SIP Deconstruction of Charli XCX's "brat" PR Campaign

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I. Company or Organization Background

Charlotte Aitchison, internationally known as Charli XCX, is a DJ and pop star that was born in Cambridge and raised in Start Hill, Essex (Khomami and Bakare 2024). Being born half Gujarati Indian and half Scottish, Charli XCX was bullied due to how she had a different appearance compared to her predominantly white classmates (Nika 2012). Despite having this experience of being an outcast already prevalent in Charli XCX's life, the artist continued to make music that spoke to her and hoped for people to relate to her music (Mossman 2024). Charli XCX started making music and posting her music on Myspace when she was 14 years old (Khomami and Bakare 2024). Her music soon got the attention of a promoter who asked her to perform at illegal raves and parties in east London, the same year she started posting her music (Spanos 2024). Soon after she got signed to a record label called Asylum Records and struck gold with her first hit single *I Love It* with Icona Pop in 2012 (Spanos 2024). The single hit number 1 in the UK as well as reaching top 10 in 18 countries and a year later made her first debut album in 2013 titled "True Romance" (Spanos 2024). Charli XCX has also produced successful hits like "Fancy" with Iggy Azalea and soundtrack "Boom Clap" for the movie *The Fault in Our Stars* (Garvey 2014, Khomami and Bakare 2024). Despite being called a "pop artist" by her label and various music platforms, she wishes to not be labeled and limited to one music genre mainly because of how it would limit her to making only certain kinds of music (Khomami and Bakare 2024). In numerous interviews, Charli XCX would reiterate that she was inspired by 1990s pop culture and the "90s schoolgirl" aesthetic (Khomami and Bakare 2024). Majority of her work and music aesthetic is inspired by artists such as Spice Girls, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Avril

Lavigne, and fictional characters such as Cher Horowitz, Wednesday Addams and Nancy Downs (Khomami and Bakare 2024).

II. Mission Statement (Business Goal)

Charli XCX is a music artist who creates music that are meant for individuals to feel comfortable in their unique and non-conforming self through authenticity.

Brand Positioning

To: Individuals who want to break out of the confined and traditional labels defined by society

Brand is: considered abnormal and unique in music concept due to the multiple times Charli XCX goes against the sound of mainstream music

That: branches out into its own form of music genre and becomes its own successful genre

Because: Charli XCX continues to challenge the music industry and social norms that are set on society through her artistry

IV: Statement of Problem or Opportunity

In 2022, before Charli XCX released her album "brat", the artist went on numerous interviews for her album called "Crash." In one of the interviews, she expressed how this was her final album with her label Atlantic Records and that she wanted to try something that she hardly does with her artist identity (Cruz 2022). She continued to express in the interview that she was normally "off the grid" when it comes to media and that she has "made her own path" when it comes to being a fairly well-known artist (Cruz 2022). In the 2022 "Crash" album, she decided to lean into the mainstream pop persona that she always has tried to avoid (Cruz 2022). Charli XCX further explained that she did this to see how well her album would have done in the music industry if she conformed with the traditional identity that numerous women artists take in the music industry (Cruz 2022). With the 2022 album, she created music that sounded like songs that were popular at the time and tried to make herself online seem like she was finally conforming into pop culture standards (Cruz 2022). Charli XCX mentions that with her "Crash" album, she wanted to play into the idea that she was a female pop star who's music and personality was made up by a record label instead and decided to box herself into the popstar stereotype (Cruz 2022). The "Crash" album debuted at no. 7 on the Billboard 200 in 2022, making the album at the time be her top selling album (Jackson 2024). Despite this, Charli XCX didn't enjoy the album due to its "vanilla palatable flatness" and still believed the traditional pop identity was not meant for her (Jackson 2024). Thus, with her latest album "brat," Charli XCX decided to risk

losing the following she gained from her 2022 and went for a "confrontational and aggressive" feel in the album (Jackson 2024). "Brat" ended up debuting at no. 3 on the Billboard 200 and became her most successful album yet and has gained millions of attention due to its marketing (Jackson 2024). The album still continues to be a success and has led Charli XCX to make more albums that include the "brat" album's theme (Schütz and Bako 2024, Spotify 2024). These albums include numerous remixes of her "brat" album's songs as well as collaborations with various mainstream artists such as Ariana Grande, Troye Sivan, and Billie Eilish (Spotify 2024). Along with her album being a success, her music continues to be relevant in social media due to what her fans called "brat summer", which featured TikTok dance trends, memes, and even popped up through Kamala Harris' political campaign (Caldwell 2024).

V: Research

Research Goals: How can Charli XCX continue to stay relevant? How can Charli XCX gain more loyal fans? Would Charli XCX be able to move past this era without losing fans? Who is Charli XCX's main target audience?

Research Methodology:

1. **Primary:**
    a. **Qualitative:** (interviews, focus groups, etc.): Who? How many? Where?
        i. One-on-one interviews with individuals who became fans of Charli XCX because of the "brat" album. Questions asked will be what they liked about the album, how did they learn about it, and if they are going to continue to be on the lookout for Charli XCX's future music. The group of participants would be 200 individuals ages 18-25 who live in Los Angeles and who have recently gotten into Charli XCX's music because of the "brat" album.
        ii. Focus groups with individuals who knew Charli XCX prior to the "brat" album and their thoughts about how their favorite artist has reached mainstream media once again. Questions would revolve around if they like the attention Charli XCX is gaining, if they think Charli XCX would continue to be prevalent in mainstream music, and if they would still be a fan despite all the new fans Charli XCX is receiving. Individuals in groups

would be ages 20-27 and who are huge fans of Charli XCX prior to “brat” album.

b. **Quantitative:** (surveys): Who? How many? Where?

i. Charli XCX's public relations team could survey top listeners who listen to Charli XCX’s music on Spotify to find out what kind of audience is listening to her music. Survey questions include basic information about name, age, area of residency, job title, ethnicity, education, and overall rating of album’s songs, cover, and social media coverage.

2. **Secondary:** List of Sources

- Media coverage from various sources like digital magazines/newspapers
- Timeline of revenue from Charli XCX’s album and single releases
- Ratings and number of streams Charli XCX gains monthly and yearly
- Social media reviews of the “brat” album found on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook

VI. Situation Analysis (SWOTS)

Strengths:

- Has a monthly listener count of 39.2 million on Spotify (Spotify 2024)
- Popular Charli XCX songs average 150 million streams on Spotify (Spotify 2024)
- Collaborates with other well-known artists (Kelly 2024)

Weaknesses:

- Charli XCX’s music doesn’t conform with mainstream music (Poe 2024)
- Her music has a lot of heavy auto tune that some people don’t enjoy (Poe 2024)
- Her lyrics to songs could be seen as aggressive and distasteful (Poe 2024)
- A lot of hits depend on collaborations, outshining non-collaborated music (Kworb 2024)

Opportunities:

- Charli XCX is now somewhat tied to Kamala Harris’ campaign, making herself more well-known outside of the music industry (Demopoulos 2024)
- With a gain in fans and a series of upcoming concerts, Charli XCX can still be considered relevant in mainstream media (Manning 2024)

- People online can use Charli XCX's music in their videos, thus continuing her music to be relevant on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook (Hammond et al., 2024)

Threats:

- The constant change in music trends. Charli XCX's newest album could be considered a trend mainly because of how there were a lot of TikTok videos using her songs, thus making her fame unstable (Monella 2024)
- Her support for Kamala Harris has caused a lot of her fans to become disinterested in her music (Poe 2024)
- New music style/identity, potentially causing listeners (mainly fans before her "brat" album) to avoid future works (Poe 2024)

VII. Strategic Insights

- Charli XCX could utilize the previous success of her music through TikTok by creating more social media trends online. This includes dance covers with other influencers and posting videos that match her album's aggressive and blunt theme. She has done this previously with one of her songs where she posted a dance cover with another famous artist, Troye Sivan. She has also created a trend with Billie Eilish with their song together. Having her create new trends could help her name and music stay relevant in mainstream media (Hammond et al., 2024, Charli XCX 2024, Charli XCX 2024).
- Charli XCX could continue to share on her social media platforms her satirical posts that mock the "daily life as an artist" and "I'm a normal person too" posts that mainstream music figures try to do on their social media platforms. Many influencers and pop artists share their daily lifestyles online; this includes them posting their breakfast, workout schedule, and hobbies that the average person also does. This solidifies her artist identity and continues to show that she likes to challenge the status quo (Cruz 2024).
- Charli XCX can continue to release music with other artists and try to make other artists conform into her genre instead of having herself conform. This further stretches the "brat summer" theme and allows her own genre to be considered as part of mainstream media despite its uniqueness. Collaborating with other artists could ease new fans into listening more to her music now that her music has some familiar mainstream artists in them (Kaplan 2024).

VIII. Communications Goals

- Stay relevant in mainstream media
    - Charli XCX had a quick and sudden jump into mainstream media. This leads to risk in falling out of mainstream media just as fast as she gained popularity. To continue to stay relevant, Charli XCX has to continue to push for her "brat" identity that millions of people fell in love with. This could include making music similar to the vibe of her recent album and continuing to be her own brand. She can also continue to create social media posts that revolve around the confrontational and aggressive feel of the "brat" album (Ahlgrim 2024).
- Continue to push against social norms
    - Charli XCX's "brat" album was a success not only because it had songs that were catchy, but also because of how the overall album was different from mainstream music and somewhat relatable despite the satirical lyrics. Her album mainly focused on how despite all the standards society puts on people, we are all complex individuals. Her "brat" album recognizes and accepts the flaws that we have as humans. If she continues to make media based on this main message, she can continue to be relevant and potentially become more successful future endeavors (Mendez 2024)

IX. Communications Objectives

- Increase media relativity by 5% by the end of October.
    - The time frame is short mainly because the album "brat" is slowly becoming irrelevant. Numerous fans online have expressed that "brat summer" was coming to an end, meaning that the album's popularity and fame is slowly dying down. To avoid this, Charli XCX could continue to post TikTok trends that have her music in them. This could continue to spread her satirical message and branding (Gordon 2024).
- Increase positive public opinion in her fan base by 5% by the end of November.
    - During her spotlight in mainstream media, what made her even more popular was how she posted "kamala IS brat" on her X account. This has led some of her fans to disassociate with her due to how they believe that Kamala is not a good representation of what's considered as a "brat." Charli XCX could turn this

around by explaining why she posted that and her thought process when posting online. This could help her gain back and strengthen her fan-to-artist trust and relationship. The time frame is by the end of November due to how the elections will be done that month. The small percentage is due to how it's hard to change public opinion once a popular public figure says/does something that's considered controversial (Charli XCX 2024, Kaufman 2024).

- Increase music streaming on platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube Music by 10% by the end of November
    - As previously mentioned, the "brat summer" era was coming to an end for many listeners. Despite this, Charli XCX has continued to make music and appear in social media. She has made new remixes and music with artists such as Kim Petras and Troye Sivan. This could help her gain and maintain her following specifically in the LGBTQ+ community and overall allow her to stay relevant (Wratten 2024).

X. Target Audiences

- The new 'brats'
    - Gen Z and young millennial women, ranging from ages 18-30, who recently got into Charli XCX's music due to the recent "brat summer" movement on social media. They felt that the album's theme spoke to their feelings about self-identity. They mainly stick to trends, but once in a while go out of their way to listen to their niches. They also are constantly viewing social media memes and pop culture. They mainly live in populated areas and cities. (Google Trends 2024).
- LGBTQ+ fans from collaborations
    - Gen Z and young millennial listeners, ranging from ages 18-30, who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community and who got into Charli XCX's music due to their favorite artist collaborating with her. In the past, Charli XCX has worked closely with artists who are icons in the LGBTQ+ community. This had led her to be one of the icons for the community (Wratten 2024).
- Fans from the past
    - Older Gen Z and millennial listeners, ages 24-35, who have listened to Charli XCX's work before and have constantly kept coming back for more of her music.

They try to attend all her concerts and DJ sessions at small and secret locations. They became fans way before "brat summer" was a thing on social media. They know almost everything about Charli XCX and her work (Byers 2024, Poe 2024).

XI. Current Audience Brand Perception

- Majority of Charli XCX's audience still sees her as a positive icon for the modern woman (Candelario 2024). Many still associate her with the "brat summer" hype despite her recent controversial tweet regarding the presidential election (Poe 2024).

XII. Desired Audience Brand Perception

- Charli XCX wants fans to continue and embrace the "brat" mentality and to continue to push social norms. Charli XCX continues to make appearances in events and even changed the "brat summer" theme into "brat autumn" in hopes to continue the confrontational and aggressive feel that the album brought to mainstream audiences (Ahlgrim 2024).

XIII. Key Message Mapping

- Single-minded message
    - "I wanted to go with an offensive, off-trend shade of green to trigger the idea of something being wrong. I'd like for us to question our expectations of pop culture—why are some things considered good and acceptable, and some things deemed bad? I'm interested in the narratives behind that and I want to provoke people. I'm not doing things to be nice" (Ray 2024).
        - This quote encapsulates Charli XCX's overall album message, which is to step out of what's considered normal and push for something new and different. Being "brat" means that one accepts and embraces their flaws and Charli XCX hopes that her album's message resonates with listeners (Caldwell 2024).
- Audience-specific message
    - The new 'brats'
        - "One day you can feel completely on top of the world; the next day, you can feel like your career's over. The song is saying, 'sometimes it's really confusing to be a girl, and that's fine'" (Mossman 2024).

        - This quote connects with her overall brand identity and message. It solidifies that her album was meant for women to accept their flaws and to appreciate how complex they are as individuals. It's a quote that Charli XCX has said herself, thus making her album more authentic and relatable to listeners.
    - LGBTQ+ fans from collaborations
        - "I truly feel like I wouldn't have a career without the LGBTQ+ community. They have made so much possible for me and supported me when everyone else had given up. It feels right for me to try my best to amplify that community wherever possible. It feels very natural to me" (Ray 2024).
        - This quote from Charli XCX strengthens her bond with the LGBTQ+ community. Having her recognize how a lot of her fans are part of the community gives members hope that she'll continue to uplift the community. This quote also put Charli XCX as a figure who will do anything to continue uplifting the LGTBQ+ community through her music and media platforms.
    - Fans from the past
        - "Post-pandemic, I actually think these kinds of scenes [secret-location parties] are thriving even more. I've always gravitated towards those spaces because I prefer the music that's played there than in a super club. And they are usually started from the ground up, often by members of the queer community" (Ray 2024).
        - This quote from Charli XCX reaches her fans who have known her prior to her mainstream success. This gives her older fans reassurance that she still would like to be part of the small secret-location parties that she was mainly involved in before her success with her "brat" album. This also reassures them that she still wants to lean off the mainstream pop star persona and that she wants to continue creating her own path in music.

XIV. Strategies

- Collaborate with brands and other artists, both big and small, and who are part of the LGBTQ+ community to stay relevant and continue her support towards under represented communities (Kaplan 2024).
    - Collaborating with more well known artists allows Charli XCX's music to reach a bigger audience and helps her ease more into mainstream music. This also allows listeners who usually try to avoid her music, due to its unique sound, a chance to actually listen to her music since their favorite artist is part of the song.
- Post more media referring to the "brat" feeling and demeanor instead of the album to continue to show the artist's true identity and push for constant authenticity (Charli XCX 2024, Caldwell 2024).
    - Instead of constantly posting the songs on the "brat" album, Charli XCX posts social media that reference the vibe and feeling of "brat." Posting social media relating to the overall feeling of her album strengthens Charli XCX's push for being oneself and not conforming to social standards.
- Explain the reasoning to controversial posts and clear up any controversies to gain back trust with her fans, further pushing the agenda that she is authentic in social media (Kaufman 2024).
    - Charli XCX's controversial tweet regarding the U.S. political debate sparked mixed reactions about the artist's stance on social issues and if the artist really supported everything Kamala Harris stands for. In an interview, Charli XCX expressed that she didn't agree with everything the presidential candidate stands for, but wants "to be on the right side of women's rights" which is on brand for her musical identity. This strengthens her brand identity which is that she's always transparent with the media and doesn't shy away from standing up for herself and her beliefs.
- Post the current trends that are revolving around the album to stay relevant in social media, specifically to Gen Z (UMM 2024).
    - The "brat" album was successful not only for its music, but for the social media trends and memes that were generated because of the album. This led to Charli XCX and her latest album "brat" to always be somewhat relevant in social media.

Usually the trends and memes surrounded the overall album's theme, which was confrontational and aggressive.

XV. Tactics

- **Paid**
    - **Billboards Outside:** Before the album was released, Charli XCX's marketing team generated wonder and hype around various locations by creating large billboards that had the lime green background from the album as well as a word in the middle of the giant box. The billboards generate excitement for the upcoming music that Charli XCX is teasing. The words are mainly of artist names that are going to be collaborating more with Charli XCX (Garnsey 2024).
- **Earned:**
    - **News releases about Charli XCX's music:** News releases cover Charli XCX's "brat" album success with various types of media, mainly because of its huge success despite being different from mainstream music and the cultural trends and memes that came with it. The album has also broken Charli XCX's personal records, causing numerous music and pop culture magazines to cover her latest album's success (Caldwell 2024, Ahlgrim 2024, Kaplan 2024).
    - **News releases about Charli XCX's political role:** Charli XCX has been tied to Kamala Harris' presidential campaign after her tweet stating that "kamala IS brat" (Charli XCX 2024). After this, Kamala Harris' PR team continued to use this as an opportunity to connect with Gen Z, thus leading Charli XCX to become relevant in news releases surrounding politics (Murray 2024, Demopoulus 2024).
    - **Interviews about artistry:** Charli XCX has been interviewed by various news sources and magazines about her latest album and what it means to her. These interviews spread her overall thought process while creating the album as well as her authentic and relatable identity that matches her music (Mossman 2024, Ray 2024, Kaufman 2024).
    - **Album/Music Reviews:** Many news and media outlets have published blogs that share their thoughts and opinions about Charli XCX's songs in her "brat" album. These reviews go through the history of her music and deep dive into the meaning

of each song on the album, thus providing more media coverage for Charli XCX and her latest album (Garvey 2024, Snapes 2024, Hickman 2024).

- **Shared:**
    - **Meme about Album Cover:** Charli XCX's album cover was unique and interesting to the public as numerous user generated memes and content mimicked the album's theme. These user generated memes reached audiences such as people following the presidential campaigns after these memes surged social media (Murray 2024).
    - **TikTok Dances & Lip-Syncing Trends:** Millions of user generated TikToks were made using Charli XCX's songs from her recent album. A lot of the user generated content was over dance trends and lip-syncing trends where people imitated Charli XCX's own generated TikToks (TikTok 2024, Caldwell 2024).
    - **Duolingo Marketing Stunt:** Duolingo, the famous language learning app, made headlines as they jumped onto the "brat summer" trend. This included them posting the Duolingo mascot wearing "brat" merchandise and even had people wear its mascot's face for a hat at one of Charli XCX's concerts (Urman and Babenok 2024).
- **Owned:**
    - **Artist's Social Media Posts:** Charli XCX consistently posted on her social media accounts about her songs, album, and personal life. She also interacted with fans to strengthen that bond between herself and her fans. These posts and interactions give Charli XCX a humanistic and relatable feel to her identity (Charli XCX 2024, Charli XCX 2024, Charli XCX 2024).
    - **Artist's Music:** Charli XCX has a huge library of music that can be found on multiple music platforms. Her music can also be used on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Charli XCX 2024, Charli XCX 2024).
    - **Website:** Charli XCX has a website that provides details about her upcoming shows, merchandise, music, and all her social media and music platforms (Charli XCX).
    - **Music Videos:** Charli XCX and her team made music videos tied to her most popular songs on the album. These music videos all have a satirical feel that ties

to the overall album's vibe as well as Charli XCX's message about mainstream artistry (Charli XCX).

XVI. KPIs - Measurement & Evaluation

- Compare music streams of Charli XCX's last album "crash" to her recent "brat" album.
    - Through various music platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, and Apple music, Charli XCX's PR team can compare the amount of music streams and impressions between her 2022 and 2024 album. As seen on a website catering to music stats, Charli XCX's recent "brat" album has doubled in music streams compared to her previous "crash" album on Spotify (Kworb 2024).
- Compare Charli XCX's current public standing with public standing in the month of July.
    - Charli XCX's team can see how the artist is doing in the public eye and see if positive public opinion has increased about her through social media posts and news releases. The PR team can compare the time where she faced controversy in July with what people are currently talking about when Charli XCX comes to mind (Wallace 2024, Demopoulos 2024).

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