

Songs featuring guest artists: Why they are more successful

February 6 2019



First author Andrea Ordanini. Credit: Paolo Tonato

In 2018, a song called "Girls Like You" credited to Maroon 5, featuring Cardi B stayed at the top of the U.S. charts for seven weeks. Two other songs with featuring credits reached No. 1 last year: "Havana" by Camila Cabello, featuring Young Thug, and "Psycho" by Post Malone, featuring Ty Dolla \$ign. And they are only the tip of the iceberg. Collaborations

between rock artists and R&B singers or between pop stars and rappers has become extremely popular.

There is a reason for this: Combining artists boosts a song's popularity, according to a new study by Andrea Ordanini (Bocconi University) with Joseph C. Nunes (University of Southern California) and Anastasia Nanni (Ph.D. student, Bocconi University). According to the analysis based on data from Billboard's Hot 100 music chart, songs featuring other artists have a greater likelihood of making it into the top 10 than songs not featuring other artists. The greater the difference between the genres of the artists involved, the more likely the song is to reach the top of the charts. Heterogeneity pays off.

Collaboration is one of the biggest phenomena in pop music. It is an asymmetric creative [collaboration](#) that involves one [artist](#) (host) integrating another artist's (guest) contribution into his song. It appeared in the 1980s in the context of hip-hop culture and boomed in the mid-1990s. In 1996, more than 20 songs with featuring credits appeared on the Hot 100. In 2017, there were 150.

Professor Ordanini has studied the phenomenon in the light of co-branding literature, in particular, the field of research that looks at ingredient branding in which an attribute of one brand is incorporated into another brand. "Under certain conditions, consumers rate co-branded products more positively than either individual brand," he says.

Does the same thing happen in music? To provide an answer, the authors looked at the songs with a featured artist that appeared on the Billboard's Hot 100 between 1996 and 2018. Their likelihood of entering the top 10 is 18.4 percent, significantly greater than the 13.9 percent likelihood for songs that do not include a featured artist. Not all collaborations are alike, though. For instance, collaborations between rap and R&B artists are more frequent than collaborations between rap and country artists.

"As genre distance between host and guest increases, the likelihood of reaching the top 10 increases, albeit at a decreasing rate," professor Ordanini says. This effect is moderated by the boundary strength of the host's genre. When it comes to genres with stronger boundaries, such as country music, the audience may not appreciate extreme deviations from existing conventions.

Featuring is an innovative practice. It owes its success to the ability to broaden the audience, bringing together fans of both artists and omnivorous listeners. "Some 83 percent of songs with featuring credits since 1996 are unique combinations of artists," professor Ordanini notes. "This allows artists to maintain their original positioning and to avoid the risk of diluting their brand."

The success of a featuring song does not depend on past popularity of the host, who can use a collaboration with a younger guest to update their image. In order for a collaboration to be successful, the authors note, artists must be careful to highlight the innovative and non-permanent nature of the collaboration. Smart consumer communications help enhance a [song](#)'s popularity.

More information: Andrea Ordanini et al, The featuring phenomenon in music: how combining artists of different genres increases a song's popularity, *Marketing Letters* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s11002-018-9476-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-018-9476-3)

Provided by Bocconi University

Citation: Songs featuring guest artists: Why they are more successful (2019, February 6) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-songs-featuring-guest-artists-successful.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.