

Synovate Survey: One Third Of Americans Would 'Give Anything' To Meet Their Music Idols;

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According to a new study from leading global market research firm Synovate, almost one in three music fans in the US would 'give anything' to meet their idols, and many are happy to view ads and even share their personal information for access to free music downloads.

Steve Garton, global head of media research for Synovate, said:

"Since the beginning of humankind, there has been a passion for music. From the primitive beating of drums, to even before we are born when we're already used to the steady beat of our mother's heart, we are programmed to have a passion for music."

Synovate surveyed 8,000 adults ages 18+ across 13 countries, including 508 in the US, to understand the buying habits and preferences of music consumers.

The results were recently presented by Music Matters during MIDEM 2010, the world's biggest music industry conference.

Music makes the world go round

It's probably no surprise that music is the world's favorite pastime. Respondents were asked to rank their passion for music on a ten point scale, ranging from 'I couldn't care less' (1) to 'I'd listen every minute of the day if I could' (10).

The majority of Americans surveyed (72%) consider themselves passionate about music, ranking their passion at level 6 or above, compared to 63% globally.

Celebrity culture is also alive and well.

Thirty-three percent of Americans (19% globally) say that they would 'give anything' to meet their favourite music artists, though exactly what that might be is anyone's guess!

Forty-four percent were excited about the idea of going on weekend getaways with their favourite musical artists and fellow fans, including access to a few concerts during that time.

This was much higher than the global average of 16%.

"The rise of artists' own web sites, along with their use of social media like blogs, Twitter, Facebook and MySpace, have gotten music fans even closer to their favourite stars," says Garton. "We're also living in fame obsessed times so these mediums help fuel the frenzy."

When respondents were asked which music 'extras' they'd be willing to pay for, it became apparent that Americans were among those most interested in paying for exclusive items such as access to exclusive unreleased MP3s, members-only web content, private gigs, etc. than people in other countries.

Americans topped the charts as most willing to pay for more access to and information about their favourite music stars. More than two-thirds of Americans say they'd pay for the following:

- Text alerts about upcoming shows and tickets availability (70%);
- Access to 'members only' exclusive internet gigs (67%);
- A 'line jumper' feature, including guest list entry and an upgrade for 'all access' to areas (67%); as well as access to a 'members only' section on an artist's website (67%).

According to Bob Michaels, Senior Vice President of Consumer & Business Insights for Synovate in the US:

"Americans are willing to pay for these 'rights' because they want to be part of the inner circle. While anyone can go online and get a song, paying for unreleased music or special access to the member-only section of an artist's website makes fans feel that they 'know' the artist and are getting something that only really dedicated fans have. It's like having a front row seat every day."

YouTube killed the MTV star?

The advent of MTV in 1981 ushered in a whole new way for musical artists to connect with their fan base, and though TV still remains a key medium for people across the globe to watch music videos, the computer has become an equal

contender, especially in developed markets like the US.

When asked how they watched music videos over the past month, Americans were almost split, with 40% saying they watched them on TV while 39% watched them on the computer.

Just 9% said they watched music videos on their mobile devices though this number is expected to grow.

Despite what some may think, the record store is not dead.

Even with the rise in digital music, many still want to own music in its physical form.

In the past month, 23% of Americans bought a music CD at a store, compared to 30% globally who did this, while 19% purchased one online (11% globally). While this is good news for music retailers, there is still an underbelly of counterfeit CDs and illegal downloading that physical and online retailers across the globe are competing with.

The music industry has spent considerable effort to attach stigmas to illegal music downloading, which seems to be working in some markets, particularly the US.

Only 15% of Americans admitted to downloading a song from the internet without paying for it, compared to 29% globally, and 18% stream music directly from a service such as MySpace, The Hype Machine, etc., compared to 21% globally who do this.

Of course, most people do purchase their music legally and legal mobile downloads are beginning to take off in some parts of the globe, Seven percent of US consumers have paid for music apps on their phone and to download a full length mobile music track.

Ads are ok

So what about all the advertisements shown on music downloading and streaming websites? They're no problem at all for most US consumers, especially if they offer something in return.

Fifty-six percent of Americans are happy to view or listen to ads if it lets them download free music while 48% are ok with viewing ads if they can get access to free music streaming, compared to 53% globally who oppose this idea.

However, not many Americans are willing to share information about themselves to gain access to free music.

Over half (61%) of Americans stated they would not provide personal information in exchange for access to free music downloads.

And only 25% say they would share their personal information for access to free music streaming.

Garton said:

"I think this shows how careful some listeners are. There is concern about what will happen to their private information if they give it to a third party, so companies need to be really considerate about privacy and explicit with consumers on how they plan to use the information."

Brands, bands and fans

Product endorsements and promotions / competitions that feature musical artists are one of the quickest ways to establish an artist's brand, and the study indicates that consumers support this.

Almost one-third (26%) of Americans look out for competitions or promotions that feature their favorite artists and bands while 32% agree that 'If brand sponsorship is the only way an artist can make money, I think they should do it (even if they have to compromise)'.

However, 53% of American music fans don't think this is a good idea, to the possible suggestion of musical artists 'selling out.'

Respondents were also asked if they are more likely to buy a product that is endorsed by their favourite artist / band.

Most Americans disagree, with 66% opposing the idea of musician-endorsed products.

But almost two-thirds (61%) agreed that they have sought out music after hearing it on an ad, TV show, movie or game.

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