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MA Music Business

**New Technology in Music and Creative
Entertainment**

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Essay

It is the year of 2022 and we carry our music around with us everywhere. Back in the day even before I was born, music could only be listened to if you attended a live music performance. However now, you can be sitting on a bus and see someone wearing earphones or headphones listening to their choice of music, with their heads bobbing along to a beat. You have cars playing loud music with serious bass lines pumping. The fact is music is ubiquitous and it is shaping the industry.

Technology has altered the way music is transmitted, preserved, heard, performed, and composed (*Kramer, 1988*). It is worth bearing in mind that the growth of digital technology in music has also disrupted the music business, meaning that people have had to become more innovative in the industry, for example to make sure artists are paid correctly (*Deaux, 2017*). As technology is being advanced, the easier it is becoming for us listeners to hear music and us consumers to buy music.

A lot has changed over the years and radio was the most generic form to listen to music to discover new artists. However, with the rise of technology, radio and other products have become almost obsolete (*Coltel, 2022*).

DISTRIBUTION

In 1974 over one billion records were sold, and at the end of the century it was almost three times as high (*Wikstrom, 2021*). The industry was booming and the record labels were on a high. All record labels tend to have the same business model such as, you would go out searching for an artist, sign them, then release an album and then do a tour. This model continued to work for a good amount of years. Music executives were paid well and the listeners and buyers were introduced to some great music, however a process was being created that would send the industry into frenzy and revolutionise the physical record distribution (*L1neup, 2020*). This was soon to be known as Napster.

Shawn Fanning and Sean Parker created Napster in 1999. They completely revolutionised the way we listen to music (*HistoryComputerStaff, 2022*). Napster is a streaming platform, which allows you to share music over the internet. They created this, as the idea was to have a platform that would make sharing music instant and free. Users of this software were able to download and share music in an Mp3 format for free, it was user friendly, easily accessible and had easy access to music files. By the end of summer 2000, they had twenty million users and 14000 songs were being downloaded every minute (*HistoryComputerStaff, 2022*). Whilst this was free for the user, the rights holders were not compensated, and this caused the decline in music sales and distributions. Napster did have to go to court for this and had to shut down their service, but this opened the doors and paved the way for other sophisticated services to start up (*Hill, 2018*). Services such as Kazaa, LimeWire and The Pirate Bay were successful too, but the music industry itself had overly aggressive tactics, such as legal and technical to force these services to shut down. By 2013, the sales of physically distributed recorded music were at low levels (*Hill, 2018*).

The industry now had to reshape their business model and produce another way to distribute music. They had to think of a way to utilise technology to their advantage to maximise the distribution world. This is how Apple appeared (*HistoryComputerStaff, 2022*).

Apple computers were the first to create an online platform for both legal sales and distribution. They wanted to offer their consumers a service, as this meant they would be more inclined to buy more music. Their plan was simple. The service allowed consumers to buy and download music legally, but they were also given space to store their music. A bonus is that consumers could now buy singles from an album for as little as 99p. The service was called iTunes (*Wilstrom, 2021*).

"iTunes was a radical change for the music industry. It was the first online retailer that was able to offer the music catalogues from all the major music companies, it used an entirely novel pricing model, and it allowed consumers to de-bundle the music album and only buy the tracks that they liked" (*Wikstrom, 2021*). Rights holders still owned and could control their properties and for every track sold, royalties were paid. iTunes was a success.

The year 2013 saw iTunes sell over twenty five billion songs, they have evolved greatly and many competitors are now using their business model, but they remain top at what they do.

The advantages of digital distribution are that since the technology has advanced, it has made life easier for artists to self-promote. An artist can be turned into a global superstar overnight with just a click of a button and it is a cheaper and efficient way of self-promotion. The internet has completely transformed the musical landscape and gone are the days where we would have to wait for radios and tapes to experience the latest trends. (*SUU, 2021*) The internet has made it easier to promote (*Deaux, 2017*). Record labels and independent musicians no longer must produce vast amounts of hard copies to various parts of the world, to be heard. The internet allows for better distributions, you are no longer faced with logistical problems, and it will not take you many years to get world-wide recognition. As mentioned above, iTunes has helped many musicians sell digital copies of their music around the globe with just a click of a button (*Deaux, 2017*).

The main disadvantage is Piracy. Piracy can be a nightmare. This is considered as musical theft. Piracy is the main factor of economic loss within the music industry, but as technology advances every day, it is hard to keep measures in place.

As for the consumer, being able to buy your music with a click of the button and having a place to store it is much easier. In certain situations, this is not convenient, for example, most cars still only take CDs. However, if you can plug your device into your car and there is no charge, or it is not compatible, what do you do then?

MUSIC SERVICE

In 2006 Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon founded Spotify. They created a legal ad-supported music service that was free and in addition generated licensing revenues to the copyright holders (*Wikstrom, 2021*). In October 2007, they signed agreements with music industry's leading right holders to distribute their music; they also offered the right holders shares within their company and

offered two services, a subscription service, and a free service (funded completely by advertisements) (Ansari, 2020).

Spotify is one of the most popular streaming services and it is up there with the likes of Apple Music. The difference between Spotify and Apple Music is that Spotify's platform offers a free version. You only need to register to access vast amounts of music catalogues. It is easy to use and it can be used with your Facebook account if you have one. You can share your experiences with your family and friend's through your social media. If you pay for the subscription, you can store up to 10000 songs and can listen to music on any device (Tiwari, 2021). The downside is that the subscription fee can be expensive and it costs £9.99 per month (£119.88 a year) just to rent. Just think how many albums you can physically buy with that amount of money and own the music you have bought. If you do not pay for the subscription, you will be bombarded with advertising, which can become very annoying, and few people can afford to pay for such a service (Tiwari, 2021).

MARKETING

Marketing is a key component when promoting an artist. Before the internet, artists were promoted via radio stations, television, DJs, press and not forgetting billboard posters. I could also remember that a team would be hired for a late-night shift just to go out around town to put poster's up. This was considered as hard physical labour. Lots of time, energy and money would be consumed to promote an artist, but these days have now phased out. Marketing an artist in today's era consists of social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and getting onto the larger platforms like iTunes and Spotify.

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels to market products and services to reach consumers. It involves the use of search engines, mobile devices, social media, websites, and other similar channels (Barone, 2021). It has completely dismantled the whole entertainment sector fans consume content, and we advertise etc. A media property without a digital or social media presence is fighting a losing battle (odartheyghnews, 2022).

Digital media plays a significant role in the promotion of an artist. Sharing your content via Facebook and Instagram everyday can have an impact and allows you to share as much content as you wish to do so. According to Raffi Keuhneliann, CEO of Music Promo Today, *"Social media has allowed musical talents from around the world to become global superstars. Just think of Justin Bieber, Adele, or The Weekend--they all 'made it' online. It also offers music fans the ability to interact and engage with their favourite musicians. Fans feel like they have a voice with social media and that they are being heard. Artists use it to communicate with their fans by keeping them in the know-how of the latest news and upcoming releases. Successful artists are those that excel with their digital marketing strategy and reap the rewards of their creative approach"* (SocialMedia, 2018).

When social media started, it was used to stay connected with friends, especially those that have not seen each other in years, however it is the most influential, and engaging marketing tool for musicians (Securemedia, 2019). Most importantly, you can connect with your fans, respond to their

messages directly, and leave comments. It creates a level of intimacy between yourself and your fans.

Another form of marketing is blogging. You can create personalised content to your fans that can get you recognised. This can boost your visibility on search engines and it is great to use your voice as a marketing tool *Securemedia, 2019*).

The advantage of digital marketing is it allows you to be more visible and you can reach a wider audience. This means that if someone sees you by chance on the internet, and finds your music appealing, they can find out more about you as an artist (*Deepakg, 2020*). As previously stated, you can communicate with fans; build relationships and rapport with the people that want to support you. You can improve yourself as an artist, by getting feedback. The internet allows you to reach people from around the globe and this would have taken longer if social media platforms were not available. This is done by sharing content. Fans can share marketing videos and it can reach people that have never heard of you. Digital marketing allows you to build your music brand through direct campaigns and you can make it personal to you, drawing your consumers in. It makes you more accessible and allows you to have a greater engagement experience (*Chifley, 2022*). In addition, we cannot forget that is also very cost effective, you are able to use these platforms to potentially reach millions of people; however, word of mouth is still just as important, with just one click, you can share your content or send a message (*Chifley, 2022*).

There are disadvantages too. The internet will not make someone a star overnight. You can influence your sales, but it takes time to build your online reputation. It is also worth adding that marketing on social media is free, such as putting up a post etc., but a lot of work is needed, so therefore it can become expensive as you may need to hire a freelancer and they do not come cheap. It is also worth mentioning that the competition can be high, meaning that brands must be relevant, but also you will commonly be dependent on technology. Links may be broken, buttons do not work, and this can become very frustrating.

CONCLUSION

Technology has completely altered the way people listen and buy music, especially when I think of the advancement of the phonograph and analogue tape machines to digital recording software and internet based streaming services (*Agrawal, 2016*). People no longer must spend extortionate prices to watch someone in concert (even though it is nice to see an artist LIVE), as performances and shows can be viewed online. However, it is worth noting that the digital era did cause the drop in revenue sales and the music industry bosses had to adjust with the times, such as finding a clever way to work, be more innovative, and throw out the old business model. Digital platforms were able to revolutionise the monetisation of digital download, but it was the streaming services that rocked the boat and changed how we listen to music (*EconomistFilms, 2019*). So now, we have gone from product to service. It is only because there is a service, the way music is consumed has now been modernised.

It has not been completely negative, because smaller businesses within the music industry are now able to put their stamp on the market. Advancement in technology means that artists can record from their home and distribute their music without the need for the big labels and be able to promote him or herself. In addition, we can now eliminate costs such as manufacturing, cataloguing, promotional cost, and cost associated with music production, but we cannot forget that it has increased copyright issues (*Alagoa, 2015*).

As the world evolves, so will our music. The times of buying CDs will be gone, just like the cassette and we would have unlimited access to all music with just one click of a button and data analysis will play a role in this too (*Coltel, 2022*).

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