

Assignment: Reflective Summary

Creative Music Management (BMTY7000)

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1. Introduction

This reflective summary aims to display and give an account of the involvement within the group during the creation of a portfolio, consisting of a release of an original single and its remix, as well as its associated media assets that aim to build a framework around the artist's brand. Here, the group dynamics and management of different functions will be elucidated, while evaluating and analysing the experience associated with past events during the creation process. Throughout the process of creating original work and promoting it with tailored media assets, current digital technologies were made use of. Here, technologies and strategies utilised by relevant stakeholders will be analysed and scrutinised, in order to have a benchmark for the creation of this portfolio. This summary will reflect on the advantages of such technologies in respect of team development and the actual creation of this industry project, alongside its limitations that were being encountered.

Using specific reflective techniques, this summary iterates key milestones along the path towards completion and provides objective conclusions about the decisions that were made and their implications. Hereby, constructive critique will be applied, in order to deduce what actions and decisions could have improved the handling of decisive events during the creation process. Through abstract conceptualisation of reflective observations of past experiences, strategies for improved handling of similar situations will be proposed. Ultimately, this reflective summary will evaluate whether the final outcome has met the group's initial vision and expectations and how these have been achieved.

2. Personal Involvement

In order to be able to promote and achieve efficiency within the team and the development of the campaign, different roles were allocated to certain team members. During a brainstorming session, key qualities and skills of all team members were noted down, which enabled the allocation of different roles to team members. By allocating relevant functions to team members that brought the necessary qualities, useless work was eliminated and a stronger understanding of inherent strengths was achieved.

2.1. Brand Identity

The visual and emotional framework for the campaign was of great importance, as it served as the initial foundation for all consecutive decisions. By developing a strong brand identity, the group was able to have a solid foundation. Deciding on what the campaign should convey at the beginning of the creation process enabled a sustainable start. While I was responsible for designing a solid brand identity for the artist, it ultimately was a collective group decision what elements would be suitable. Beforehand, key values associated with the act were collectively decided, which enabled me to have a clear vision of how a brand identity document may display our thoughts most efficiently. Collective decisions during consistent in-person meetings and sourcing the technical creation to a member who is competent in the relevant field promoted a strong cooperation between all members and contributed to an efficient way of working. Assigning roles relevant to the team members competences provided a feeling of leadership for every team member in their responsible field.

2.2. Validation

In order to validate our plans and visions for the campaign, we made use of receiving feedback from third-party individuals from a mutual industry. Although we received constructive feedback, we could have made use of more feedback from individuals originating from different backgrounds, that could have pin-pointed certain areas more efficiently that may have needed improvement. This also helped leverage the credibility of our campaign (Aronson, 2016). The imminent creation of a brand identity and determining key values that should be conveyed by the campaign helped build a solid foundation for the whole project. A positive validation from a third-party industry expert was a motivating experience and helped the group navigate in the right direction. Hereby, we were assured of our vision and kept trusting it.

2.3. Financial and Marketing Plan

In conjunction with creating a brand identity for the campaign, creating a financial plan was another challenge I took on. Due to my past experience, the group decided to allocate this area to me. I split up the budgeting into two sections: operating budget and financial plan. The financial plan displays an overview of all inherent costs and the operating budget a five-week plan, where the budget is being allocated individually on a weekly basis. While the allocated budget provided a useful frame for deciding how much costs would be suitable, the choice of costs and PR should have been decided more coherently, as the financial plan strongly coincides with the marketing plan and assets. As the operating budget splits up the costs on a weekly basis, it was a challenge to decide the time of allocation of certain amounts. This question arose continuously while creating the financial plan. When conceptualising this scenario, the financial plan could have benefitted from involving marketing decisions more closely, in order to develop a more sustainable and realistic strategy. The release strategy for this campaign was used as a form of marketing planning. However, I would have separated them and created a separate marketing plan, which could have been used in conjunction with the financial plan in a more efficient way. Deducing a financial plan from a sole release strategy posed to be a challenge and risk. However, as all team members inherited multiple skills, it was possible to insource production costs to a great extent.

2.4. Remix

In terms of remixing the original single that is part of the assessment, a decision regarding the genre had to be made. As one may consider the original single to belong to the “indie/pop” genre, a genre that pays respect to the tempo and memorability had to be decided on. House or dance remixes have had positive effects on their original works on several occasions. These remixes, often created by DJ/producers, such as Robin Schulz and Felix Jaehn, have managed to land chart-topping hits by using the original songs as a basis for their dance or house productions (Copsey, 2020). A crucial aspect of the decision that was made was the fact that it enabled us to target a larger audience. Due to the increasing popularity of house/dance music and remixes that are created in this genre, a remix for this assessment in such genre was considered to be a suitable market fit. After the production process of the remix, there was a mutual positivity among the group regarding the remix and the group agreed on the fact that it pays respect to the memorability of the original work, while it has the potential to successfully target a different audience. As all group members have a thorough understanding of the music industry and its current trends, the decision regarding the remix was made without any friction. As the remix was completed towards the end of the planning of the campaign, there was not as much room for feedback, which would have benefitted the final product.

In retrospect, this was due to our lack of creating a precise plan in terms of what duties and responsibilities had to be completed after a certain period of time. Although there was a positive work ethic present throughout the project, the absence of a precise plan may have contributed to shifting important work towards the end. A clearer structure could have had the potential to counteract the aforementioned obstacle that has been encountered.

3. Impact of Digital Technologies

3.1. Digital distribution

Throughout the creation of the campaign, several digital technologies were taken advantage of, especially due to the fact that these belong to the industry-standard and are inevitable to make use of. Due to the large dependency on digital media, traditional channels of distribution did not come into question for this campaign. As streaming accounted for 85% of all revenue within the U.S. market in 2020, our campaign focussed entirely on the use of digital distributors that concern themselves solely with digital streaming platforms (Heater, 2020). The need for raw materials in order to produce physical products has become redundant (Harvard Business School, 2017). As traditional distribution did not suit our campaign and due to the reliance on digital promotion, the costs of production were reduced to a great extent. The emergence of digital distributors enables individuals to release their own work independently, making record labels and recoupable payments effectively obsolete. In light of this new situation the industry is facing, we took advantage of working completely independently and reducing liabilities as much as possible. The way in which one can access these distributors has eased the task of distributing the product and the barrier to entry has been lowered significantly.

3.2. Digital Media Channels

In reference to the marketing plan that was implemented in the campaign, all promotional elements are based on digital media channels, such as Instagram and TikTok. While traditional distribution channels require lengthy inquiries in terms of print, copyright and costs, the use of digital media channels was beneficial for the efficiency of our campaign, without missing out on a potential audience, due to the ever-increasing popularity of the above-mentioned channels. Social media channels inherit the potential of network effects, through which certain trends or products can easily benefit from virality that is enabled through such platforms. As “67% of [TikTok] users are more likely to seek out songs on music- streaming services after hearing them on TikTok”, it was an inevitable decision to lay a certain focus on this stream of promotion (Whateley, 2022). As the low barrier to entry floods the market with new content, a structured and consistent marketing plan was of great importance, in order to counteract this obstacle.

The democratisation of releasing, distributing and promoting content cuts both ways. While we were able to allocate a greater share of the budget towards marketing, the low barrier to enter the market requires a unique selling point in terms of brand identity and marketing plan.

3.3. Production Tools

The ability to record and produce a piece of musical work from home has accelerated how we finished the project to a great extent. The task of producing a remix required little time and there was no need to rent studios, gear, etc. The rise in popularity of DAWs has eased the task to complete an original piece of music, which would have required more stress and time without access to such programs on personal computers. Using video production tools, such as Premiere Pro, we were able to in-source video production entirely. The popularity of platforms, such as YouTube, have promoted the popularity of lyric videos, which are not as expensive and elaborate as traditional filmed music videos, while completely serving the consumers and audience's needs. Therefore, we did not require filming an actual music video and decided to continue with digital assets for promotion. In addition, this decision was specifically valid, due to the indie or "DIY" approach we wanted to attribute to the brand identity and campaign.

3.4. Team Development

Cloud-based platforms, such as Google Drive, enabled us to upload and access all mutual documents that were relevant. Having the ability to upload relevant assets to a mutual folder improved the efficiency of working and made outdated processes, such as sending emails back and forth, obsolete. In addition, the use of cloud-based platforms had a positive impact on the feeling of working collectively on a common project. Generally speaking, online video calls have had a positive effect on developing a project as a team. In addition, video calls have had a positive impact on the creation of musical pieces as well, as they enable musicians to instantly work together without the need of travelling. Effectively, it has opened up new opportunities to work with like minded people, which could not have been possible in such an effective way without the integration of online video calls (Birnie, 2020).

This has created a stronger network among musicians and has promoted a more diverse exchange of ideas within the recording industry. In our case, the meetings have yet again promoted stronger bonding among the group members, even when everyone was remote.

3.5. Experimentation

Further avenues of research could include employing influencers as another form of marketing and promoting. The emergence and dependency on social media has opened up new revenue streams for content creators and artists, where high prices can be requested. While these content creators may lead to a steep increase in traction for our campaign and single, current prices for influencers with a minimum amount of useful following would exceed our allocated budget. While social media platforms have opened up a large amount of possibilities for artists and content creators, taking advantage of them requires a price that compensates for their high potential value they may have for a successful campaign.

4. Conclusion

Initially, we have envisioned and collectively decided on a unique brand identity and set of values, which helped guide us through different stages across the creation of the campaign. I am confident that we have achieved the vision that we set for ourselves at the beginning. Through third-party validation, we made sure that our ideas and concepts were viable and have the potential for sustaining in the market. While we have achieved the goals that we have set ourselves initially, there was an absence of a clear structure and time plan for specific tasks to be finished. Although we efficiently allocated certain roles to different team members, we did not set any deadlines. Especially in the context of group work, I believe that deadlines are essential, as some tasks among different team members build up on each other. Therefore, I will appreciate the integration of a strict time plan to a greater extent in the future, as I have experienced during this project that its absence can have far reaching implications.

Word count:

2317

5. Citations

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