MA International Music Marketing

Module: Creation in International Music Marketing

Term 3: Written Proposal

Chiara Filomeni
2122216

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Introduction

After reflecting on all the facets of the music industry, I decided to dedicate my final master's project in International Music Marketing to the creation of a music school, a project that I have had for some time in mind and that I feel is the right moment to realise.
My profession as a vocal coach was born a few years ago, but it became effective during the pandemic when people found themselves spending too much time without being surrounded by music. I noticed an exponential growth of people who decided to approach singing, even without any previous training, of any age and with different goals.
I am a self-employed vocal coach and found most of my students through the various websites consulted over time, such as SuperProf or simply thanks to the district app - Nextdoor - in which I published a post where I introduced myself and explained that I was giving singing lessons for all ages and levels. In addition to this very effective method that has led to word of mouth and therefore to an exponential growth of my students, I am a self-employed tutor in a music school. The school is providing me with new students, but the students' management - including administrative - is all my responsibility.
As a first step to creating a 3-years marketing plan, I will need to define my brand, to identify the UPS - unique selling point - of the business.

The Brand and the target

As Simon Sinek says: Start with Why. After listening to his TEDx talk, I decided to buy his book to delve into this interesting topic, which will be part of my final project references, since the talk has already given me great inspiration and stressed how the success of some companies like Apple is linked to why these companies create their products: as Simon Sinek explains, Apple believes in thinking differently - which is the why - so it makes beautifully designed products, user friendly - the how - and it just happens to make great computers - the what (Sinek, 2010).
I would like to focus the project of the music school that I will open together with Daniel - my piano player and partner in life - on this fundamental principle, elaborating the "why" that can lead to differentiation in a competitive market of music schools, especially in a metropolis like London.
During my first research, I noticed a lack of a real interconnected path between instruments. In the school I would like to create pupils will be allowed to learn about how

to use their internal instrument - the voice - as well as work on rhythm and body coordination.
The care of the voice, the body and the ear will be approached from a very contemporary point of you, after working on a method that I am already developing and testing with my current students.
Our goal, therefore, is to be able to create a music school that involves groups of children/teenagers and trains them musically in the most complete possible way.
”A tailor-made music school” is the first idea of a potential slogan, which could represent the message and create a UPS in this competitive market. The idea that this school is built perfectly fitting for our students draws attention to why the school exist and how it is differentiating itself from the competitors. I want to create a real community, in which pupils are also involved in the method, as I truly believe that teaching is never one way. I would like the students to feel free to express their ideas and suggest songs they would like to work on to build their choir repertoire, involving them in the decision-making.

The Research

Research is an essential part to define a marketing strategy. Therefore, I will work on gathering information about the market, to gain a better understanding of the size, demographics and social trends (Queensland Government, 2022).
I started identifying some competitor schools, which are the followings: London School Of Music LSM, Fireworks Music School, LAMDA, Smarts London, Tchaikovsky London Music School, London Music Academy and Limitless Music Academy.
Most of the above-mentioned schools are having children and teenagers as the main target, but during the analysis of competitors, I will also refer to schools with an adult target, to examine the aesthetics and the marketing strategies used and understand if there may be a crossover among them.
I will then conduct a SWOT analysis, to overcome challenges and develop a full awareness of all the elements involved in the decision-making process. Billy Bauer, managing director of Royce Leather in New York, argues that “Once you’ve identified your risks, you can then decide whether it is most appropriate to eliminate the internal weakness by assigning company resources to fix the problems, or to reduce the external threat by abandoning the threatened area of business and meeting it after strengthening your business” (Schooley, 2022). I believe that in this very early stage of my new

business, having a clear idea of the surrounding market is an important step which precedes the creation of a marketing plan.

The Marketing Mix

After determining the brand and analysing the surrounding market, I will focus on the marketing mix, which is a combination of channels, platforms, actions and tactics to promote the business in the market (The Economic Times, 2022). The mix will depend on three things: the budget I will have at my disposal - which I am still establishing - the existing marketing expertise, and the audience's interests - which can be discovered by finding relevant targeted Instagram accounts, YouTube channels, and hashtags that are followed by the target audience (Careers & Marketing, 2021). I will define the budget and my marketing capabilities, choosing some specific marketing channels - most probably Facebook and Instagram to start, as I am familiar with Facebook Ads Manager.
As a goal for the second year of my marketing plan, I will add platforms like YouTube and Google Ads, which require different skills and potentially a specific figure within the school, who will help me and Daniel to expand our business.

The Marketing Strategy

After the Pandemic, the marketing and communications strategies have completely changed. People are no longer comparing a business only to direct competitors, but with any online experience they have. This means that the research of competitors won't be exhaustive and I will need to work on different marketing strategies to impress potential customers.
The first step will be to design a website and create a good experience, especially on mobile. 79% of people who are not satisfied with what they find on the website will search for another one and 94% of first impressions are design-related (Major, 2022). Those stats are showing how important is for a business to spend time and budget on the creation of a proper website. The experience on mobile, as mentioned above, is crucial as mobile users are five times more likely to abandon a website if it is not optimised for mobile (Major, 2022).
Another decisive aspect is the consideration of the online reviews' impact. 90% of consumers read online reviews even before visiting the official website and 84% of people trust online reviews, in the same way, they trust personal recommendations (Major, 2022).

For this reason, I would like to recruit some parents as Ambassadors for the school, not only because they can improve the enrolments, informing other families about it - worth of mouth is a great way to advertise a business - but also because they can leave positive reviews of an experience they are actively part of (Perez, R. 2020). This will also lead to an improvement in the search engine strategy.

Developing SEO - search engine optimisation - is taking time and it is a strategy which will be developed in the second year of my marketing plan, as previously mentioned. I am still considering using the digital advertising tool of PPC - pay-per-click advertising - from the first year of my marking plan: as mentioned above, I am not an expert in Google Ads so I could wait until an expansion of the business, hiring a professional who will specifically work on it.

I will also offer discounts for the first students, and an extra discount for the Ambassadors' children - this will help to increase the signups and reach a decent amount of students in a shorter time (Hughes, 2022). It will also improve organically the search engine (Major, 2022) and it is an initial pricing strategy that could encourage new students to enrol (The Economic Times, 2022). Choosing the right combination of the 7Ps of marketing across product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence, the marketing strategy is more likely to succeed (Queensland Government, 2022).

Starting a blog, with helpful information for parents, students' stories and additional resources to consult could be another strategy to adopt from the first months of the school opening. This will imply consistency in resources to post and different topics to write about (Major, 2022).

I will invest in meaningful, consistent social media ads, another great advertising tool, which is worth exploring further.

The Social Media Ads

Social Media Advertising is a great tool where the average cost-per-click is much lower than search ads and creativity can play an essential role, diversifying the reach with a variety of marketing campaigns and formats to experiment with (Major, 2022).

To obtain qualitative social media ads it is necessary to have a precise target audience, high-quality assets with a catchy description, a call to action and links to go to the relevant landing page and a clearly defined goal.

According to the State of Social Media 2016 survey of Buffer, brand awareness is the top reason marketers use social media. According to Buffer's former product marketer Alfred Lua, this is because the average person spends nearly two hours on social media every day (Lua, A. 2019), an average which increased to two hours and a half in 2022 (Chaffey, 2022). Therefore, social media is one of the leading places where to grab consumers' attention. Social media has also enabled marketers to have a more quantitative understanding of the presence and reach online, providing data on the reach of social media content, which allows being more accurate in reporting the business's online presence (Lua, A. 2019).

Another potential goal for social media ads is to grow revenue by increasing signups. With Facebook ads, I will set up marketing campaigns to advertise the school enrollments and check how many signups the social media ad will bring (Lua, A. 2019).

Boosting brand engagement is the second top reason why marketers are using social media, and research shows that social media interactions with the community increase loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations. Moreover, Facebook and Instagram's algorithms are prioritising posts with higher engagement as a result of the expectation that users will be keener to see highly engaging content (Lua, A. 2019).

Consequently to this, it is necessary to add that the interaction with the community is a direct consequence of its creation of it. A Facebook group could be a first step to connecting all the parents of the students, together with the above-mentioned creation of a school blog (Lua, A. 2019).

Another aspect which could help to increase the number of enrolments is to provide good social media customer service. It is a very good opportunity for the business to differentiate itself from the competitors, focusing on fast responses to questions, doubts or problems found on the platforms or the website (Lua, A. 2019).

My intention is also to develop a long-term content strategy, create an editorial calendar to monitor the performance of posts, be more organised and improve low-performing posts with a better understanding of what the customers are looking for.

The Email Campaign

A further step that could be introduced in the second or third year of the marketing plan is email campaigns. Building an email workflow - a set of emails automatically sent to subscribers considering their interests, demographics and psychographics - could be a good inbound marketing strategy. Those automated emails can be used for newly

enrolled students or even to onboard new tutors. That is why I am considering this strategy for the second and third years, which will be focused on the expansion of staff, both in terms of administration and teaching (Major, 2022).
The main email campaigns I could run would comprehend TOFU - Top-of-the-Funnel - campaign to move the audience from awareness to consideration, MOFU - Middle-of-the-Funnel - campaign to increase conversions, moving the customers from consideration to decision, and BOFU - Bottom-of-the-Funnel - campaign to meet the enrolment goals, encouraging the re-enrolment (Major, 2022).

The consolidation

The second and third years will most probably focus on the development of the school - our intention is to expand it geographically, thanks to the chance to develop an online program which can be followed from everywhere in the world.
Part of the development, however, is to consolidate what has already been created. That is why an organic social media strategy will be run, keeping the tone, the brand and content consistent and current (Major, 2022).

The Marketing Plan

A marketing plan consists of a prospectus of the marketing goals - which we previously analysed - the marketplace and tactics used to achieve the marketing strategy, and the action plan to use to enforce the marketing tactics. I will use the marketing strategies I mentioned above as headings to organise the marketing plan.
A good marketing plan is driven by the strategy created and how you accomplish it. Taking the time to develop a well-informed, thoughtful marketing plan will keep the activities targeted to the appropriate markets in the best way and it will help me measure success (Queensland Government, 2022).
The marketing plan will be formed by the definition of the brand - the music school - the identification of the target and the establishment of the goals, the marketing mix, the budget and the determination of the action plan, mainly focused on social media campaigns (Wiebe, 2022).

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