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Music Artists' Online Streaming Business Strategies

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Angela S. Arnold

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Music Artists' Online Streaming Business Strategies

by

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MBA, Purdue Global University, 2016

BS, University of Louisville, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2022

Abstract

Music artists' incomes are directly affected by online music streaming technology advancements. A lack of business strategy, when faced with online music streaming, can lead to an inability to maintain a steady revenue stream among music artists. Rooted in the conceptual framework of disruptive innovation, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore online streaming business strategies music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with six music artists in the New York City area who maintained a steady revenue stream in the past 5 years and focus group responses from a combination of four managers, engineers, or producers in the music industry in the New York City area who maintained a steady revenue stream in the past 5 years. Data were also collected from artists' income reports. The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis were (a) marketing, (b) music distribution channels, (c) collaborations, and (d) live music performances. A recommendation for music artists is to build consumer-to-brand value relationships and value co-creation. The implications for positive social change include the potential to create sustainable income for music artists as small business owners and the development of more successful careers and derivative jobs within the music industry.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study first to God who has given me the persistence and resilience to complete my doctoral journey despite the obstacles that life may have tried to throw my way in the process. To my beautiful mother Annie F. Roberts. There's no me without you. You have been my rock from day one in all that I do. To my siblings and friends, who have shown me the greatest understanding and encouragement. To all the music artists that I have watched over the years, I admire your ability to never give up on your dreams. I would also like to dedicate this to my extended friends of D-Nice and Club Quarantine, who have shown me moral support, providing laughter, prayers, and encouragement throughout my journey. I could not have seen the light at the end of the tunnel without you all always in my ear. It takes a village.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Online streaming platforms are now one of the leading disrupters of the music industry. At the onset of digital technology for music distribution, the music industry saw a 14-year decline in music sales (Hesmondhalgh, 2020). Dating back to 1999, physical music sales from music fell by 68% over a decade globally (Guichardaz, et al., 2019). By 2001, music industry sales began to rebound with a rise in global music revenue of \$14.3 billion due to music streaming services (Hesmondhalgh, 2020). As a result, those in the music industry will need to continue restructuring their current business model to integrate online streaming business strategies to maintain a steady revenue stream.

Background of the Problem

Music artists are one of the many stakeholders within the music industry affected by advances in technology. On-demand streaming services have disrupted the traditional business model used by music artists, and some researchers have identified the positive and negative effects these services have on overall revenue in the music industry (Towse, 2020). The objective of this study was to explore successful strategies used by music artists to maintain a steady revenue stream.

Problem and Purpose

Music artists are seeing their revenue shares decrease due to online music streaming technology (Bender et al., 2021). While the online music streaming platform Spotify earns an average annual revenue of \$4.99 billion, music artists receive a fraction of a penny, \$0.00437, for each song streamed on the platform (Dahrooge, 2021). The general business problem is that music artists lack business strategies to create a steady

revenue stream when faced with the disruptive innovation of online music streaming technology. The specific business problem is that some music artists lack online streaming business strategies to maintain a steady revenue stream.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. The target population consisted of six music artists in the New York City area, who have maintained a steady revenue stream in the past 5 years by distributing their original music on online streaming platforms. The findings of this study have potential implications for positive social change by improving the financial sustainability of music artists, which in turn improves the quality of life for working musicians and allows them the opportunity to use their musical talents to benefit citizens of their communities. Music can be used as a form of medicine and therapy. Health care professionals use music medicine by having a patient listen to their favorite music to treat various ailments such as anxiety and stress reduction (Monsalve-Duarte et al., 2021). Music therapy has been credited with improving the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of life. For example, physical therapy that uses music has been shown to improve balance and mobility in Parkinson's disease patients (Sotomayor et al., 2021).

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of six music artists in the New York City area who have successfully published and independently distributed their original music using online streaming, along with other revenue streams, within the past 5 years. A combination of four managers, engineers, and producers in the music industry, who had

at least 5 years of experience in helping music artists generate revenue with their music via online streaming platforms, living in the New York City area participated in a focus group. All participants had to be 18 years of age or older. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who were found through internet and social media searches and colleagues who had direct access to potential participants. I used semistructured interviews, a focus group, and document review for this study.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative research method was best suited for this study to explore online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. Qualitative researchers explore the textural aspects of participants' responses rather than specific measurable behavior (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Researchers use quantitative research methods to analyze data using statistics to objectively examine variable characteristics and relationships (Sawatsky et al., 2019). I explored the experiences of participants pertaining to online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream; therefore, a quantitative research method was not appropriate to use for my study. Researchers use the mixed method to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods to enhance research results (Hou, 2021). Mixed-method research was not appropriate for my study because it includes the quantitative research method, which was also not appropriate for my study for reasons stated previously.

I considered three research designs to use for researching music artists' strategies: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, and (c) multiple case study. The subject and object

in phenomenology are one in the same, wherein an individual's conscious mind shapes the outcome and not the circumstances of their environment (Sundler et al., 2019). A phenomenological study focuses on how reality is perceived in the individual consciousness (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). I did not use phenomenology because my study was focused on the outcomes of the efforts as opposed to how participants felt about or consciously influenced their personal experiences. My intent was to explore online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. The ethnography design is used to explore groups' culture and values through exploring and observing participant behavior (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; White & Devitt, 2021). The ethnography design was not the best fit because my study was not focused on the culture and values of the participants' organizations, but on the business strategies music artists use to generate revenue.

I used a multiple case study design to explore online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream when faced with the disruptive innovation of music streaming technology. Using a case study design allows for the study of a phenomenon within real-world circumstances (Tsang, 2022). Furthermore, by using a multiple case study design, a researcher can use evidence from several areas such as field study, archived records, and observation to compare and strengthen conclusions (Sawatsky et al., 2019).

Research Question

What online streaming business strategies do music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream?

Interview Questions

1. What business strategies do you use to generate sales for your music?
2. What business strategies did you find most effective to generate sales of your music?
3. How did your strategies assist you to meet the challenge of disruptive innovation with online music streaming technology?
4. How did your business strategies help you to maintain a steady revenue stream by using online music streaming?
5. What were the principal components of online music streaming platforms that helped you generate sales?
6. What additional information can you offer on the business strategies you use to generate a steady revenue stream by using online music streaming technology?

Conceptual Framework

The theory of disruptive innovation was the conceptual framework for this qualitative study. Authored by Clayton Christensen in 1995, disruptive innovation can occur in a circumstance in which the value of a market is changed by a new technology introduced into a market that typically supersedes an older technology (Christensen, 1997; Rakic 2020). Disruptive innovation is a competitive response theory in which a newcomer in an industry provides the same, or an enhanced, service at a lower rate than its competitor (Alberti-Alhtaybat et al., 2019). Christensen identified affordability, accessibility, profitability, and efficiency as the main drivers of disruption (Alberti-Alhtaybat et al., 2019).

Disruptive innovation brought on by new incumbents creates a transparent immersive experience for consumers to think about the services they wish to access and receive (Jari & Lauraeus, 2019). Online streaming technology companies have created affordable and convenient ways for music consumers to access a large music database for a flat fee (Li et al., 2020). I anticipated that using the lens of Christensen's disruptive innovation theory could assist me in understanding the findings from my study, exploring the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream.

Operational Definitions

Crowdfunding: A way that people and companies can raise money by receiving small donations from individuals in exchange for small rewards as an alternate way of financing a venture (Simpson et al., 2021).

Do-it-yourself (DIY) business model: A four-step process of self-producing, self-distribution, leveraging fame, and capitalization followed by independent business owners (Heins, 2018).

Streaming: Media received concurrently by a user from a provider (Colbjornsen, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

A challenge of qualitative research is in establishing credibility, which attests to the accuracy of data (Nassaji, 2020). Challenges to qualitative research could be attributed to a lack of structures or practices customarily adhered to when conducting research (Scalcau, 2021). Establishing validity or credibility of the findings depends on

how well a researcher represents the findings from the data collected (Hayashi, 2019). In the design phase of a study, to establish the credibility of the research, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are important to identify and address (Pathiranage, 2021).

Assumptions can be articulated or unarticulated beliefs that affect every step of the research process (Morrow & Nkwake, 2016). Assumptions are statements viewed as true by a researcher without proof (McGregor, 2018). The first assumption in this research was that participants chosen for this study would have adequate knowledge about online streaming technology to provide data to answer the research question. The second assumption was that participants in the study would be open and honest with their interview responses. The third assumption was that participants would possess a strong knowledge of the business model used in the music industry.

Limitations of a study are defined as foreseeable weaknesses beyond the control of the researcher (McGregor, 2018). The research question focused on strategies used to generate online sales of music for the artist. The research was limited in that there may be other ways artists benefit from using online streaming platforms other than streaming their music to generate income. Also, using a small sample size of six music artists may not be representative of all artists who use online music streaming.

Delimitations are intentional boundaries set by a researcher to narrow the scope of a study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Due to the music industry being a massive global industry, focusing on music artists in New York City downsized the margin of the research and allowed me to focus on a city known as a major entertainment servicer. The

participants were limited to six music artists who had experience using online music streaming technology to generate a revenue stream.

Significance of the Study

My primary objective was to conduct research on the online business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. Kessler (2018) indicated that the loss of revenue by both major and independent record labels led to artists opting to handle their business matters out of a need to generate more income. Research results on resolving this issue could help music artists understand and develop strategies for working within the online streaming industry to generate revenues through both existing and new business channels.

Potential implications for positive social change from this research are improving the financial sustainability of music artists, which enables artists to develop and distribute music that could lead to artists contributing more to their communities. Music can be used to engage the mind and body (Lamont, 2021). Human beings are influenced by sound, which has a direct impact on how people think and function (Radzinska et al., 2018). Using music as a healing mechanism can strengthen social bonds, stimulate cognitive and motor skills, and relieve stress (Rana, 2018).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

For this literature review, I expanded on the research of Bender et al. (2021), in which they examined the effects of streaming services on music industry revenue. Similarly, my research was focused on the music industry between 2015 and 2019 when online streaming platforms continued to influence how consumers accessed music. The

methods that consumers use to access music impact the way music artists present their goods to the public, ultimately affecting their ability to generate revenue online. The literature review consists of five major categories: (a) disruptive innovation applied to the music industry, (b) business model of the music industry, (c) governance of the music industry, (d) generating revenue in the music industry, and (e) social construct of the music industry.

For the conceptual framework, I used disruptive innovation theory. Disruptive innovation theory illustrates how demand for a new entrant into an already existing industry can cause incumbents and consumers to respond differently based on product characteristics (Jari & Lauraeus, 2019). There were 201 references used for this study. Of the references used, 90% were peer reviewed and 80% were published between 2018 and 2022. There were 110 references used in the literature review, 99 of which were peer reviewed. I used an Excel spreadsheet to organize the information obtained from documents for the literature review.

The purpose of this literature review was to provide an analysis of disruptive innovation and disruptive technology as it pertained to music artists, the evolution of the music industry, and micro factors that have shaped its current state and strategies that music artists use to generate revenue. I researched the business strategies and ideas that music artists use to generate revenue and the factors that contribute to their gain or loss of revenue due to the disruptive innovation of online streaming platforms. In exploring the literature, I used various academic databases, including Business Source Complete, Emerald Management Journals, Gale Academic One File, Lexis Nexis, ProQuest, SAGE,

Academic Search Complete, and Science Direct. My keyword search included *digital music, music streaming, music piracy, disruptive innovation, business strategy, creative arts, music law, streaming platforms, disintermediation, music industry, disruptive technology, streaming technology, and cocreation.*

Disruptive Innovation Applied to the Music Industry

Disruptive Innovation

Christensen's concept of disruptive innovation focuses on low-end users within an industry often overlooked who may prefer low-end replicas of a product that offers close to or the same service as a popular incumbent (McDowell, 2018). At the time that Christensen coined the theory of disruptive innovation, Christensen was trying to gain insight into why companies were threatened by new entrants that had less technological sophistication (Kawamoto & Spers, 2019). McDowell (2018) pointed out that overlooking an untapped market could cause the potential decline of the incumbent. The scenario applies to any failure in an industry. A company paying attention to innovations within the market can help in sustaining their current users as well as becoming engaged with new ones (McDowell, 2018).

Millar et al. (2018) argued against disruptive innovation calling the concept one sided. Confusion has remained around what disruptive innovation is because there are varying definitions and understandings of how disruptive innovation occurs (Martinez-Vergara & Valls-Pasola, 2020). Montoya and Kita (2018) noted that Christensen's idea of sustainable innovation focused on improvement to an existing product, whereas for a product to be considered a disruptive innovation, a technology would only need to be

something that lowers product performance (at least temporarily). Christensen explained that the absence of concise boundaries was due to critics not understanding that the concept of disruptive innovation initially focused on disruptive technology (Martinez-Vergara & Valls-Pasola, 2020). Christensen enhanced the concept of disruptive technology to include business models, replacing the term *disruptive technologies* to *disruptive innovations* in 2003 (Martinez-Vergara & Valls-Pasola, 2020). Alberti-Alhtaybet et al. (2019) agreed that despite the disruptive innovation concept being defined by critics in various ways, the concept is still characteristically sound. While in many studies into disruptive innovation, researchers have focused on a singular perspective, Guo et al. (2019) provided a measurement framework for assessing how innovations disrupt a market through the specific measurement indicators of technical features, marketplace dynamics, and external environment.

A business can become competitive in a changing market by understanding how innovation evolves. For a business to be competitive in a changing market, business leaders must be able to successfully generate new ideas, validate those ideas in the market, and reallocate assets to support the new ideas (O'Reilly & Binns, 2019). An innovation that has the potential to disrupt the norm begins with a few people adopting the idea, and as it becomes widespread, it attracts a larger group of users (Martinez-Vergara & Valls-Pasola, 2020). Innovation does not become disruptive until it begins to cause an imbalance within a market (Martinez-Vergara & Valls-Pasola, 2020). An example of this type of disruption is online streaming replacing music artifacts such as CDs and vinyl. Many companies have opted to exist and collaborate with newcomers,

separating good ideas from bad ones by testing the market, rapidly boosting customer numbers, and product capability and capacity (O'Reilly & Binns, 2019).

Conceptual Framework Applied to Music

Innovation does not become disruptive in an instant but does so over time. Disruptive innovation becomes apparent when the demand for performance from the incumbent does not happen at a rapid pace and the incoming innovation performance gains momentum (Reinhardt & Gurtner, 2018). Disruption within the music industry became apparent when online streaming platforms became the preferred method of music consumption by consumers as evidenced by the growth of music streaming platforms. With the entrances of peer-to-peer file-sharing platforms and Napster in 1999, consumers adopted new ways to listen to their favorite music (Galuszka, 2015), which aided in the disruption of the traditional music business model.

Christensen believed that for an innovation to be disruptive, an entirely new market is created because of its entry. The theory of disruptive innovation was expanded on by Millar et al. (2018) who outlined the factors that lead to changes in an industry because of innovation. Disruption is driven by cost, quality, customers, regulation, and available resources in which disruption can happen at any of these levels (Millar et al., 2018). An example would be the costs for music production leveling out because artists have easier access to software and resources online.

Roy (2018) and Ozgur et al. (2017) agreed that a cyclical effect occurs in the adoption of innovation with the innovation underperforming and keeping offerings to a niche market with a relevant lead user before emerging into a mainstream market. Roy's

(2018) and Ozgur et al.'s (2017) findings implied that trial and error occur with the adoption of a new market. Some consumers have opted out of buying CDs that contain one artist's music catalogue for unlimited access to a wide range of music catalogues online, where they can listen to music for a fixed monthly fee (Im et al., 2020). This type of comparison would imply that disruptive innovation happens in stages with a slow rise and slow fall or the trial-and-error effect (Millar et al., 2018).

Business Model of the Music Industry

Music Business Model

The traditional music business model has been restructured continuously since Tin Pan Alley sheet music and the invention of the phonograph, which was disrupted by recorded tapes and eventually by digitization (Kiresci, 2021). Kiresci (2021) provided an exploratory study and discussed the evolution of the standard music business model and how it changed over time due to rapid technological innovations that enabled the consumer to listen to music. At the beginning of the technological age, changing the music business model to include the bundling of branded merchandise such as the phonograph in conjunction with music was thought to be the most effective way to create value. As technology advanced to include devices that changed the way the public communicated with one another, record industry innovators thought it best to explore their options. Record industry innovators exploited music production to create value through the integration of the internet and the MP3 player to dominate music marketing and promotion (Kiresci, 2021). Throughout these changes to the traditional music

business model, the artistic, technological, and marketing aspects have been the deciding factors in creating the most value in the music industry.

More emphasis was placed on the business models that focused on pricing, which enabled the executives of record labels to maximize profits for their companies (Ko & Lau, 2015). Ko and Lau (2015) found that since the disruption of the music industry in 2000, individuals working in the music industry have been looking for ways to stabilize the revenue generated from music sales. Depending on the pricing model used, an artist can gain or lose profit.

Based on Ko and Lau's (2015) study, record companies could offer different product bundles to customers leading to higher profit margins. Record labels are the controlling factor in how an artist and fan relationship is established. Ko and Lau (2015) suggested that the more fame an artist has and the higher position an artist holds in the public eye, the higher the price for their goods and the more their records gain in revenue.

Rethinking Business Strategy

The behavior of technological development has dictated the financial advancement of artists within the music industry. These shifts have caused music artists to rethink how they present their services to the public. Pointing out the factors that led to the rapid growth of streaming music, Sharakhina et al. (2020) emphasized the efforts of streaming platforms to find business models that both please the consumer and the independent artist, linking the right listeners to the right songs uploaded by the artists. By understanding the results of the attempts of streaming markets to compensate artists, revamping business strategies could be achieved for better rates of return for the

independent artist when it comes to DIY production compared to the rate of return received from record companies. Independent artists are opting out of signing with major labels and dealing directly with music streaming platforms, which has increased the music share for streaming platforms (Sharakhina et al., 2020).

The opportunity for independent artists has improved due to changes in business strategy and advancement in technology (Walzer, 2017). The changes in technology have enabled artists to take on multiple roles as artists, producers, and engineers of their ventures. One way this has happened is through the advancement of software in technology. The key to independent music artists doing well in a digital market is contingent on their accessibility to the latest production software and tools to produce music in a global market (Walzer, 2017). Research done within educational institutions could allow people to look internally at the processes of independent artists and access their business needs for generating revenue and access to resources (Walzer, 2017).

Artist Online Streaming Business Strategies

The music industry's business structure began to change with the emergence of online streaming platforms. In response to the entrance of online music streaming, in 2015, singer Taylor Swift paved the way for artists who were displeased with artist compensation from online music streaming platforms and pulled her music from Spotify (Kronenberg, 2018). Although being exclusive to one streaming platform may be suitable for the artist, customers are burdened financially with obtaining subscriptions to more than one music streaming platform to find their favorite artist (Kronenberg, 2018).

Rapper Jay-Z responded to the influx of online music streaming platforms by purchasing a music streaming platform that allowed artists to interact directly with customers, collect a larger royalty rate, and offer exclusive music not provided on mainstream online music streaming platforms (Tribulski, 2020). In 2017, music artist Taylor Swift rereleased music with Spotify under an exclusive rights deal (Shaw, 2017). Jay-Z later followed suit and negotiated an exclusive rights deal with Spotify after speculation that the streaming platform Tidal was under investigation in 2019 for exaggerating streaming numbers (Mejia, 2019).

The actions of Taylor Swift and Jay-Z encouraged many mainstream artists to follow suit. Still, independent artists were not so fortunate to negotiate lucrative exclusive deals with online music streaming platforms efficiently. Despite the inability to negotiate lucrative exclusive deals with online music streaming platforms, independent artists have seen online music streaming success. For example, UK pop artist Anne-Marie was the 76th most streamed artist on Spotify in 2016 (Robinson, 2016). Artist and repertoire Chris Anokute emphasized the importance of using the analytical data that Spotify provides to identify who the loyal fan base is for an artist, which translated into markets where Anokute's artists were able to sell out live shows (Robinson, 2016).

While artists have used the analytics and streaming power to convert online music customers into live fans, other independent music artists have embraced streaming in different ways. Loosely mimicking what major music artists have done, Indy record label owners, like those at SubPop Records, established exclusive artists deals with Drip.fm, a subscription and download service that connects the artist directly to a fan, focusing on

the excessive music fan culture (Bromwich, 2014). With the release of their album *In Rainbows*, the rock band Radiohead used the approach of allowing the consumer to pay what they wanted for the album, leading to their largest revenue share from record sales in their career (Kiresci, 2021).

The artist entrepreneur is an individual who is passionate, talented, self-confident, opportunistic, efficient, and focused on making a financial profit (Szostak & Sulkowski, 2021). Diversification and the musician taking on the role of an entrepreneur allows the artist to have control over their music, events, merchandising, and image, which enables them to create more opportunity to receive a higher percentage of revenue from the consumer (Everts & Haynes, 2021). Bandcamp is a digital marketplace, not a streaming platform, where artists directly engage with the selling and marketing of music and merchandise to customers. Bandcamp is set up to perform like an extension of a social media platform where music artists control and generate all content offered on the platform to create their own digital storefront (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2019). In return, customers can freely express their views about their favorite artists through the Bandcamp blog (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2019).

Other independent artists have chosen not to embrace online music streaming platforms. Those artists have decided to create streaming platforms for generating revenue for independent artists. Musician Peter Harris formed a co-op streaming platform in 2015 in which both artists and customers are involved in artist compensation, and artists can view estimated profits using a sliding scale available on the website (Mejia, 2019).

Another example of an artists-controlled platform is Patreon. On Patreon, customers have access to exclusive creative artists' works for a fee, allowing customers access to exclusive rewards for their patronage and engagement from artists (Hair, 2021). Patreon offers a way for artists to supplement their income by offering their fans access to works that include, but are not limited, to music, artwork, games, writings, and other unique creative works (Hair, 2021). Artists who use Patreon receive a monthly membership fee from each consumer, creating a direct-to-consumer interaction that allows artists to develop sustainable careers (Hair, 2021).

DistroKid is a music distribution platform that acts in the capacity of an aggregator for independent music artists who own the rights to their music catalogs (Hu, 2019). Distribution platforms like DistroKid claim to be better for the artists because there is no limit placed on how much content an artist can upload. The artist keeps 100% of their earnings, and DistroKid owners have embedded multiple marketing tools into the platform (DistroKid.com, 2021). As the sister company of another aggregator, CD Baby, DistroKid piqued the interest of investors who envisioned buying digital distribution companies as a prospective positive investment (Hu, 2019). According to Hu (2019), this type of distribution platform helps artists save on distribution, but costs more on the backend for the investor due to the costs associated with artist development.

Governance of the Music Industry

Copyright Law and the Modernization Act

As a disruptive innovator, online streaming platforms could usurp the concept of music ownership. In a report done by Bazinet et al. (2018), it is suggested that the music

industry is a business of music publishing and recorded music, making up 1/5 of the record music business. Items considered essential to understanding how the music artist is paid are licensing and copyright law. According to the 2015 Nielsen Music consumer report, audio streams were down by 83.1% and physical album sales by 6.1% (Demos, 2016). Demos (2016) accredited this drop in sales to the rapid advances in technology. By 2017 12% of music revenue was captured by artists across several distribution platforms, i.e., radio, satellite radio, and internet distributors (Bazinet et al., 2018). Most revenue gains were driven by live concerts (Bazinet et al., 2018). As the world shut down due to Covid 19 in 2020, audio streams rose by 16.2% while physical album sales fell by 23.3% (Nielsen Music Mid-Year Report, 2020).

Lawmakers have attempted to keep up with the rapid changes in technology by amending copyright laws. Those in government made changes to the law mainly to secure the financial interest of the musician. The world's first copyright law was the *Statute of Anne* implemented in Britain in 1710, which protected English publishers. Those in U.S. Congress included the copyright patent clause from the *Statute of Anne* in the U.S. Constitution, which allowed Congress to secure the exclusive rights writers have to their work for a limited time (Bazinet et al., 2018).

Those in the United States government realized the importance of copyrighting as early as 1790 (Heins, 2018). In the case of *Buck vs. Jewell-LaSalle Realty Co.* and *Twentieth Century Music Corp vs. Aiken*, lawmakers established rules concerning what constituted a public performance as pivotal points of change in copyright law (Heins, 2018). In the case of *Buck vs. Jewell-LaSalle Realty Co.*, it was argued that playing music

through a radio signal in hotels could be deemed performance of a copyrighted work, and the U.S. Supreme Court found that the hotel violated the law (McGraw, 2018). In *Twentieth Century Music Corp vs. Aiken*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Aiken and determined that the restaurant was not in violation of copyright law by playing music on a personal device that could be found in a home (McGraw, 2018).

As found in section 115b of the Copyright Act, a compulsory license gives an individual the right to reproduce copies of nondramatic musical works (Larson et al., 2018). A compulsory license is a type of mechanical license that is generally secured by those wanting to use songwriter's or publisher's material for their music projects that are physically or digitally distributed. In 1831, copyright protection was given to music publishers but sound recordings had not been had not addressed (Bazinet et al., 2018). According to the Citi Music Industry Report, copyrights were not given to songwriters whose work was performed publicly until 1897 (Bazinet et al., 2018). Mechanical licensing of musical compositions has been in place since 1831, with the first significant need for mechanical licensing measures to be implemented, with the invention of the record player and the pianola (Victor, 2020).

Due to the decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court in *White-Smith Music Publishing Co. vs. Apollo Music Co.*, Congress extended copyright to exclude parts of an instrument mechanically used to reproduce a work with the condition of applying a fixed royalty rate to the copyright protection of music in 1909 known as the 115 License in the Copyright Act (Victor, 2020). Apollo Music Co. manufactured perforated cylinders that enabled pianos to play music automatically. Executives at White-Smith Music Publishing

Co challenged this type of free playing instrument by arguing that using a play roll in a pianola to play compositions infringed on their copywritten material. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Apollo Music Co., citing that Apollo Music Co. was not making copies of the music and therefore there was no copyright infringement (Bazinet et al., 2018). In 1910 the U.S. Congress reformed the copyright to include copyright holders having the right to control the mechanical reproduction of their work, along with a compulsory license that allowed for the right of pianola makers to play composer's music, which was later made more complicated with the emergence of the digital downloads.

The Music Modernization Act was brought forth in the U.S. Congress to strengthen laws on compensation through mechanical licensing, creating a balance between the value of music to the customer and the value of the work to artists (Huffman, 2019). According to research done by Huffman (2019), the act failed to address how royalties would be paid out to artists and producers to regulate streaming platforms. Spotify is an example of a company that has benefited from infringing upon copyright laws by failing to obtain proper mechanical licensing for the music they stream by opting to negotiate and pay out later (Huffman, 2019).

In 2018 the Music Modernization Act was overhauled by the U.S. government, which consolidated three bills governing music licensing into one (Larson et al., 2018). A new bill named the Orrin G. Hatch Bob Goodlatte Music Modernization Act encompassed the Modernization Act, Classics Protection and Access Act, and the Allocation for Music Producers Act into one (Larson et al., 2018). Section 115 of the

U.S. Copyright Act was revised by the U.S. government with the establishment of The New Modernization Act. The language in the New Modernization Act included improving royalty payouts for music producers and engineers, artist compensation for pre-1972 recordings, and the streamlining of the music licensing process to include compensation from music streaming platforms (Buiey, 2019).

Also, U.S. Congress voted on The Music Modernization Act of 2018 to amend title 17 of the U. S. code to establish fairness on how musical works get reproduced and distributed for digital use (Loren, 2019). Lawmakers moved to create a blanket mechanical license that covered the activities of digital music providers and established standard rates for licensing through a copyright royalty board (Larson et al., 2018). The blanket license proved to be more beneficial to major record companies who have the advantage of negotiating rates at a higher level than independent songwriters and publishers (Lawrence, 2019). Songwriters collect mechanical royalties which as of 2016 was at a rate of \$0.091 for songs of five minutes or less in duration. In 2016, interactive digital rates for streaming platforms like Spotify were broken down to around 6% mechanical royalty of about \$210 million generated per year in which the per-stream royalty is \$0.0007 (Bazinet et al., 2018).

The misinterpretation of the law occurs when specifics of interactive streaming platforms are governed differently from non-interactive platforms. Section 114 of The Copyright Act stipulates that noninteractive streaming platforms to acquire a compulsory license to stream music. Interactives such as Spotify and Apple Music have on-demand

streaming rights allowing people to play music any time without consumer ownership (Chandler, 2019).

Musicians were approaching business strategies to make money inaccurately when they concentrated on copyright law (Davis, 2017). Davis (2017) argued that copyright law was one issue that musicians faced, which would drive intermediaries to invest in musicians. Record companies and musicians alike missed out on capitalizing on the innovation of streaming platforms early in a market that now has a DIY atmosphere because the focus was placed on copyright infringement. Davis (2017) noted that along with the decline in revenue, song creation by artists who are directly affected could decline.

360 Deal

Artists have sought to generate revenue using multiple streams of income, musical and nonmusical (Huffman, 2019). To counteract this, record companies have turned to 360 contract deals. With the implementation of the 360 deal, artists are considered brands in the current music industry (Klein et al., 2017). Guichardaz et al. (2019) credited the rise of 360 deals by record companies that exploits sources of revenue for an artist as a result of a decline in record sales and advancement in technology. The 360 deals within the music industry allow for record labels to be involved in the revenue of artists beyond sound recordings (Kessler, 2018). Artists enter into 360 deals with record company owners who can oversee every aspect of their careers, maximizing profit for the label, taking up to 35% of all non-musical artist revenue (Huffman, 2019). According to Kessler (2018), this meant that record companies could collect on revenue on the artist's

behalf for live performances, music publishing, and merchandising. Due to this provision, record labels could offset their losses from record sales with the ancillary activities of their artists (Kessler, 2018).

Performance Rights Organizations

Performance rights organizations (PROs) act as centralized clearinghouses, acting on behalf of their members to collect royalties and ensure that copyright and licensing laws are adhered to by music users, which includes songwriters, performers, and music rights owners (Sukenik, 2019). PROs represent approximately 1.4 million composers and about 22 million musical works that generate around \$2.6 billion a year with a song generating on average \$114 a year across all musical platforms. Of that \$2.6 billion, PROs retained 12 % to cover the overhead expenses (Bazinet et al., 2018).

The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) is the first nonprofit owned by composer members in the U.S. in which members are allowed to self-report their performances (Jackson, 2021). The Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) is a non-profit PRO founded by broadcasters that provides licensing for public venues representing songwriters and composers in the United States. (Jackson, 2021). The Society of European Stage Authors and Composers (SESAC) is a for-profit PRO that offers invitation-only membership to composers (Jackson, 2021). A newer PRO is Global Music Rights (GMR), which is a boutique PRO focused on negotiating music licensing rights directly with songwriters and musicians (Lenard & White, 2018). The main difference among ASCAP BMI, SESAC, and GMR is that BMI and ASCAP are required

to abide by consent decrees and are non-profit organizations acting on behalf of their artists (Bazinet et al., 2018).

Deciphering who owns the rights to a song prompted the U.S. Congress to create an exclusive PRO for artists called SoundExchange. SoundExchange is a PRO that monitors royalty distribution for both artists and copyright holders, with 50% distributed to copyright holders, 45% going to featured artists, and 5% going back to musicians (Bazinet et al., 2018). SoundExchange executives collect digital royalties from noninteractive streaming platforms such as SiriusXM, Pandora, and iHeart Radio. SoundExchange executives used about 8% of the \$700 million in royalties collected by SoundExchange for overhead fees. PROs are involved in constant legal battles over performance rights. According to Business Wire (2019), in 2019, GMR won a lawsuit against the Radio Music Licensing Committee regarding fixed pricing for playing artists music.

Over the years other PROs have aggressively sought royalty payments for those they represent. ASCAP pursued the Meadowlark Bar in Colorado regarding the establishment profiting from playing music works without permission and argued that music creators should also reap the benefits (Wenzel, 2019). In the *United States of America v American Society of Composers*, authors and publishers licensing fees for wireless transmissions were contested which resulted in a \$ 1.5 million-fee for blanket licensing being acceptable for the telecommunication company AT&T to pay for the use of music for ringtone previews (US v. ASCAP, 2009). SESAC settled a lawsuit with the

Television Music License Committee for \$58.5 million regarding anti-trust claims of SESAC overcharging for licensing fees (Sisario, 2015).

As Spotify went public and other companies such as Apple Music maintained a constant presence online, lawsuits continued to arise regarding these platforms obtaining proper licensing for the songs that are offered. Lenard and White (2018) suggested that due to licensing issues, creators of music have become unmotivated to create new works as they are not able to recoup the costs of making the music initially. According to Lenard and White (2018), since the digital age, laws have been emerging to expand on copyright laws, leaving artists to debate on how important it is to establish their rights for leverage in a digital marketplace.

As of 2020 an artist on average receives \$26,468 a year with a small projected rise to \$26,888 by 2026 from all music related endeavors, even with the consistent annual financial growth of digital streaming platforms (Paolucci, 2021). Fairness in royalty payments has been a concern for artists before the inception of digital streaming (Kronenberg, 2018). With Apple Music reportedly paying 71.5% of incoming revenue to royalties and Spotify paying 70%, Kronenberg (2018) proposed a uniform royalty rate that would satisfy the discontent of artists over royalty payments. Davis (2017) noted that Spotify pays between \$.006 and \$.0084 in streaming royalties to artists. For example, singer/producer Pharrell earned between \$2,700 and \$25,000 in royalties, after accumulating about 43 million streams from fans.

Digital Piracy

Piracy is credited by researchers for the decline of revenue and recorded music in the music industry (Savelkoul, 2020; Papies & Van Heerde, 2017). Digital piracy was made possible by the advances in modern technology to the point that legal debates and lawsuits have occurred as to whether piracy has helped or hurt the upward financial movement of music artists. Aversa et al. (2019) concluded that access to large music catalogs and the global reach has attracted customers to digital pirating, with the onset of Spotify and other online streaming platforms. The digitization of information has led to the creation of digital music files that evolved into digital piracy (Papies & Van Heerde, 2017).

According to the research findings of Hampton-Sosa (2019), as digital piracy increased by 1%, music sales decreased by .6% in 2009. In addition to disrupting record sales, the emergence of piracy has left record companies no choice but to rethink the traditional business model and consider the change in the business relationship with music streaming systems (Hampton-Sosa, 2019). Although modifying the business model from both online streaming platforms and those in the music industry is ideal, addressing issues with governance and proper compensation remain at the forefront of the debate. Many strategies used in the music industry have been used to counteract the effects of piracy on music distribution and revenue. From adjusting pricing to legal ramifications, piracy has proven to be challenging for the music industry (Hampton-Sosa, 2017).

According to Mitchell et al. (2018) the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) reported 30 billion songs were illegally shared and downloaded, leading

to the litigation of copyright infringement. The phenomenon of piracy began to reach global heights with the music sharing platform, Napster in 1999 (Aversa et al., 2019). Virtual private networks and remote file-sharing has made it easy for piracy to continue to thrive. Aversa et al. (2019) found that recent studies support the claim that digital piracy has led to a significant decline in physical album sales. Those in the music industry have tried to counteract the use of these methods by using digital management protections for music distributed (Husin & Hidayanto, 2018). According to Husin and Hidayanto (2018), by using digital management protections, limitations can be placed on how the consumer obtains music.

Generating Revenue in the Music Industry

DIY Entrepreneurship

The changes in the digital industry caused record executives and artists to rethink their business models and reevaluate the relationships that existed between the two entities. Part of the issue lied in how cost-effective the digital market was for artists who are not contracted by record companies to acquire the same resources and benefits from online streaming platforms. As a result of this change for artists, record companies are viewed as influential intermediaries between the artist and online streaming platforms. However, record companies have a certain amount of influence with online streaming platforms and can offer an abundance of products which artists on their own cannot to these online streaming companies. This dilemma leaves the artist to choose sides which includes the decision to handle their careers on their own or to continue to collaborate with major record labels.

Originating from the home improvement industry, DIY concepts have extended to include music and the arts consisting of in-home studios and makeshift venues (Jones, 2021). Instead of being mistreated by players in the music industry, artists can conduct their business affairs on their own behaves. The current music industry evolved from various innovations in technology such as the cassette tape, CD, and MP3 players. As technological innovation continued to happen, music became more accessible to the consumer. Davis (2017) suggested that artists and record companies integrate themselves within the fabric of platforms to advance their careers, taking on entrepreneurial marketing statuses.

Music artists like Chance the Rapper have made the decision to not rely on record companies and copyright laws and adopt a DIY entrepreneurial method for getting their music out to consumers, while turning a profit (Heins, 2018). Therefore, it has been argued that placing a significant amount of emphasis on reforming copyright laws is an unnecessary focus. When record labels were the dominant gatekeeper of artists being successful, copyright laws were one of the most important aspects to have for music. As hardware and technology have shifted, artists' means to record and distribute their music without spending thousands of dollars has helped them become self-sufficient. The DIY business model for artists consists of an artist being able to self-produce, become popular through directly submitting to intermediaries, touring, and capitalizing off a perceived persona (Heins, 2018).

Many independent artists who take a DIY approach to their careers may supplement their careers by maintaining secondary career paths. In a study done by

Haenfler (2018), some punk rock artists hold positions in writing, social work, or careers indirectly related to their music. Artists managing multiple positions requires maintaining flexible schedules to concentrate on their music careers. Music artists handle booking, revenue-generating strategies, organizing, contacting agents, promotions, and sales, suggesting that entrepreneurial skills go hand in hand with creative aspects of being a music artist (Haynes & Marshall, 2018a). In the vane of DIY behavior music commentator, Dave Kusek views artists as being their own company and as such offers advice on how to generate income from multiple streams within the music industry (Haynes & Marshall, 2018a).

Disintermediation

The service of an incumbent can become obsolete due to disintermediation. Disintermediation is the elimination of a middle participant within a supply chain, which leads to direct contact between two parties (Haynes & Marshall, 2018b). Haynes and Marshall (2018b) pointed out that disintermediation involved the changing of the social and behavioral habits of the consumer within an industry. This process involved the service of an incumbent becoming obsolete, due to being overtaken by innovation or a different way of operating. Disintermediation influences the economic labor structure because independent music artists now have the means to create independent of intermediaries (Walzer, 2021).

Galuszka (2015) suggested that disintermediation may not only occur as a direct result of the disruptive innovation of online streaming but also from adapting to other intermediaries and the restructuring of the music industry. Reducing the production of

CDs and long play (LP) albums, artists could consider online streaming as a new business standard in the restructuring of the old music industry business model. Online music streaming platforms can therefore be viewed as internal disrupters that profit from music that caused the unbundling of a previously grouped product (Lee et al., 2020).

Online streaming platforms have unbundled the LP album and the CD by making music available in a single format for consumption. The unbundling of music via online streaming platforms turned music into a commodity shared across online streaming platforms. The unbundling concept makes the idea of buying bundled music obsolete. When a company unbundles products, it affects the standard ritual of a customer having to physically go into a store and purchase a CD and makes it easy for consumers to listen to and obtain music instantly. The end-user of the music has more control over how they listen to their music (Lee et al., 2020).

Essling et al. (2017) sought to understand the effects of bundling. Over 20 years, data was collected on the revenue generated by releasing single songs as opposed to albums. Essling et al. (2017) discovered a gradual decline in physical sales as technology advanced. When a record company decides to release a single song, the intention is to give the public a sampling of what a record company can offer the consumer. However, a rapidly growing digital market and the ability of a consumer to buy singles could add to the decaying effect of music released into the market. The emphasis on product decay gives rise to how record companies decide to release a single song or album into the market. Unbundling music into a single sale instead of an album has immediate effects on revenue in the music industry because music companies no longer have exclusive control

over how artists choose to release singles into the market, which the market is now in part controlled by consumer behavior (Essling et al., 2017).

Because of shifts in the music industry caused by intermediation and disintermediation, both record executives and artists alike are forced to adapt and change with the innovations. Haynes and Marshall (2018b) pointed out that it was a hope that the emergence of digital technology would give an artist the freedom to be independent of major record labels. The main hope was that this disintermediation would lead to formulating a better relationship between the artist and the consumer (Galuszka, 2015). However, direct contact with the consumer may require the artist to know how to monetize online music streaming platforms. Haynes and Marshall (2018a) argued that rather than digital technology being exclusively disruptive to production, creativity, and consumer value creation, new technology integrates with the existing practices of the music industry.

Finding ways to create value in the music industry when faced with technological advances and digitization has led those within the music industry to restructure their business models continuously (Ko & Lau, 2015). Ko and Lau (2015) pointed out that culture and socioeconomics have also contributed to determining the approaches used by record companies. As technology continues to advance, there is a need to determine the best methods to adapt, to create, and sustain the value within the music industry. In their research, Ko and Lau (2015) determined that how customers perceive the product they are receiving has an impact on music industry profitability.

Intermediation

Creators of online streaming platforms have been able to sustain due in part to the intervention of intermediaries that have enabled easy access to music with the invention of MP3 players in 1979 and other devices (Sharakhina, 2020). Companies can consider intermediaries niche players within the value chain, creating an innovation ecosystem. The innovation ecosystem involved the integration of several technologies, which created an ease of use for the end-user (Ozgur et al., 2017). The disruptive nature of online music streaming platforms can be expanded to include technology such as MP3 players and mobile devices as intermediaries.

Digital streaming music platforms serve as intermediaries between the music artists and the consumer. In this manner, artists using online streaming platforms face obstacles in financially generating and sustaining income. However, new intermediaries have slowly started emerging that seek to disrupt the digital market. The creation of the 1-day Part of the issue lied in how cost-effective the digital market was for artists who are not contracted by record companies to acquire the same resources and benefits from online streaming platforms. celebration called Record Store Day identified a gap that existed between technology and personal customer engagement. Celebrating Record Store Day emphasized retailers reestablishing vinyl records to physically engage the listener in small record stores to music enhancing the idea of vinyl having a collector's item appeal (Harvey, 2017; Bates, 2020).

Bates (2020) suggested that consumers' direct interaction with music products is a benefit to brick-and-mortar companies. Online music streaming platforms can be viewed

as direct distribution portals with streaming executives having the capability of exclusively controlling what goods consumers are able to access at any given time (Maaso & Hagen, 2020). Therefore, the in-person interaction has helped retailers fill in the gap of cultivating customer relationships for sustainable growth in the music industry. Online music streaming has forced music stakeholders to redirect how they digitally distribute music and holistically engage with their customers by monitoring listening behavior through datafication methods obtained from the streaming platforms (Maaso & Hagen, 2020). While getting a boost after the decline of CD sales, record store owners redirected their efforts toward creating face-to-face interaction with the customer's relationship with music thereby connecting it to other lifestyle experiences of consumers (Bates, 2020).

The revival of the vinyl record, in the face of the online streaming revolution, has managed to create a unique connection between the customer and the artist (Harvey, 2017). While vinyl records sold in small retail settings act as an intermediary between customers and artists, as do popular digital platforms, the creating of experiences such as Record Store Day had a direct influence on the economics of small communities (Harvey, 2017). The resurgence of the vinyl record has been able to find a middle playing ground in the face of digital monopolization. Retailers have been able to redirect the focus on music consumption by creating a unique customer experience (Harvey, 2017). Fleischer (2017) pointed out that music as a branded experience was becoming a dominant fixture within the landscape of the music industry, with a focus on introducing customers to

music that caters to customers' life moments, making it easier for them to access music through playlists.

There are a variety of streaming music services that generate revenue through subscription-based membership and paid advertising, yet artists have not been appropriately compensated for their music due to lack of visibility and consumer accessibility on these platforms (O'Dair & Fry, 2020). The customer to artist exchange and the currency system of blockchain technology is an example of an intermediary that could potentially disrupt the innovation of online music streaming platforms and their subscription pricing strategy. Owen and O'Dair (2020) explored blockchain technology as an alternative to music streaming platforms, which could solve the issues of documenting music ownership, slow return on investment, and inaccurate royalty distribution. Blockchain technology, as a form of intermediation, creates a networking industry among key industry players that will create a direct interactive experience between artists and consumers.

The evolution of streaming platforms has introduced a new form of commodification or value-exchange into the music industry (Fleischer, 2017). As an intermediary step, subscription-based listening, peer to peer file sharing, and advertised listening contribute to a commodity-based economy. Using the aggregator, Spotify, as an example of a commodifier, Fleischer's (2017) research opens up the conversation about music as a commodity that provides a gateway to other commodities.

Supply Chain Collaboration

Working from the inside out could prove useful in establishing positive business-to-business relationships. Research showed that the focus for companies has shifted to making sure that the functions of the supply chain are aligned with the value created for stakeholders (McLoughlin et al., 2021). This phenomenon could prove beneficial within an online streaming market with an emphasis on online platforms working in conjunction with artists towards a common goal.

Kang and Moon (2016) focused on how to improve supply chain performance through supply chain collaboration. Combining a resource-based view and dynamic capability theory, Kang and Moon (2016) found IT competency to be a contributing factor to supply chain performance regarding collaboration. Research demonstrated that supply chain competency in IT can lead to an increase in supply chain-to-supply chain exchange of information. Kang and Moon's (2016) findings could expand research into the causal relationship within supply chain collaborations.

Naveed et al. (2017) pointed out that revenue within the music industry has declined since the emergence of the online streaming of music. Naveed et al. (2017) suggested that the internet gives customers access to music, providing free and unpaid services. While revenue increased for streaming platforms and record companies, distrust grew from artists who did not feel that they were being paid enough for their products. The break down in revenue caused a shift in focus, and artists started to rely on live concerts to generate income (Naveed et al., 2017). Live events provide the artist an opportunity to be more visible in an oversaturated market (Danielsen & Kjus, 2019).

Seen as a new part of the music artist business model, live streaming is a way for artists to stay connected to fans and generate revenue (Breese et al., 2020). More prominent during Covid artists live streaming their performances has introduced a wider range of opportunities and audience connection in conjunction with live in person concerts (Rendell, 2020).

Artists doing live concerts did not, however, replace the digital streaming market. Through their research, Naveed et al. (2017) suggested that live concerts co-evolved with digital streaming and complimented live concert sales. Naveed et al. (2017) tested the theory that artists are promoting their live concerts through digital streaming sites, which would lead to a better rate of return for the artists. Naveed et al. (2017) tested this theory by analyzing streaming platform services and concert events side by side after the economic recession of 2008.

The findings were that the loss of revenue could be counteracted by live shows that engaged the consumers as co-creators of their own experience. By working hand in hand, owners of online streaming platforms and artists could establish business relationships to create better value and generate revenue. Similarly, leading executives from companies such as Live Nation, AEG, and OCESA/CIE recognized the connection between live concerts and online streaming platforms and they established exclusive deals with artists in direct competition with record companies (Simon, 2019). From 2003 to 2007, to help music artists, *The O.C. Effect* was created on the TV drama *The O.C.* by the music supervisors to specifically include and license the music of independent music artists, drawing attention to the music artist's brand. These efforts to license music made

it an acceptable way to distribute music for artists providing them with exposure and revenue (Nelson, 2018).

Value Cocreation

Cocreation involves analyzing customer involvement at all levels of product evolution. Research shows that customer involvement and the behavior of a customer within a company's product evolution process has influenced purchase decisions on both sides. The customer involvement in cocreation also extends to how customers interact with each other and the circumstances surrounding customer engagement when chosen for a multi-dimensional study. Interaction and the experience that consumers have with companies creates value. Value cocreation can impact the existing relationship between a company and the consumer. In analyzing the whole experience through online consumer engagement, Zhang et al. (2018) found that taking the feedback and comfortability of customers into account in relation to their services would enable them to improve their services.

The shift from consumer electronics (CE) and information technology (IT) companies has contributed to how people consume music. Corporate interest in music consumption is dominated by CE companies such as Siemens and Sony merging with record companies such as Columbia and Polygram Records. These mergers connected products with personal consumption. The evolution from CE to IT signaled the instant personalized virtual consumption of music through streamed-based companies like Spotify (Hesmondhalgh & Meier, 2018). Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2018) suggested that these rapid changes in technology have caused the devaluation of music by the consumer.

Klein et al. (2017) explored the nuance of how music artists are compromising value in their work to gain economic independence. This goal of creating value leads musicians to partner with companies for profit, which once was deemed hazardous to remaining in control of original works. While technology has offered more exposure to music artists, it has also paved the way for increased intense competition from major record labels and a decline in record sales (Kiresci, 2021). In their research, Sanchez-Olmos and Castello-Martinez (2020) concluded that multiple alternative sources of generating revenue have emerged, and that selling single songs and albums is no longer effective.

Brand placement is viewed by artists as a way to counteract the disruptive innovation of streaming platforms for increasing their sales (Sanchez-Olmos & Castello-Martinez, 2020). Cobranding can strengthen the influence of the collaboration between two entities through positive association (Ordanini et al., 2018). It is suggested that brand alliance can strengthen the quality perceived by the consumer of two brands working together (Kupfer, 2018). For example, music artist Patti LaBelle was able to expand on her career by cross-branding with cookbooks, hosting a cooking show, and becoming a spokesperson for reputable brands, increasing visibility and brand value (Vesey, 2018).

The Sharing Economy

Sharing economies are a form of disruptive innovation that changed how customers pay for and receive their product, with the projected profit gain of \$300 billion by 2025 (Munoz & Cohen, 2017). Munoz and Cohen (2017) suggested that the lack of knowledge about how these economies are structured has caused tension between

protecting businesses and the consumer. By researching the different business models that exist, Munoz and Cohen (2017) discovered that there is no concrete way to define what constitutes a sharing economy.

Because of the advancement of technology, online streaming economies have evolved, causing more attention to be placed on the significance of creating value for the customer. Zhang et al. (2018) found that this phenomenon leads to a shift in how a company creates a loyal customer following. Creating value requires both supplier and customer participation through direct interaction. Through this type of interaction, the customer perception of a service offered can stimulate them to invest in a product or service (Zhang et al., 2018).

The sharing economy has provided a more convenient and less expensive way for customers to obtain services and goods while creating trust and value. Kathan et al. (2016) pointed out that due to the rapidly growing pace of modern technology, regulations that would support fairness within a sharing economy are not always followed. Although establishing a sharing economy could aid in an individual generating extra income, it may not offer financially sustainable means of income. Further research could indicate how sharing economies can create a balancing effect to satisfy both the customer and the company in building a positive and progressive business relationship (Kathan et al., 2016).

Crowdfunding

Small and medium-sized businesses are intricate in introducing new ideas and products to a market. Crowdfunding has become an alternative for small and medium-

sized enterprises (SME) to obtain their financial resources and pay off debt (Kit, 2021). However, compared to larger companies, SMEs are at a disadvantage when it comes to obtaining funds from larger entities. According to Kit (2021), by gaining access to funds through crowdfunding instead of large financial corporations, SME owners gain a financial advantage, increase market visibility, and establish close business relationships. The music artist can be viewed as an SME in this capacity as it pertains to generating revenue for the creation and development of music independently.

Crowdfunding has eliminated the need for artists to look to record companies as intermediaries, because of fans becoming more involved in their music listening experience. The elimination of barriers between artists and fans became evident with the rise of the internet in the 1990s and the lack of marketing research done by record companies (Galuszka & Brzozowska, 2017). Although crowdfunding is a way to engage the consumer, Galuszka and Brzozowska (2017) pointed out that it has yet to increase the sale of albums and status for the artists.

Social Construct of the Music Industry

Emails and Websites

Sending emails is a direct marketing approach that helps strengthen the loyalty of customers. Distributing emails to consumers is a part of the social construct of business. Email marketing helps to effectively build customer engagement (Bismo & Sukma, 2019). The one-way communication of emails used by business executives aids in businesses building relationships with clients to inspire them to view a company's website (Civelek et al., 2020). Developing a website helps executives engage with and

inform clients of what their company offers in a detailed manner and encourages people to perform an action which is an effective marketing strategy (Vasiliu, 2020).

Social Media

One of the most widely used digital marketing tools in business is social media (Bismo & Sukma, 2019). Burrati et al., (2018) pointed out that social media markets helped executives participate more in direct communication with consumers. From a business perspective, social media makes it possible for business owners to overcome their lack of resources and create collaborative opportunities. The same approach could apply to artists who use these platforms to engage their fans as a second avenue to bring awareness to their music. Social media outlets have changed the way people communicate with one another. Venciute (2018) posited that the internet and social media have made it faster for people to communicate with one another, building consumer loyalty over time. Not only are social media platforms used as an engagement tool, but the outreach to the consumer is on a larger scale, and aids company leaders in understanding their markets. As suggested by Venciute's (2018) research, social media could be considered part of a company's overall marketing strategy.

Social media has allowed consumers to engage directly with companies. In their study Bismo and Sukma (2019) found that social media provided a convenience to consumers to find information they needed, making the consumer intent to purchase from a business greater. Researchers have suggested that there is a connection between the increase in sales for artists and consumers engaging an artist's social media content (Kupfer et al., 2018). In addition, participating in social media marketing is seen as a key

factor in building relationships beyond a financial transaction (Shabbir et al., 2020).

When interacting on social media, the artist becomes the company in which consumers are seeking to engage. This type of outreach enables an artist to develop an emotional bond with consumers.

According to Saboo et al. (2016), musicians ranked in the top ten of people most followed on social media. Visually pleasing content can be created to capitalize on the awareness of the average social media user. Ramadanty et al. (2020) found that coupling creative visuals with text in social media posts and the timing of the posts is received at a higher intensity than using text in a post alone. Social media platforms act as both a tool to raise awareness and a tool for professional development.

Musicians, as well as those in other careers, can increase marketing opportunities by creating ecosystems of like-minded individuals and engage more people through their social media circles (Tribulski, 2020). The addition of followers could serve as guidance for artists as they navigate their roles as DIY entrepreneurs. Shabbir et al. (2020) concluded that social media marketing coupled with relationships with customers leads to an increase in customer engagement which leads to more potential for sales. The interaction between artists and consumers could shift the products offered by artists which are rooted in consumer feedback. According to Tribulski (2020), the observation of the new music industry's social media interaction enhanced other traditional media activity, bringing more awareness to an artists' personal and professional lives.

Music Streaming Platforms

Spotify and similar streaming platforms claimed that their interactions with both their customers and their business-to-business relationships with record companies and artists worked in the artist's favor. With limited research conducted to measure how profitable the relationship with the artist had been, researchers turned their focus to dissecting the process of how music is obtained and distributed to maximize customer behavior and artists' satisfaction. Popular online music streaming platforms like Spotify aligned with social media in the sharing of information to connect with consumers, which increased a customer's network with each other.

The leveraging of social media platforms has allowed artists a direct-to-fan interaction. Haynes and Marshall (2018a) suggested that the direct-to-fan interaction brought on by social media platforms enabled artists to sell directly to their fan bases. The ability to connect with consumers has dismantled the traditional music business model which focused on industry led interactions minus the artist. Hagen and Luders (2016) tested the theory of music acting as a social construct to bring people together in a broader supportive community and concluded that streaming enables consumers to influence each other.

Online streaming platforms can vary from geographical location, making it difficult to determine if these platforms are achieving connectedness (Hagen & Luders, 2016). Hagen and Luders's (2016) concluded that file sharing for customers depended on what they perceived as private or public when it comes to their information. These factors ultimately shaped how a customer related to others and provided a look into how they

interacted on online streaming platforms. Hagen and Luders (2016) suggested that customers are in control of their music streaming and sharing experiences.

Spotify offers a diverse range of music for customers to choose from. Through acquiring the music intelligence company, The Echo Nest, executives at Spotify sought to expand their global reach in hopes of regenerating money back into the music industry, based on reshaping the customer experience. However, the creators of Spotify received criticism for having too many repetitive music looping cycles that took away from the consumer listening experience (Snickars, 2017). Through reverse engineering, Snickars (2017) conducted a study using bots as dummy customers on Spotify, to gain an understanding of the platform algorithms and how music is chosen for replay and looping. Snickars (2017) concluded that the repetitive nature of Spotify algorithms failed to create a personalized customer experience.

Streaming Platforms Advantage and Disadvantage

Online music streaming platforms offer an alternative selling method to record companies and artists. A study by Lee et al. (2016) focused on the effects of legal music streaming on artists' revenue and the contrast between digital and physical products. According to Reinhardt and Gurtner (2018), record companies failed to see the potential of online streaming as being disruptive or beneficial and failed to prepare for the possible change within the business structure. Lee's et al.'s (2016) research showed that online sales have a positive impact on overall records sales, prompting a customer to seek out music products (i.e., CDs and LPs) offline. The study done by Lee et al. (2016) did not

consider the legal ramifications that record labels and specifically independent artists faced.

Record companies have an advantage over independent artists because they have control over a wide range of music. This control gives the record company the ability to negotiate prices with the online streaming platforms on their terms leaving independent artist limited negotiation power. Major record label executives are afforded the power to negotiate for exclusive content, company shares, and lower royalty rates with online music streaming companies (Huffman, 2019). The unpaid consumption of music by customers causes a reduction in revenue for the artist. It is suggested that the decline in revenue for the artist started occurring when consumers engaged in file sharing, with revenue slipping by 75% (Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2016). This free consumption affected not only what the artists was paid but impacted the way that producers and other creatives were paid (Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2016). If the creative entities behind a music project do not get paid, it creates a scarcity within production.

Haynes and Marshall (2018a) pointed out that there are benefits for artists that engage with online music streaming platforms, which could offer them global exposure, direct engagement with their fan base, and an opportunity to sell more than music. It is suggested that artists embrace streaming platforms as an ally and include them in their online streaming strategies (Reinhardt & Gurtner, 2018). The inclusion of online streaming into an artist's business strategy could draw more attention to an artist's brand and prompt the consumer to invest more in the artists' brand. While easy access to these platforms is great for the artist, the streaming platforms are oversaturated with music,

thus hindering revenue to support the endeavors of the artists (Haynes & Marshall, 2018b). However, Hesmondhalgh (2020) pointed out that the inclusion of streaming platforms in an artists' overall business model has increased revenue by 25% which is slightly higher than the rate of 5% to 10% from record sales in the 1900s and early 2000s. Oversaturation could prompt an artist to find other methods of generating income.

Playlists

Playlists have become a popular way for consumers to discover new music on streaming platforms and an artist standard because consumers may not favor full albums over listening to single songs. Some artists address playlists as being a body of work, that if following the most recent addendum to the Copyright Act, would be deemed a body of work that could be protected (Misrok, 2019). Playlisting is used by digital music streaming platforms to assist in the discovery of new music by artists and to administer pay per stream accordingly (Morgan, 2020). Zhang and Negus (2021) pointed out that playlisting helps record companies specifically in their attempts to direct the listening habits of the consumer. Playlists can be separated into curated and noncurated playlist. Unlike third party noncurated playlists, both Spotify and Apple Music have playlists that are curated by consumers who create a unique marketing experience for songs that are chosen for featured playlists on those platforms (Morgan, 2020).

When placed into the broader scope of rights for all individuals involved with online streaming platforms, some hurdles remain to be worked out within the online streaming business structure. For example, in 2015 recording artist Cari Fletcher credited her financial success as an independent artist to being discovered through the New Music

Fridays playlist on Spotify, which helped them create a global fanbase (Hackett, 2019). New Music Fridays is structured as a day that Spotify features 50 new songs in each country that Spotify does business in, with the possibility of additional visibility for music artists (Aguilar & Waldfogel, 2021).

Transition and Summary

Section 1 of this study consisted of an introduction to the study, problem statement, and nature of the study that supported using a multiple case study design. Included in Section 1 were the research questions, interview questions, conceptual framework, and the significance of the study, as pertinent aspects of the study. The scope of my study was to explore business strategies music artists used to create a steady revenue stream in a music streaming environment. As changes have occurred rapidly in how companies distribute music to consumers through streaming music platforms, music artists need to understand how to navigate through the changes.

A thorough literature review of research that reflects the past and current state of the music industry was developed. A breakdown of the role of the researcher, participants, research methods and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data analysis, reliability, and validity will be detailed in Section 2. Section 3 will include the findings of the study, applications of professional practice, implication of social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I discuss (a) my role as the researcher, (b) qualification criteria for those who participated in the study, (c) rationale for selecting and using the research method and design, (d) population definition and sampling procedures, (e) employed ethical standards, (f) data collection instruments used, (g) data collection and organization, (h) data analysis process and steps, and (i) means for assuring the study's reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. The target population consisted of six music artists in the New York City area who have maintained a steady revenue stream by distributing their original music on online streaming platforms in the past 5 years. The implications for positive social change include improving the financial sustainability of music artists, which in turn improves the quality of life for working musicians and allows them the opportunity to use their musical talents to benefit citizens of their communities. Music can be used as a form of medicine and therapy. Health care professionals use music by having a patient listen to their favorite music to treat various ailments such as anxiety and stress (Monsalve-Duarte et al., 2021). Music therapy has been credited with improving the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of life. For example, physical therapy that uses music is known to improve balance and mobility in Parkinson's disease patients (Sotomayor et al., 2021).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to collect and analyze data in an unbiased and objective way. The role of a researcher in the data collection process is one of detachment, being a part of the research as an instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Clark & Veale, 2018). Coming from a family of entertainers, I watched the slow decline of artists' revenue firsthand through family members and friends. Artists I knew were either released from their agreements with record companies or chose to become independent artists free of being controlled by record label owners, both of which had an effect on their revenue.

Not all biases can be eliminated from research, but as Wadams and Park (2018) pointed out, biases should be recognized and addressed by a researcher. As a researcher, I needed to be aware of my personal biases when conducting research. Because of my familiarity with the business problem, I remained mindful of not imposing my personal beliefs on my participants, and I used multiple sources of data to confirm the findings in my study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), people are a good instrument for data collection because they can deconstruct thought and gather understanding of participants.

When conducting this study, I followed the ethical standards of the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report is the ethical guide that protects the rights of human participants involved in the research process, with emphasis on respect of persons, beneficence, and justice (Redman & Caplan, 2021). The respect of persons, as described in the report, is recognized as participants having the right to participate in a study or not and to make proper allowances for participants who are vulnerable in a process (Fox et

al., 2021). To ensure voluntary participation, all participants gave consent beforehand by responding to the invitation/consent letter with the words *I consent*. By engaging in beneficence, I as the researcher vowed to do no harm by making participants aware of any events during the research process that may have been a potential risk to them, which leads to the third principle of justice or treating each participant fairly throughout the process (Fox et al., 2021).

To mitigate potential research bias, I used member checking, which allows participants to correct data and the researcher the chance to obtain additional information to reach data saturation (Motulsky, 2021). I also engaged with participants I did not have a personal or professional relationship. However, I established a rapport with participants so there were no limitations on the depth of the data collected (Thurairajah, 2019).

An interview protocol is vital to gain useful qualitative data (Yeong et al., 2018). Establishing an interview protocol framework helped to refine the semistructured interviews I conducted. Developing a plan of action for an interview ensures a researcher fully informs the participant about the nature of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Furthermore, Yeong et al. (2018) pointed out that by developing an interview protocol, a researcher can develop their interview process.

Participants

Participants for this study consisted of six music artists in the New York City area who maintained a steady revenue stream by distributing their original music on online streaming platforms in the past 5 years. Social platforms and the use of technology is unreliable if not for the user (Jordan, 2018). In the case of music artists for this study, the

artists were the users of internet technology for purposes of generating income through their music; the artists and their business strategies were the primary focus of the study. For participants to be eligible for this study, they had to be 18 years of age with at least 5 years of experience in generating revenue with their music via online streaming platforms, online aggregators, and other revenue streams to establish consistency of the music artist within a digital industry. These criteria helped to build the validity and reliability of the study findings. Creating validity and reliability increases the transparency of research while decreasing researcher bias (Fusch et al., 2018).

The search for participants began with researching successful music artists whose home base was in the New York City area. I gathered a list of profiles of independent music artists by conducting a Google search, social media search, access to colleagues directly connected to potential participants, and direct access to independent music artists. I initiated contact with participants through introductory emails, phone calls, and personal visits to public events where the artists were participating. I needed to establish a level of comfortability with the participants and find common ground as the researcher. Achieving comfortability and rapport helps to establish mutual trust and respect, leading to voluntary communication (Sivasubramaniam, 2021). Also building rapport with participants in the form of a question that shows interest in the participant can help a researcher establish a sense of comfort with the participant (McGrath, 2019).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

A methodology is used to develop new knowledge about a research topic and lay the foundation of how a researcher will conduct their research to achieve desired results (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Researchers use qualitative methods to conduct in-depth studies of a phenomenon by collecting rich narratives through people's real-life experiences and the meanings attached to them (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, which uses a structured approach, qualitative research uses an unstructured approach that allows researchers to use tailored methods in research (Cypress, 2018). A qualitative method was appropriate for this study to explore business strategies used to generate revenue from online streaming platforms.

Both quantitative and qualitative research focuses on data and segmenting of a phenomenon as an object of interest (Park & Park, 2016). Park and Park (2016) suggested that qualitative research methods focus on a field study in natural settings, and the researcher often looks for patterns within the data. The research methods differ in that quantitative research functions in a controlled environment in which researchers make predictions, measure their findings, and seek to justify the research (Park & Park, 2016). In answering the what and how of research, using a quantitative research method will only answer and expose trends in research but does not answer the why of how phenomena came to be (Bush & Amechi, 2019). Although there were similarities in the experiences of the music artists observed for this study, there were also unique differences in each artist's experience, which would have made it challenging to use a

structured quantitative method to capture the complete experience of the music artists' interactions with online streaming platforms.

Music artists can be viewed as entrepreneurs, and as such, each artist has a unique set of experiences and business practices in mind. Quantitative statistics can vary, causing a broad range of data collection that could take an unmeasurable amount of time to get concise research results. Because qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to seek opposite outcomes, one in a controlled environment and the other in a natural environment, using a mixed research method would have proven challenging. Mixed-method research relies on using both quantitative and qualitative variances, which could become costly and similarly time consuming (Dawadi et al., 2021).

Research Design

The multiple case study served as the appropriate design for this research. A case study can answer the how and why of a phenomenon, emphasizing data collection through interviews, archives, and observation (Zahle, 2019). As an extension of a single case study, multiple case studies can deliver more robust results that either illustrate replications or significant contrasts between cases (Yin, 2017) and increases the understanding of a phenomenon (Zahle, 2019). I used the interview process to achieve data saturation. Bansal et al. (2018) suggested that drawing on the data found through participant experience can move theory into new directions, especially when the research in each area is understudied.

In contrast to case studies, other strategies such as phenomenology and ethnography are specifically rooted in the direct observation that goes beyond the surface

to gain an in-depth understanding, which requires an extensive amount of field study and is the key component in those types of studies (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). A researcher can think of ethnography as describing and observing culture (Magnat, 2018).

Ethnography is focused on studying a group over a long period and involves participation and observation to interpret data (Mohajan, 2018). The business of music consists of skilled practitioners who unless already involved in that industry would make it difficult to grasp. Therefore, ethnography was not ideal for this study.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative multiple case study consisted of six music artists in the New York City area who, within the past 5 years, had successfully published and independently distributed their original music using online streaming along with other revenue streams. A researcher determines the sample size of a study by a predetermined purpose, time, and resources that illustrate transferability and discovery (Bush & Amechi, 2019). Purposeful sampling involves selecting participants based on who would be the most informative, contingent on the researcher's judgment (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

To be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to be music recording artists who use online streaming business strategies to maintain a steady revenue stream. A researcher reaches data saturation when they can emphasize depth and quality, and there are no new themes and no new data discovered within the interview process (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is intricate in assessing validity in research, which is determined by how many interviews will be enough to achieve saturation and other

factors such as the scope of the study, research method and design, nature of the study, and information obtained from the participant (Aldiabat & LeNavenec, 2018).

Eligibility requirements for participants included being 18 years or older and being an independent music artist in New York City for a minimum of 5 years. Each participant had to have revenue means that may have included but were not limited to digital music sales, publishing royalties, merchandising, and live performances. I conducted each interview via a secured video conferencing link and asked participants to select a private open environment, to ensure participant comfortability. Research done by Hoogesteyn et al. (2019) showed that providing a spacious open environment for a participant makes a participant comfortable with disclosing information. Also, choosing a private place free of distraction helps in achieving a quality recording of the interview (McGrath et al., 2019).

Ethical Research

Those who participated in my study did so voluntarily and did not receive compensation for their participation. Because there were human subjects involved in this research study, I sought approval by the Walden University Institutional Review Board. Osborne and Luoma (2018) pointed out that research conducted under the IRB jurisdiction follows the standard rule of research, which is the rule of ethics for all government-funded human subject research in the United States. Upon approval from Walden University's IRB, each participant was contacted and sent an invitation/consent letter to participate via email.

In the invitation/consent letter, I disclosed the purpose of my study, the nature of participation, participant confidentiality, and all other ethical matters. Participants who were invited to participate in the study responded with the words *I consent* if they chose to participate. Participants had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time by sending an email expressing their desire to withdraw from the study without consequence.

I also detailed the purpose of the research study in the invitation/consent letter, including participant expectations and the safe storage of the data. I addressed the purpose and significance of my research study, the measures of confidentiality, and the intended audience who would benefit from my study in the invitation/consent letter. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) and Nomazulu (2018), the identity of participants should not appear anywhere in the research. To ensure the privacy of participants and that participants' identities were not compromised, I used alphanumeric identifier codes, assigning the letter A to identify artists (A1, A2, A3). Kamanzi and Romania (2019) suggested that confidentiality entails not revealing who participates in a study with only the primary researcher being privy to that information. I provided participants a copy of the outcome of the study results for general distribution.

As per the requirements established by the IRB, I secured all data used and collected in the research process in a locked file cabinet, which will remain there for 5 years from the date of this completed study. After 5 years, I will permanently delete all digital data and shred all transcripts related to the study. The identity of each participant will remain confidential within, during, and after the research process, ensuring that no

identifying factors between the participant and their response will be in the published study (e.g., names, physical location, business relations). I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB before any data were collected. The IRB approval number for this study is 09-10-20-0668175.

Data Collection Instruments

As a researcher, I acted as the sole data collection instrument. I used semistructured interviews, which Brown and Danaher (2019) described as having a list of specific questions that participants can answer freely. I used semistructured interviews to explore the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. Each interview conducted was for approximately one hour, with the primary goal being to collect as much data as possible from each participant. I took notes and recorded participant responses using a digital recording device designated solely for use with my study.

An interview protocol (Appendix A) was my guide for conducting a successful interview with each participant. Researchers use interview protocols to ensure that the interview process remains systematic and for achieving relevant and comprehensive data in the specified time allotted for the interview (Yeong, et al., 2018). To ensure that answers were relevant, I asked the same questions of each participant, which consisted of six open-ended questions (Appendix A) used to explore business strategies of music artists, to generate revenue when using online streaming platforms.

To check the accuracy of the data collected through the interview process, I used member checking. Member checking involves validation from participants who can

check the intended meanings of their responses (Smith & McGannon, 2018). I gave participants a chance to review my interpretation of the information they provided, and to make any changes needed for assuring accuracy via the member checking follow-up interviews.

Data Collection Technique

Once Walden University IRB approved my study, I collected data. The primary data collection technique for my study was semistructured interviews. Interviewing is a way to receive first-hand information that a researcher may not have obtained through other methods (Kaliber, 2019). Kaliber (2019) pointed out that semistructured interviews involve social interaction between participant and interviewer. During the interview process for my study, I took notes and recorded all responses from participants' using a digital voice recorder. Note taking alone can result in key points being missed in the interview. Recording interviews can help maintain the interviewer's focus on the content of the interview so data can be captured more effectively (Brown & Danaher, 2019).

Triangulation is a concept based on the intertwining of either methodology, theory, investigative collaboration, or data collection (Fusch et al., 2018). Triangulation requires using multiple external sources of data to assure the reliability of data and to reach data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). Data triangulation is essential to gain a rich and detailed view of the study by obtaining data from different sources, places, and times (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Therefore, for the triangulation process and in addition to the semistructured interviews, I conducted a focus group and document reviews. Conducting a focus group

gives participants the opportunity to speak on a particular topic for gathering data for participants' interactions (Mozhgan et al., 2019). The participants for the focus group consisted of a combination of four managers, engineers, or producers in the music industry lived in the New York City area and had at least 5 years of experience in helping music artists generate revenue with their music via online streaming platforms.

Document review can help the researcher find reason and meaning in resources that are related to the topic being studied (Bathmanathan et al., 2018). According to Bathmanathan et al. (2018), a broad source of fixed background information that can be used to textualize the research being conducted are found in documents. I reviewed documents and reports from notable reporting sites such as Nielson Soundscan and the Recording Industry Association of America. In addition, I reviewed profit records from online music streaming platforms and reports on artists profits that were available from public records.

I selected all participants for both the interviews and the focus group via purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is defined as a process of selecting people or groups that are experienced with the study topic (Stratton et al., 2019). The interviews took place virtually via Zoom and each participant was asked to find a comfortable environment, free of distraction, that would give them the freedom to be open and honest with their answers. Before interviewing participants, they received an invitation/consent letter to decide if they wished to participate in the study. Each participant was informed to save or print a copy of the agreed upon invitation/consent letter for their records.

Using semistructured interviews entails being systematic in approach with a predetermined number of interview questions, which helps to maintain focus on the research topic at hand (Brown & Danaher, 2019). To ensure that I represented participants' responses to the interview questions accurately, I held follow-up interviews to conduct member checking of primary interview responses and interpretations with each participant. Each secondary interview was also recorded, and all data collected were included with the primary data.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization techniques are used in research to sort raw data to make the data understandable (Hartson & Pyla, 2021). Mobile devices make it convenient for those trying to get work done on the road to gather a large amount of data at one time (Boase & Humphreys, 2018). The main concern was in the vulnerability of using devices such as tablets and mobile phone technology to store research. To take extra precautions regarding the confidentiality of data gathered during the interview process, I used a digital recording device that I specifically designated for this study and I took notes by hand. I kept a research journal to keep track of things that I observed during the interviews and to ensure validity. Notes taken by research journaling during the interview process can be viewed as raw data which helps in establishing neutrality and trustworthiness (Amankwaa, 2016). Furthermore, keeping field notes or a research journal in combination with recorded interviews increases transparency and is less intrusive to the participant than recording (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

After collecting all data, I manually transcribed the participant responses and manually identified common themes and patterns using tables and categories in Microsoft Excel, along with the completion of data triangulation. I relied on NVivo 11 as a support software to help identify themes and commonalities that I may have missed initially. I removed all information that identified the participants by assigning each participant an alphanumeric label indicated as A1, A2, A3. Data anonymization provides confidentiality and privacy for the participant throughout different stages of the research process (Frank et al., 2018). I stored my data electronically by transferring it to a USB flash drive. All data from interviews, including written notes and the designated digital recording device was stored in a locked file cabinet, as required by the Walden University IRB, for 5 years. I am the only one to have access to the data collection instruments and will delete and shred all documents upon the 5-year expiration.

Data Analysis

I used the seven-step process developed by Marshall et al. (2021) for data analysis. The seven steps were (a) interpreting the data (b) organizing the data (c) data immersion (d) identifying common themes and patterns (e) categorizing the data (f) finding alternative understandings, and (g) writing the analysis. After conducting interviews with music artists in New York City area, I member checked by conducting a follow-up interview in which each participant was given an opportunity to add to, correct, or validate their previous responses. I also used focus group data collected and document review to reach data saturation. Member checking allows participants to correct their responses that may have been interpreted wrong by the interviewer, strengthening the

data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The conceptual framework of disruptive innovation was the guide to interpreting and comparing the findings. According to Smith and Firth (2011), using the framework approach can help in explicitly describing and increasing the credibility and transparency of the data. I stopped the interview process once I reached data saturation, and no new information could be found from the process.

It is essential to use triangulation in research because of the participants' and researcher's world view and biases intentionally or unintentionally present during the research process (Fusch et al., 2018). Fusch et al. (2018) described triangulation as a concept based on the intertwining of either methodology, theory, investigative collaboration, or data collection. There are four types of triangulations used for data analysis: (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation. Triangulation requires using multiple external sources of data to improve the reliability of data and reach data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). Data triangulation is essential to gain a rich and detailed view of the study by obtaining data from different sources, places, and times (Abdalla et al., 2018). I used methodological triangulation for this study. Fusch et al. (2018) describe applying methodological triangulation as using multiple external data collection methods, aiding in the researcher reaching data saturation.

To ensure that all steps of data analysis were covered, I transcribed all data collected from the participants during the interview process verbatim in Microsoft Word. In duality with traditional coding using paper and colored schemes to differentiate between themes and patterns, I placed all transcribed data into the data analysis program,

NVivo 11, to identify additional patterns and similarities in data that may have been missed during manual analysis. Using dual methods for identifying themes and patterns encourages reflection and more significant researcher interaction with the data (Maher et al., 2018). Also, using the literature review to correlate key themes found while analyzing data will help in deciphering between what was done before and gaps that may exist in the research (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Reliability and Validity

Trustworthiness in qualitative research helps to establish reliability and validity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The information obtained from the participants must be of value, be able to be used in other settings, be consistent, and be able to be confirmed by other researchers' conclusions about the study, to establish trustworthiness (Johnson et al., 2020). Glenna et al. (2018) pointed out that conventional research wherein the same researcher collects and analyzes the data makes the research linearly strong and central to establishing validity, opposed to conducting a large qualitative study that would involve multiple locations which would bring the quality of a study into question. Based on this knowledge, I chose to use a small sample size of six participants.

Reliability

Establishing reliability in research entails using legitimate research methods that are accepted in the research community for collecting and analyzing data and producing apt descriptions of a phenomenon (Collinridge & Gantt, 2019). For this study I used methodological triangulation to collect and analyze data and establish reliability. Using methodological triangulation aids in mitigating bias by using multiple data collection

methods for the study (Fusch et al., 2018). According to Collinridge and Gantt (2019), reliability in qualitative research focuses on finding consistent similarities in results. Additionally, establishing reliability in the study minimizes bias and error (Yin, 2017).

Credibility and Dependability

Research validity requires ensuring the credibility and dependability of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility requires enough prolonged engagement with participants to build trust and produce rich data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability deals with the findings in a study being consistent and in line with the standard of research design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For this study I established validity by conducting follow up interviews with each participant. Credibility and dependability can be established through following up with participants through member checking, which will allow the participants to give their input on whether the data collected in the initial interview is accurately reflecting their experiences (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Smith & McGannon, 2018).

Validity

Validity involves producing legitimate results from adequate interviewing, observation, experience, culture, and theory (Collinridge & Gantt, 2019). Collinridge and Gantt (2019) stated that validity requires the application of an appropriate method and applying the method to the research. Validity in research deals with the accuracy of the findings being investigated for the study (Noble & Heale, 2019).

Confirmability and Transferability

Confirmability is the level to which findings are shaped by participants rather than the interest and bias of the researcher (Amankwaa, 2016). In establishing confirmability, research findings are derived from the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I ensured confirmability by using methodological triangulation to see the data in multiple ways without personal bias. Also, I used transparency in describing the research steps throughout the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability is the extent to which findings in one study are useful or can be reproduced in another study (Nassaji, 2020). Transferability can be achieved in research by providing thick description to the point that external validity can be achieved (Amankwaa, 2016).

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I explained the role of the researcher, participants, the rationale for the selected research method and design, population definition and sampling procedure, methods employed for conducting ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, and processes for reliability and validity assurance. Section 3 will include the outcome and interpretation of the research, which identifies key themes and patterns assessed from the data gathering and analysis process. Section 3 will include potential applications to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the online streaming business strategies that music artists have used to maintain a steady revenue stream. Information was collected from six music artists who have maintained a steady revenue stream in the past 5 years by distributing their original music on online streaming platforms. Information was also collected from one focus group and from streaming income reports from music artists. The findings from this research will assist music artists in developing strategies that will consistently help them generate revenue by using online streaming platforms.

Presentation of the Findings

The overall research question for this study was: What online streaming business strategies do music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream? I conducted semistructured interviews and reviewed documents to thoroughly understand the online streaming business strategies music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. Four themes emerged from the data analysis process: (a) marketing, (b) music distribution channels, (c) cocreation, and (d) live music events.

Theme 1: Marketing

The six subthemes, as summarized in Table 1, for marketing are (a) engaging customers through social media, (b) creating visual content to post on digital platforms and social media, (c) selling merchandise to generate extra income, (d) keeping fans

updated about products and events through email blasts, (e) seeking out bloggers and magazines to get music reviews, and (f) maintaining an updated website.

Table 1

Participant Response Percentages of Subthemes for Marketing

Subthemes	%
Engaging customers through social media	100
Creating visual content to post on digital platforms and social media	100
Selling merchandise to generate extra income	71
Keeping fans updated about products and events through email blasts	57
Seeking out bloggers and magazines to get music reviews	57
Maintaining an updated website	43

Note. Percentage is the total occurrence of the subthemes from participants overall.

Social media engagement with fans was something that participants saw as the most important aspect of their business strategies. Participants agreed that all marketing should work hand in hand as a calling card to promote their music and make people aware of their brands. The responses made by the participants aligned with Shabbir et al.'s (2020) findings on social media marketing and the development of customer relationships. Participants mentioned that remaining consistent in posting engaging visuals to social media was important to keep fans interested in what music artists offer.

P1 said:

I do find that making advertisements that either have some kind of video content that matches up with your song, it doesn't have to be a full music video, but some kind of teaser video of some sort garnered me the most views and interest when I am posting about new releases that I have.

P5, P4, P6, and focus group participant F4 placed emphasis on artists frequently posting about their latest projects. F4 said, "People like visuals. So, music videos or just videos

you create on social media in general—it's a way to help people connect more to the music and connect to streaming.”

Due to the disruptive changes to the music business model, music artists have diversified their offerings outside of music to generate revenue. This change came in the form of merchandising or selling more than music to fans. P2, P5, P6, and all participants from the focus group agreed that selling merchandise is an effective alternative way to generate revenue and build brand awareness, in addition to selling music, which aligns with research conducted by Everts and Haynes (2021) regarding a musician diversifying their offerings to generate revenue. P2 explained:

I can start my e-commerce store and design my sweaters and my hats that are the same theme as my music and then start to sell it on Spotify. Spotify has a feature where you can turn your page into a store.

Similarly, F4 added that if you have merchandise, you can sell it through Bandcamp stated, “If you have cassettes, vinyl, shirts or anything, you can sell that.” P5 mentioned that at the festivals they perform at, they sell merchandise related to their brand more than physical CDs, stating, “Recently when I did a festival, I sold 12 CDs and \$500 worth of t-shirts.” P6 emphasized that being on the streaming platforms may lead to fans seeking out how they could access and buy their merchandise: “I believe streaming platforms are advertisement for your brand and for other things. It could lead to other things that you sell.”

Participants expressed the importance of email blasts, working in conjunction with other marketing elements to continue to inform fans of what they are offering. P1

mentioned collaborating with an artist who has a bigger following and is willing to share their lists to help an artist spread the word about their latest project. Regarding music artists distributing information to the fans about their projects, P6 stated, “I did a newsletter every week. Every single Monday, I put out a newsletter so people knew where to find me. and I could promote my stuff.” Music reviews were viewed by participants as being a good promotional tool to have handy for the creation of unique posts for social media that could be used for the engagement. P4 said, “The best business strategy for me it’s been a combination of getting some prereleased reviews that I can share. Some nice pull quotes which are just eye-catching review statements made about you by writers.”

In alignment with Ramandanty’s (2020) research on the increase in engagement brought on by creating visual content to post, P1 emphasized keeping an up-to-date website: “Make sure you have a website that serves as a home base for your artistry, your merch, people to join your mailing list and you have to really keep it up to date.” In alignment with P1, P6 stated that his strategy included housing information about music, tour dates, and other promotional material on a central website. P4 mentioned using other marketing platforms has allowed them to encourage people to explore their website:

I have been able to steer traffic and customers straight to my website because of Bandcamp because Bandcamp has allowed me to build up a following of people who are going to be interested in hearing what I’m putting out.

Theme 2: Music Distribution Channels

As summarized in Table 2, the three subthemes for music distribution were (a) playlisting, (b) distributing directly through standalone distribution platforms, and (c) using third-party aggregators for distributing music.

Table 2

Participant Response Percentages of Subthemes for Music Distribution

Subthemes	%
Playlisting	71
Distributing directly through standalone distribution platforms	57
Using third-party aggregators for distributing music	57

Note. Percentage is the total occurrence of the subthemes from participants overall.

Some participants felt that playlisting was a tried-and-true method to generate sales from music streaming platforms. Other participants felt that playlisting was a small way to bring awareness to their brands. Seen as a collaborative tool, P1 stated, “If you have someone that is known for making playlists and has a lot of followers on Spotify that listens to their playlists, those are good to get on as well.” A strategy used by P2 is contacting playlists curators to be placed on the playlists directly: “That’s how you get a multitude of people listening to your music and if they stream it and play it—then I get paid for those plays.” P3 expressed that playlisting was a way that artists could generate revenue from Spotify: “Getting on playlists will help generate sells from Spotify, but otherwise Spotify and iTunes do not seem to be big moneymakers for me.” F1 emphasized, “Playlisting is the new radio.”

Some music artists have chosen to either distribute music using a standalone digital platform such as Bandcamp, whereas others have chosen to distribute through

platforms such as DistroKid that send their music out to multiple streaming platforms. Other artists have chosen to use both standalone digital platforms and digital distributors. Bandcamp is viewed as both an artist- and customer-controlled platform. P2 uses the distribution of the digital distributor and emphasized that they like the convenience of a fast turnaround for distributing their music quickly to music streaming platforms.

P3, P4, P5, P6, and F4 agreed that Bandcamp is the most effective way to generate revenue from their music. P3 stated, “Bandcamp, which is where you see the most money as an artist—I can see every time someone buys my album on Bandcamp. It immediately writes me an email, and I get a high percentage of it for the album.” P4 stated, “Bandcamp, it gives the highest revenue share to the artist.” P5 mentioned that the Bandcamp feature of direct-to-fan interaction allows them to see who buys their product and in turn they can personally say thank their fans. P6 mentioned that Bandcamp is free to artists and offers a variety of sound file types when music is downloaded from the site. F4 stated, “They have this thing called *Bandcamp Fridays* where you can sell any music that you have and get all of your money. That goes straight to you.”

Theme 3: Co-Creation

As summarized in Table 3, the four co-creation themes are (a) online music streaming, (b) collaborating with other music artists, (c) cross promoting with other brands, and (d) creating music for film and television.

Table 3*Participant Response Percentage of Subthemes for Co-Creation*

Subthemes	%
Online music streaming	71
Creating music for film and television	43
Collaborating with other music artists	43
Cross promoting with other brands	43

Note. Percentage is the total occurrence of the subthemes from participants overall.

A small number of participants in the study expressed that streaming does not make any money; others suggested that streaming platforms help them generate revenue and provide a gateway to other money-making opportunities in music creation. In reviewing participant records of artists' revenue, the income was inconsistent, varying from making less than \$5 to more than \$29,000 in revenue per project in a fiscal quarter, which is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4*Revenue From Song Streaming Report Payouts and From Music Licensing*

Distribution method	Organization	Payout
Streaming (26,071)	ASCAP	\$3.81
Streaming (15,204)	BMI	\$1.30
Streaming (14,227)	BMI	\$19.39
Streaming (6,751)	TuneCore	\$29.24
Streaming (4,294,362)	TuneCore	\$5,077.87
Licensing	AFM	\$29,106.24

Note. Numbers are based on reports from artists from one fiscal quarter within a 5-year period.

P3 and P6 credit music licensing as either part of what financially sustains them or the main source of music revenue. P3 stated, "So I get a license every time I score for film. That amount of money has nothing to do with the amount of time that it's played on

Netflix or on HBO or whatever it is.” P5 credits streaming platforms and online presence for their licensing deals:

Somebody stumbled across some of my music and said hey I’m going to use this in this film. I want to give you this much money. I write jingles and I do film scoring. Somebody paid me \$15 grand to write a 2-minute piece.

P6 suggested seeking out licensing opportunities, as artists begin to mature in their career: “Streaming is just one piece of the pie. I would never make streaming the whole pie. As you progress in the industry hopefully you can start making money from licensing your work.”

Collaborating and cross promotion for participants was seen as a contributing factor in increasing overall revenue. P2 stated, “Collaborating with artists that are bigger than me and have a bigger brand will also bring plays to those streaming services and those plays will monetize. So, I’ll get paid for those too.” P4 emphasized how collaborating with other artists who are more popular can also create awareness around an artist’s brand:

I’ve done a lot of collaborating with people just remotely, and the best-case scenario in those situations is that everybody involved tells their people about it when it’s finished and it’s available. It’s an opportunity to maybe bring fans of other people who aren’t aware of me, and it also allows me to get a little bit more coverage with reviews and stuff.

F2 emphasized that working on multiple projects is beneficial:

Your revenue comes in more when you have your hands in other things that make sense. So, it is not just a 9 to 5. You got like 4 or 5. You must look at it even in the streaming services. You have to have multiple outlets.

Theme 4: Live Music Performance

The subthemes for music events were (a) touring and (b) hosting live events.

When the option to tour is not available, artists have turned to performing via streaming platforms and social media. P1 and P2 emphasized that touring was their main source of income where they could sell merchandise after their concerts. P3, P5, P6, and F4 shared that the biggest money maker for most artists is touring. P3 saw touring as a way to establish a relationship with fans who they would be able to steer toward interacting with them online: “If I go on a tour and I’m face to face with my audience, then I’m going to leave the room with a physical copy of something, and then they’re going to remember to follow me on live.” P5 also answered similarly: “It’s worked backwards for me. Someone has an experience at my live show and then they start following me online.”

In addition to live shows, P3 performed shows online to generate revenue: “Once a week, I did an online show that goes on for hours for my fans, and I said you can just donate what you want, and they’ve been doing that, and it’s helped support me.” Breese et al. (2020) noted that streaming concerts are a way to connect to fans even if the shows are live or prerecorded. P5 used prerecorded material to show on their Bandcamp platform to generate revenue and segue into other sources of income.

Applications to Professional Practice

Based on participant interviews, data analysis, and other data sources researched, music artists could apply the findings in this study to their business practices through marketing, music distribution, value co-creation, and live music performances. Music artists can reach more people by creating material with other artists and marketing that material to a targeted consumer base and include consumers in the creative process. Furthermore it could be beneficial for music artists to consider developing an entrepreneurial attitude that encompasses expanding their outreach beyond traditional online music streaming business strategies. Music artists could also extend their music offerings to be licensed for television and film projects and brand placement. Partnering with the right brands can give artists the exposure to develop beneficial relationships for all stakeholders involved (Rittenhouse, 2019).

Music artists could use various marketing strategies, processes, and tools that bring about awareness to their brands, leading to the cultivation of client relationships. By using a proper marketing strategy, artists could identify and focus on a consumer base that is willing to pay, regardless of the market's current state (Sheth, 2021). The benefits created by small business owners building relationships with the consumer are an increase in revenue and competitive advantage. Sheth (2021) noted that because of digitalization, consumer behavior has shifted from preferring physical interaction to online interaction as the primary means for product consumption, with a focus on the consumer both being the buyer and the user, looking for value in performance and price consecutively.

According to Saragih (2019), cocreation applies to all stages of the music business value system through the development, promotion, production, and distribution phases. Music artists could cultivate relationships with other artists who may have a more substantial consumer focus on engaging and involving the consumer in the music creation and delivery process. By concentrating on collaborating with other artists to gain a more extensive consumer base to market to and for selling their music and by engaging the consumer, artists could create increased value. Artists collaborating with stakeholders and consumers could create a more robust experience for all stakeholders involved (Saragih, 2019).

According to Nakano (2019), using a digital market supports downloads and streaming. Based on the findings in this study, artists could use a variety of distribution outlets, that suits their needs. Knowing this information, the music artist could analyze what types of digital platforms would be more beneficial, based off operational needs, to lead to an increase in profits.

Implications for Social Change

Currently, most music artists receive little to no revenue from streaming platforms unless supported by a team that can assist with those efforts. An artist's short-term and long-term goals are usually determined by their team, consisting of agents, lawyers, producers, and managers. Within the decision-making process, these team members can make decisions that will either be successful or end an artist's career, including handling an artist's finances (Brabec & Brabec, 2018). As participants in this study have expressed, music artists have often had to find other ways to generate money from their

music, which does not exclusively depend on streaming their music on digital music streaming platforms.

The cultivating of small businesses could catalyze job creation, adaptability to social change, and the rapid consumer response in a market (Seisenbayeva et al., 2020). Walzer (2017) indicated that successful artists are known for working with a team of creatives to bring attention to their brands collectively and meet their goals. Based on the findings in this study, the potential contributions to social change include creating sustainable income for independent music artists in a small business owner capacity and job creation for key players who aid in music creation and marketability. In such cases, those that contribute to an artist's music career, including musicians, producers, engineers, designers, writers, and more, can benefit from the success of an artist generating revenue from online music streaming. Job creation could come from these key players within the music industry cultivating communities or networks that work together to bring projects to fruition.

Recommendations for Action

Music artists are small business owners who offer a creative service to their consumers. As such, I recommend music artists develop a business strategy that emphasizes consumer and brand value. A marketing strategy could be put into place that creates a shared value between the artist and the consumer. Artists could achieve this by having a mission and vision to determine their position in servicing their communities (Grzegorzczuk, 2020). I recommend music artists pay attention to where and how they distribute their music. A benefit of artists strategically distributing their music is that

supply chain costs could decrease and value would be created for all stakeholders (Dubel, 2020). I recommend music artists consider collaborating with both brands and other music artists to increase and bring attention to their brand's value. Businesses getting involved in cocreation helps businesses leverage their brand equity and creates a positive image (Omar et al., 2020). The results of this study can be disseminated to music artists through music conferences, seminars, and publishing the findings and recommendations in music and scholarly media.

Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for further research include researching team building and business strategies for music artists, focusing on improving small business structure and development. This study was restricted to six participants and a focus group of four participants in the New York area. Therefore, I recommend that researchers expand on the findings in this study by including a broader demographic of music artists on a national or international scale. Additionally, when choosing another population to focus on, I recommend that researchers refine the population to music artists who create a specific genre of music. The knowledge base on generating revenue from digital music platforms should also be expanded to include more research on the internal structure of specific music streaming platforms as it pertains to artist relations with online music streaming platforms.

Reflections

I focused my study on exploring the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. I chose this topic because I have

watched creatives in the performing arts struggle to reach the goal of financial stability without taking on secondary employment unrelated to their industry. Instead of staying in a career with several uncertain outcomes, I chose to exit the music industry in its current state several years ago and focused on helping small business owners reach their maximum financial potential. I watched the colleagues I left behind struggle to become stable because of the emergence of online music streaming platforms.

I wanted to identify and define the gap between the music artist and the ability to reach financial stability in a rapidly changing industry. Although the participants had similar techniques for using digital music streaming platforms, it became clear that there is no definitive and universal standard online streaming business strategy that music artists follow to generate a steady revenue stream. I did find that the participants were willing to share their experiences and approaches to generating revenue without inhibition and were eager to be thorough about how they became successful in their industry. It was vital for me to seek out artists with whom I did not have any direct relation because their experiences provided the diverse research that I sought, to address my research question.

By conducting this study, I understood the importance of strategic business planning to become a successful small business entrepreneur. Furthermore, these findings revealed several ways music artists could develop a strategy to increase financially sustainable opportunities within their industry. By conducting this study, I have been educated on how important small business entrepreneurship connects to today's music artists' success in a digitally dominated industry. I hope that the findings and

recommendations from this study will encourage music artists to rethink their current online streaming business strategies. Additionally, I hope that by using or adapting the recommendations in this study, artists could balance being creatives and view themselves as small business owners, enabling them to obtain success through online streaming platforms and successfully working with disruptive innovation.

Conclusion

The online streaming business strategies music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream are part of a larger business strategy. This business strategy includes the four themes of (a) marketing, (b) music distribution channels, (c) co-creation, and (d) live music performances, which were discovered through the data collection and analysis process. The findings directly related to the disruptive innovation conceptual framework by identifying ways that music artists use their resources to leverage online streaming platforms and generate revenue despite changing how music is distributed to consumers.

The collective information gathered from the participants indicated that online music streaming was used as a specific marketing tool that contributed to generating revenue in conjunction with alternate means such as music licensing and live events. Participants discussed the importance of continuing to engage consumers in their creative processes by consistently presenting engaging material. Using a combination of the four themes that emerged, the participating music artists successfully generated revenue from online music streaming platforms.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date:

Occupation:

Initial Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. The purpose of meeting with you today is to interview you to explore the online business strategies you as a music artist use to maintain a steady revenue stream. I have purposely selected you for this study because you fit the criteria of a music artist living in the New York City area that has used online music streaming business strategies to maintain a steady revenue stream for a minimum of 5 years. The interview will be a minimum of 45 minutes but will not exceed 60 minutes. As indicated in the consent form, I will be recording our interview today to aid in taking notes and assure the accuracy of your responses. All recordings and notes will be securely stored by me and remain in my possession for 5 years. After 5 years, all recordings and notes will be destroyed. If you are ready, may we begin?

Start Recording

Introduction

Hello, my name is Angela S. Arnold, a doctoral student at Walden University. Today I will be conducting an interview with (participant identifier), a music artist who has a minimum of 5 years of experience with online streaming business strategies. The purpose of my study is to explore the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. This interview will last for a minimum of

45 minutes but will not exceed 60 minutes. For accuracy and note-taking purposes, this interview is being recorded. For confidentiality, the participant's name has been concealed. Let's begin. The overall research question to be explored is what online streaming business strategies do music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream?

May I first ask you:

Interview Questions

1. What business strategies do you use to generate sales for your music?
2. What business strategies did you find most effective to generate sales of your music?
3. How did you meet the challenge of disruptive innovation with online music streaming technology?
4. What business strategies do you use to help you generate a steady revenue stream by using online music streaming?
5. What components of online music streaming platforms help you generate sales?
6. What additional information can you offer on the business strategies you use to generate a steady revenue stream by using online music streaming technology?

Wrap up

I would like to thank you for allowing me to interview you today. This concludes our interview for today.

Stop Recording

Schedule Follow- Up Interview:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate today. When would be a good day and time for our follow-up interview next week?

Follow-Up Interview:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. The purpose of with you today is to conduct a follow-up interview with you to explore the online business strategies music artist use to maintain a steady revenue stream. The interview will be a minimum of 30 minutes but will not exceed 45 minutes. As indicated in the consent form, I will be recording our interview today to aid in taking notes and the accuracy of your responses. All recordings and notes will be securely stored by me and remain in my possession for 5 years. After 5 years, all recordings and notes will be destroyed. At this time, I would like to provide you with a copy of the synthesis or your initial responses to the questions that I asked you in our first interview. If you are ready, may we begin?

Start Recording**Introduction:**

Hello, my name is Angela S. Arnold, a doctoral student at Walden University. Today I will be conducting a follow-up interview with (participant identifier), a music artist who has a minimum of 5 years of experience with online streaming business strategies. The purpose of my study is to explore the online streaming business strategies that music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream. This interview will last for a minimum of 30 minutes but will not exceed 45 minutes. For accuracy and note-taking purposes, this interview is being recorded. For confidentiality, your name has been concealed. You have been given a synthesis transcript of your responses from our initial interview. I will ask each question again, along with the synthesis of your initial

response. Let's begin. The overall research question to be explored is what online streaming business strategies do music artists use to maintain a steady revenue stream?

Interviewer note:

Ask any probing questions according to IRB guidelines. After each interpretation of the initial response, ask if you missed anything or if there is anything at this time that they would like to add to their response.

Interview Questions

1. What business strategies do you use to generate sales for your music? Read succinct synthesis aloud.
2. What business strategies did you find most effective to generate sales of your music? Read succinct synthesis aloud.
3. How did you meet the challenge of disruptive innovation with online music streaming technology? Read succinct synthesis aloud.
4. What business strategies do you use to help you generate a steady revenue stream by using online music streaming? Read succinct synthesis aloud.
5. What components of online music streaming platforms help you generate sales? Read succinct synthesis aloud.
6. What additional information can you offer on the business strategies you use to generate a steady revenue stream by using online music streaming technology? Read succinct synthesis aloud.

Wrap up:

I would like to thank you for allowing me to interview you today. This concludes our interview for today.

Stop Recording