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Intro

This marketing report outlines the marketing strategy proposed for the release of Ben Ellington's debut album "Same Me". The report will cover the thought process, backed up by various marketing frameworks and theories, behind the strategy we will implement throughout the release cycle. After examining external factors such as current trends in the music market we have put together a cohesive and flexible plan that will introduce Ben Ellington to his target demographic while differentiating himself from other artists and building a buzz around his upcoming and future releases. Ben is a UK R&B artist with a heavy Hip-Hop influence. With an emphasis on rhythm and harmony and catchy hooks, Ben's music is ready made for the current mainstream market whilst maintaining its own unique sound. We will be taking a DIY approach to this campaign as it will be completely self-funded and independent of major label support, however, we believe that our strategy focusing on precise targeting, engaging content, a strong image and quality music will successfully introduce Ben as an artist and establish a core fan base that we can expand on going forward.

Key Marketing Concepts/Principles

Through reading various books relating to marketing philosophies and principles I found that "Tribes" and "Permission Marketing" by Seth Godin provided the most relevant principles which aligned heavily with our goals for Ben's release campaign.

We will use the principles outlined in permission marketing to give people the opportunity to discover Ben's music and from there we will aim to grow our tribe around Ben as an artist. We will provide fans with a narrative based around his album release, places to discuss and share this content, as well as engaging content and live events for them to participate in (Godin, Tribes, 2008). To quote Seth Godin himself, we will "Paint a picture of the future" and "people will follow" (Godin, Tribes, 2008).

Alongside these aforementioned principles we will also build the strategy around some of the core classical marketing theories, taking into account concepts relating to the 7 p's and the more entertainment marketing focused 4 c's. We are taking a more modern approach, related to entertainment marketing, and will therefore lean on the 4 c's more heavily than the 7 p's, however, we will still keep these in mind when laying out our strategy.

At every level we will attempt to understand customers wants, lower the overall cost of consuming Ben's music, increase the convenience of consuming Ben's music by identifying where customers are finding new music, and finally we will consistently communicate with our target market through our various social media platforms.

Permission Marketing

Permission Marketing outlines the process behind effective marketing in today's attention economy. Gone are the days of outdated interruption marketing, popularised in the 50's. This book in particular has shaped our strategy heavily and calls for marketers to gather permission from their potential customers before making a sale. This can be done through a variety of methods e.g. collecting email lists (Godin, Permission Marketing, 1999).

The main principles that I have taken from this book in regard to our plan are: 1. Ads that rely on interrupting people are ineffective 2. Giving people the option to volunteer their attention leads to a

much more targeted and engaged audience 3. The internet is the most valuable tool at our disposal in order to implement permission marketing theory (Godin, Permission Marketing, 1999).

We will implement this permission marketing principles throughout our campaign inviting potential fans to engage with promo videos, song snippets and song writing/production related content, while directing people to his social media profiles, where they can follow him, make use of pre save links and engage with more of his content.

Tribes

“Tribes”, written by the same author as “Permission Marketing”, Seth Godin, outlines how the internet has made it possible for the emergence of various “tribes” across the whole world. The book states that all you need to build and grow these tribes are: 1. A narrative, that outlines your vision 2. A way to connect all members of the tribe to the leader and 3. Some sort of an activity for the tribe to participate in.

The main takeaway from this book for me was that rapid growth is not the most important thing straight away, it is more important to focus on the strengthening of the ties between your tribe in order to form a strong bond with fans and create a high value audience that are truly engaged as Seth Godin himself said, “An individual artist needs only a thousand true fans in her tribe”. This will lead to organic growth as “Tribes grow when people recruit other people” (Godin, Tribes, 2008).

Our campaign will implement Tribes teachings, we will overall aim of telling a convincing and engaging story about Ben’s body of work as well as him as an artist (Godin, Tribes, 2008).

Marketing Strategy

Ben Ellington is a singer, songwriter and producer who blends R&B and Trap to deliver his own unique brand of Alternative R&B with high commercial potential. Ben is DIY Artist with the vast majority of his music being self-produced and self-written. We will work this into our campaign narrative, letting our current and potential fans know that Ben has an independent creative vision and is pursuing this vision without the help of any major labels. This will highlight Ben as someone who is not afraid to do things differently, Seth Godin would describe this as being a “heretic”, this will further influence the growth and strength of Ben’s tribe (Godin, Tribes, 2008).

Ben has little to no social media presence, we will therefore have to build this from scratch. We will focus on building profiles, covering social media channels that are content driven and allow fans to engage with the Artist (Leader) and each other(Tribe) (Godin, Tribes, 2008). Our priority here is to establish a fan base and tighten the bond between them and Ben by actively engaging with them and responding to their feedback/comments. Fans love direct communication with the artist whether it be a hearted comment on YouTube or a reply on Twitter, this is especially important during the early stages of building a fanbase and at this stage simple comment reply can result in gaining a fan for life. From here on we can focus on further growing this fan base and tightening the bond between them.

R&B audiences are usually teenagers and young adults between the ages of 13 to 34 (Statista, 2018). We will therefore base our strategy around platforms this age group frequents e.g. YouTube, Instagram etc. We will also heavily target our core demographic, which we will discuss later, through paid for ads on these social media platforms.

I would compare Ben’s potential audience to artists such as The Weeknd, Brent Faiyaz, Roy Woods & Daniel Caesar. We will use target data gathered from streaming service and social media databases

such as Facebook Audience Insights in order to identify target audiences throughout our marketing plan (See Figure 3). This will help us specify our core demographic and will result in us reaching more valuable customers.

Market Analysis

This is an exciting time of growth in the music industry with the global recorded music market growing by 9.7% in 2018, capping of a fourth consecutive year of growth (IFPI, 2019). In 2018 streaming revenue saw a growth of 34% and made up approximately 47% of revenue, globally. (IFPI, 2019) This growth was predominantly driven by a 32.9% increase in paid subscription streaming. The amount of paid streaming service users grew to 255 million users by the end of 2018. (IFPI, 2019)

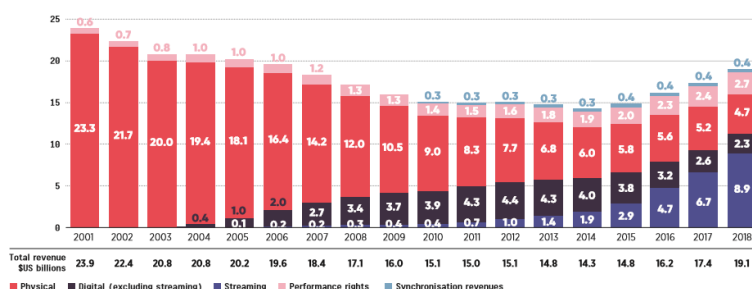
Due to the emergence and growth of new technologies making music to a professional standard is easier than ever. This has led to a huge amount of new music and therefore competition. As Max Lousada, CEO of Recorded Music at Warner Music Group has said, in this current climate “even the most original and compelling talent needs amplification to cut through the noise” (Lousada, 2019). Our Marketing strategy will take into account the music industry’s commercial evolution and will be formulated around current and expected future trends. This will help Ben in keeping up with the current market and will ensure that he is not only heard but that his fans are engaged to the point where they genuinely care and interact with his content.

The UK is the largest market in the European region, we will make this our base of operations for promotion and touring throughout the EU while heavily targeting the American market online which grew by 14% in 2018 (IFPI, 2019).



The above figures relating to digital, physical, performance and synch revenues give us a good outline of where the market is headed. As a result, we will assign proportionate amounts of our budget and overall effort towards each category. Generating a reliable fanbase and consistent growth in streams will be our main priority. We will not focus on physical, instead only opting for value adding, limited edition physical releases and bundles in the future, depending on demand. We will also prioritise live performances and evaluate opportunities in regard to synchronisation. As a DIY artist Ben has the opportunity to take advantage of the growth in synch through the use of his released catalogue and additional catalogue tracks that may not be commercially released.

Global Recorded Music Industry Revenues 2001–2018 (US\$ Billions)



(IFPI, 2019)

Goals/Critical Success Factors

The table below runs through our main campaign goals and the subsequent expectations that we will place on ourselves.

Goals & Objectives	What does success look like?
Build Ben's brand/image	Amass 10k Followers on Instagram/YouTube/Facebook
Successfully launch Ben's album	Achieve at least 1 million streams across all platforms
Successful UK/EU Tour	Sell out tickets for tour dates
Create media hype around Ben as an artist	Generate at least 25 articles/features from our list of shortlisted blogs/media.
Playlist placement	Land a placement on at least 5 of our shortlisted playlists.

Value Proposition

Defining Ben's unique selling points as promises helps to define the quality and type of products that Ben must serve to remain consistent yet authentically true to his fans. It also provides a code of conduct, mantra and service level agreement for Ben and his supporting team.

Brand Promises	Brand Products
Storytelling/Insight into relationships and breakups	1 full length studio album
Current and interesting spin on the traditional R&B sound	2 Deluxe singles
Hard hitting lyrics alongside memorable production	Live tour dates across the EU/UK
Intimate live shows	Merchandise
Content relating to fashion/music production/song writing	Song writing/ beat making tutorials/challenges, Posts relating to fashion.

Target Audience Profile

Demographic:

Teens – late 20s. RnB/Hip-Hop has the largest audience in this age group and is the dominant genre in the streaming world (MusicAlly, 2019). Much younger audiences wouldn't be suitable due to strong language involved with the hip hop genre and the more sexually explicit content related to R&B (Bailey, 2020). Females in their late teens to mid 20's would be the largest target market overall. Males in their late teens to mid 20's would be our secondary target market.

English speaking countries are more likely to be the target market as they can understand the lyrics on a deeper level due to speaking the language. Lower income groups should also be kept in mind as evidence shows that the majority of listeners of R&B, hip-hop and rap earn a salary of less than 20K – mostly students working part time (Bailey, 2020). This core audience are also usually single as they aren't old enough to be married (not always the case).

Geographic:

America, Europe, Asia. A quarter of fans live in the West, with 27% more fans in the western region than the U.S. average.

Psychographic:

Relationships, interests in concerts and in the R&B/Hip Hop genre. Experience going through relationships and breakups, allowing them to relate to issues raised in Ben's lyrics.

Like streetwear brands such as Nike, Adidas, Supreme etc.

Like artists that fall into the "Alternative R&B" Category such as Brent Faiyaz, Roy Woods & Daniel Caesar

Campaign Release Plan

The artist offerings for the campaign are:

- 1 studio album on digital download and streaming formats
- 2 deluxe singles
- Merchandise: t-shirts & hats. See Figure 1.

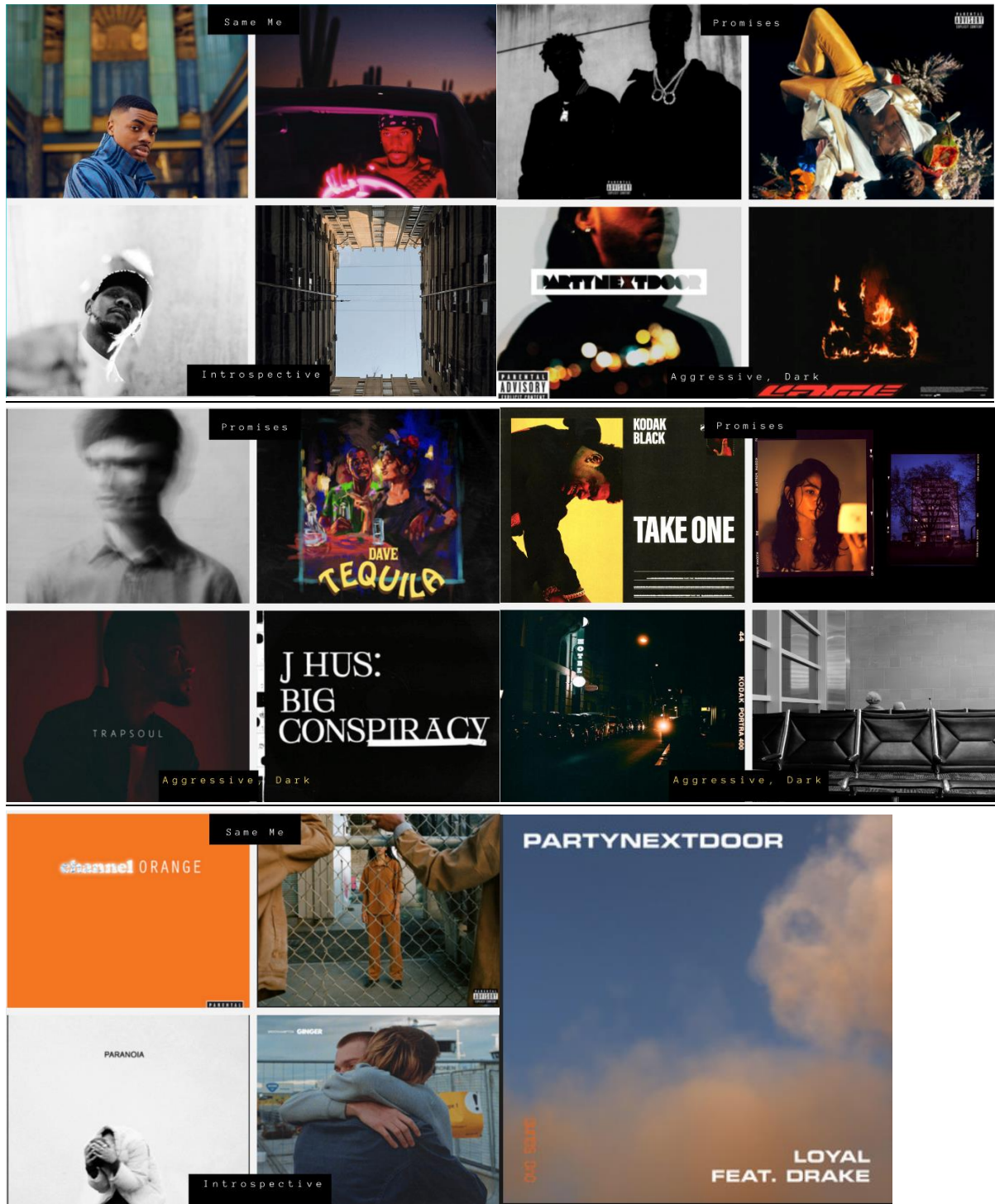
We will approach the summer release cycle with a strategic single release plan. Releasing 4 out of the 7 tracks from the album as singles. Conceptual artworks will accompany each single. Following the release of the album we will conduct a UK and European tour. Including shows in; London, Manchester, Brighton, Birmingham, Dublin and Brussels. We will lay out a 6-month plan of meaningful content alongside the album release and live activity and will release of a deluxe version of the album in order to further stimulate streaming numbers and live ticket sales. The bi-weekly conceptual release of the 4 singles will begin in June 2020 leading up to the eventual album release on the 21st August 2020. The two deluxe singles are scheduled to release in September/October. This will help to bolster streaming numbers, keep fans engaged and provide more material for live sets. We will target UK and International blogs, reaching out to them with a press release at least a week before each single is dropped.

Phase 1 – Planning

4-6 months ahead: Artist visual branding, Content Strategy, The User Journey & Media Mix, Electronic Press Kit (EPK), Distribution plan, Tour planning, Optimise Sales funnels, album release Planning,

Artist visual branding

Having discussed potential branding options and album/single artworks, I instructed Ben to assemble a list of artworks that aligned with what he was trying to achieve. I then assembled mood boards to aid in the creation of artworks for the project going forward. The key visual takeaways from these mood boards were distorted images, giving a vague, often blurred image of the artist but providing a clear feel for the individual track.



Working closely alongside Ben we came up with the following images to be used throughout his album/single release campaign. We feel they capture the reflective and introspective feel of the album while providing a mysterious yet compelling image of Ben as an artist.



Content Release Strategy:

The content we will release in order to build Ben's image and engage fans will mostly be distributed on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. In order to build Ben's image as a DIY artist we will release beat making/song writing videos giving viewers an insight into Ben's song writing process. It is hoped that fans of these videos will follow and engage with his commercial releases. We will also reach out to other songwriters/producers in Ben's network inviting them to engage in challenges that we will post on Ben's socials. These challenges include "4 producers, 1 sample" challenges and rhythm roulette challenges where Ben will use a random sample, possibly chosen by fans, to make a song in a specific time frame.

During the pre-release period we will use Tileyard's wide reach and industry ties in order to build Ben's image throughout the community. We will approach Tileyard in order to enlist their services while promoting the aforementioned challenges, hoping to make them a community wide challenge. We will also use their platform to engage in Instagram takeovers, specifically with the aim of promoting Ben and his upcoming release. This will help Ben rise his profile throughout the campus and will bring his content to potentially very valuable followers.

We will also schedule cryptic posts revolving around the album's core themes as well as alternative artworks created for the album. This will allow followers to get a feel for the album/singles before they drop and will also help in building suspense around the release.

The User Journey & Media Mix

We will use a model that breaks down the various media channels into paid, earned, owned and shared media. We will then base our media marketing plan around these 4 categories.

Earned media includes word of mouth, coverage from bloggers and influencers as well as radio and playlist placements.

Paid media refers to paid marketing such as social media advertising, we have put a significant portion of our budget towards this. The key here is a highly specified targeting which will allow for very efficient ads with high click through rates. After each ad campaign we will also make use of the data generated from the campaign in order to retarget audiences that responded well to the ads.

Shared media is a very important channel, this relates to social media content on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Our heavy focus on this media channel will give our fans a place to consume and share our content as well as discuss the music amongst themselves. Ben will take an active role in this, making an effort to engage with and respond to as many fans as possible on his social media platforms.

Owned media will also play an important role in our strategy. We will direct fans towards Ben's website as well as offering fans the opportunity to opt into a fan newsletter. This will allow us to capture fan information for future marketing purposes.

Tour planning

Following the release of the album we will conduct a small UK and European tour. Including shows in; London, Manchester, Brighton, Birmingham, Dublin and Brussels. We have focused on cities that are considered to be taste making hubs in regard to music and have also planned around cities where Ben has friends/support. This will allow us to reduce touring costs, which is a main priority due to the restrictive nature of our budget, while also ensuring that there is an engaged crowd present at live shows.

Distribution

As we did not produce any physical copies of the album, we will instead sell the album through digital downloads and streaming services using TuneCore as our digital distributor.

EPK

An Electronic Press Kit will be created containing promotional photos, iconography and a brief biography. This will be sent to media outlets ahead of releases. See Figure 2.

Phase 2 - Fan Acquisition and Promotion

4 months ahead: We will begin our social media content campaign starting with scheduled weekly production tutorials, song writing sessions, and eventually leading up to marketing "challenge" collaborations with Tileyard and snippets from the album.

3 months ahead: The media outreach plan will come into effect. We will reach out to various media channels with an EPK, Promotional material and private listening links to our 4 singles. We will focus heavily on bloggers and influencers within the R&B scene.

Media Plan

We will reach out to various media outlets with an EPK to promote the singles and album release. These channels have been specifically chosen due to their wide reach, relevance to Ben's target audience and focus on urban music.

Radio	Print	Online	TV
Radio 1 Extra	XXL	Complex	Yo MTV Raps UK
BBC Introducing	Complex	The Fader	
Radio 2	Vibe	Pitchfork	
Regional stations in tour stops		Pigeons & Planes	
Capital Xtra		Fact Magazine	
		A&R Factory	
		SongDew	
		Line of Best Fit	

2 months ahead: We will undertake our first single release, in the weeks leading up to this we will consistently promote this single making pre save links and promotional content available throughout our various social media channels. Two weeks before the first single release we will again reach out to various media, bloggers and playlists with promotional material for this release and a reminder of its release date. This will be followed by promo posts and advertisements in the weeks following as well as a lyric video and full video release. Following this we will start teasing our next two singles on socials. 2 weeks after the first single we will drop the second single. This will again be pre-empted by reaching out to bloggers/influencers/media with promotional content related to the single.

1 month ahead: We will release the third single, again reaching out to all relevant media at least two weeks in advance. At this stage we will follow this up with teasers for the final single as well teasers and promotional videos for the album.

2 weeks ahead: We will drop the final single, followed by a lyric video and full video. Following this we will unveil the album artwork.

Phase 3 – Release Full album

2 weeks ahead: We will send promotional material relating to the album as well as a reminder of the release date to all relevant media. Two weeks after this we will release the full album.

1 week after: We will announce the UK tour and start our “direct to consumer” campaign, selling tickets to the dates online through targeted social media advertising. We will also continue our promotional push of the album’s singles.

2 weeks after: We will tease the announcement of two surprise EU dates.

3 weeks after: We will announce the EU dates in Dublin and Brussels. As well as this we will announce the upcoming release of two deluxe singles and will send promotional materials regarding these to all relevant media.

4 weeks after: First deluxe single drops.

6 weeks after: Second deluxe single drops

8 weeks after: UK tour begins

13 weeks after: EU tour begins

Budget

As this was a self-funded campaign costs were kept to the minimum and we had to heavily rely on our network to secure favourable deals on music videos and touring costs. We also chose to take advantage of online freelancing services such as fiver which allowed us to outsource elements of our campaign e.g. lyric videos, at a very low cost. The budget, however restrictive it is will provide us with all necessary components for the release, and coupled with our aggressive content and paid advertising campaign I believe that we will meet our goals of creating Ben's new fanbase and establishing him as a commercially viable artist going forward.

Expenses	
Video 1	£800.00
Video 2	£500.00
Lyric Video 1	£50.00
Lyric Video 2	£50.00
Album/Single Marketing	£1000.00
Radio/Playlist Plugging	£1000.00
Travel	£200.00
Merchandise	£220.00
Live Show	£1000.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>£4820.00</u>
Expected Revenue	
Streams	£3600.00
Ticket Sales	£3000.00
Merch Sales	£750.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>£7350.00</u>
<u>Profit</u>	<u>£2530.00</u>

Appendix



Figure 1. Merchandise

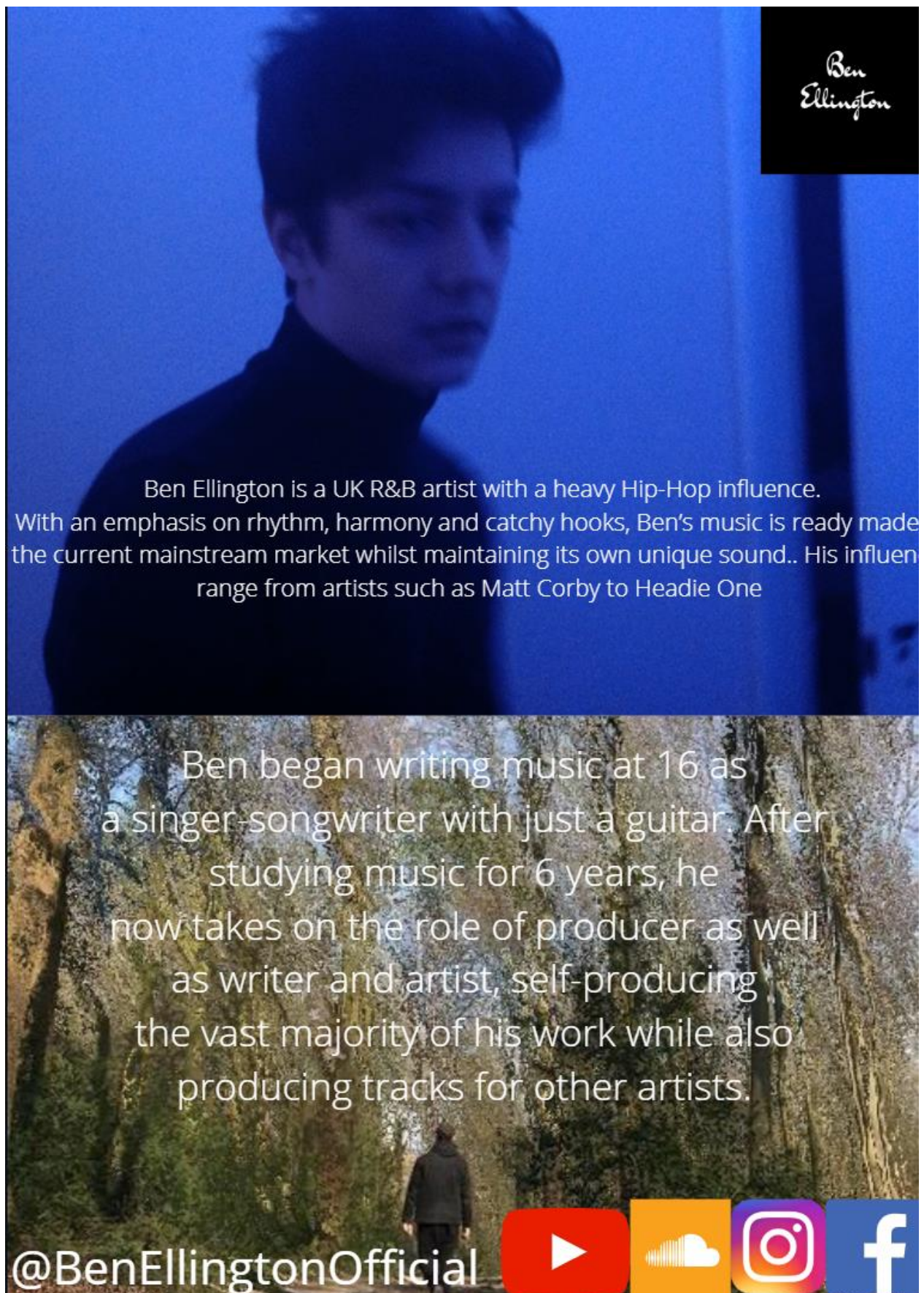


Figure 2. EPK



Figure 3. Facebook Audience Insights for The Weeknd
(Insights, 2020)

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