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The Contribution of Instagram to the Popularity and Promotion of Music Artists

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Submitted to Marion Garaus

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Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed. In particular, I did not use any text generators or other paraphrasing tools. My thesis was proofread by Ms. Marion Garaus *(marion.garaus@modul.ac.at)* without changing or amending the core of my work.

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Abstract

The development of social networks has significantly contributed to the transition to new marketing channels for disseminating information and promoting products and services. As one of the most sought-after non-physical products, music has carved out a special place in both the category of products and marketing tools available for use on social media platforms. Therefore, this thesis examines how Instagram can contribute to music artists' popularity and promotion, guided by secondary data, such as databases, and past research conducted on the relationship between the music industry and the use of social media, and by analyzing the results of the quantitative content analysis performed for this thesis. To study Instagram's contribution to the popularity and promotion of musical artists, data was collected over a 4-week period on the activity of 50 artists from 20 to 35 years old, who were selected for this study using convenience sampling. The artists represent five different music genres, including alternative, pop, rock, instrumental, and electro/dance, which are considered to be the most popular genres over the course of the recent decade. The results show that Instagram partially contributes to the promotion and popularity of music artists. However, given the results' moderation, future exploration of the topic is recommended to examine the factors that influence and are associated with the popularity and promotion of music artists.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

1   Introduction

Over the past decades, social networks have occupied an important niche both in the daily life of people and in various areas of business, such as the music industry. According to Statista (2022), due to the rapid growth and development of digital platforms, music industry, especially digital area, has been gaining more attention. The digital music industry worldwide generates the most profit from the U.S. market, by a significant margin. (Statista, 2022). As one of the most used social networks, Instagram has become an increasingly important platform for music artists to promote their work and connect with their fans (Menon, 2022). According to Statista (2022), over one billion users are monthly active, which allows Instagram to offer a massive audience for artists to share their music, updates, and behind-the-scenes glimpses with their followers, making Instagram one of the most effective marketing tool among millennials, who make up the most significant part of Instagram users (Menon, 2022). Millennials, by definition, are the people born between 1980 and 2000 whom Hartman & McCambridge (2011) described as "technologically sophisticated multitaskers."

Like other social networks, Instagram has an excellent marketing potential due to a particular type of users - influencers (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Companies often turn to influencers to support a company's brand, as influencers help connect their target audience with brands while maintaining an almost direct connection with their followers (Childers et al., 2018). Another important aspect of using influencers as a marketing tool is that influencers are considered reliable sources of information among their followers. This plays a vital role in creating successful marketing for a brand, as people are more likely to be interested in those products for which they receive recommendations from people whose opinions they have a reasonable degree of trust (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Many music artists nowadays share the role of influencers, too and, thus, working with brands and creating sponsored posts or promoting their music through variety of sponsored partnerships, creating a powerful way for artists to reach a wider audience and gain exposure to new fans (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

Instagram also contributes to another growing area of marketing - sensory marketing. Krishna (2012) defines 'sensory marketing' as "*marketing that engages the consumers' senses and affects their perception, judgment and behavior.*", thereby creating more evident links between brand and sensory experience. Given the vast potential of sensory marketing, it resulted in formation of new marketing practices that many companies nowadays start to implement into their strategies (Iglesias et al., 2019). In this regard, the amount of research conducted on the topic of sensory marketing has been vastly growing in the past twenty years (Krishna, 2012). Nevertheless, there are still not enough studies focusing on the use of sensory marketing, especially in the music industry sector. Therefore, one of the goals of this study is to research the potential of using sensory marketing methods in social networks with regards to the music industry.

Among sensory stimuli, music is one of the most complex and, therefore, the second most effective sensory stimulus (Iglesias et al., 2019), which can be used as a powerful marketing tool in combination with Instagram's various features, helping music artists connect with their fans. For example, Instagram Live allows artists to stream performances and interact with their fans in real time; Instagram Stories also allows artists to share personal and candid glimpses of their daily lives; and Instagram Reels provide an opportunity for users to use popular songs or melodies to create their own content, also exposing music artists to the masses. All these features can build a deeper connection for artist with their fans, while also leading to increased popularity and fan awareness (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Despite a significant amount of research conducted on sensory marketing over the past 20 years, there are still many aspects of this field that require further investigation (Krishna, 2012). The same way, there have been several studies in the past that have focused on the behavior of Instagram users (Menon, 2022). However, most not focusing so much on the responses to the external sensory stimuli, but primarily on the relationship between consumer personality and the type of content they prefer. Platforms like Instagram have changed the way artists interact with their audiences, significantly impacting every aspect of the music industry (Menon, 2022). In today's digital age, understanding the dynamics of Instagram's influence and

interaction with music artists is paramount to the future development of the music industry. The relationship between Instagram and the popularity of music artists opens a new avenue for research into audience preferences and behavior when consuming music content, which in turn helps improve advertising strategies for the music sector of the market. This study's significance comes from exploring the nuanced relationship between music promotion and audience engagement on Instagram and how the platform facilitates an artist's reach and recognition among new and/or existing fans. This project aims to offer practical implications and possible learnings for music artists, marketers and the music industry in its entirety by examining the types of content that resonate with audiences, as well as analyzing the impact of Instagram on popularity, recognition and growth of the performer. The results will serve as a roadmap for performers as well as industry professionals looking to use Instagram to optimize their digital advertising efforts effectively. Therefore, this thesis will be focusing on the exploration of how Instagram contributes to the popularity and promotion of music artists to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What role does Instagram play in building music artists' audiences?

RQ2: Which factors influence the popularity of artists on Instagram and why?

RQ3: How does the use of Instagram features affect the number of fan interactions with artists content?

2   Literature Review

2.1   Theoretical Framework

2.1.1   Uses and Gratification Theory

Although social media is essential, there still needs to be more understanding of how and why consumers use it. The Uses and Gratifications Theory, which originated in the communications literature, can be a valuable tool for developing better scales and measurement instruments for social media marketers (Perse, 2016). Gratification is described as obtaining satisfaction from using the media in accordance with

expectations (LEVY, 2016). This theory is used to determine the expected user satisfaction with media and provides a theoretical framework for understanding the motivation and behavior of users when using media (Menon, 2022). Understanding these concepts can lead to a more precise understanding of the process of popularity and promotion of music artists on the Instagram platform.

Sundar and Limperos (2013) proposed the MAIN model of uses and gratifications theory - a classification of satisfaction from new media. It identifies four technological affordances in digital media: modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability. The modality refers to the ability of users to present themselves through social media functions. Agency refers to creating interactions such as 'likes' or 'comments.' Interactivity refers to making changes in real-time, while navigability refers to exploring the social network platform (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The MAIN model can be used to understand the gratifications of social media users. The theory identifies different needs, including personal integrative needs, which relate to self-esteem, and integrative social needs, which relate to socializing with family, friends, and society. Social media can fulfill both needs, and marketers can use the theory to understand better how to target their audience (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Although this theory was initially applied to analyzing traditional media types such as newspapers, radio, and television, social networks have now become an equally important part of news and entertainment media (Sundar & Limperos, 2013) and are interpreted as platform-oriented media. Thus, Instagram, as a representative of an emerging social network platform, provides its users with the opportunity of gaining enjoyment through browsing, sharing, and interacting with other users, precluding the theory of use and satisfaction. Specifically, user—to-user interactions are a high contribution to the

2.1.2 Social Identity Theory

The theory of Social Identity investigates how personal and social identities interact with each other. Its objective is to define and anticipate the situations in which individuals perceive themselves either as individuals or as part of a group (Ellemers, 2023). Social Identity Theory was developed to explain how individuals create and

define their place in society. According to the theory, three psychological processes are central: social categorization, comparison, and identification (Abrams, 2001). Social Identity Theory has been applied to various fields, including intercultural communication, organizational behavior, and marketing. The theory has been used to understand how individuals define themselves in relation to others and how group membership influences behavior. Social Identity Theory has also been used to develop effective marketing strategies that target specific social groups. By understanding the psychological processes related to social identity, marketers can develop campaigns that appeal to the needs and motivations of specific social groups. This theory can be applied to Instagram users, who often form communities based on shared interests and identities (Ellemers et al., 2023), creating a specific information pool.

2.1.3 Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

Tafesse and Wood (2021) note in their study that it is essential for influencers to understand common ground with their audience in order to establish long-term relationships with followers. In case of music industry popular and/or developing music artists nowadays become a form of influencers too. Therefore, finding points of contact with their audience through the use of social media, such as Instagram, can be one of the keys to the future success, as listeners are more eager to listen to the songs that "resonate with them" (Berns et al., 2010). It was also noted that influencers who posted consistent topics were more popular than those who posted little related or inconsistent content. Thus, the formation and duration of an influencer's relationship with an audience are highly dependent on the stability and quality of their content (Belanche et al., 2021).

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model can help to identify those common ground, as it states that after exposure to certain stimuli, people generate cognitive and emotional states that cause them to perform (or not perform) specific actions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). *Stimuli* were defined as specific elements that cause the reaction of the body - cognitive and affective. The user's responses to receiving, processing, holding, and retrieving stimuli are cognitive, while emotions are affective (Eroglu et al., 2001). Stimuli in social networks can be perceived as audio and/or visual

content that causes users to respond with either 'approach' or 'avoid' behaviors, meaning positive or inaction and evasive actions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

The case study of Berns et al. (2010) investigates the neuroscience response to music as a form of stimuli to identify neural mechanisms related to social among adolescents of 12-17 years old. The main interest behind this study was to discover the correlation between the song's likability and its popularity using brain activity as the main supporting and demonstrating factor. Berns (2010), following in the footsteps of a pioneering social psychologist, Solomon Asch (1951), notes that social influence from peers is one of the decisive factors for a piece of media to gain popularity and recognition, especially at such a young age. The data collected using fMRI (functional magnetic resonance image) while playing a 15-second sound clip showed that the likability of the song increased when it was revealed it was a popular piece of media. Berns found a strong correlation between changes in ratings of likability given by a participant after revealing the popularity of a song and their brain activity in a reward-driven action, meaning that participants tend to change their ratings because of the anxiety of being mismatched with the group preferences (Berns et al., 2010). However, in the case of measuring the popularity of a piece of media on social media platforms, such factors as social anxiety are reduced by the feeling of anonymity generated while using social media on a personal device (Harris & Bardey, 2019). That feeling provides comfort for users to express their personal interests fully without worrying about potential judgment from society, which enables them to find and support creators and artists of any type without regard to the opinions of others (Zeynep Tufekci, 2016).

2.2   The Sensory Experience on Instagram

In the marketing field, sensory marketing has become omnipresent, as this branch of marketing uses one of the most effective direct non-verbal customers influencing techniques, primarily based on external stimuli (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014). Sensory marketing is based on the senses' role in studying consumer behavior. Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) identify four brand perceptions: affective, intellectual, and behavioral, with particular emphasis on the latter - sensory. It was

mentioned earlier that social networks, particularly Instagram, build their communication with users through sensory stimuli - audio and visual (Eroglu et al., 2001). Because of the influence sensory stimuli have on human behavior, successful marketing through the use of social networks becomes highly possible.

The sensory perception of a brand includes tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory and gustatory stimuli elicited within the consumers. Vision is believed to be the primary source of sensory information affecting human perception (Hoegg & Alba, 2007). An example, restaurants and cafes are actively resorting to sensory marketing, posting photos of the offered dishes on their pages on social networks or in online-ordering profiles. In their study of cross-modal sensory imaging, Liu, Wu, Yu, and Huang (2022) report two experiments showing that brighter, more intense food images are more effective in stimulating consumers. It is also interesting that the color saturation becomes less attractive when the visual distance of the food in the frame is too close. Visual distance refers to the perceived distance as proximal or distal to the object being viewed (Elder et al., 2017). It is believed that the more proximal the visual distance, the stronger the sensory images experienced by the consumer.

The second most crucial sensory factor can be considered sound or auditory stimuli. Retailers regularly use in-store music to influence customer satisfaction or purchasing behavior (Chebat et al., 2001). Music, especially background music is one of the many marketing communication tools used to shape the atmosphere in shops and restaurants the same way many Instagram creators use popular sounds or songs when creating their content. Karageorghis (2010) also argues that cognition, affect, and behavior is greatly influenced by the tempo of the background music. For example, slower-tempo music was shown to be more effective in keeping customers inside stores (Eroglu et al., 2005) and, therefore, contributing to producing more significant profits as customers were picking more items during their shopping, moving slower through the stores. While slow music also reduces anxiety about pricing and shortens waiting times, fast music increases waiting times (Eroglu et al., 2005). Similar behavior can be seen in social media user's, who tend to slow or increase their scrolling pace when met with different tempos (Lin et al., 2023).

2.2.1 Music as a Form of Cognitive Influence

Consumer research from a psychological and physiological point of view shows that musical tempo largely determines an individual's emotional and cognitive response (Karageorghis et al., 2010), as tempo also has a direct impact on information processing, according to Kellaris and Mantel (1994). Faster music also contributes to the strengthening of the emotional state (Xiao et al., 2020).

Association Network Theory (Singer & Salovey, 1988) is one of the theories explaining the cognitive effects of music through the emotional state. The theory claims that emotions formed during and associated with an event contribute to better memory. The emotional context of the event makes it easier and faster to retrieve memories from long-term to short-term memory (Eich & Metcalfe, 1989). Most often, the emotional context factor is decisive in the formation of viral content in social networks, especially on Instagram, with the use of the Reels function. Audio tracks or parts of songs that users emotionally remember are often found in combination and associated with emotionally similar content (Menon, 2022).

Thus, the influence of music on attention depends entirely on the level of arousal caused by the music. A high level of arousal promotes increased attention involvement, stimulating memorability (Davenport, 1974). Corhan and Gounard (1976) also note that complex or random and unstable patterns of music stimulate the audience's attention more actively by increasing the cognitive load, creating a multifunctional effect. Music and other types of audio stimuli on social media, along with visuals, are among the most effective stimuli for attracting users' attention (Karageorghis et al., 2010). Based on that, social networks can be considered a multifaceted stimulator of users' attention aimed at exciting their emotions, through which brands and/or influencers can create memorable associations of their content with users, increasing their engagement.

2.3 Social Media Marketing in the Music Industry

For 'engagement' related to any online activity, Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines it as "the process of people looking and reacting to particular information online." The

anonymity on social media can be seen as a prism of filter through which most of the user engagement is happening. Several studies highlighted how paradoxical it can be when users can engage more freely without direct personal accountability, resulting in a lack of authentic interaction with the source content creators (Correa et al., 2010). However, other studies, such as (Seidman, 2013), suggest that building a strong persona online helps improve the recognition of artists or content creators, which in the case of the music industry turns out to be one more way for artists to reach their target audience. Users are more willing to give their attention to the content creator or influencer whom they can differentiate from other online personas (Belanche et al., 2021).

2.3.1   Influencer Marketing

The overall development of social media has prompted an increase in the number of independent third parties broadcasting their lifestyle, opinions, interests, and values on social media platforms. These social media users are known as influencers (Hu et al., 2020). Influencers are most often described as a mix between "mutual friend" and "celebrity," but there is a fundamental difference between an influencer and a celebrity. While influencers are predominantly "born and live" on social media (Belanche et al., 2021), broadcasting only those parts of their real-life that are related to their image on social media, celebrities, such as actors, athletes, or politicians, are most commonly known for their activities and lives in the real world. Although many influencers are beginning to combine the qualities of celebrities and vice versa, another difference between celebrities and influencers is the influence on their audience through information or entertainment (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019), which makes it not uncommon for many brands to collaborate with influencers for promotion of their brands as part of the marketing strategies (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

In most cases, brand collaborations with influencers are episodic. There are rare instances when an influencer's content aligns with the brand's mission and/or vision without purposeful intent, so many influencers are wary of accepting collaborations head-first, except when the brand's product or services are similar to the influencer's

content. In case of finding mutual similarities, influencers try to keep associating with the brand, as it helps to promote them to the broader audience (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Nevertheless, after collaborating for some time, a substantial discrepancy might occur between the influencer's regular content and the brand's collaborative content, causing followers to react negatively and impacting the influencer and the brand image (Ahluwalia et al., 2001).

2.3.2   Word-of-Mouth

Nowadays, more and more companies provide non-physical brands (Wong et al., 2012). The music industry can be an example of a manufacturer of such brands for which creation and promotion play an important role. Branding is a strategic tool in the music industry to attract and retain the attention of listeners (Carah, 2014). Creating and promoting a music brand includes many aspects, including the selection of artists, the creation of a unique style and image, and the development of logos and album covers. Most music brands strive to create their unique style in order to increase recognition among potential audiences through associations and further establish an emotional connection with their fans. The main products of the music industry are recorded songs and their further online broadcast or performance during live concerts and festivals (Mossberg & Getz, 2006). However, being mainly the focus, the music is not the only important aspect of these events. Packer and Ballantyne (2010) identified four main components of musical events in their study: musical, celebratory, social, and new experiences. Together, they form a complex emotional experience and attachment. In turn, the emotional attachment of listeners (Hudson et al., 2015) is the driving force behind the music industry, as it stimulates the spread of word of mouth about artists, helping to build their audience.

Since social networks are primarily built around the concept of Word-of-Mouth, significant events such as concerts and festivals featuring famous music artists, quickly spread among users (Hudson & Hudson, 2013). Through the "share," "broadcast," or "reels" – common interactive features of social networking platforms such as Instagram, users can translate and share their experience with millions of other users, thereby increasing the recognition of artists.

2.4 Digitalization of the Music Industry

Through the last two decades, the music industry has steadily shifted from producing and distributing physical copies of music in the form of compact discs towards storing the music as a digital file that can be played on any networking device. Accordingly, such drastic change has also altered how the chain of power and supply functions within the industry (Morris, 2013). Twenty years ago, music artists could not produce, distribute, and trade their content freely without having an agent and producer who had the power over the supply chain of the physical copies of artists' music. However, with the development of Internet and social networks, the traditional "creation to distribution to consumption cycle" (Morris, 2013) has gone through altering several vital stages. Music artists can now gain exposure to the masses by circulating their works and their personas through the use of social media and new technologies, such as streaming platforms like Spotify. The fluidity and mobility of digital media format allowed musicians to overcome physical barriers between them and their fanbase through the use of online presence, which also altered the process of music creation and distribution (Wilcox, 2017). The new format has also presented new ways to include fans directly in the creation process by making extensive use of social media tools, for example, Instagram's Broadcast and Stories features, allowing artists to share the backstage of production with their fanbase.

2.4.1 Music as a Form of Digital Commodity

Morris (2013) defines "music digital commodity" as a specific combination of sound and data, which exists as a separate entity and serves the purpose of selling and acquisitions through online retail. Even though music in the form of CDs is considered a form of digital good, plenty of physical aspects are still involved with this type of product, such as the production of physical copies, their distribution network, retail storage, and presentation (Bull, 2000). While the digital music commodity lacks the ability to possess those physical and tactile features directly, this type of product created a new promising combination of both technology and culture (Katz, 2006). The audio file gains its physicality through the use of multiple technological software and hardware devices, while the experience of aesthetics formed and gained by each listener adds cultural value (Théberge, 2006). Although, digitalization process has

taken some materiality from music commodity, the packaging remnants, for example, album cover, were not completely disregarded and forgotten, but rather transformed into metadata, tags, software interfaces (McCourt, 2006).

Goods and commodities gain their value from the exchange they are involved it compared to the other commodities and labor on the market. Its overall value tends to fluctuate based on its economic and cultural value after passing through several owners and presenting or storing spaces (Straw, 2000). This creates the phenomenon of "cultures of circulation," which Benjamin Lee and LiPuma (2002) believed is shaped by interactions between people, objects, and spaces. Lee and LiPuma see circulation as a cultural process, where objects, ideas, and commodities exchanged between people, raise activity levels within different communities, such as social media users.

Therefore, the culture of circulation creates a promising basis for having a closer look into the mobility and fluidity of music as a digital commodity (Jones, 2010). The form of distribution has a direct impact on how consumers perceive the final product (Jones, 2002, pp. 215-216). The way users find music and the way music finds them influence how consumers see the content creators, creating new forms of connections among music distributors and music consumers (Jones, 2002, p. 214). Throughout the process of music digitalization, traditional creative and professional relationships between listeners and music artists have also shifted towards a more direct and personal approach. The introduction and development of social network platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, changed music distribution infrastructure (Morris, 2013).

The development of digital music commodities was mainly successful due to the rapid technological growth within the music industry, providing a greater fluidity for music artists and producers. The creative process became more accessible when computers became its central figure, allowing almost anyone access to near-professional digital recording (Breen & Forde, 2004). There was no further need for a physical recording studio when music artists could now create wherever they had their portable recording and production devices. Rapid growth and development of e-commerce and network file exchange have massively contributed to digital music distribution

(Armstrong, 2008). Without the further need to manufacture thousands of copies of CDs and albums as the primary form for product distribution, artists could make use of free platforms like Bandcamp or Soundcloud and platforms like Spotify later on to sell their music directly to their listeners (Morris, 2013). The development of social media and streaming services also contributed to the fan-exposure, previously available primarily through live tours and concerts. Concerts and tours are still crucial for the promotion and recognition of artists. However, with the development of real-time streaming technologies, most tools for attracting attention and connecting with listeners, such as concert posters and announcements, interviews, blogs and vlogs, and music videos, have now morphed into a digital format (Kim & Kang, 2022).

2.4.2 Digital Profiles Formation

With social media and networking platforms, music creators are now a part of their fan's everyday lives, adding to the culture of circulation through their web presence (Morris, 2013). Compared to traditional media formats, such as TV, radio, or magazines, social media are perceived to be a more direct and personal way of artist-fans communication. In 2008, Beer, using the example of Jarvis Cocker, lead singer of the British band Pulp, discussed how interaction with fans through social networks contributes to creating a virtual "profile" that provides fans with another point of contact with the performer. Nowadays, web presence has become an almost everyday phenomenon for most social network users (Menon, 2022), so the profiles of many music artists and content creators are not static. Changes with each new update or publication provide a connection between the artist and fans, as well as between the fans themselves (Zeynep Tufekci, 2017; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). While many well-known music artists have their personal social media profiles managed by their PR managers or consultants hired by record companies, up-and-coming and lesser-known artists and creators primarily manage their web presence themselves (Belanche et al., 2021). However, in both cases, users experience a sense of unity and close proximity with the performers, which increases their interest towards their favorite artists (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

Although creating and maintaining a digital profile requires a certain level of transparency from the artist, their fans usually stay anonymous (Zeynep Tufekci, 2016), creating dual dynamics within fan communities (Morris, 2013). The anonymity of fans fosters a unique connection between artists and their audience, where the transparency from musicians strengthens fans' loyalty, while the certain degree of separation formed through fans' anonymity leaves enough room for their unique interpretations of the artist's work. Dynamics like that result in the formation of multifaceted fan communities (Baym, 2013) with diverse content engagement and inclusive artist narratives. Furthermore, the veil of anonymity promotes honest critique, feedback, and opinions from fans that can diverge from artist's, providing new points of view and contact, often resulting in the diversification of the creative process (Marwick, 2016).

However, being transparent online doesn't mean artists fully expose all their life's aspects to their fans. Similar to the cases of online celebrities and influencers, musicians prioritise representation of specific parts of their life that align well with their creative persona (Morris, 2013). Music artists, same as most of social media users, tend to modify self-appearance online to appear more desirable to their audience, which sometimes can get to the point of repression of specific traits of their personality (Harris & Bardey, 2019). The pursuit of illusory ideality on social networks often causes increased stress, which in turn directly affects the mental health and well-being of users. Research by Harris and Bardey (2019) highlights the importance of considering the potential impact of idealized online self-presentation on users' mental health and well-being. Due to the particular level of anonymity provided by social networks, the process of self-idealization becomes much easier than in the real world, where physical presence often becomes one of the tools of non-verbal dialogue between parties (Schouten et al., 2007). One of the main factors in the process of self-idealization in social networks is the unlimited amount of time available to users to think and formulate or embody the desired image of their profile (Harris & Bardey, 2019). For example, users can rewrite their texts several times before posting or editing a photo or video until they achieve the desired visual result. From this point of view, musicians benefit from the use of platforms such as Instagram precisely due to

the opportunity to shape their image indefinitely until the moment of publication (Manago et al., 2008).

The research focused on the topic of online self-idealization has found an interesting correlation between users' personality and their tendency to idealize their online appearance (Correa et al., 2010). Seidman (2013) argues that extraversion is often found to be a similar quality among active social media users. Such people are equally willing to make contact in both real and online spaces, enthusiastically interacting with other users or their content (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008). This, in turn, often results in extroverts becoming part of numerous diverse communities, demonstrating higher levels of activity and engagement (Correa et al., 2010). Their social skills allow them to be more active and involved fans or present themselves as open and transparent content creators (Dennis et al., 2014).

However, coupled with research on extraversion, it was also found that people with pronounced neuroticism traits tend to use social networks more often and more actively than extroverts (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2004; Correa et al., 2010). The identified links between neuroticism and social media use demonstrate that people with low levels of emotional stability—neurotics—strive to be as appealing as possible in online spaces (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). It is also interesting to note that when the study was repeated, but on the basis of Facebook instead of Instagram, neurotic people were more likely to disclose themselves through the "wall" function in their personal Facebook profiles, publishing small text blogs. At the same time, extroverts found it easier to disclose themselves through photos and videos on Instagram (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Moore and McElroy (2012) also note that while neurotics and extroverts actively use social networks, their levels of openness and willingness to disclose more personal information about themselves on social networks are noticeably lower than those of people high in agreeableness traits. Agreeableness is characterized by a person's willingness to accept opinions different from his own and openness to new creative pursuits (Harris & Bardey, 2019). Since not much research has been conducted on the relationship between social networks and agreeableness, some researchers believe that users with increased agreeableness are more likely to exhibit pronounced altruistic behavior - that is, more willingly accept

other people's points of view (Swickert et al., 2002); while other researchers, on the contrary, note the cross-situational consistency of social behavior both online and offline, when the user's opinion changes or remains the same depending on the complexity of the situation (Jain et al., 2016).

Sheldon & Bryant (2016) argues that Instagram, compared to the Facebook, where users tend to use their real names to interact within relatively public domain (Tufekci, 2008), is more focused on self-presentation and promotion. Main functionality of Instagram to share and edit visual content, such as photos and videos, appeals to young people mostly within ages of 18 and 29, making them one-third of Instagram users (Duggan and Smith, 2013). While Instagram's promotional aspect contributes to the recognition and distribution of musicians' content, it also adds on certain mental pressure due to the sole revolution around visual editing and sharing (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Several previous research concluded that being visually and aesthetically appealing to the audience on Instagram is often a vital component of gaining popularity through the increased likelihood (Dumas et al., 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). While Instagram's 'Like' function can serve as a cause of mental stress, it can also serve as a positive reinforcement for motivation in a form of representing audience's enjoyment with artist's work (Dumas et al., 2017).

2.5   Social Media Engagement in the Music Industry

Through the mechanisms of user engagement, social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumbler, and Instagram, became an essential and effective tool for influencing the popularity and promotion of artists (Belanche et al., 2021). Music artists, in particular, benefit more than other artists when using social media as a promotion tool (Park et al., 2018). Due to the simplicity of sharing any music format nowadays through the use of a smartphone or computer, users can share, like, and comment on any music content available online, and algorithms implemented in different social media platforms will automatically promote it to user's followers, creating a digital 'word of mouth' (Chin-Fook & Simmonds, 2011). Previous research in the field of online music content mainly focused on the effectiveness of utilizing social media as a form of marketing for a company's brand image (Chin-Fook &

Simmonds, 2011; Chen et al., 2015; Berlin et al., 2014). However, the question of how user engagement influences users' choices of music products is yet to be addressed more thoroughly (Park et al., 2018).

2.5.1 User Generated Content (UGC)

Hwang and Thorn (1999) refer to "engagement" both as involvement and any kind of participation. It is commonly seen as a form of brand's business communication with the consumer, yet due to the rapid growth of social media usage, users tend to skip companies' contribution to their connection with the artists, when other users start to distribute the same type of information that is much more easily accessible (Eisingerich & Bell, 2008). Therefore, user contributions to the distribution of music products becomes significantly important, especially on social media platforms such as Instagram. Park et al. (2018) suggests that music clips are significantly more effective and influential forms of marketing on the basis of social media, compared to other types of marketing media, such as text, plain images or simple sound. Music clips as a form of marketing has a higher rate of user involvement due to the information diversity that combines both visual images and audio (Karageorghis et al., 2010). Therefore, users tend to be more willing to engage with the content that combines both visual and audio, which in return also increases the generation of users' content as a form of artists' support and resonance with their work.

UGC usually forms as a complementing addition to online platforms and often incudes blogs, comments, videos and fan-made wikis (Tomita et al., 2010) and sometimes can serve as news, entertainment, word-of-mouth or even as problem solution in rare cases (Tomita et al., 2010). For example, Morris (2013) discusses how Imogen Heap – British ambient pop-music artist who used social media as a way to break out of the creative rut she found herself in after the electronic duo Frou Frou, which she was a part of. Having gone solo, Heap actively used the fan base she formed during her time in the duo in order to compose, promote, and distribute her music via the Internet. Using platforms such as MySpace, Facebook, Ustream, and YouTube, Heap regularly kept fans updated on the progress of her third solo album, "Eclipse." The performer documented her progress through a series of 40 short vlogs, regularly posting them

publicly to fans while communicating with them via Twitter or including Q&As and reactions to fan comments in the vlogs. On average, the videos lasted 5 to 15 minutes and received up to 100,000 views on her YouTube channel. Through these short vlogs, Heap documented the process of returning to her parent's old house, where she converted the basement into a personal recording studio, where the album "Eclipse" was eventually created (Heap, 2007-2009, vBlog #3-10). During the album's production, fans actively interacted with Heap's vlogs comment section, giving feedback on her vision or sharing their opinions on which melody they liked best for a particular song, which Heap also took into account during the creative process (Morris, 2013). Thus, "Eclipse" became more than another solo pop album; it was a collaborative experience between the artist and their fans, where fans' engagement became a form of inspiration and support for the artist to continue their work.

Shin et al. (2016) examines the impact of Tumblr posts on subsequent user interactions with content creators, specifically likes and reposts. The main focus was on visual sources of information - videos, gifs, and images, as well as textual ones, such as tags and text. The study found that adequately selected visual content, coupled with accompanying or complementary text, had a significant impact on audience engagement, as measured by the number of likes and reposts (Shin et al., 2016). Lee et al. (2018) also studied the impact on user engagement from the interaction with different types of advertising content presented on social networks, mainly focusing on analyzing data (likes, comments, shares, views) from Facebook. The results of the study revealed high engagement rates in posts with emotional and humorous content that reflected the brand's personality. At the same time, although more informational content showed lower levels of user engagement, Lee et al. (2018) noted that click rates increased when users were presented with easily accessible and straightforward information content. Liikkanen and Antti Salovaara (2015) came to a similar conclusion when examining how and what characteristics of music videos influence user engagement on YouTube. The results of their study highlight the difference between engagement when viewing traditional company-generated content (CGC) and user-generated content (UGC), as well as relevant or similar in-between videos such as gaming or interactive videos.

According to Statista (2022), YouTube is the most popular video service and one of the most popular pastimes on the Internet, so research into viewer engagement on such a vast online platform is necessary to improve other online video venues, such as social networks (Lee et al.,2018). YouTube is also the third largest Internet service, with traffic of an average of 758 million users worldwide, each of whom views at least 79 videos every month (Statista, 2023). Musical content is one of the main reasons for these numbers. Since 2013, YouTube has become the most recognizable digital brand for broadcasting music videos (Statista, 2013-2022). According to IFPI (2022), music-related content on YouTube accounts for 38.4% of total traffic, of which 23-30% are videos posted under the "Music" category, that is, official videos, latest hits and compositions, official albums, remixes, covers, etc. (YouTube Music, 2023).

Thus, in the music industry, YouTube is one of the indispensable tools for distributing music as a form of content, as well as a platform for fans to interact with the works of artists and themselves. YouTube's ability to promote artists and increase their visibility can be seen in how YouTube became a crucial factor in the meteoric success of one Korean girls' band, EXID (Park et al., 2018). In 2014, the band released a new track single, "Up Down (Wi-Arae)," in the hope of attracting public attention (KProfiles, 2016). However, audience interest and activity subsided within a month, which significantly reduced the group's rating in the global and domestic Korean markets. However, everything changed dramatically when a video of their performance was uploaded to YouTube by an anonymous fan, which received more than 20 million views in less than 24 hours, instantly catapulting EXID to the top of the national charts in Korea. Thus, thanks to the UGC activity of an anonymous fan who was not part of any music agency, EXID has grown from an unknown band into one of the most famous and sought-after bands in South Korea in 2014 (Park et al., 2018). Because to YouTube's ability to like, share, or even download videos, fans are able to share their interests and preferences, thereby generating word-of-mouth on the Internet that serves as promotion for music artists that would otherwise never be known to a broader audience (Peitz & Waelbroeck, 2006).

2.5.2 Social Media Engagement and Artist Performance

Morris's (2013) research of Heap's case was mainly focused on how social media can increase the effectiveness of an artist's audience reach and promotion to the broader population. Park et al. (2018) conducted another research with a focus on the relationship between social media usage and overall artist's performance. The research discovered that the overall implementation of social media as a marketing tool resulted in a positive impact on the performance of the company (Park et al., 2018), showing that implementing UGC can be considered an equally effective marketing strategy when compared to others (Miller, 2015). When investigating the impact of UGC on sales in the music field, Chang (2016) discovered a correlation between the number of mentions of new music album releases and the sales numbers after and during the release dates. The fan-generated buzz around upcoming new releases in the music field is often the cause and effect of increased sales. It is important to note that this pattern occurs more often when releasing music albums from independent labels than from more well-known ones. Frick et al. (2017) also found that well-known artists value direct overall fan activity and interaction on social networks much more, while lesser-known artists, on the contrary, are more interested in the increase of sales of individual songs and albums.

However, in a comparative study of the impact of mass media (radio) and social media (personal blogs) on sales, Dewan and Ramaprasad (2014) found a negative relationship between fan buzz on personal blogs and sales. The results of the study showed that radio had a more positive effect on song and album sales. In contrast, blog noise, i.e., discussion and activity regarding specific music content, did not have a positive effect on album sales and even had a negative relationship with sales of songs. It is important to note that the negative relationship was more pronounced for less popular music and less famous songs on albums than for more popular music. Thus, in the context of this study, increased buzz and blog activity around songs had less of an impact on sales, especially for less popular music, while radio broadcasting had a much more positive impact on future sales of both albums and individual songs (Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014). However, this study primarily looked at sales success, focusing less on proximal factors such as awareness, fan engagement, and continued

growth of the artist's fan base, which are also highly important for further artist's development.

As has been noted before, social networks facilitate interaction between fans and artists, thereby generating a massive amount of information for the analysis of the music market (Shin et al., 2016). Thanks to online media, brand awareness is constantly growing, which in turn increases users' exposure to brands' products and services, resulting in creating greater customer loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2012; Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). The music industry primarily benefits from the dominance of famous artists's accounts in digital spaces, constantly attracting the public's attention by being in the spotlight. More than half of Twitter users follow at least one official account of a music artist, while out of ten accounts in the top charts, eight are created by musicians themselves (Cho et al., 2018). Creating personal accounts on social networks such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook actively promote songs, albums, as well as live concerts of performers (Dhar & Chang, 2009).

Due to the relatively low costs of social media usage, musicians can communicate with thousands of people and fans, which in turn makes it much easier to collect demographic data about the target audience (Cho et al., 2018). Facebook Analytics, YouTube Analytics, or Instagram Analytics collect data such as location, age, gender, and nationality, from the analysis of which artists and companies can draw conclusions about the common characteristics, as well as the preferences of their target audience, which also simplifies the process of content creation (Liikkanen & Antti Salovaara, 2015). Fans also benefit from sharing their demographic information on social media platforms. For example, because of the built-in geolocation function, fans can monitor real-time news about various upcoming events in their region, which over time becomes one of the incentives to log into social networks more often, thereby improving statistics on viewership of artist accounts and content creators (Bennett, 2012). Cho et al. (2018) examined the relevance of social media to the music industry through decision-making regarding the location of potential concerts. In other words, a study was conducted looking into how the use of social media influences potential tour and concert itineraries.

Cho et al. (2018) examined a sample of 234 musicians and their 57,411 concerts held between 2000 and 2011 in the United States to test whether social media influences venue selection. Data was also collected on the account creation of the artists included in the study, demonstrating that the majority of the creation of personal profiles on social networks occurred between 2008 and 2010. Based on the empirical analysis, Cho et al. (2018) concluded that social media does have an impact on the location of the next concert, as with the onset of active use of online platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and/or Facebook, performers have the opportunity to expand their concert reach. Before the active use of social media on a daily basis, performers mainly focused on densely populated areas when choosing a venue for their next concert (Dhar & Chang, 2009). However, with the development of social networks, musicians began to lean towards smaller regions, exploring the new opportunities and audiences that became available through new channels in the form of social networks. Thus, the concentration of concerts in densely populated areas began to decrease, spreading more to other regions, thereby attracting new fans and generating more revenue (Cho et al., 2018; Dhar & Chang, 2009).

Since the number of sales has decreased significantly due to the easy availability of digital music through online files, the primary income in the music field comes from concerts and tours (Dhar & Chang, 2009). Thus, the role of social networks increased significantly with this shift in income. Now, the analysis of data about the target audience is more comprehensive than the main interests and points of contact between fans and performers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Social media and collected statistical data allow artists and music companies to improve the concert production process based on quantitative fan demographic data (Cho et al., 2018). Consequently, this approach also provides more significant sales revenue and, in addition, increases the affection and interest of the target audience due to the opportunity for live interaction with a favorite performer in real-time (Liikkanen & Antti Salovaara, 2015).

2.5.3 The Implementation of Immersive Technologies

The active development of social networks is primarily associated with the even more active development of technology (Correa et al., 2010). The constant improvement of

portable devices, such as smartphones, smart watches, laptops, tablets, etc., primarily expands the horizon of possibilities for marketing strategies in any industry, including the music industry (Turchet, 2023). Therefore, it is not surprising that with the advent of access to augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies on the market, many music studios and performers saw great potential in them and began to integrate them into their production (Gu & Li, 2020).

The perception and composition of music have constantly changed throughout history with the proliferation and innovation of technological developments and changes to benefit audiences. It is, therefore, not surprising that the development of the metaverse has provided a new space for musical activity for audiences and musicians (Turchet, 2023). The metaverse is a virtual parallel to the actual physical world, where, unlike interpersonal interaction, interactions occur through each user's virtual avatar (Dionisio et al., 2013). To date, the exact definition of the term "metaverse" has not yet been fully formed (Turchet, 2023); however, most researchers adhere to the definition given by Lee et al. (2021), which envisions the metaverse as "a virtual environment that combines the physical and the digital." There are already a significant number of different types of metaverses, such as Fortnite, Roblox, or Minecraft, which are entirely based on games; or those based on blockchain technologies - Decentraland or The Sandbox; or such as Horizon by Meta, interaction with which is entirely based on VR technologies that require an appropriate VR-headset. Nevertheless, all these metaverses have in common the critical factor that they enable real-time interaction in a digital environment (Lee et al., 2021). Metaverse users can socially interact with each other, take part in virtual events, or be their creators. Since music has always been one of the most widespread forms of leisure and entertainment (Wilcox, 2017), the emergence of metaverses could not leave such a significant layer of user interest unattended (Turchet, 2023).

Metaverse technologies allow and even facilitate various musical activities - from the composition of musical compositions to conducting full-fledged concerts in virtual spaces. Such channels have vast artistic and creative potential for musicians, as well as commercial benefits (Turchet, 2023). Similar innovations led to the creation of the so-called "Musical Metaverse" (MM), which is a separate part of the metaverse

focused specifically on musical activity (Lee et al., 2021). The concept of MM is not a novelty; since the transition of the Internet to Web 2.0, users and researchers have actively discussed the possibilities of online spaces, particularly metaverses, in terms of potential for the musical industry (Gu & Li, 2020). However, at the beginning of the development of Web 2.0, the Internet environment and information technologies were limited in their capabilities, hence the ability to implement the concept of MM appeared relatively recently (Turchet, 2023). Not the last place in such a rapid implementation and development of the MM was played by the COVID-19 pandemic, which became a powerful trigger for a forced transition to online interactions during self-insolation (Fram et al., 2021). Interest in the metaverse also increased significantly after the official representatives of giants of technological companies, such as Mark Zuckerberg, stated that the metaverses are the future of the Internet and social networks in particular (Meta, 2021). In the aisle of this statement, the example of using metaverse spaces, such as Meta, to conduct a full-scale concert can be seen in the case of the famous K-pop band "Black Pink."

"Black Pink" is a South Korean girls' band formed in 2016 by YG Entertainment (YG Entertainment, 2024). In October 2023, the K-Pop superstar began their world tour in honor of the celebration of the debut of their last album, 'Born Pink' (Black Pink, 2023). Starting in October, they conducted more than 60 live concert performances on all continents, which they completed with two concerts in Seoul on September 16 and 17 (Black Pink on Instagram, 2023). On the last day of performances, in addition to the opportunity to attend the concert personally, fans could also watch the concert broadcast online in real-time on Weverse and Meta. The broadcast differed from conventional concert films because of the explicitly equipped site on which the group performed to create the effect of presence through many interactive cameras and microphones on different parts of the scene (Denis, 2023). Thus, the Black Pink fans received a unique opportunity to observe their favorite band's performance in high resolution and almost "in the forefront" without personal presence at the concert itself. The success of the decision to broadcast the concert in the virtual space of Meta can be evaluated based on record marks in the charts of music billboards all over the world (Cabison & Billboard 200tm, 2023), as well as the fact that after the end of the

tour, all participants unexpectedly announced their shared contract's prolongation with YG Entertainment studios, considering that before the last concert, it was said that the tour in celebration of the 'Born Pink' album would become the final for the band's existence (Denis, 2023).

Currently, music artists and influencers from the Asian market sector are skyrocketing in the world charts, gaining increasing popularity in the American and European sectors (Dwivedi et al., 2021). However, it is essential to note the significant differences between Western and Eastern music markets, as understanding their dynamics has a significant impact on the global music industry (Zhang & Fung, 2019). East Asian markets, especially South Korea and Japan, where cultures are built primarily around the idea of socialism, place a significant emphasis on local curated online platforms such as WeChat, Douyin, Weibo, etc., where exposure to creativity and interaction with artists is carefully shaped music production studios, which include performers (Negus & Zhang, 2020).

The Asian music sector differs in many ways from the West in that pop idol image-making is a separate and mainstream industry for them, primarily targeting the domestic market (Kwon & Kim, 2013). However, with the beginning of the second digital wave in East Asia, marked by digitalization, mobile and Internet communications, and, in particular, the spread of social networks, the Asian music industry gained the way to the global market (Negus & Zhang, 2020). By the time East Asian artists entered the global market, they already had significant influence and popularity in their home markets and music sectors, which played a significant role in the speed at which new artists formed a fan base in European and USA markets (Sun & Liew, 2019). Artists from the East Asian sector are more than just music artists. Through painstaking preparation, which music companies regularly improve in the East Asian music industry, performers from this sector have the opportunity to become full-fledged influencers, idols (Baym, 2018), and also, more recently, ambassadors for famous brands, as can be seen in the example of the members of "Black Pink." Since 2017, each member of the band has been featured as a spokesperson for brands such as Celine, Chanel, Saint Laurent, and Dior, generating additional buzz in the press and among their fan base (Widjojo, 2022).

Compared to the East Asian sector, the Western music sector is more individualistic and still relies heavily on more traditional media such as television shows, radio, and the press, as well as the identity of the music artists (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Due to the fact that Western performers have a much more individualistic approach to music, it is easier for them to form the image and personality of their work, which can be seen in the example of the group "Gorillaz" - a British virtual group that has existed since 1998. The main feature of this group is the fictional universe created around the avatars of the four group members. In addition to the virtual avatars, which are also the group's mascots, the virtual universe can be observed through video content created by the group, for example, a series of short cartoons around the lives of the members' avatars (Gorillaz, 2024). Since their debut self-titled album, which sold 7 million copies, allowing the band to enter the Guinness Book of Records as "Most Successful Virtual Band," Gorillaz have repeatedly expanded the usual boundaries of the music industry (Cook, 2022).

In 2022, the band released the single 'Skinny Ape' - part of the upcoming "Cracker Island" album, which was planned to be promoted using augmented reality (AR) at one of their performances (Gorillaz, 2024). Nowadays, the band is already widely known for its unique animated branding, which was actively used in creating marketing content and music videos. Fans have seen more than once how, with the help of holograms or video equipment, virtual avatars appeared on stage alongside live performers or independently (Cook, 2022). However, with the development of virtual or augmented reality technology, the band's capabilities have expanded dramatically. The band members themselves believed that the use of such technologies would "revolutionize the very concept of musical performance" (Gorillaz, 2022), so they eagerly accepted it, working together with the support team of Google, who saw in their idea an excellent potential for presenting their technical capabilities at the times of immersive technologies rising popularity (Cook, 2022). On December 17, 2022, in Times Square in New York City, Gorillaz presented a free virtual performance for hundreds of assembled fans to celebrate the release of the first single from their new album "Cracker Island" - 'Skinny Ape.' The performance was based on AR technology, where fans on the ground could, through their phone

cameras, watch in real-time the performance of 4 giant avatars of the band members sitting on the buildings, accompanied by the playback of the single itself through speakers installed along the Times Square perimeter, which was turned into the large-scale immersive stage seen through the phones' cameras (Gorillaz, 2022). Thus, the entire performance was built through the combination of the fans' experience and the immersive technologies of AR.

Turchet (2023) suggested that without the presence of fans, the music industry would not exist, as is the case with the Music Multiverse (MM), which would not exist without the technology used by fans to access the virtual environment. Thus, the role of the audience in the music industry is growing commensurately with the advent of new technologies, highlighting the importance of the connection between fans and artists (Dwivedi et al., 2022). The emergence and development of AR and VR have once again revolutionized the fan experience by enabling the creation of virtual environments that contribute to shaping the digital MM ecosystem (Shi et al., 2023). Thus, the existence of MM is directly dependent on user interaction with the platform features provided (DeCasare & Wang, 2020). The presence of metaverses and MM, in particular, provides a broader digital landscape of harmonious intersection of social networks and immersive platforms, such as Metaverse (Turchet, 2023). Due to interactive features and visual storytelling, Instagram greatly facilitates fans' access to their favorite artists and vice versa, becoming a form of catalyst for fan communities' formation, which in turn brings new opportunities for the further development of MM (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Thus, immersion MM technologies complement the interaction of fans and musicians on social networks, contributing to the promotion of the latter and the engagement of the former (Shi et al., 2023).

2.6   Research Model

The conceptualization model for the contribution of Instagram to the popularity and promotion of music artists:
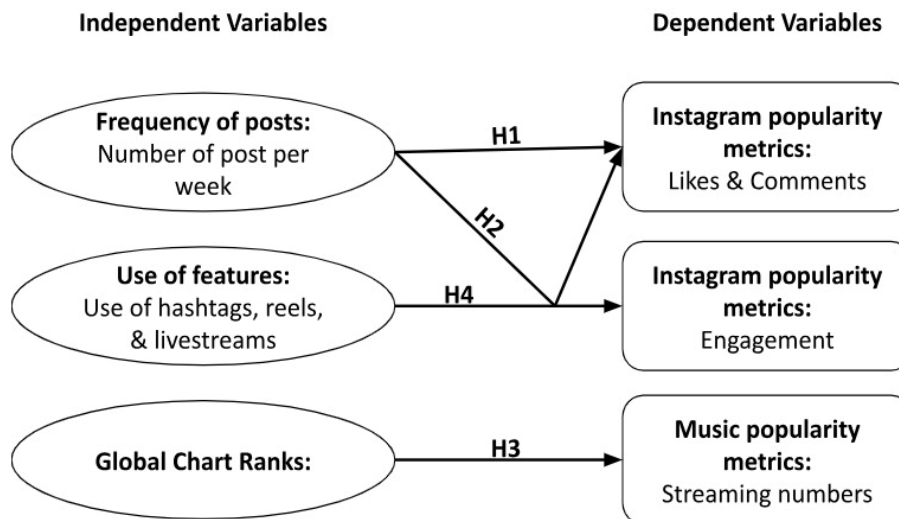
3   Methodology

The main objective of this thesis was to explore how Instagram contributes to the popularity and promotion of music artists. Given the nature of this study, secondary data was chosen to be the primary source for data collection instead of gathering new data. The main reason behind selecting secondary data over collecting new data was that all the necessary information required to answer chosen research questions could be extracted from existing databases, such as Statista and Songsta (Ashley & Tuten, 2014), and direct sources, such as Instagram artists' accounts (Jones & Lee, 2022). Additionally, quantitative research requires fewer resources, can be performed under a shorter time constraint, and is easier to replicate in the future, should the need arise (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, quantitative content analysis will be performed on data gathered through the convenient sampling from music artists' Instagram posts, with streaming numbers, chart rankings, and number of likes and comments as dependent variables, and music genres, frequency of posts and use of Instagram features as independent variables, which will be used in Linear Regression,

ANOVA and MANOVA statistical analyses for hypotheses testing later on for the following hypotheses:

(H0): There is no significant correlation between the frequency of Instagram posts by music artists and their popularity metrics (such as streaming numbers, chart rankings, and follower count).

(H1): The frequency of Instagram posts positively impacts likes and comments.

(H2): The frequency of Instagram posts positively impacts engagement.

(H3): The chart ranking has a positive impact on streaming numbers.

(H4): The use of Instagram features has a positive impact on (a) likes and comments and (b) impacts on engagement.

3.1   Study Design

According to the previous studies, through the use of a quantitative approach, it becomes possible to "test objective theories by examining the relationship among variables within a hypothesis" (Creswell, 2014, p.4) using the reliability and validity standards. Numerical data can be used to measure the variables, making it possible to analyze the data through the use of statistical procedures, which in return leaves less room for potential bias. The content analysis, which will be implemented in this study, falls under the category of descriptive research, referring to the types of studies describing a subject previously thoroughly researched by analyzing variables and the relationships between them (Lans & van der Voordt, 2002). Therefore, this thesis's research framework takes a similar approach to the several studies that have been conducted on the use of social media as an instrument for the promotion and implementation of various marketing techniques in the past (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018; Chen et al., 2015; Hudson et al., 2015; Jones & Lee, 2022), using different social media metrics as their variables. In particular, Jones and Lee (2022) have also used follower count and frequency of posts as their variables of interest, collecting data over the course of a 4-week time period, supporting the argument of Sabate et al. (2014) that the content uploaded in social media environments for more than 30 days

is less likely to receive higher levels of new interaction while demonstrating a higher passive engagement number, such as likes, comments, and shares, which can result in incorrect interpretations of the results of the statistical analysis. Therefore, the data from the Instagram accounts of music artists and secondary data from the databases of Songsta and Statista collected for this study will demonstrate the activity of selected artists and their fans over the course of 4 weeks, starting from the 16th of December of 2023 until the 12th of January of 2024.

When conducting a study, validity and reliability become essential for the sake of findings and future research, given how reliability ensures the study's repeatability and validity ensures the "integrity of the conclusions" (Bryman, 2016, p. 14). Therefore, the sampling technique of the artists included in this research was performed through the means of non-probability convenient sampling. In particular, all the artists were selected through the recommendations of the For You Page (FYP) of the researcher's personal Instagram account, which can be seen as one of the potential limitations of this study and will be addressed in the Limitations section further on. However, all 50 selected artists (N=50) were included based on specific characteristics relevant to this study. To be included in the sample, the artists had to be either a Millennial or Generation Z (Gen Z), meaning their age had to be between 20 and 35 years old because. According to Mennon (2022), Millennials and Gen Z are the two generations most commonly using Instagram on the everyday basis, also making them the target audience for the majority of the social media marketing strategies, which is an important part of this research.

It is also important to note, that since this study looked at Instagram contribution along with music charts and streaming data, artists were required to have at least 10 thousand followers on their accounts as an indicator of their subsequent popularity and recognition by fans. Although recognition was not included in this research because it would require a qualitative study to measure it (Nerilee Ceatha et al., 2019), a sufficient number of followers ensured that there would be activity on the music artist's posts required to conduct this quantitative study. However, there was also an upper limit to the inclusion of artists in the study, since when a musician reaches over 3 million followers, they become more than just music artists, becoming mega-

influencers and celebrities whose engagement rate on any type of publications will be high regardless of published content (Belanche et al., 2021). Therefore, only artists with a follower count between 10 thousand and 2 million were included in the sample. The music genre was also considered a specific characteristic when selecting the sample. However, it was more flexible compared to previous specifications. The five genres were chosen, including alternative, pop, rock, instrumental, and electro/dance. These genres were chosen due to the method used to find artists through the researcher's personalized Instagram recommendations, therefore, it was important to diversify the types of genres to eliminate accidental bias towards one particular genre or a group of artists. Another reason for the selection of these five genres was based on statistical data demonstrating that these genres were the most popular over the past five years (Fleck, 2023), providing a sufficient amount of historical data for this research.

3.2   Variables & Data Coding

In preparation for data collection and further analysis, several variables required coding. Specifically, 'Genres,' 'Chart rankings,' and 'Use of Instagram features.' As mentioned before, this study looked into five genres picked for this research, and each of them had a numerical category assigned to them for the purpose of further use in statistical analyses for supporting the hypotheses testing: 'alternative' (1), 'pop' (2), 'rock' (3), 'instrumental' (4), and 'electro/dance' (5). 'Chart rankings' were also coded using a numerical framework for direct use in statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. Since each music artist had a different number of charts they were included in, it was decided to use quartiles as a form of reverse coding. Therefore, artists whose charts fall between 0-25 charts were assigned category (4), those who had 25-50 charts were included in category (3), and those who had 50-75 charts received category (2), leaving the artists with 75-100+ charts were assigned category (1). Lastly, the 'Use of Instagram features' was categorized into simple "yes/no" code, where 'yes' was represented by (1) and 'no' was represented by (2).

Additionally, the 'Number of likes and comments' over the course of four weeks was merged into a single variable for each of the music artists. The total number of likes

and comments was calculated by adding the number of likes and comments on all posts published over a four-week period. Subsequently, the resulting amount was used to identify another variable in this study - the engagement rate of fan involvement in the activity of performers on Instagram. 'The engagement rate' was calculated using the formula *[(number of likes + number of comments) / (number of followers) *100]* used in similar past studies (Erkan, 2015; Sádaba & SanMiguel, 2016). The 'Frequency of publications per week' for each artist was also calculated using the formula *[(number of posts over the course 4 weeks) / 4)]*.

3.3   Results and Analysis

After all the data was collected, sorted, and coded, the Jamovi program was used for further statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. For this section, results for each hypothesis will be discussed separately first, and then an overall conclusion will be presented in the end.

3.3.1   (H1): The frequency of Instagram posts positively impacts likes and comments.

Table 1 – Linear Regression between the Frequency of Posts and Number of Likes and Comments

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.215	0.0460	0.0257	2.27	1	47	0.139

To test the first hypothesis, linear regression analysis was used, in which the dependent variable was the 'Number of likes and comments,' and the independent variable was the 'Frequency of Posts per week.' The correlation coefficient (R) showed a positive linear correlation (table 1) but was relatively low (R=0.215), indicating a positive but weak linear relationship between the two variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) (table 1) was also found to be significantly low (R^2=0.04), demonstrating that only 4% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable, meaning that only 4% of the variability in the total number of likes and comments can be explained by the frequency of publications per week. As a result, it can be assumed that the number of likes and comments on

38

published posts is influenced by external factors that are not included in the research model. The p-value also turned out to be greater than the 0.05 accepted for this study as a statistical significance level (p=0.139) (table 1), demonstrating that there is no significant statistical relationship between the selected variables. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H1) should be rejected, and the null hypothesis (H0) stating that there is no significant correlation between the frequency of posts per week and the total number of likes and comments on the posts of musical artists on Instagram should be accepted.

3.3.2 (H2): The frequency of Instagram posts positively impacts engagement.

Table 2 – Linear Regression between the Frequency of Posts and Engagement

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.462	0.214	0.197	12.8	1	47	< .001

For the following hypothesis, the linear regression analysis was used again, with the dependent variable being 'Engagement' and the independent being the 'Frequency of posts per week.' The results showed that the correlation coefficient (R) of these variables was significantly higher in comparison to the first alternative hypothesis (R=0,462), implying that there is a moderate positive linear relationship between the two variables and that by increasing the frequency of posts per week, music artists will most likely see a higher engagement on their posts. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also found to be moderately high (R^2=0.21), suggesting that about 21% of the 'Engagement's' variability can be explained by the 'Frequency of posts per week,' implying that the 'Frequency of posts per week' is a more influential factor when explaining the 'Engagement.' Finally, with the p-value being significantly smaller than 0.05 (p<0.01), providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis (H0), it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between fans' engagement and the frequency of posts per week made by artists. Therefore, after finding evidence that the relationship between dependent and independent variables

was less likely caused by random chance alone, the alternative hypothesis (H2) should be accepted.

3.3.3 (H3): The chart ranking has a positive impact on streaming numbers.

Table 3 - Group Descriptives

	Quartile	N	Mean	SD	SE
Streaming numbers (in thousands)	1	17	106005	185758	45053
	2	7	26616	53026	20042
	3	7	2609	2866	1083
	4	18	360	440	104

Table 4 - Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

	W	p
Streaming numbers (in thousands)	0.466	< .001

Note. A low p-value suggests a violation of the assumption of normality

The one-way ANOVA was implemented to test the following alternative hypothesis (H3) to determine whether the factor variable, the 'Chart ranking (quartile),' affects the dependent variable, the 'Streaming numbers.' Given the relatively small sample for this research (N=50), the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality of data distribution check was also conducted to determine whether to use Welch's ANOVA, which assumes that that variables across all groups are not equal, or Fisher's ANOVA, which assumes all of the variable to be equal. Both of these methods are commonly used to compare the variance between groups to the variance within groups (Meier, 2021). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test (table 4) showed that the data was not equally distributed (p<0.01), meaning that the assumption of normality was violated, presumably due to the small sample size. The unequal data distribution could also be seen from the Groups Descriptives table (table 3), showing how the majority of the sample was distributed between quartile 1 (N=17) and quartile 4 (N=18).

Table 5 - One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)

	F	df1	df2	p
Streaming numbers (in thousands)	3.47	3	12.7	0.049

Therefore, based on the Shapiro-Wilk's test results and Groups Descriptives, Welch's F-statistic was chosen to determine whether there are significant differences in the means of the groups. The results (table 5) showed that regardless of the unequal data distribution, the p-value was still smaller than the chosen significance level (p=0.049), proving the alternative hypothesis (H3) to be accepted in the context of this research. However, further exploration and consideration are recommended for future studies.

3.3.4 (H4): The use of Instagram features has a positive impact on (a) likes and comments and (b) impacts on engagement.

The MANOVA test was chosen for the last hypothesis due to the more than one dependent variable being considered. The factor variable for this test was the 'Use of Instagram features (yes/no),' and the dependent variables were the 'Number of likes and comments' and 'Engagement.' Due to the small sample in this research (N=50), Wilk's Lambda was chosen to demonstrate multivariate statistics, as it was the most commonly used method in the previous similar research (Jones & Lee, 2022).

Table 6 - Shapiro-Wilk Multivariate Normality Test

W	p
0.666	< .001

Table 7 - Box's Homogeneity of Covariance Matrices Test

χ^2	df	p
65.5	3	< .001

Additional Shapiro-Wilk tests (table 6) for normality of the dependent variables within each group and a Test of Homogeneity (table 7) using the Chi-Square (χ^2) to assess equality and variance of the dependent variables were also conducted. However,

similar to the previous alternative hypothesis (H3), due to the insufficient sample size (N = 50), Shapiro-Wilk showed a significant deviation from the normal distribution (p < 0.01) in at least one variable and a low Chi-Square Test (p<0.01) revealed significant differences in the variances of the dependent variables.

Table 8 - Multivariate (MANOVA) Test

		value	F	df1	df2	p
Use of Instagram features	Wilks' Lambda	0.797	5.87	2	46	0.005

Despite the results obtained from the Assumption Checks Tests (tables 6 &7), Wilk's Lambda p-value confirms that there are significant differences between the means of dependent variables of 'Number of likes and comments,' as well as in overall 'Engagement' between groups, which are explained by the factor variable 'Use of Instagram features (yes/no).' In other words, considering this study's nature, the low p-value of Wilk's Lambda (p<0.01) allows us to reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative (H4), which states that the use of Instagram features does have a positive impact on likes and comments, as well as overall engagement of fans in the accounts of music artists.

3.4   Limitations

Because time constraints primarily dictated the choice of quantitative analysis, quantitative data may provide somewhat limited results compared to qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the use of a mixed method would be ideal to obtain more extensive results in the future. The use of a mixed method would also provide contextual information, based on which the interpretation of quantitative results will provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Quantitative content analysis also does not provide or oversimplify the meaning of motivation, emotions, or experiences of participants or subjects, due to which the phenomenon being studied is also simplified (Creswell, 2014).

While taking into account the limitations, it is also worth noting the possibly insufficient size of the sample being studied, which is why the results may not be sufficiently indicative of the selected phenomenon. When repeating this study, it would be worthwhile to sample a sample of at least 100, ideally 150, participants to ensure greater diversity in the collected data. For example, when collecting data for the independent variable, music genre, only two music artists performed in the Electro/Dance genre, which significantly limits the generalizability of the results of this study to the entire genre. Continuing with this example, future research would be wise to set a minimum number of musical artists for each individual genre, thereby preventing a lack of data for subsequent analyses.

In this study, "Duration of stay on Instagram" was included as one of the control variables, designed to reflect the timeline for the formation of profiles of music artists. A limitation that arose when collecting historical information from performers' accounts was that many performers initially maintained their Instagram accounts as personal, later changing them into professional. However, many posts that remain on artists' accounts over the course of their personal account may cause a distortion of the final results, such as, for example, an inaccurate number of posts dedicated to the creative activity of the artist, because on some accounts, for example, the artist OkJess (@okjessofficial), it is complex to say from what moment targeted professional content aimed at career development began to appear. Therefore, this study looks at the number of followers instead of the number of posts to avoid inaccuracy that could be filtered out by additional qualitative analysis.

Another reason for including "Duration on Instagram" as a control variable was the multi-channel use of music users in the social media environment on other social platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook. Since the data was collected primarily from Instagram, the factor of which social network is the main channel of communication between the artist and his audience was not taken into account. It could be reflected in the presence of a small number of posts and the recent creation of an account for some artists, but at the same time, them having a high number of followers who know of this artist from other platforms and following them on Instagram in addition to those other social networks (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

Considering this possibility, it can also be said that focusing this study exclusively on data from Instagram is the most significant limitation of this study since it considers only part of the factors associated with the promotion of music artists on social networks. However, Instagram is one of the largest platforms for promotion through social media marketing (Belanche et al., 2021), so the data obtained in this study can be used as additional support for similar studies conducted for other social networks such as TikTok, Facebook, or Twitter.

3.5   Discussion

The aim of this thesis is to explore the use of social networks as marketing tools, particularly the use of Instagram as a form of contribution to the development of the music industry. In particular, this thesis explored how the landscape and functionality of Instagram contribute to the promotion and popularity of music performers and artists, also trying to determine the associated and influencing factors for attracting, forming, and involving the audience in the activities of performers to answer the research questions, formulated in the beginning of this thesis. Thus, the formulation of research questions and the results obtained from analyzing the collected data from the accounts of 50 music artists on Instagram allowed the research to assess the potential of Instagram as an effective marketing and promotional tool.

The findings of this research project further validate the findings of Jones and Lee (2022), arguing that online content creators, such as music artists, especially benefit from using Instagram as a PR tool due to the music's powerful sensory stimuli abilities that can significantly complement visual content. Therefore, social networks, such as Instagram, allow music artists to interact directly with the audience through the many functions offered by those platforms and share their creativity both through visual and audio content (Belanche et al., 2021). During the research process, the results revealed that the use of various Instagram features moderately impacts user engagement, which can be observed through the number of likes and comments that fans leave on artists' posts. It is also important to consider that in modern social networks, it is not enough to post once a week (Morris, 2013) since due to high competition among content creators, and in particular, creators in the music sector,

the attention and involvement of users are fundamental components in increasing popularity and recognition of creators (Waldron, 2013). This is clearly demonstrated in the influencers segment, which musicians also often relate to due to the formation of fan bases around them with various distinctive characteristics, like the atmosphere created by the artist's music or the topics they address and touch upon (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Therefore, the artist's ability to utilize the mechanisms available to them to broadcast their content to the audience becomes decisive in many respects, which is demonstrated by the data obtained during the study, implying that the variety of use of Instagram functions contributes to the growth of engagement from fans, partially expressed in the number of likes and comments.

However, although the key to the success of any action lies, first of all, in the competent management of available resources, in case of Instagram, it is not enough to use native-to-platform functions, such as hashtags, publishing reels and stories, as well as conducting livestreams. Although implementing those functions in artists' online activity helps promote artists' content and reach new audiences (Belanche et al., 2021), it is also important to understand how the algorithmic mechanisms of this social network work, in which the frequency of publications significantly influences both the offering of the artist's content to a new audience and the maintenance of interest and involvement of existing fans (Cho et al., 2018). The research looked at how post frequency individually affected the number of likes and comments, as well as the overall fan engagement. An interesting and unexpected result of this research showed that for most artists, the frequency of publications did not significantly affect the number of likes and comments. Meaning, that from an increase in the frequency of publications, the total number of likes and comments both from followers and non-followers did not decrease but did not increase either. However, as the frequency of publications increased, the involvement of the artist's audience grew, demonstrating that a higher percentage of followers were actively engaging and were active in relation to the published content, regardless of the type.

Though this thesis looked into the relationship between artists' use of Instagram as a promotional tool for their content, it is also vital to take into consideration that any distribution of musical content on social networks is complimentary (Peitz &

Waelbroeck, 2006). Thus, the success of artists largely depends on how many people will download, listen, and learn about new songs, tracks, and releases on official streaming services such as Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, SoundCloud, and numerous others, in which social networks such as Instagram mainly contribute to by enhancing marketing strategies. This study also touched upon the importance of charts as a source of information that can be used to increase artists' streaming numbers. Interestingly enough, during the research, it was revealed that the charts act more as milestones for the artists themselves and their producers but are not commonly considered by the fans. However, their impact on streaming numbers has been shown to be positive, implying that charts can increase the amount of streaming artists' content online, again proving the existence of external influencing factors.

3.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, based on past research and the results obtained during this study, this thesis can argue that Instagram, being a dynamic and constantly evolving platform, is a useful tool for modern artists in the constantly changing online marketing environment and has a moderately noticeable impact on the development and success of music artists. With rapidly advancing technology, a social media presence is becoming more than an option, but a necessity to maintain a sustainable career in the highly competitive music industry. By providing various opportunities and functionality, Instagram contributes to the development of music artists, changing the paradigm of promotion in the digital age, as well as helping to attract and build artists' audiences, promoting the popularity of artists, and strengthening their positions in the ever-evolving landscape of the music industry. Therefore, based on the obtained results, the research supports the hypothesis that Instagram, however, moderately contributes to the popularity and promotion of music artists.

3.7   Implication for Future Research

Future research should further explore the impact of Instagram on artists' development in both online social media spaces and the real world. Due to this study's somewhat generalization examining the more superficial aspects of an artist's online presence on social media, the future exploration of one or more external factors could

provide beneficial results. Therefore, future research should delve deeper into the influence of individual factors, for example, conducting research on how the use of viral songs affects the recognition of their authors and if it impacts their creative careers. It might also be beneficial to consider the possibility of using a more targeted sample of music artists to obtain more narrowed results that can be directly used for the further development of the selected artists. For example, future research can focus only on artists from the EU sector rather than including artists from several sectors in one study.

Moreover, instead of obtaining data on several, choosing one specific music genre can also provide helpful insight for musicians and music marketers. Another promising research topic can be artists' interest or willingness to spread brand awareness and expand their audience through one or more social networks alone or combined with other traditional media types, like radio or television. Looking into the data from other major social media, like TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook, can also significantly contribute to the results obtained in this study, making it yet another promising option for future researchers.

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