

Program : MA Music Business

Module : Creative Music Management

Module code : BMTY7000

Lecturer : Harry Leckstein

Assignment title : Reflective Summary

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Submission Date : Apr 11, 2022

The assignment is to write a reflective summary of my involvement in the group portfolio and presentation task to create a single, remix and associated media assets.

Being the first time writing a reflective summary, I tried to research different reflective tools & techniques. I found the DIEP model (Describe, Interpret, Evaluate, Plan) from the University of Melbourne could help me build a better structure of the whole summary. (The University of Melbourne, 2022)

To DESCRIBE the key aspects of my task, I need to work in a group and create a portfolio including :

- An original single of commercial music and its remix
- All associated artwork and iconography for the digital single and remix
- A promotional video associated with the single
- An electronic press kit of all the relevant media assets
- An operating budget showing all expenses or any receipts and income generated

We also need to develop, as an optional asset, a theoretical marketing strategy for the artist, single and remix involving different aspects in the marketing mix.

We are in a group of 3 people, Lera, Emma & myself. Lera is a musician in the past, performing with her partner, and she is now going to operate her own publishing company in the UK. Emma is working in her music event business, arranging different kinds of music

events. I am a marketing professional working in a non-music business corporation in Hong Kong. Despite being fully occupied by my daytime job, I use all my leisure time to organize different classical music events inviting classical saxophone artists to Hong Kong for concerts & masterclasses. I am also a classical musician performing in community bands in Hong Kong.

Based on the different backgrounds of the three of us, we allocated our work with Lera focusing on the song itself, including the original single of the music & all the associated artwork and the promotional video. The profession of Emma made her the best person to work on the EPK, including all the press releases & the social media plan. With me having the least experience in pop music marketing, I was assigned to research various ways of distributing our music, which is also part of the marketing promotion mix.

On top of the assigned task, I also started researching topics about music marketing for my own interest. How can we better promote the artists or a song? How to create the music marketing plan, what steps I should follow, etc. These all come to my attention since I would like to bring this learning to my future career. (Jared, 2021)

When INTERPRETING what I needed to work on after talking to my teammates, I found out I knew so little about pop music, and I felt so embarrassed about not being able to contribute a lot to the group. Actually, my teammates are really good and patient with me. I was so amazed by their efficiency and professionalism. We had regular meetings in the first few weeks after we formed the group, in which we aligned on the directions & jobs assignment. Lera, who has been a musician in the past, contributed one of her songs for the group

portfolio submission. Since she is the song's composer, she knew the background and moods of the song, which made her the right person to develop the artwork of the single & the promotional video. Emma, who constantly works on different music events, including the launching of songs in her daytime job, made her the best candidate to work out the promotional text & the social media plan for our music.

We have good chemistry within this group, and we discuss ideas and work out plans not only in our regular meetings but also via daily WhatsApp for all communications. All these make this "cross-country team" work in harmony & effectively.

Through discussing with the two ladies, I start to learn how to plan a promotion plan for pop music. Unlike classical music, the ways of promoting pop music are more open and direct. The media they used, the promotion text, and the promotion mechanics they developed are all valuable tools that I can refer to when I try to adapt it to classical music in the future.

Not only can I learn how to promote pop music by working with the ladies, but when I did my research on music distribution, I also started to find out how diverse our music world is. In my legal lessons, I touched on preliminary aspects of different online streaming platforms. Still, I only start to know more details in this research about each streaming platform, their pros and cons, how to achieve the best out of these platforms etc. (Santalla, 2022) (Rachel,2021).

I also researched different music distribution companies. To me, I work on many food distributions in my daytime job. However, this is really a new industry for me in understanding the music distribution of a song. I find out from my studies what kind of work a music distribution company does, how does it compare with one another, how should the different type of artists choose different music distribution companies etc. All these give me new insights when I need to plan for the music distribution of a classical song in the future.

Last but not least, I also found the record labels research very rewarding since classical musicians like me in Asia might not have many chances to get in touch with record labels. What will they do for musicians? What are their roles? What is the difference between each record label? Which record labels are suitable for what type of songs? How can a classical musician work with a record label? All of these provide good background knowledge for me to understand further how to help classical artists work with record labels in the future.

After interpreting what I have done, I started to EVALUATE how this experience will impact my thinking process and behaviours in formulating my future business plan. With my professional aim of creating a music platform in helping classical musicians to promote themselves & their songs, all the steps I learned in creating this portfolio gave me new perspectives and insights, especially under the rapid growth of the internet and the impact of Covid-19. The fast growth of the digital technologies during these years did impact significantly on the creation & promotion of songs and the artists themselves. (SUU, 2021)

Although I did not involve in the song itself for creating the portfolio, I did aware of how digital technology can influence the creation of songs. Composers & producers can now produce music even in their home studios using advanced software. They can use software-

based virtual instruments and MIDI technology to create lots of sounds when they are making their music. This technique not only impacts the pop music field but can also help classical musicians for creating their orchestral pieces.

I also realize how important digital technology has impacted the way of music promotion. The easy access to the internet does shorten the distance between each person nowadays, and it increases the transparency between artists and fans. Musicians can now promote themselves more easily via their own websites and this makes promoting oneself become more flexible and direct. Musicians can also create an interactive conversation, and any news, including new songs, new awards, and recent events, can be spread out quickly via the email list to all their fans.

With digital technology, music performances now are not only limited to live performances, but musicians can also play for their fans around the world through various live-streamed portals. They have been monetizing live-streamed performances over social media platforms using donation links or paid access services. Lectures & masterclasses are no longer confined to face to face execution, but the advance in technology makes live lessons or even open rehearsals for a big group possible.

When working on how to promote our song during the project discussion, we touched on different social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube & even Tik Tok, which is considered one of the most powerful tools for music promotion. I also investigated different features in each media and how to analyze their effectiveness. This really enlarged my horizon since most classical musicians did not explore many different

social media to promote themselves. They will do simple posting and then wait for the feedback and reviews. However, I can now understand how valuable those analytic tools are and how to fully utilize each feature in different media. I was really amazed by their scope of influence of each social media on their fans, and I strongly believe this is what I need to further equip myself so that I can apply those techniques to help the classical musicians in the future.

Apart from knowing how to use digital technology for music promotion, my research about different music distribution channels in the project also impacts my thinking process on how to help classical musicians to earn more money. Unlike pop artists, classical musicians are always more subtle and conservative; they mostly rely on concerts, tours or classes to make money. Only the big classical artists like Yo Yo Ma, Lang Lang will be taken care by record labels. By studying different online streaming platforms, it gave me many insights in recommending which one to be used for which types of artists so that they can earn the most money. However, music distribution companies are also not very popular among classical musicians. Still, I believe sooner or later, classical musicians will understand about the benefits music distribution companies can bring to them.

All the experience that I got during this project & the first semester of the MA program already helped me start sharpening my skills & give me many insights when I am working towards my aim of creating a platform to support classical musicians in the future.

During the past 3 months, I have learnt about legal aspects, copyright & intellectual property. I also got more ideas about online streaming, music distribution, different promotion

opportunities & entrepreneurship set-up skills. I understand this is just the beginning of building up my knowledge, I still need to gear up in different aspects to have a holistic view of the whole music business field. I believe through creating an effective music marketing plan will help me get a thorough understanding of the industry and what I should do to achieve my aim. Because of this, I need to spend more effort in understanding how to work on a comprehensive marketing plan, including a clear vision & mission, a SMART goal, detailed micro & macro environment analysis, defined target audience, correct marketing strategy and marketing mix and finally a good budgeting and execution plan. (Jared H, 2021). I believe in the coming semester, I will be able to learn more in-depth about the marketing mix and execution, and I can combine what I have learnt in this degree program to conduct my future business.

Actually, since I come from the classical music field and am based in Hong Kong, although I cannot represent all the classical musicians, I realized there are differences between classical & pop artists when they look at ways of music promotion. Firstly, it is about what they use to promote themselves or their music. Unlike pop artists, most classical musicians are more conservative & passive in promoting themselves. They will not build a fancy website, and they will only rely on a few simple social media like Facebook or Instagram to promote themselves or their music. They will focus on their own playing, and their communication with their fans will mostly be one way of informing them what has happened without doing many interactions with their fans or followers.

Secondly, most classical musicians earn their livings by holding concerts, lectures, masterclasses or even tours. Some key classical musicians worked with record labels, which

can help them build their name and earn more money. However, even though some classical musicians now use digital technology to do live stream events for earning money, the majority of them are not or do not know how to make full use of the digital technology like the online streaming platform to earn more revenue.

Another interesting feature that I found out is about the perception of Tik Tok among classical musicians. Although Tik Tok is one of the most powerful tools for promoting music nowadays, I notice it is not widely used among classical musicians. I have talked to many renowned artists about their opinion on promoting their music via Tik Tok. Most of them think Tik Tok is not yet an appropriate tool for classical music for the time being. It might be because of the over-whelming/wow nature of the medium, which did not fit the subtle characteristic of classical music. Therefore, they will instead rely on traditional media like Facebook & IG to promote their songs.

In studying in this MA program, I had learnt a lot about the dynamic of the music industry and what should an artist do to be successful and stand out from the crowd. Although it might resonate more with pop artists, I believe the theory behind it should be the same for classical artists. The way we analyse the environment, set up our goal, and work out the marketing strategy & marketing mix should also be applied to the classical music field.

Afterall, we need to take a deeper understanding of the nature of classical music and study the behaviour of classical musicians. If we can find out what they need and what are their problems, we can definitely work out a suitable strategy for them. I have full confidence that

I can make use of what I have learnt, together with my passion, to start working towards my ambition to help Hong Kong classical musicians building a successful career. (2327 words)

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