Music in Streams: Communicating Music in the Streaming Paradigm

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Abstract

Streaming services have become a key player in the cultural industries in sharing media content with audiences. This chapter addresses how on-demand music-streaming services, the world's most popular format for the distribution of recorded music, have driven new professional music industry practices that are affected by, and affect in turn, the ways in which music communicates. Based on insights from two larger projects focused upon the digitization of the music industry and empirical material from interviews with Norwegian popular music managers, this chapter explores the work and the strategy behind contemporary music distribution in the context of streaming-service logics. By addressing how the streaming format disrupts the "audience-media engine" (Wikström 2013) in ways that radically impact music's media presence audience reach, audience approval, and audience action, the chapter identifies new dynamics in the relationship between listeners and music. It then analyzes the ways in which these dynamics afford yet other distribution practices in the music industry, according to two communication patterns. These patterns have particular purposes and methods but share an alignment with the logics of distributed communication, either within or outside of the streaming services, where the struggle for audience attention is paramount. The chapter concludes with a discussion of streaming's impact upon the negotiation of new practices in the music industry derived from the abundance and intangibility of those services, as well as their multiple options for music consumption. The chapter explains how the communication adapted to the streaming paradigm is characterized by content circulation among the layers and fragments of global networks and multiple platforms, linking artists, fans, music, and the industry in new, less predictable ways. The work of communication management hence grows in importance in a streaming-dominated music industry that might also be characterized as a communication industry in its own right.

Keywords: music streaming, communication, audiences, music industry, attention economy

1. Introduction

Streaming services have become a key global player in the contemporary cultural industries for the dissemination of media content. Films, TV series, news, books, and music (the focus of this chapter) increasingly reach their audiences as streams via services and platforms that privilege access to content, through subscription or advertisement exposure, over ownership of their products through purchase. Spotify, the most globally significant on-demand music-streaming service (or MSS), launched in Sweden in 2008. As a legal alternative to the widespread illegal file-sharing practices of the 2000s music market, this on-demand MSS was warmly received.

Since then, Spotify and peers such as Apple, Deezer, and Tidal have become the most important vehicle for recorded-music distribution. Spotify has surpassed 100 million paying subscribers, and its percentage of recorded-music revenue generation continues to grow annually. In 2018, streaming accounted for over 50 percent of all recorded-music revenues worldwide, and in the music markets of early streaming adopters such as Norway and Sweden, this number was a whopping 90 percent (IFPI, 2019).

Amid all this growth, optimism has reigned supreme, though critical voices have arisen as well, particularly concerning copyright issues, revenue-sharing arrangements, and the opacity of streaming's business model. Regardless, streaming now finds itself at the very center of the current music industry, with consequences for the production, distribution, and consumption of music, correspondingly (for various perspectives, see Johansson, Werner, Åker, and Goldenzwaig, 2018; Kjus, 2018; Spilker, 2018; and Wikström and deFillippi, 2016). Streaming is recognized as the kind of innovation that changes the rules of even long-established games, introducing new values, mindsets, and business models—that is, a *paradigmatic innovation* (Krumsvik, Milan, NiBhroin, and Storsul, 2018, p. 17). Scholarly interest has grown in what is being done with music within this new *streaming paradigm*, and this chapter will contribute to the subject by drawing upon the perspective of music industry intermediaries, and primarily music managers, in Norway. For these professionals, the streaming paradigm has brought with it new opportunities to reach new audiences in new markets, as well as new competition demanding new skills and new negotiations. Based on

empirical insights from a multidisciplinary research project* in Norway, this chapter will explore how streaming has impacted professional practices related to the communication of music. This "practice perspective" derives from media and communication studies focusing on actions *oriented to* media, actions that *involve* media; and actions whose *possibility is conditioned by* the presence or functioning of media (Couldry, 2012, p. 35), or, more specifically, actions in professional music distribution with, through and in the streaming media. To begin, I will introduce the audience-media engine.

2. The audience-media engine

The music-media scholar Patrik Wikström reminds us that most professional musicians and artists communicate with their audiences primarily via some kind of electronic medium, because only a small fraction of those audiences is able to experience the music live. The music industry is therefore "completely dependent on the media as a promoter, user and distributor of its products" (2013, p. 86). This reliance generates unique and complex dynamics among audiences, content (primarily music), and media that can be explained via a model called the *audience-media engine.*

The audience-media engine consists of four variables. *Media presence* captures the activity of the various media outlets within which music firms try to improve their standing or impact through various marketing and licensing activities (Wikström, 2013, p. 87). If one's media presence in turn generates substantive *audience reach*—that is, if the music is able to reach a significant share of the total possible audience via the media outlet or platform in question— the chances of securing the *audience's approval* (positive responses to the music thanks to the media presence) increase. This then results in *audience action,* which has traditionally generated most of the music industry and the individual artist's revenues—for example, the purchase of an album, a song, merchandise, or a concert ticket. Not all audience actions generate income, and some actions are even considered infringements of copyright (Wikström, 2013, p. 86). Nevertheless, almost any action, legal or illegal, is important at some level, because together they sustain fan cultures and interest in the music.

The four components of the audience-media engine form a circle through which each variable feed into the next. As this wheel turns, when audience reach, approval, and actions result in a new media presence, in turn, the dynamics linking music and people become clearer. The audience-media engine is therefore a communication engine, in the end, and if it works against an artist or a music firm, success will be hard to achieve. An understanding of the audience-media engine is therefore critical for music industry actors, as its workings "constitute a reinforcing feedback loop that plays a crucial role in the music industry dynamics" and give "rise to (or end) fads, brands, acts, or genres" (Wikström, 2013, p. 88). To better grasp streaming's impact upon the audience-media engine, I will now describe some of the main characteristics of the on-demand MSS platforms.

2.1 This is a music-streaming service

A primary condition of the MSS is that it is a networked internet medium, which allows it to make content available to subscribers and users all over the world. This inherent *high connectivity* allows information, money, fads, norms, and so forth to flow easily among members of the given network (Wikström, 2013, p. 5). Streaming therefore boasts great market potential for global reach and increased audience engagement. Still, because networked media have entirely different communication structures than existing hierarchical media (Wikström, 2013, p. 6), this capacity for distribution is also more difficult to control. A 2011 study of the *social media and music nexus* demonstrated that music promotion through networked platforms such as Facebook and YouTube allowed for both unprecedented global music communication and increased local music activity and audience engagement, but with significantly less control, less predictability, and fewer linear results than in pre-digital music promotion (Mjøs, 2011). Interestingly, Mjøs's nexus did not include streaming, which presumably undercuts control of promotion and distribution yet further.

More specifically, streaming technology is based on a delivery system that relies upon vast amounts of digital data stored in the *cloud*—that is, large data centers comprised of networked servers that are connected to the internet. Music streaming providers transfer service-hosted content, such as music, from the cloud to the user via a broadband internet connection. Through a range of various service models provided as internet applications, music is made

available for users on their personal media devices, including tablets, computers, and airplay clients, as well as their smartphones, the most-used device for music streaming today.

Through a digital interface provided as a screen window on the media device, users are able to stream music without needing to download the files themselves. Assuming an adequate broadband connection, music is just a few keystrokes away. The music files are not experienced via any physical format (except the media device itself, plus headphones or loudspeakers) but instead are experienced in real time, as continuous streams of data. "Streaming" thus labels all of the intangible processes related to the user's interaction with the MSS. These services tend to stream compressed audio files, which means that vast music archives can be accessed and readily played. Most services offer around forty million tracks—an abundance of music exceeding anything that any music consumer, whether dedicated fan or casual listener, has ever been able to access via any medium before.

The interactions between users and technology take place on a service interface that links software instructions and platform programming to the hardware and user devices. The service interface is therefore an important communication window, because it is here the users encounter with the MSS content. An *invisible interface* is hidden from users and controlled by the streaming platform owner, who can change it by hiding or revealing certain icons, contents, or features, and by arranging for music assets to perform in certain ways according to preprogrammed algorithms and formulas. Via an invisible interface, as well, service providers collect data and insights about the user's traffic, preferences, interactions, and connections in the service. The aggregation and analysis of this data for commercial purposes is called "datafication" (Krumsvik et al., 2018, p. 196), and this process has fed into the service providers' creation of playlists and algorithms from the start, thereby shaping the ways in which music is both supplied and accessed via the services' *visible interface*. Here, news, magazine content, and playlists are presented via clickable headings and images that link to suggested music and, increasingly, videos, podcasts, lyrics, and other non-musical content. The visible interface generally contains "technical features (e.g., buttons, scroll bars, stars, icons) as well as regulatory features (e.g., the rule that a personal profile is required before entering the site)" (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 31). A selection of interactive features is normally offered in the visible interface that enables subscribers to share, organize (in favorites lists and playlists, for example), search, and otherwise be creative with their music.

With this combination of automated and participatory features, MSS platforms have developed a fairly standardized structure for providing content to their audiences—in fact, they have become another generic distribution and listening format, along the lines of LPs and MP3 files. As a format, this technology translates into features with which users are able to assert themselves with regard to their music management and everyday music consumption; in short, it impacts the user's connection with the music, feeding the audience-media engine in a media-specific way that in turn propels the development of innovative industry practices.

Streaming technology therefore foregrounds certain questions regarding *professional* music management. For example, how can music intermediaries control communication in this environment? What kinds of production and distribution practices are habitually triggered by the streaming technology, for what communication purposes, to what effect for the audience-music interaction? Such questions must be asked of a format or medium that so effectively absorbs its audience's attention in new and occasionally (if unsuccessfully) contested ways and thrives despite the inherent unpredictability of the industry. These questions are difficult to answer with the changed logics of the streaming audience-media engine (Wikström, 2013, p. 89), which involve compound and heterogeneous dynamics in opaque and complex systems. I am trying to do so anyway because an analysis of the streaming audience-media engine can provide fruitful understanding to the patterns of development in the current music industry. After a summary of the methods applied in this study, I will explore the communication practices between people and music that streaming acts to shape so profoundly.

3. Methods and material

This study relies on insights from two multidisciplinary research projects studying aspects of the digitization of the music industry in Norway. The present analysis, however, focuses mainly on seven semi-structured interviews (lasting sixty to ninety minutes each) with anonymized music industry stakeholders, five men and two women, in the two largest cities in Norway, Oslo and Bergen. The interviewees were recruited in spring and summer 2018. They all worked at the time as music managers, most of whom also offered label, booking, publishing, or promotion services, for Norwegian artists with a global reach. The management firms included from one to ten employees and boasted rosters of one to twenty artists/bands in both mainstream and niche popular music genres. This informant selection limits this

chapter's discussion to practices related to a commercial, market-driven popular music context.

The choice of music managers as expert interviewees was strategic, as the generally industry need for these figures has increased amid the relative financial chaos of the streaming paradigm (Gordon, 2014), which brought with it new actors, tech companies, and digital platform providers (and their international partners) who pursued negotiations and regulations at an unprecedentedly professional level. Managers also work closely with artists and often have salaries based on percentages of the artist's income. The balancing of strategic and artistic career moves to maximize economic gain and overall success for artist and manager incentivized innovative musical moves such as effective distribution via streaming, among other things. In accordance with this study's practice perspective, its analytical material documents how various actions are interrelated and coordinated within the informants' frameworks of understandings, procedures, and engagements (Warde, 2005, p. 134). The analysis produces interpretations of the managers' activities that I present as two patterns of communication.

4. Analysis: how streaming shapes music communication

4.1 Communication that drive streams

As the most-used device for music streaming, the smartphone affords flexible, individual, and whimsical music consumption in people's everyday lives. Music now takes on meaning or significance depending on its fit with a certain moment or given purpose—on the go, in the flow, in between, random or planned, for a moment or a while, together or alone. This is because access to musical content is no longer an issue, nor is listening anywhere at any time (at least from a hardware and software perspective). Context is the defining factor for meaning making in contemporary music experiences, and new notions of music categorization have moved away from conventional labeling toward more fluid, context-based, and self-defined standards that reflect the way the user's actual and infinitely possible listening defines the content, title, and use of her or his playlist (Hagen, 2015).

Translated into industry dynamics, the audience's context-thinking and playlist orientation with regard to their music listening has already been adapted to and capitalized upon by

streaming service providers. Most services now offer playlists made to fit the most common listening contexts, genres, and moods, including workouts, sleep, travel, focus, and so on. These options have increased over the years as a consequence of the datafication of the subscribers' user patterns. Playlists also accommodate recurring happenings or events, such as Spotify's release playlist "New Music Friday," or supply subscribers with individually tailored music suggestions, informing listeners evolving expectations for an on-demand MSS context for music distribution. Stakeholders in this study noted this as well:

> Playlists have become extremely important. They are the new radio, kind of, because they drive so many streams. Playlists don't make careers themselves, but they generate money to the labels and artists. (Manager 6)

As the quote demonstrates, the playlists with the biggest followings represent an opportunity to reach many listeners at the same time, even though the actual *listening* often happens casually and randomly. This realization triggered yet other practices in the music industry, including some with consequences for the work of communication among industry professionals. My interviews reveal clear patterns of pitching, marketing, and coordinating music releases is tandem with popular playlist logics, contexts, structures, and themes in order to maximize the success of a given track. Presence on a list, as noted above, is a way to drive streaming. One manager explained how popular playlists represent an entry point into new international markets.

> All we ask is to enter one of the three largest playlists in a country. Nothing more specific than that. Then [Spotify] always gets a bit relieved, and we respect the principle of the service's editorial freedom. (Manager 5)

The growing trend toward playlist-based music releases partly explains the current music-industry focus on singles rather than full albums. One manager sees playlist-inspired singles strategies as part of an effort to amplify the effect of an album:

> Previously, you released one single before the album, to promote it. Today we release at least three or four tracks in advance. This is not because albums always include better single material, but because we work differently. The key is where a track fits. One can be released because it's radio friendly, and then the next might be perfect for

a specific playlist . . . like the album released in January—there, we started with the first single promotion in June. The stretches are longer, and the plans, more targeted. (Manager 2)

The rationale behind a fragmented long-term distribution of various singles from an album across different playlists is to ensure a maximum amount of audience attention to each release. The chance that the music (and the artist) will be forgotten goes down, and revenues driven by the audience's longer span of attention go up. Another strategy involves the staggered releases of versions of the same track.

If a band has a new song, then we also consider an acoustic version, because then it would fit acoustic playlists. And remixes are sometimes made as well, always to fit other playlists. (Manager 6)

The increased production of remixes and remakes with variations in language, beat, sound or instrumentation, and feel represents another example of an industry adjustment made with playlists in mind. It is all about "working on the premise of the track and using its potential . . . to create long campaigns that continue to lead people back to the original song" (Manager 5). The industry boom in artists releasing cover versions of old hits follows the same trend—songs already known to people are a straightforward means of capturing both playlist position and audience attention. Of course, reaching the audience through playlists, remixes, and fragmented album releases is still "just another way to promote the song. We can also make a video, or teasers or gifs or whatever. Everything is possible" (Manager 3). In other words, as this study will demonstrate in what follows, artists need a consistent communication plan spanning all of the distribution opportunities offered by the MSS platforms, not only their playlists.

4.2 Long-term communication: artists as brands

With millions of subscribers, MSS platforms boast enormous potential for audience reach, but what music finally reaches that audience is at the mercy of several conditions, including, as discussed, the listener's agency and interests. The abundant, intangible, and volatile context and conduct of these   represent another impactful condition within which the media presence of artists and individual tracks must compete. Those in the music industry cannot rely solely

on the audience's discovery of their music *through* the service interface, as this window displays but a miniscule percentage of the 40 million tracks that are always available.

In terms of maximizing the potential of music discovery, then, aspects of the invisible interface are also important. Automated recommendation systems and algorithms provide listeners with music suggestions via playlists and streams that might be chosen or randomly or distractedly encountered. These systems and algorithms impact how music is perceived, remembered, and made sense of in dramatic but also unpredictable ways, presenting both an opportunity and a challenge to those people dedicated to facilitating their music's media presence and audience reach. In short, music distribution through networked media is characterized by structures that make the resultant spread more difficult to control (Wikström, 2013, p. 6). As a result, as indicated by this study, the *communication* of musical content is forced onto other, complementary digital platforms, which provide information and sustain audience attention even when the MSS has moved on.

> If a track streams well in Spotify, it's not clear that the success can be tied to the artist at all. Previously, the CD was the artist, kind of, and then you bought it. Now you get listed so much that people barely know you. Tracks get discovered randomly. The audiences don't need to check the artist profile or have a relationship to the artist. And that's why it is so important to build the contextual brand. To make it clear that this music is ours. It comes from us. This is the reason why the chase to be on social media is so important. (Manager 3)

This statement captures the conundrum of how the massive capacity and opportunity presented by streaming is still experienced as lacking by music industry representatives and artists. The audience's meeting with music via the streaming service can be profound, but it can also be random, sequential, or even volatile in nature. Another mode of communication must therefore arise to complement the MSS—one with "new possibilities for narrative constructions and genre development due to the ability to combine stories across technological platforms, such as televisions, web and mobile phones" (Bolin, 2011, p. 87). This mode, according to my interviews, centers upon strong narratives promoting the artist as a contextual brand of recognizable multimedia content:

> We come to the streaming service with a kit consisting of songs, images, the artist, and a history. The word "concept" is a bit "njah," but the point is that the audiences have to get it, the thing, just after few seconds of notice. Get a feeling or an impression of the whole concept. This is the artist's world, a glimpse of her story. (Manager 5)

Another manager describes this tendency as a turn in the music industry from a product-driven orientation (selling albums) to an artist-centric orientation (creating musical brands). As a result, interestingly, music partnerships with other types of branded content become more acceptable, not "selling out" (Tessler, 2016, p. 38)—collaborations and music bundling with other (media) products or artists are in fact necessary conditions of a promotional culture shaped by the lack of the physical purchase (Wikström, 2013, p. 114). Of course, the physical purchase persists, but the traditional product of the music industry, the *album* (whether on vinyl, CD, or MP3), has now become part of the larger representation of the artist.

In general, any media content that enables a promoter or artist to form an emotional connection with a listener drives "product desire" (Tessler, 2016, p. 38). To complement the unpredictable audience-media engine dynamics created by streaming, branded communication extends the media presence of music to other media outlets. Tessler's observation that "today's paradigm is no longer about music *getting* a piece of the action, but about music *being* a piece of the action itself" (Schnur, 2008, emphases in original, in Tessler, 2016) is truer than ever in the wake of branded communication. The action, in this case, is the way in which the various narrative, visual, and communicative representations of the music spur the audience recognition needed to engage, and, in turn, the actions of the audience-streaming media engine to sustain the whole paradigm. One of my informants stressed that branded communication of the artist worked best via smartphones, because the audience's attention must be captured immediately, frequently, and on the spot: "All other promo and traditional press are really out. If you do not manage to do the work through the platforms people use on their phones, you'll have nothing to do in the music industry" (Manager 5).

This heightened focus on long-term, on-going, multiplatform communication requires musicians to spend more time and money on maintaining their social and visual media profiles: "Videos, single covers, and just everything we post live and the social media content and such" (Manager 7) has to be produced and shared consistently and in synchrony:

I simply have to remind the artists to create the connections that make them visible. All the time. It's like, always mention the track, retell the story, try to drive the audiences into the streaming profile. Again, and again. Link into Spotify. From Facebook. And Twitter. And Instagram. (Manager 3)

Relatedly, Nancy Baym notes that the relational labor, time, and effort required by social media interactions with audiences have changed what it means to be an artist in the industry today (2018). Social media exposure has become so essential that music managers often must help to create and post content through the artists' media channels—and remain authentic while doing so:

It seems truer than ever: things cannot be fake. I could never have run [anonymized hip-hop artist's] Instagram. His way of writing with people at age twenty-two years and such . . . But for [anonymized female band], we do more. We have learned their tone of voice in posting, so to speak. But we're never able to create stuff better than when they post themselves. (Manager 1)

Communication management of this nature sometimes leads to conflicts as well:

Like [anonymized female artist]: she has been amazing at posting content. In her own peculiar way, it is her artistic product that comes out. But social media is also important for promotion. And believe me, we've had our fights. The way we have solved it is that she controls her Instagram completely, and we do her Facebook and Twitter. (Manager 6)

Overall, an artist-centric orientation has altered the notion of the product in the industry: "The complete package—the artist as a brand, a concept, a whole—that is just as much the product as the track" (Manager 3). This mindset derives from the ways in which content must compete for media presence on MSS platforms, and the ways in which audience penetration is undercut when service providers become gatekeepers in music distribution. The music then demands frequent and consistent communication via multiple platforms to achieve the level of recognition that is needed for audiences to stream it with intention and loyalty.

5. Discussion: Distributed communication and the value of attention

The preceding analysis has included examples of how professional practices related to the promotional communication of recorded music have adapted to the streaming paradigm, demonstrating the connection between available distribution technologies and current communication forms and flows. It is possible to assert this connection without being a technological determinist, because issues of human agency and social contexts always take part in defining and developing media-related practices and experiences. Nevertheless, the current industry's commitment to streaming explains a lot about what the music world has become, and that is why it is a paradigmatic innovation, or one that brings new business models, mindsets, and values to the field and its organization (Krumsvik et al., 2018).

The starting point of the streaming business model derives directly from the abundance and intangibility characterizing the cloud. Combined with mobile technology, the streaming format makes *more* music *more* available in *more* situations. This business model also points to a whole new music economy that makes users (listeners) into renters of access to everything rather than owners of a few things over defined timeframes rather than in perpetuity. From an experiential perspective, this shift gives rise to an increased ephemerality and fluidity in music experiences, which become new stepping stones from which to develop viable and effective distribution practices. That is to say, streaming underpins the negotiation of new *working notions* (Sundet, 2012)—those constantly reconstructed beliefs or views held by professional intermediaries that also define the professional discourse of the industry.

The analysis above further draws attention to how music managers in Norway have developed distinctive working notions around the practices related to the communication of music in the streaming paradigm. These working notions include both obstacles and opportunities, one of the latter being the potential to reach millions of global listeners through these services. At the same time, neither media presence nor audience reach, in the sense of Wikström's audience-media engine (2013), is guaranteed via the streaming service, meaning that competition for the audience's attention becomes harsher than ever. This situation evokes longstanding quandaries regarding exactly how people in technology-driven societies deal with the information overload. A wealth of information can lead to a poverty of attention, demanding, in turn, that the audience both shapes and allocates its attention very efficiently (Simon, 1971, pp. 40–41).

We are then presented with new communication *mindsets*. Music industry intermediaries know that the audience's music engagement via streaming is volatile, temporary, random, and idiosyncratic, often thanks to the role of algorithms, automated recommendations, and playlists, and that it therefore lacks sensitivity and traction. Streaming services supply music, and define the dynamics of the audience-media loop, in relatively unpredictable ways. As a result, communication practices come to favor a more efficient media presence and, in turn, superior audience reach, audience approval, and audience actions. As discussed above, these practices are realized via (at least) two communication patterns.

The first pattern derives from practices in a mindset that aims to exploit the services' opportunities for driving streaming traffic. One aspect of it involves releasing tracks individually and creating versions of songs that easily draw attention because they already are well-known. Albums are also teased via multiple singles releases. The goal is to maximize the streaming potential of each track and win the audience's attention and action along the way. Within this pattern, distribution is often inspired by playlists themselves—music releases are planned in tandem with popular playlists that might vary in theme, content, context, and structure but have in common the fact that they reach big audiences of playlist followers right away. Many playlists, interestingly, thus come to symbolize instant audience approval, as these lists, rather than any specific music as such, have become attributes of the listeners' everyday orientations with regards to their moods, activities or habits. When this instant approval fulfills expectations and produces the audience reaction of continuing to stream these same playlists, revenues will follow. The challenge is that music intermediaries cannot guarantee audience responsiveness to these playlist-oriented music experiences, no matter how popular or universal the playlist in question. The music-audience relationship is therefore fragile, even in the context of streaming "success."

The second pattern derives from a desire to build long-term artist careers based on intentional relationships between audiences and artists, specifically via a media presence beyond what is possible in the streaming services. This pattern dictates the distribution of the music itself, multiplatform music- or artist-related narratives, and a sense of the music's unique aesthetics via comprehensive campaigns of extended outreach on many different kinds of platforms. This pattern answers to a contemporary understanding of any long-running artist as a brand with a reliable set of qualities. When fragments of this brand are communicated promptly and

synchronized amongst themselves, the music and the artist stand out from the (streaming) crowd.

Both patterns of communication endorse Goldhaber's claim that attention becomes all the more valuable as people turn to the internet to live their lives (1997)—and access, explore, and experience their music. In terms of streaming, audience attention implies the approval that drives streams within the services and creates the relationships needed to build long-lasting artist careers. Goldhaber notes: "Getting attention is not a momentary thing; you build on the stock you have every time you get any, and the larger your audience at one time, the larger your potential audience in the future. Thus, obtaining attention is obtaining a kind of enduring wealth, a form of wealth that puts you in a preferred position to get anything this new economy offers" (1997, p. 12).

In both communication patterns, we find a more distributed distribution, so to speak. As anticipated, the study thus confirms that streaming adds more complexity and less control to the *social media and music nexus* (Mjøs, 2010), representing, as it does, greater connectivity and more networked flows than those of the hierarchical structures of the pre-digital industry (Wikstrøm, 2013). The control of professional music distribution begins to slip away from the music industry, and streaming providers see a corresponding increase in influence and power. As the newest gatekeepers in the digital music industry, they own, develop, steer, and monetize several of the most influential control mechanisms for music's successful distribution. Streaming (technology, services, and providers), in other words, now goes a long way toward defining how music is selected, circulated, filtered, forgotten, and generally communicated in the current music industry.

6. Communicating music in the streaming paradigm

After the on-demand MSS gained its foothold with millions of global listeners, music industry actors realized that the rules of recorded music distribution game had changed. In order to survive, they had to innovate—the MSS, then, forced profound changes in the ways in which music communicates by prompting a new business model, new mindsets, and new values.

The streaming format disrupts the audience-media engine in ways that radically impact music's obtainable media presence, audience reach, audience approval, and audience action.

The resultant new dynamics in the relationship between listeners and music afford new practices in the industry and new negotiations around working notions among the intermediaries. Based on its empirical insights into the work and the thought process behind professional popular music distribution, this chapter has discerned two communication patterns developed from and shaped to complement the post-streaming audience-media engine. The overall goal for both patterns: to direct music to audiences through communication that successfully drives streaming revenue and sustains long-term artist careers.

The first pattern is based on content commissioning and positioning that seeks to exploit added streaming traffic by following the logics of the MSS—for example, by appearing on multiple playlists with many dedicated listeners, or by distributing recognizable music, including covers and remixes, over and over again. Audience reach, attention, approval, and streams follow from this more efficient media presence in the streaming window, if not as products of intentional or even conscious commitment on the audience's part.

The second pattern pursues the long-term goal of a sustained relationship between audience, artist, and music. Over time, relationships of this nature drive streams and secure both income and careers for music industry actors. In this case, the communication goes beyond the streaming platform, and the content goes beyond music. Songs and lyrics, supported by visual, interactive, and social multimedia content, are subsumed into a conceptual brand encompassing the artist, the music, and some kind of coherent narrative, told over time and across platforms. Activated attention, acquired recognition, and hard-won approval loop back onto the artist and music in ways that benefit all concerned.

The two patterns have in common that they follow logics of distributed communication, both within and outside of the streaming services, where the struggle for attention is the motivating factor in the execution and development of the practices. The value of attention is enormous within the streaming paradigm, as mentioned above, as is the data to be gleaned there. I have not emphasized datafication in this discussion, but further research might well contend with the impact of data, now and in the future, on the work and flows of communication in the music industry.

Thus, the streaming paradigm represents a communication mode that has departed from the one-way, top-down flow of information and revenue that characterized the pre-digital music industry. Streaming has stimulated music to circulate in layers and fragments of global, multidirectional, multiplatform communication, linking artists, fans, music, and industry in new, less predictable ways. The work of communication management therefore appears increasingly crucial to success as the industry navigates the streaming paradigm, whereby successful music distribution demands both immediate and long-term adaptations, and the streaming services—distribution channels with an enormous influence upon both the production and the consumption of music. The music industry, that is, has become a communication industry.

7. Literature

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