

Marketing Report: Album Release

OLIVER FRANCIS



Entertainment Marketing

SBTY7003

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1. Introduction

In this report, the marketing strategy, timeline, budget and project plan will be examined and explained regarding the upcoming release of an original album. In order to properly execute an effective marketing strategy, various marketing principles must be applied. This allows us to plan, track and assess the choices we make when deciding a strategy. In entertainment marketing, the basic 5 P's principle is an effective tool when creating a plan. In general, firms need a repository for information and analyses about the customers (Holbrook et. Al, 2016). This essential asset is something the music industry can exploit very effectively. Targeted adverts, user demographics and analytics services provide an invaluable insight into who your customers are, and where your marketing strategies are having the most impact. The Branding business, including festival and tour sponsorships, endorsement deals and synchronization (music in TV) revenues, reportedly generated \$2Billion for the Music industry in 2016, and it is growing every year with the opportunities ever expanding (Meier, 2017).

2. The Artist

The artist whom this report concerns is Oliver Francis. Real name being Alex Kelly, Oliver Francis is an American Rapper and Producer, who has previously released mildly successful singles and albums on platforms like Spotify and YouTube. When creating a marketing plan for an artist's upcoming album release, it is vital to get to know the artist in as much detail as possible. This will ensure that the strategy set out will be most authentic representation of the artist. The narrative that you drive is the single most important message in the promotion. Especially with an artist like Oliver Francis, who currently depends on those super fans to continue buying, streaming and watching his work.

2.1 Background

Francis is from Columbia, Missouri, USA. He was a popular kid in school but also enjoyed retro gaming and fantasy. He has had previous successes with a few songs reaching over 1 million hits on YouTube and Spotify, however it has proved hard for Francis to convert these hits into fans. He has always produced and recorded all of his songs in his bedroom at home and enlists the help of his childhood friends when filming low budget music videos. The friends he has around him have been there since day 1, and they regularly get involved in lending a hand in album artwork, videos and promotion.

2.2 Unique Selling Point (USP)

Being a smaller independent artist, it is essential to things that make you stand out from everyone else in the market, especially in the Hip-Hop/Rap genre, where all too often artists have similar styles and music. For Oliver Francis, there are three main attributes that make him stand out.

2.2.1 *Fan Engagement*

Francis regularly replies to and likes fans comments on social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. This has created a dedicated, loyal fanbase called the 'Cloudboy's'. This name originates from the music sharing platform SoundCloud, where Francis first released some of his music back in 2015. Building a fanbase and a following is the most important aspect

of succeeding as an artist nowadays, as it can lead to multiple profitable opportunities such as merchandise, sponsorship, collaborations and touring.

2.2.2 Independent

All of the production, recording and videos are done independently by Francis himself, with the help of some friends. He has mentioned previously how he does it all from his bedroom, this is something that people can really relate with and be inspired by. To record an album in the past, it was a necessity to have the right connections, sufficient funding and access to the best facilities. However nowadays, the same thing can be done from a bedroom with nothing but a laptop and some headphones. This is something that is part of the Oliver Francis brand, and helps to connect people to his music.

2.2.3 Authentic Narrative

The Hip-Hop community in particular generates negative connotations due to the lyrical and visual content displayed by the artists, often being linked to misogyny, violence and anti-social behaviour. Whilst this may be a harsh reality for many artists, the narrative has become crowded and often greatly exaggerated. There is more of a push towards being completely authentic and true to yourself within new artists. Oliver Francis is a prime example of creating a brand that broadcasts his interests, lifestyle and vibe. As previously mentioned, Francis is a fan of retro video games, he regularly portrays this in his music and visuals. The main message he conveys is his vibe, often referring to mild drug use, but not in a violent or aggressive fashion. Many of his videos and songs are very 'wavy' and promote the idea of just having fun, partying and not taking life too seriously. This is also a message that resonates well with the younger generations.

2.3 Growth Potential

Whilst Francis has had a few songs hit over 1 million streams/listens on Spotify and YouTube, he has struggled to retain the listeners and convert them into new fans. The exact reason for this is unclear, however there are various areas where there is ample opportunity to branch out and use the brand to its maximum potential. As the main aim is to infiltrate and explode into the UK market, all the planning must be compatible with the UK system. As Francis lives and records in the USA, all the legwork must be done online. This particular new album release will therefore feature innovative strategies and marketing ideas that will expand three main areas of Oliver Francis's franchise. These three areas are, Video, Audio and Socials.

3. Marketing Strategy

As previously mentioned, the hip-hop community often brings bad press and replicated styles. Therefore, to really make an impact in the scene, an innovative approach to the marketing of a record/album is essential to really stand out. To successfully promote the album in question, a mix of tried-and-tested strategies, along with industry standard marketing approaches will be the foundations to new, innovative ideas which can hopefully make this album stand out among the crowd. These avenues will address the key marketing principles in the form of the 5 P's; Product, Place, Price, Promotion, and People.

3.1 Audio

3.1.1 Streaming

Being an album release, the audio is the bread and butter of the launch. For this particular album, Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal and Soundcloud will be the platforms expected to bring in the most traffic. It is also very important to keep the Soundcloud platform active as it is largely responsible for Oliver Francis's success, and not uploading to the platform would be looked upon negatively among his most dedicated and earliest fans. Spotify is currently the largest streaming platform, so is an essential to any musician trying to get noticed.

As Spotify doesn't have large pay-outs, the platform will mostly be used as a marketing tool, to spread the word about his music as much as possible.

Spotify Genius allows the lyrics to be displayed while a song is being played and allows the artist to write on the lyrics and go into more detail on what they mean. This helps to further drive the narrative and fan engagement.

Classical	2.5%	2.1%	2.7%	3.0%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.5%
Country	12.9%	10.6%	14.3%	16.3%	2.9%	14.6%	7.4%	8.7%	4.9%
EDM	1.5%	2.1%	1.2%	1.0%	2.5%	4.0%	4.4%	4.7%	3.8%
Jazz	2.7%	2.4%	2.9%	2.6%	4.3%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%	0.4%
Latin	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	0.4%	3.8%	11.4%	5.8%	21.8%
New Age	0.7%	0.9%	0.6%	0.7%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%
Pop	26.3%	24.9%	27.2%	27.5%	25.6%	25.6%	18.5%	19.4%	16.6%
R&B	7.3%	7.2%	7.3%	7.3%	7.9%	10.3%	11.3%	11.0%	11.9%
Hip-Hop/Rap	5.2%	7.6%	3.7%	3.2%	6.6%	14.7%	25.4%	26.9%	22.8%

Figure 1: Consumption Breakdown by Genre (Highlighted from left to right, On demand streaming, audio streaming, and Video streaming)

Source: Audiophilereview.com

3.1.2 Radio

Radio continues to be an influential platform in the UK, with 87% of the population tuning in to radio stations every week (Rajar, 2019). For Hip-Hop/Rap, the main station to target is Radio 1, which is the third most listened to station in the UK. Radio 1 also has many features and special shows that would cater to the release of Oliver Francis's new album. 1Xtra is a branch of Radio 1 that primarily plays underground and urban music, who also pride themselves on finding new contemporary artists and playing unknown gems. 1Xtra also holds the well-known, 'Fire in the booth', hosted by Charlie Sloth. This segment allows artists to freestyle over instrumentals chosen by the Radio DJ to test their lyrical and rhythmic skills. It is also not exclusive to UK artists and has featured the likes of Drake, Boogie and Waka Flocka (All American).

This would be the perfect platform for Francis to gain recognition in the UK, and also would give him the platform to tell people about himself to give people an idea of what his music and brand is about.

3.1.3 Sync

Music Sync licensing is the process of having your music implemented into visual projects such as TV, YouTube Videos, Film or Video Games. Whilst these can all be very profitable and effective marketing strategies, it is important to remember the message you are trying to convey, and only get into deals where the brand image complements your music. For example, for this album release, you wouldn't want to have a song featured in a children's toy advert, or a make-up tutorial on YouTube. There are however multiple beneficial opportunities that would be perfect for Francis's music. Urban culture films and TV would be the main aim considering sync licenses.

3.1.4 Video Games

As Francis is a self-proclaimed video game lover, being featured in games would be a great fit for his image and music. More specifically, there is a game called 'Grand Theft Auto V', which has sold 120 million copies since its release in 2013. In each Grand Theft Auto release, the in-game radio has been an important part of the games. Featuring 22 unique radio stations covering multiple genres, and famous names such as British icon Cara Delavigne's hosting a station, the radio stations have been updated since release, adding more stations and music. This is an extremely underrated and undiscovered marketing opportunity, as you are potentially having up to 120 million people hearing your song. Video games are getting bigger and bigger each year, and as the industry brings in more money, the more money development studios have to spend on secure sync licenses. This segment is sure to explode in years to come and getting ahead of the curve on this will prove to be a profitable strategy in the future.

3.2 Video

The visual aspect of an album or song release is becoming increasingly important, not just in the sense of music videos, but also in the form of online promotion via video sharing platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. Each strategy comes with its own risks and benefits. It is therefore essential to prioritise which avenues would be most effective your launch.

3.2.1 Spotify Canvas

Canvas is a relatively new innovative attachment created by Spotify for use on the mobile app. It allows an artist to upload a 6 second looped video that replaces the album artwork when playing a song. Whilst this may not necessarily be a profit driver, it is another layer on pushing the visuals, and getting as much exposure as possible. For an Oliver Francis song, a simple countryside landscape, smoking marijuana with animated smoke and clouds passing the screen would be an effective, immersive visual.

3.2.2 Music Video

The effectiveness of music videos as a source of revenue is widely debated, however, using music videos primarily as a marketing tool can be very effective. The main source of income from music videos comes from the pay-outs of ads on streaming sites such as YouTube. This can however give low returns, roughly £1000 per million views. This has encouraged people to find other ways of making money of music videos. Sponsors and product placements would be an effective income source for Francis' new videos. The choice of product, as explained before, is very important as it must represent the image/narrative that the artist wishes to display. In Francis' particular case, alcohol, rolling papers, clothing and car brands would all be suitable to his style.

An Oliver Francis music video is clearly identifiable by its low budget and creative narrative. Currently directed and filmed by Francis, a lot of his ideas, personality and style is easily portrayed in his videos. From dressing up in cowboy and spaceman outfits dancing with aliens, to a simple representation of a normal night in, the authentic nature of his videos is something that is vital to ensure doesn't change. Keeping in line with the original narrative will retain loyal fans and encourage more to get involved with its distinct vibe.

3.2.3 Online Video Streaming

YouTube, Vimeo and TikTok are the only video streaming platforms that are worth investing time into, with YouTube taking the bulk of that share. YouTube is a default option regarding music videos, it has 1.9 Billion monthly users and in an average month, 8 out of 10 18-49-year-olds watch YouTube, while 90% of America 18-24-year olds use it (Smith, 2020). Whilst

YouTube will be the primary focus for the music videos, Vimeo is also worth considering and is still a source of viewing for many people.

TikTok is an increasingly effective platform and has proved to be able to break certain artists. The most notable example of this would be Lil Nas X, and his song 'Old Town Road', which was the first taste of TikTok's influence on the music industry. Old Town Road spent three weeks at number one on the Billboard top 100. Lil Nas X also acknowledges the platform's marketing potential saying that, 'I should maybe be paying TikTok, "They really boosted the song. It was getting to the point that it was almost stagnant. When TikTok hit it, almost every day since that, the streams have been up. I credit them a lot.' (Lal, 2020). The app has been downloaded over 2 billion times and allows any user to upload music for free. Seeing as anyone and everyone can upload anything, it is very difficult to try to be noticed or go 'viral'. The songs which have most success on TikTok are usually associated with challenges, such as dance videos. To increase the chances of taking off, partnering with influencers will be vital. Sites such as BrandWatch.com, provide useful services to identify the key influencers and the impact it could have on your market.

3.3 Socials

In today's climate, building a fan base is as important, if not more, than producing good music. The most effective way of doing this, is through social media and other media outlets. For this particular album, four main avenues are being explored and invested in. Social media, Website, Advertisements, and magazines.

3.3.1 Social Media

A study undertaken by Salo et. al (2013), found that there were five key motives for social media participation. They are, access to content, sense of affinity, participation, interaction, and social identity, in decreasing order of effect. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are the platforms most useful for this release, also in decreasing order of effect. Francis currently is active on these platforms, messaging fans, posting gig videos and song releases. These are all effective, however for this release more will need to be pushed on social media, such as merchandise, competitions, and direct ticket links.

As this launch strategy is largely visual based, Instagram will be the main target for investment. As with TikTok, contacting and persuading influencers to feature the songs is another effective strategy and could potentially reach millions of people. As the budget for the album release couldn't compete with large companies marketing budgets, offering the influencers something physical instead of money, could be a cost-effective, value exchange strategy. In return for featuring segments of the song in the background, or shouting out Francis in a video, Influencers can get free tickets, merchandise and a pre-release album copy.

3.3.2 Website/Merchandise

There is an official Oliver Francis website and Merchandise, with the domain name OliverXFrancis.com. Currently, the website features a menu inspired by old retro video games. This is another effective element of ensuring the narrative is authentic. As the menu only features two clickable links, Store and Tour, social media links (embedded hyperlinked icons) and other content was needed to increase engagement levels. Photos, After-Tour compilations, and increased merchandise options are new avenues that will boost reach among the target consumers.

Merchandise also brings many new opportunities for collaborations and sponsors. The only clothing items for sale at the moment are a t-shirt and hoodie, which have both sold out.

Increasing the stock to include hats, socks, shoes and accessories would be profitable and still in line with original Oliver Francis style and narrative. Collaborations with sportswear and streetwear companies such as adidas, Nike, supreme and Bape would also be ideal for Francis. To increase the likelihood of these companies' cooperation, the brands will be worn anyway in press shoots, music videos and live gigs.

3.3.3 Advertisements

Google and Facebook advertisements allow you to reach a detailed target audience based on multiple parameters to maximise its potential reach. The services also provide in-depth analytics which show the effectiveness of each of your ad campaigns and how many people have interacted with the ad. The marketing budget for this project was £2000, allocating these funds appropriately and effectively is essential. Due to the importance and influence that Ads can have on new album releases, £1500 of the £2000 will be spent on them.

Both Google Ads and Facebook Ads work well in conjunction with each other, in an article on WordStream.com, written by Asi Dayan, it was found that advertising on Facebook led to a 34% increase in brand searches on Google. The reason for this is also explained in the article, saying that, 'Many of the people that see your Facebook ads may have some interest in the offer, but they want to know more about your company and what you sell. Therefore, instead of clicking the ad, they will leave Facebook and search for your brand name to get the information they want.' (Dayan, 2020). This another reason to make sure that the website is up to date and provides as much entertainment, engagement and purchase offers as possible.

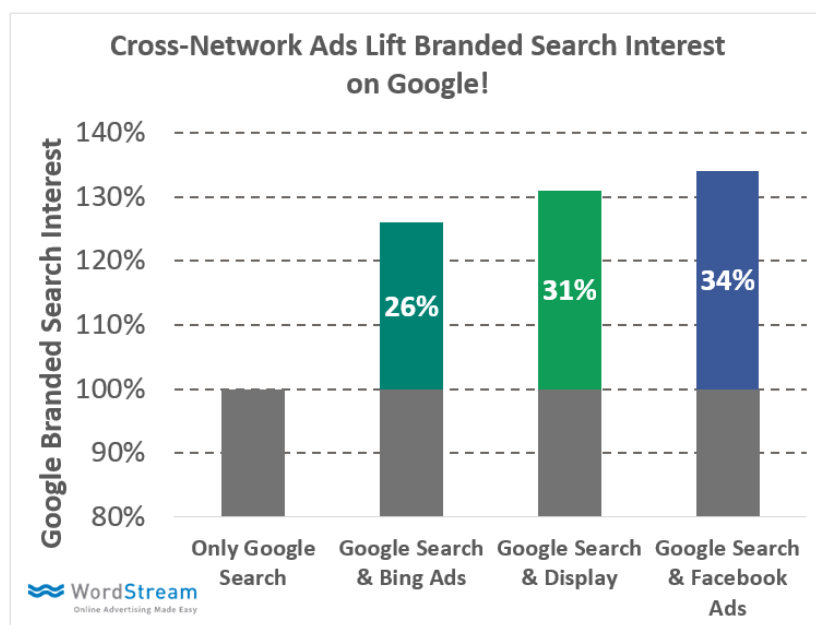


Figure 2: Facebook Ads & Google search

Ensuring you are targeting the right demographics is vital as you are aiming to get the best Click through rate (CTR) possible, and to increase the likelihood of achieving this, choosing the right age group, related artist tags, geography, interests etc will be most effective. For Francis' album release, there are certain essential parameters to maximise possible reach.

- 1) 18-24
- 2) Not a Parent
- 3) Hip-Hop Listeners
- 4) Attends Nightclubs / Live Events
- 5) Buys Streetwear
- 6) Western Countries (Europe/America)
- 7) Retro Video Games

The investment into each of these individual tags will be constantly reviewed to analyse their effectiveness with my target audience. By using the platforms' key performance indicators

(KPIs), and being able to identify the CTR, we can reallocate the funds from the less well performing parameters, into the others doing well. This way we can attempt to gain maximum reach whilst also stabilising the outgoing investment into the ads.

3.3.4 Magazines

Magazines suffered from technology boom as more and more information is consumed online. However, those who have survived, have a good reputation and created websites with the same content. Hip-Hop magazines such as Complex, The Source, and XXL still gain significant traffic and therefore still hold influence in the scene. The mags cover music, video, fashion, culture, food and lots more, all related to hip-hop. XXL has a yearly 'Freshman' category, which features interviews, freestyles and other content from promising up and coming rappers. This would be the first goal for Francis' album, he has the look, skill and drive to appeal to the readers, however getting the recognition is the tricky bit.

Whilst growing fans and gaining views/streams is the obvious way of being featured, it is worth considering; what do magazines/papers love the most? Gossip. A risky strategy to involve Francis in the industry gossip, would be to start 'Beef' (Calling someone out/starting a feud on a song) with a 'Freshman', or some other rap artist featured in the magazine. The reporters will almost certainly want to hear your side of the story should it gain a lot of attention.

4 Timeline

Creating an album release marketing timeline allows us to efficiently organise what actions are to be taken and when.

Week 1.

- First Teaser Video
- Small instrumental section of new song
- Animated graphics
- Instagram, Facebook, Twitter
- Posted on Wednesday, 6pm
- Art competition, draw an Oliver Francis inspired Album cover to win free merchandise (New Album release hint)

Week 2.

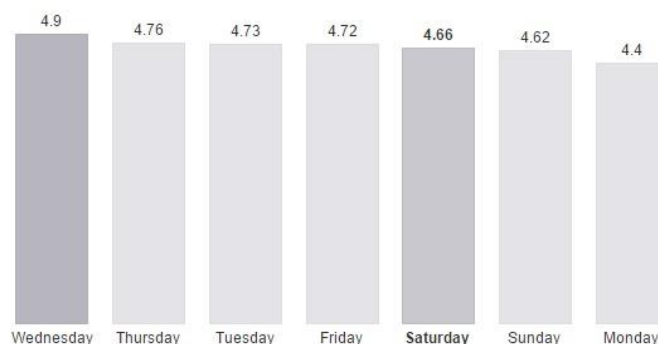
- Official Announcement Gig
- Announcement made as last song about to be performed (Song from new album)
- Announce Pre-order opportunity
- Social Media and Website updated to announce new album
- Direct links to pre-order website
- First 50 pre-orders get a random item of merchandise

Week 3.

- Assess current hype
- Gathering info about pre-orders, announcement post engagement, media attention

Which Days Have The Best Instagram Engagement?

The differences are slight, but average Instagram engagement -- "likes" and comments divided by a user's number of followers -- does shift depending on the day, according to scheduling service Latergramme.



Source: Latergramme

Figure 3: Instagram Engagement by Day

- Create bespoke target Google and Facebook adverts using the gathered info
- Mid-Week countdown, release another short video on social platforms, segments of the music video
- Offer influencers album and tour tickets before release, in exchange for shoutout/feature

Week 4.

- Two more music video teaser releases for social platforms
- Review Ad performance, assess KPIs and adjust investment accordingly
- Pre-orders receive early copy, automatically entered into competition for free tour tickets
- Push for radio interviews, talk show, magazine features to talk about upcoming release next week

Week 5.

- RELEASE WEEK
- Live Countdown on Website, with instant link to music video and streaming platforms when countdown hits zero
- Video release on YouTube and Vimeo at same time as Audio streaming release
- Contact fellow artists to negotiate value exchange, playlists, shoutouts, etc...
- Push for influencer features on socials
- Ask friends, family with TikTok to use music and attempt to start a dance trend

Week 6-8

- Stay on top of Advertisement KPIs and adjust appropriately
- Share Fan reactions to album release on social platforms
- Announce art competition winner from first week, post the art on social accounts
- Pre-order tour ticket winners announced, tagged in social posts
- Share, comment and like as many social posts containing the new music as possible (Maximum fan engagement)
- Tour Begins Week 8

5 Budget

5.1 Video

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Music Video	£4,000	£4,000	£0
Edited Social Media Releases	£800	£1,000	£200
<i>Total</i>	£4,800	£5,000	£200

5.2 Marketing

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Google Ads	£750	£750	£0
Facebook Ads	£750	£750	£0
Merch for Influencer collaborations	£200	£500	£300
<i>Total</i>	£1,700	£2,000	£300

5.3 Tour

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Artist Flight to UK	£2,500	£2,000	£500
Travel (Driver for Week)	£1,000	£1,000	£0
Hotel	£6,000	£5,200	£800
Miscellaneous	£500	£1,800	£1,300
<i>Total</i>	£10,000	£10,000	£0

5.4 Merchandise

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Hats	£500	£250	£250
Hoodies	£850	£1,000	£150
T-Shirts	£400	£250	£150
<i>Total</i>	£1,750	£1,500	£250

5.5 Summary

<u>Total Expenses</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	£18,250	£18,500	£250

As Oliver Francis is not yet a global star, the budget does not match that of one. The total budget for this album release comes from personal investment in the artist. As this won't include the premium resources and contacts available to large labels, it is a much more personal and authentic marketing campaign, truly aiming to spread the message about who Oliver Francis is and encouraging people to get onboard with the vibe. Part of the narrative is being down to earth and relatable, having a small budget to complete the album release complements this and will be recognised by listeners and watchers, to hopefully convert them into paying, loyal fans.

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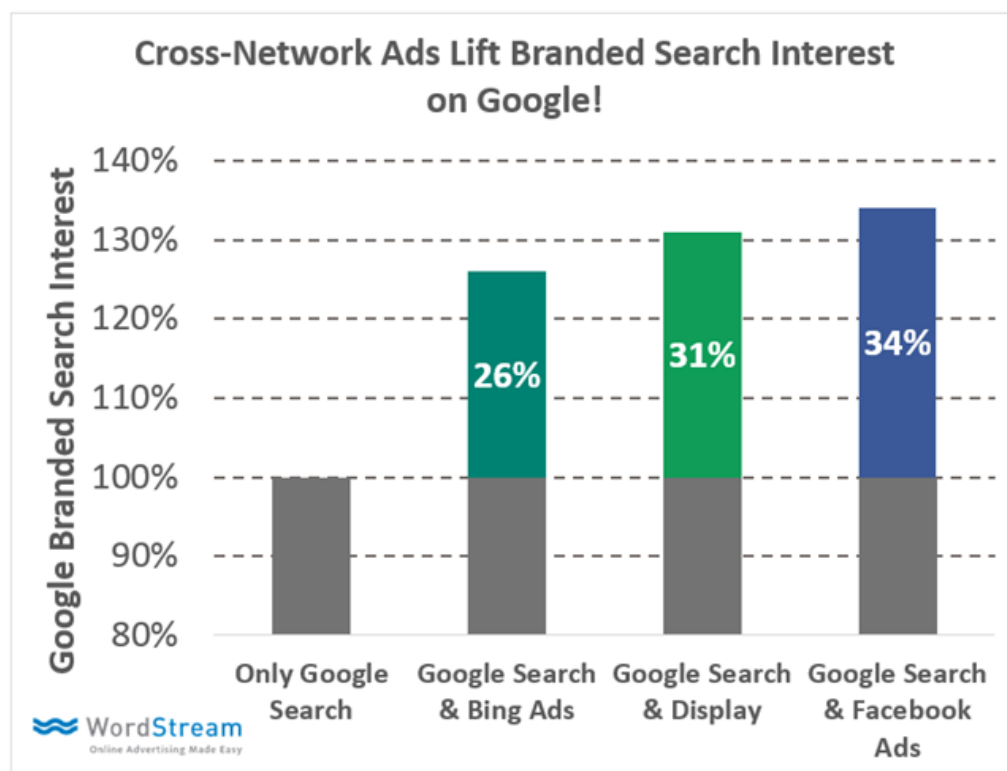
7 Appendices

7.1 Figure 1 – Streaming consumption by Genre

(Highlighted from left to right, On demand streaming, audio streaming, and Video streaming)

Classical	2.5%	2.1%	2.7%	3.0%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.5%
Country	12.9%	10.6%	14.3%	16.3%	2.9%	14.6%	7.4%	8.7%	4.9%
EDM	1.5%	2.1%	1.2%	1.0%	2.5%	4.0%	4.4%	4.7%	3.8%
Jazz	2.7%	2.4%	2.9%	2.6%	4.3%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%	0.4%
Latin	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	0.4%	3.8%	11.4%	5.8%	21.8%
New Age	0.7%	0.9%	0.6%	0.7%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%
Pop	26.3%	24.9%	27.2%	27.5%	25.6%	25.6%	18.5%	19.4%	16.6%
R&B	7.3%	7.2%	7.3%	7.3%	7.9%	10.3%	11.3%	11.0%	11.9%
Hip-Hop/Rap	5.2%	7.6%	3.7%	3.2%	6.6%	14.7%	25.4%	26.9%	22.8%

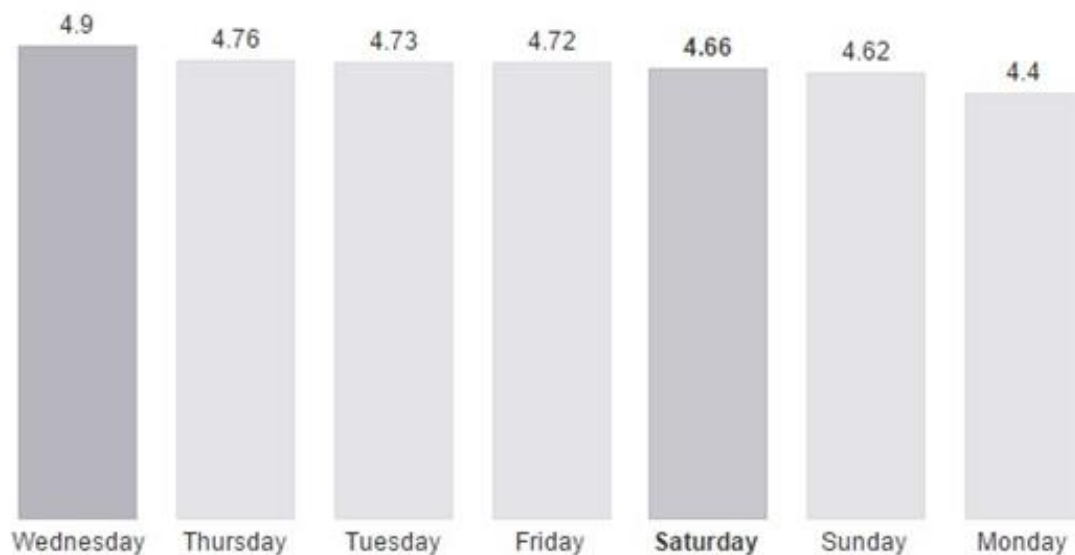
7.2 Figure 2 – Facebook Ads and Search engines



7.3 Figure 3 – Instagram Engagement by day of week

Which Days Have The Best Instagram Engagement?

The differences are slight, but average Instagram engagement -- "likes" and comments divided by a user's number of followers -- does shift depending on the day, according to scheduling service Latergramme.



Source: Latergramme