

# INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MUSIC ARTIST MANAGEMENT

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Course

Date

In this digital age, almost every aspect of the music industry has been transformed. Holt cites a targeted focus on music artists with mass appeal to whom most attention is focused due to their high return on investment<sup>1</sup>. User-generated content (UGC) on social media is proving to be quite influential and sometimes detrimental, especially in promoting and shaping artist public image. In the digital age, labels are taking a new approach to their star artists' management, particularly through building strong artist-fan relationships<sup>2</sup>. Social media has greatly impacted music artists' management by providing crucial tools that help shape and develop an artist's brand image. This essay will explore the influence of social media on the management of prominent music artists' promotion and publicity to maximize their profitability.

### **Innovatively Going Digital**

In the digital age, music labels are embracing new and innovative digital business models to maximize profits and survive. They were forced to change after a sharp decline in CD music sales at the turn of the century increasing music piracy<sup>3</sup>. Today, with the interconnectedness of the world amplifying the effects of the revenue losses, music labels are seemingly struggling to

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Holt, "Branding in the age of social media," *Harvard business review* 94, no. 3 (2016): 7.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Turri, Karen H. Smith, and Elyria Kemp, "Developing affective brand commitment through social media," *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research* 14, no. 3 (2013): 201.

<sup>3</sup> Timm Wagner et al., "Streaming killed the download star! how the business model of streaming services revolutionizes music distribution," *Journal of Organizational Advancement, Strategic and Institutional Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 29.

survive. Most of these labels have taken the strategic risk-averse approach and decided to capitalize on prominent artists who possess significant sales potential<sup>4</sup>. They have placed more emphasis on individualized management of star artists' public perception<sup>5</sup>. Notably, the star artist brand image is arguably the most important commodity to music labels today due to its influence on consumers.

### **Influence of Social Media on Music Artist Image**

Allen reports that about 80 % of people online access social media sites, including blogs<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the definition of social media encompasses the various sources of online information created and shared by users, which can be linked to brands, products, personalities, and topics, among other elements<sup>7</sup>. The user-generated content shared on social media has been shown to significantly influence consumer behavior in the marketplace, especially in creating awareness, gathering crucial information, developing attitudes, and determining purchasing patterns<sup>8</sup>. With social media becoming a more prominent and reliable marketing tool for user-generated

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<sup>4</sup> Jim Rogers, *The Death and Life of the Music Industry in the Digital Age* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 71.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Mulligan, *Awakening: The Music Industry in The Digital Age* (London: MIDiA Research, 2015), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Allen, *Artist Management for the Music Business* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Turri, Karen H. Smith, and Elyria Kemp, "Developing affective brand commitment," 202.

<sup>8</sup> Damien Chaney, "The Music Industry in the Digital Age: Consumer Participation in Value Creation," *International Journal of Arts Management* 15, no. 1 (2012): 43.

information, it has proven to be quite influential in building music artists' image. Notably, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram have become key sites for artist interaction.<sup>9</sup> . According to Mulligan, the image of a star is determined by key aspects two vital ones being 'promotion' and 'publicity', which focus on music artist management.

### ***Promotion***

Rogers argues that even with social media taking over traditional advertising, public relations are still essential in music artist management<sup>10</sup>. However, Mulligan reports that social networkers have been found to possess a significantly higher affinity for buying music compared to general internet users<sup>11</sup>. Salo, Mikko, and Matti propose innovative communication paradigms with the inclusion of all social media tools applicable as strategic development and implementation methods<sup>12</sup>. Music labels are increasingly using social media promotion supplemented with traditional marketing<sup>13</sup>. They are becoming more particular about what their star music artists

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<sup>9</sup> Holt, " Branding in the age of social media," 11.

<sup>10</sup> Rogers, *Music Industry in the Digital Age*, 71.

<sup>11</sup> Mulligan, *Music Industry in The Digital Age*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> Jari Salo, Mikko Lankinen, and Matti Mäntymäki, "The Use of Social Media for Artist Marketing: Music Industry Perspectives and Consumer Motivations," *International Journal on Media Management* 15, no. 1 (2013): 24.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, *Artist Management*, 116.

communicate via their social media handles, with some dedicating a team to share predesigned messages that adhere to an agreed-upon promotional strategy. Additionally, labels are becoming more involved in controlling the type of content, frequency of sharing, timing, and platforms of such public communication to drive the narrative that shapes their star artist's image.

With social media reducing the gap between an artist and their fans, today, there can be instant and up-to-date information sharing through various media formats and social media platforms with global coverage. Music labels have capitalized on this aspect of easy and cheap fan communication to market their artists in the digital marketplace. Some of these artists must develop and maintain a visible online presence and even use a promotionally strategic persona that matches their brand image<sup>14</sup>. With the extensive information available about artists on their social media pages, including discography, tour dates, upcoming projects, and biography, fans can better familiarize themselves with their favorite artists. Additionally, music management can provide easy access to merchandise sites, supported charities, and other social media pages that further promote the artist's image and that of the label. With the ability of fans to link their social media handles to those of their favorite artists, they will keep getting updates about the artist's engagements with the inclusion of new music, appearances, photos, videos, and other details shared by the artist and their management. Evidently, while older, more traditional promotion methods were mostly passive, social media is evidently more interactive and engaging, thus highly influential in shaping an artist's public image.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 41.

## *Publicity*

Apart from promotion, social media is also a vital tool in shaping good publicity, which is highly impactful on a star musician's image. With social media transforming the communication between fans and artists, there is higher accessibility to the latter's lives, shaping their public perception. Notably, social media has exponentially amplified the word-of-mouth concept of publicity among artists, which can be both highly beneficial or detrimental depending on the message shared. Chaney states that currently, the world of music has shifted from a linear to a dynamic model of experience whereby consumers are communicating their likes, dislikes, and interests to other digital music consumers<sup>15</sup>. Reportedly, according to Nielsen, about 60% of social media users share reviews on products including music and films, with 30% of people who are active on social media found to be following a celebrity, most of who are music affiliated<sup>16</sup>. With the importance of user-generated online content such as reviews and commentaries, social media is becoming more crucial in determining the viability and profitability of star artist image.

With social media amplifying the consumer word of mouth, there can be both benefits and detriments to a star artist's publicity, which factors into the management's promotional and marketing strategies. Notably, many years ago, with traditional media being more prevalent, bad publicity was easily managed by publicists who manipulated public perception by controlling the

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<sup>15</sup> Chaney, " in the Digital Age," 46.

<sup>16</sup> Mulligan, Music Industry in The Digital Age, 132.

narrative<sup>17</sup>. However, today, social media has changed everything, with the type of publicity (good or bad) most prevalent being decided by consumer perception. According to Chaney, traditionally, a dissatisfied customer could tell a few people. Still, today, they can tell tens of millions at the click of a button and, in so doing, alter the public image of an artist<sup>18</sup>. With consumers holding such power, music label management is forced to adhere to social media standards. As such, they meticulously control online publicity to make sure it matches their promotional strategy of a star artist's image. Seemingly, the best way to promote good publicity is by maintaining a consistent and effective social media presence.

### Conclusion

In the age of social media, consumers are seeking information from online sources to inform their musical opinions and purchasing behaviors. As such, for music managers, maintaining their star artist's public and online image is crucial, with social media being an essential tool. Today, music artist management is focused on consistent online presence with strategic sharing of promotional information to instigate positive user-generated chatter that aligns with desired marketing strategies. Additionally, music managers are increasingly using social media to promote artist-fan relationships through active fan engagement through various means. However, with social media being explosively potent in creating both good and bad publicity, it is vital that music managers meticulously control their star artists' online public image. Seemingly, today's image of a star musician is perhaps the most important aspect of music marketing and is highly dependent

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<sup>17</sup> Allen, *Artist Management*, 26

<sup>18</sup> Chaney, "in the Digital Age," 50.

on social media representation in the public eye. Towards future sustainability in the digital era, it would behoove the music industry to devise more innovative market exploration models towards recognizing their seemingly diminishing role in this consumer-run marketplace.



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