeah, I don't know if you like me / Sometimes I think you might hate me / Sometimes I think I might hate you / Maybe you just wanna be me.

Lyric 7:

Yeah, I don't know if you like me / Sometimes I think you might hate me / Sometimes I think I might hate you / Maybe you just wanna be me.

In this song, her character is caught between friendship and rivalry, presenting herself as confused about her feelings toward another woman which could be a fellow artist/singer. Her persona here is honest and self-aware, sharing her internal struggle. According to Forster (2000), such internal conflict demonstrates a “round” character’s depth. Her identity in this song reflects emotional discomfort in social situations, showing her willingness to admit difficult feelings.

In the song “Talk talk” Charli explores unspoken attraction and emotional tension. She repeats throughout the song: I wish you'd talk, talk, wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd talk, talk, wish you'd just talk to me / I wish you'd talk, talk, wish you'd talk, talk

Lyric 8:

I wish you'd talk, talk, wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd talk, talk, wish you'd just talk to me / I wish you'd talk, talk, wish you'd talk, talk

Here, she presents herself as a nervous character who desires honest communication but feels stuck. Her persona shows vulnerability and restraint, expressing longing for openness. Later, she asks: Are you thinking 'bout me? / I'm kind of thinking you are

Lyric 9:

Are you thinking 'bout me? / I'm kind of thinking you are

This lyric shows her cautious curiosity about whether her feelings are mutual. Her identity here is shaped by hesitation and emotional uncertainty. In the outro, she sings: Talk to me in French, / Talk to me in Spanish, / Talk to me in your own made-up language / Doesn't matter if I understand it

Lyric 10:

Talk to me in French, / Talk to me in Spanish, / Talk to me in your own made-up language / Doesn't matter if I understand it

These lines show her playful desire for connection, regardless of the language, reflecting her deep need for emotional closeness. Eder et al. (2010) describe such moments as part of character development in narratives, where personal desires and conflicts are revealed gradually.

Charli also expresses social anxiety and awkwardness in the song “I might say something stupid, she admits her overthinking through lyrics such as: I might say something stupid / Talk to myself in the mirror / Wear these clothes as disguise

Lyric 11:

I might say something stupid / Talk to myself in the mirror / Wear these clothes as disguise

This shows her as self-conscious and hesitant, fearing social mistakes. Her persona here is awkward and reflective, showing her inner worries about social situations. Her identity revolves around self-awareness and vulnerability, consistent with A. F. Moore’s (2012) view that lyrics can reflect artists’ private emotional landscapes.

In the song “Everything is Romantic”, she presents a dreamy and idealized perspective. She repeats the line: Bad tattoos on leather-tanned skin / Jesus Christ on a plastic sign / Fall in love again and again / Winding roads, doing manual drive

Lyric 12:

Bad tattoos on leather-tanned skin / Jesus Christ on a plastic sign / Fall in love again and again / Winding roads, doing manual drive

Her character here appears poetic and whimsical, focusing on beauty and fantasy. Her persona becomes detached from reality, showing her longing to see everything as meaningful. Her identity in this song reflects a desire to romanticize life, which A. F. Moore (2012) notes is common in artists who use lyrics to explore imagined or idealized identities.

In the song “Rewind” Charli expresses deep nostalgia. She sings: I'd go back in time to when I wasn't insecure / To when I didn't overanalyse my face shape

Lyric 13:

I'd go back in time to when I wasn't insecure / To when I didn't overanalyse my face shape

This lyric shows her desire to revisit the past and escape the present. Her character here is reflective and longing, while her persona becomes softer and more introspective. Her identity revolves around memory and the emotional pull of the past.

In the song “So I” she explores grief and mourning. The song is written as a tribute to her late friend and collaborator SOPHIE, who passed away in 2021. The lyrics drop all sarcasm and instead focus on her grief and loss. She admits to hiding her sadness during performances with the lyric: When I’m on stage, sometimes I lie / Say that I like singing these songs you left behind

Lyric 14:

When I’m on stage, sometimes I lie / Say that I like singing these songs you left behind

Her character here is weighed down by grief. Her persona is sincere and emotionally vulnerable, showing her pain about loss. Her identity connects to mourning and her struggle with emotional expression, showing how she balances her public image with personal grief.

Charli addresses family influence and inherited traits in the song “Apple” She sings: I guess the apple don’t fall far from the tree

Lyric 15:

I guess the apple don’t fall far from the tree

Her character here is introspective, examining how her family history shapes her. This aligns with Frith’s (2017) theory that identity in music often emerges from personal storytelling and emotional narratives, where artists draw from their backgrounds and experiences to construct a relatable persona. Her persona becomes more thoughtful, while her identity explores her connection to her roots and personal growth.

In the song “B2b” she shows the difficulty of breaking emotional cycles. The song repeats: Back to, back to, back to, back to you

Lyric 16:

Back to, back to, back to, back to you

Her character here feels trapped in a relationship pattern she cannot escape. Her persona becomes emotionally exhausted, and her identity reflects attachment struggles and recurring emotional patterns.

In the song “365” she celebrates escapism through nightlife. She declares: No, I never go home, don't sleep, don't eat (Ah-ah, ah) / Just do it on repeat, keep (Bumpin' that) / When I'm in the

club, yeah, I'm (Bumpin' that) / 3-6-5, party girl (Bumpin' that) / Shall we do a little key? Shall we have a little line?

Lyric 17:

She declares: No, I never go home, don't sleep, don't eat (Ah-ah, ah) / Just do it on repeat, keep (Bumpin' that) / When I'm in the club, yeah, I'm (Bumpin' that) / 3-6-5, party girl (Bumpin' that) / Shall we do a little key? Shall we have a little line?

Here, her character is carefree and energetic, focused on fun and freedom. This reflects Auslander’s (2006) concept of persona performance, where artists intentionally project playful or exaggerated versions of themselves in their music. Her persona here reflects a party-goer enjoying the moment, while her identity connects to self-expression through dance and music, portraying her as someone who uses music as an outlet for both release and self-affirmation.

In the song “Mean girls” she embraces rebelliousness and confidence. She sings: This one’s for all my mean girls / this one’s for all my bad girls

Lyric 18 :

This one’s for all my mean girls / this one’s for all my bad girls

Her character here is defiant and bold, celebrating social rebellion. According to Frith (2017), identity in music can also reflect the need for self-assertion and resistance against societal expectations. Her persona becomes unapologetic, and her identity reflects pride in being independent and daring, showing how she uses music to project her confident, rebellious side.

Finally, in “I think about it all the time Charli contemplates her future. She sings: I think about it all the time / that I might run out of time

Lyric 19:

I think about it all the time / that I might run out of time

Her character here is thoughtful and uncertain about life changes. Her persona becomes cautious and reflective, while her identity reveals her concerns about personal growth and time.

Throughout Brat, Charli XCX constructs a multi-dimensional character, shifting between confidence, vulnerability, nostalgia, and reflection. Her persona changes with each song to express different emotional tones, and her identity remains rooted in personal experiences and self-reflection. The lyrics serve as a key medium for



presenting her artistic self in this album, demonstrating complex character traits and emotional honesty.

Vocal Delivery

In addition to lyrics, vocal delivery plays an important role in shaping an artist's character, persona, and identity. Vocal delivery refers to the way a singer uses tone, pitch, emotion, and vocal techniques to express feelings and personality in their music. In Brat, Charli XCX's vocal performances vary greatly from song to song, allowing her to present different emotional states and aspects of herself. These choices are not random, they help show what version of herself she wants to perform in each song. Through her voice, Charli moves between emotional roles like a performer on stage, switching from boldness to vulnerability, from anger to apathy. One clear example is found in the song "Von dutch" Charli's vocal tone here is sharp and almost sarcastic. She raps most of the lines with a steady, cold voice. She never sounds too emotional instead, she sounds tired of everything, especially the people who pretend not to care about her. She performs a pop persona who is proud and angry, someone who knows she's being judged and is throwing it back in people's faces: Yeah, I know your little secret, put your hands up / It's so obvious, I'm your number one

Lyric 20:

Yeah, I know your little secret, put your hands up / It's so obvious, I'm your number one

She says this line like she's rolling her eyes. There's a slight pause before put your hands up which adds a mocking tone like she's daring the listener to admit the truth. Her performance in this song builds a character that's stylish, rude, and totally self-aware.

In "Talk talk", her voice becomes more anxious. She sings: I wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd just talk to me

Lyric 22:

I wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd talk, talk / Wish you'd just talk to me

Her tone is lighter here almost fragile. She repeats the phrase with growing desperation. Even though the line stays simple, the way she says it each time changes slightly, like she's becoming more and more anxious. This is how she builds a persona of someone who is afraid of

being ignored, someone who is desperate for connection but scared to ask directly. The repeated lines Wish you'd just talk to me are performed with overlapping vocal layers and soft echoes, creating a dreamy yet anxious atmosphere. This supports her persona as someone caught in emotional confusion and longing, while her identity here becomes fragile and introspective.

Another brilliant use of vocal delivery is in the song "Mean girls" Here, Charli plays the role of a dangerous, sarcastic, hyperfeminine troublemaker. Her voice in the chorus is rhythmic and fierce: This one's for all my mean girls / This one's for all my bad girls

Lyric 23:

This one's for all my mean girls / This one's for all my bad girls

She delivers the lines like a chant, almost like a cheerleader — but there's irony behind it. She sounds fun but also threatening. Her tone adds to the persona: the girl everyone gossips about but secretly wants to be.

Next in "I think about it all the time" Charli's vocal delivery here is much more soft, smooth, and even hesitant. This song reflects deep thought about the future including the idea of becoming a mother. She sings with warmth but also uncertainty: But I finally met my baby / And a baby might be mine

Lyric 24:

But I finally met my baby / And a baby might be mine

Charli's vocals are delivered with a shy, almost shaky tone, which perfectly matches the song's themes of social anxiety and hesitation. The slightly mumbled and delicate vocal phrasing makes her sound hesitant, reflecting her self-conscious character. This vocal style brings her persona closer to the listener, making her seem relatable and sincere, while also supporting her identity as an artist unafraid to show emotional imperfections. She lowers her voice slightly on might be mine almost like she's unsure whether she's allowed to want that. It's a rare moment of peace and possibility.

Production Style

The production style of Brat is equally significant in shaping Charli's character and identity. The album blends hyperpop, club music, and experimental electronic elements, using sound textures that amplify the themes in her

lyrics and vocal performances. According to Simon Frith (2017), the sonic environment of a song plays a key role in shaping the listener's perception of the artist's identity. Tracks like "Von dutch", "360" and "Mean girls" use loud, aggressive production with distorted synths, metallic beats, and heavy bass. The glitchy, industrial sounds in "Von dutch" create a chaotic atmosphere that matches her bold persona, while the sharp, synthetic textures in "360" enhance the song's themes of self-reflection and digital culture. "Mean girls" features pounding percussion and a relentless tempo, reinforcing the rebellious, defiant tone of the lyrics. These production choices reflect Philip Auslander's (2006) theory of persona performance, where exaggerated sonic textures help artists project larger-than-life identities. Here, the intense production pushes Charli's bold, unapologetic persona to the forefront.

In contrast, songs like "Sympathy is a knife", "So I", and "Rewind" use minimal, airy production to create intimate, emotional soundscapes. "Sympathy is a knife" features sparse, echoing synths and slow-moving beats that emphasize the song's themes of jealousy and emotional struggle. In "So I", soft ambient layers and gentle, glimmering synths create a reflective, mournful mood that matches her vocal delivery. "Rewind" also uses warm synth tones and simple beats to evoke nostalgia and longing. These songs reflect A. Moore (2002) theory that sparse, intimate production can increase emotional authenticity, helping artists convey personal vulnerability. The quiet, ambient production allows Charli's emotional narratives to take center stage.

Other songs like "Talk talk", "I might say something stupid" and "Apple" blend stripped-back production with subtle electronic elements to support introspective and personal lyrics. "Talk talk" uses a minimal beat with soft synths, reinforcing the song's quiet emotional tension. "I might say something stupid" features shimmering production layers with slightly warped effects, enhancing the song's dreamy yet uneasy atmosphere. "Apple" uses a repetitive, almost hypnotic synth pattern, mirroring the cyclical themes of family history and emotional frustration. Club-focused tracks such as "365" and "Club classics" rely on danceable, rhythmic beats and high-energy synths. "365" features a repetitive, hypnotic bassline and pounding drum patterns that evoke a nightclub setting, while

"Club classics" uses fast-paced, pulsating beats and playful sound effects to create a vibrant, celebratory mood.

Finally, "Everything is romantic" and "B2b" use unique production techniques to enhance their emotional messages. "Everything is romantic" employs lush, layered synths and soft percussion to evoke a whimsical, nostalgic feeling, while "B2b" relies on looping melodies and repetitive beats to mirror the song's themes of emotional cycles and relationship patterns. Just & Rudolph (2024) theory on identity construction through musical elements applies here, as Charli uses production not just for style but as an essential tool for emotional storytelling and persona-building. The shifts between distorted, aggressive sounds and soft, minimal textures throughout *Brat* allow her to explore a wide range of emotional themes, supporting her multi-dimensional character and identity.

Recurring Character Traits That Define Charli XCX's Persona

This section discusses the second research objective, which is to analyze the recurring emotional and character traits that appear across Charli XCX's *Brat* album. Emotional and character traits are significant in the study of identity construction because they show the consistent emotional patterns and narrative tendencies an artist brings into their work.

In line with Just & Rudolph (2024) theory of emotional expression in music, artists often use songs as a platform to express personal feelings that may be difficult to articulate through other forms. Furthermore, DeNora (2000) explains that music is not only an entertainment medium but also a space where individuals construct their identities by processing emotions. This makes the analysis of emotional traits in *Brat* essential for understanding Charli XCX's self-presentation throughout the album. In "360", Charli performs an assertive version of herself that radiates confidence and cultural control. She opens with the line: When you're in the mirror, do you like what you see? / When you're in the mirror, you're just looking at me

Lyric 25:

When you're in the mirror, do you like what you see? / When you're in the mirror, you're just looking at me

This shows a character who positions herself as the standard of beauty, influence, and coolness. The reference to "Julia" (Julia Fox) signals a self-

aware glamorization of public image. Charli leans into pop culture spectacle, aligning her persona with hyper-visibility and intentional exaggeration. The fast-paced, electronic production mirrors her forward momentum and dominance. Auslander (2006) would describe this as a deliberate construction of a “theatrical self,” where confidence is a performance of presence, not just an emotional state “Club classics” shifts from self-centered confidence to a more communal sense of belonging. By referencing artists and producers she admires: Yeah, I wanna dance to me / I wanna dance to SOPHIE / I wanna dance to A. G.

Lyric 26:

Yeah, I wanna dance to me / I wanna dance to SOPHIE / I wanna dance to A. G.

Charli locates herself within a shared creative lineage. The upbeat and rhythmic energy of the song mimics the euphoria of club culture, where individuality merges with collective memory. According to Frith (2017), music is a way to participate in identity communities, not just define oneself against them. The emotional trait of belonging in this song highlights how Charli’s persona is not purely individualistic but also formed through connection and shared experience.

In “Sympathy is a knife”, the confident surface breaks down as Charli reveals overwhelming insecurity and emotional instability. The line “Why I wanna shoot myself?”

Lyric 27:

Why I wanna shoot myself?

It is delivered in a detached and repetitive way, suggesting emotional numbness rather than melodrama. Her comparisons to another woman create a destabilized self, one riddled with jealousy and inadequacy. The production becomes minimal, mirroring the emptiness in her emotional world. A. Moore’s (2002) theory of expressive authenticity helps frame this track as a moment when the artist moves from persona into vulnerability. This is no longer a performed brat, it is the inner self speaking.

“I might say something stupid” continues this theme but through a quieter, more socially anxious lens. Charli sings: Talk to myself in the mirror / Wear these clothes as disguise

Lyric 28:

Talk to myself in the mirror / Wear these clothes as disguise

Here, the emotional trait of anxiety is tied to performance, as she hides behind fashion and scripted behavior. Her voice is soft and careful, and the slow, ambient production signals hesitation. Willimek & Willimek (2014) argue that musical dynamics such as slow tempo and gentle delivery often express emotional insecurity. Charli’s persona in this track is inward-looking, afraid of being misunderstood or exposed.

In “Talk talk”, Charli expresses longing and emotional frustration, desiring connection despite barriers in communication: Talk to me in your own made-up language / Doesn’t matter if I understand it

Lyric 29:

Talk to me in your own made-up language / Doesn’t matter if I understand it

The emotional trait here is longing, not just for words, but for emotional presence. Her repeated pleas become rhythmic and obsessive, reflecting a deeper emotional need. Eder et al. (2010) describe round characters as those capable of experiencing unresolved internal tension, which Charli clearly does here. Her persona is emotionally open, but also emotionally drained.

The tone shifts again in “Von dutch”, where Charli adopts a defiant and bratty identity to push back against judgment: It’s alright to just admit that I’m the fantasy / I’m your number one

Lyric 30:

It’s alright to just admit that I’m the fantasy / I’m your number one

The industrial production, robotic delivery, and sarcastic tone turn confidence into aggression. Charli performs rebellion as both armor and power. This exaggerated stance aligns with Auslander’s (2006) view of persona as theatrical, a space where irony and self-assertion collide. The emotional trait of defiance becomes her method of regaining control over image and narrative.

“Everything is romantic” presents emotional detachment and ironic distance masked as beauty. Charli sings: Jesus Christ on a plastic sign / Everything is romantic

Lyric 31:

Jesus Christ on a plastic sign / Everything is romantic

Her romanticizing of mundane objects feels hollow and hyper-aesthetic. The production is dreamy, but the lyrics suggest she is emotionally

removed. J. G. Moore (2024) explains that musical irony arises when emotional exaggeration conceals emptiness. Charli's detachment becomes a shield, turning real feelings into stylized gestures.

In "Rewind", Charli expresses nostalgia and regret as she reflects on her past self: I'd go back in time to when I wasn't insecure

Lyric 32:

I'd go back in time to when I wasn't insecure

Her longing is directed not at a person, but at a simpler version of herself. The minimalist production and slow tempo create a space for reflection. Frith (1998) emphasizes that music helps listeners and artists return emotionally to past experiences. Charli's persona here feels worn out by fame and self-awareness, longing for emotional ease.

"So I" is a rare, unfiltered moment of grief, as Charli mourns SOPHIE with direct honesty: Say that I like singing these songs you left behind / But I lied

Lyric 33:

Say that I like singing these songs you left behind / But I lied

The emotional trait here is not performative sadness, but genuine loss. Her vocals are soft, and the sparse instrumentation leaves space for the pain to resonate. According to A. Moore (2002), expressive authenticity emerges when an artist allows real emotion to surface without disguise. This is one of the most human portraits of Charli on the album.

In "Girl, so confusing", Charli deals with conflicted admiration and competition, especially within female friendships: Maybe you just wanna be me / Maybe I wanna be you

Lyric 34:

Maybe you just wanna be me / Maybe I wanna be you

Her voice is casual, but the lyrics reveal emotional contradiction. The internal split between jealousy and connection adds to her depth. Forster (2000) "round character" theory applies well here, as Charli's persona is neither entirely sure nor entirely stable. She becomes emotionally honest by admitting confusion.

"Apple" is marked by resignation. Charli reflects on inherited flaws and learned emotional behaviour: I guess the apple don't fall far from the tree

Lyric 35:

I guess the apple don't fall far from the tree

She does not resist these patterns but seems to accept them. The song's slow pace and tired tone reflect emotional fatigue. Frith (2017) argues that identity is shaped by environment and personal history. This track adds a generational dimension to Charli's persona, showing that some struggles are not self-created, but inherited.

"B2b" expresses emotional dependency through lyrical repetition: Back to, back to, back to you.

Recurring Emotional and Character Traits

This section presents the recurring emotional and character traits identified throughout Charli XCX's Brat. These traits are drawn from the lyrics, vocal tone, and overall mood of each track. The traits are supported by relevant theories such as Juslin & Laukka (2004), Hall et al. (2013), Frith (2017), and others. The table below summarizes the findings based on all 15 tracks.

Table 2. Recurring Emotional and Character Traits

Track Title	Dominant Trait	Theory
360	Confidence	Juslin & Laukka (2004)
Club classics	Confidence, Detachment	Frith (2017)
Sympathy is a knife	Insecurity, Jealousy	Juslin & Laukka (2004)
I might say something stupid	Self-consciousness, Anxiousness	Juslin & Laukka (2004)
Talk talk	Longing, Emotional Tension	Juslin & Laukka (2004)
Von dutch	Defiance, Rebellion	DeNora (2000), Auslander (2006)



Track Title	Dominant Trait	Theory
<i>Everything is romantic</i>	Irony, Emotional Detachment	Frith (2017)
<i>Rewind</i>	Nostalgia, Regret	Hall (2013), Juslin & Laukka (2004)
<i>So I</i>	Grief, Vulnerability	Moore (2002), Juslin & Laukka (2004)
<i>Girl, so confusing</i>	Social Conflict, Confusion	Juslin & Laukka (2004)
<i>Apple</i>	Reflection, Frustration	Moore (2012), Hall (2013)
<i>B2b</i>	Emotional Exhaustion	Juslin & Laukka (2004)
<i>Mean girls</i>	Boldness, Rebellion	Auslander (2006), Frith (2017)
<i>I think about it all the time</i>	Anxiety, Existential Doubt	Hall (2013), DeNora (2000)
<i>365</i>	Escapism, Repetition	Frith (2017), Juslin & Laukka (2004)

Reflection of Identity

As Hall et al. (2013) suggests, identity is not a fixed essence but a fluid and constructed narrative often performed and mediated. Each track contains moments of personal confession, cultural

commentary, or emotional expression that contribute to an evolving sense of self. The table below outlines how identity is reflected in each track of the album, along with relevant theoretical perspectives that support the interpretation:

Table 3 Identity Reflection

Track Title	Identity Reflected
<i>360</i>	Hyper-visible pop icon
<i>Club classics</i>	Belonging through nightlife culture
<i>Sympathy is a knife</i>	Shows insecurity and comparison
<i>I might say something stupid</i>	Self-conscious and anxious
<i>Talk talk</i>	Conveys longing for connection
<i>Von dutch</i>	Projects a rebellious self-image
<i>Everything is romantic</i>	Ironic, hopeless romantic
<i>Rewind</i>	Regretful
<i>So I</i>	Expresses grief and vulnerability
<i>Girl, so confusing</i>	Reflects rivalry and self-reflection
<i>Apple</i>	Connects to family and generational ties
<i>B2b</i>	Suggests addiction and dependency
<i>Mean girls</i>	Bratty and confrontational persona
<i>I think about it all the time</i>	Reveals fragility and anxiety
<i>365</i>	Embodies escapism and overstimulation

Overall, the table demonstrates how Brat reflects different sides of Charli XCX, from confidence and rebellion to vulnerability and

nostalgia. Each track presents a distinct expression that together creates a layered and dynamic portrait of the artist. Rather than offering

a single consistent image, the album showcases shifting emotions and self-presentations that highlight the fluid nature of her artistic persona.

CONCLUSION

Using a textual and interpretive analytical framework influenced by identity theory, persona studies, and hyperpop aesthetics, this study has investigated how persona and identity are constructed in Charli XCX's BRAT. The results show that BRAT presents identity as a fragmented, performative, and self-aware construction influenced by digital culture and modern pop aesthetics rather than as a cohesive or confessional story. The album challenges prevailing expectations of authenticity in popular music by emphasizing sonic minimalism, emotional restraint, and ironic self-positioning. It also suggests an alternative model in which authenticity arises through aesthetic consistency and purposeful artifice rather than emotional transparency.

This work has wider ramifications for popular music scholarship than just its contribution to the examination of a single album. First, it implies that even in platform-driven and algorithmically structured music ecosystems, modern pop artists still exhibits conceptual coherence at the album level. BRAT serves as an example of how album-length projects continue to be essential platforms for expressing intricate and changing identities that are impossible to adequately convey through single tracks. Second, rather than passively consuming emotional narratives, listeners are encouraged to interpret, negotiate, and co-construct meaning in the digital era, which is reflected in the findings that show changing artist–audience dynamics. In line with discursive listening behaviors promoted by digital platforms, the album's rejection of emotional resolution promotes a more introspective and interactive style of interaction.

Understanding the development of hyperpop aesthetics as they move from experimental subcultures into mainstream pop contexts is another benefit of this research. BRAT shows how hyperpop tactics can be assimilated and strategically restrained, allowing for new types of identity performance based on ambiguity and self-awareness, as opposed to depending on maximalist excess. This change reflects a larger trend in pop music innovation, where experimentation increasingly functions through

restraint and recalibration as opposed to overt disruption.

It is necessary to recognize a number of limitations in spite of their contributions. Alternative interpretations of the record are still feasible, however the results of this qualitative and interpretive analysis are inevitably influenced by the researcher's analytical viewpoint. Because the analysis represents a particular cultural period and artistic trajectory, the conclusions are limited in their generalizability due to the concentration on a single album and artist. Additionally, whereas well-established theoretical frameworks of genre, character, and identity offer analytical clarity, they might not adequately take into consideration the quickly changing behaviors found in digital music cultures. By comparing artists and genres, including audience reception studies, or delving deeper into theoretical approaches that look at platform governance and algorithmic mediation, future study could overcome these limitations.

All things considered, this study establishes BRAT as an important cultural work that represents current changes in pop identity formation. The study reinforces the ongoing value of album-level analysis in comprehending popular music in the digital age while advancing scholarly discussions on persona, authenticity, and digital subjectivity by fusing lyrical, sonic, and contextual analysis within a clearly stated interpretive framework.

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