

**SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES OF INDEPENDENT VS  
MAJOR LABELS IN ESTONIA**



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The purpose of this thesis was to analyze and describe music marketing strategies, focusing on social media marketing, that independent record labels and artists make use of, compare these strategies to those used by affiliated or the Big Three major labels in Estonia, and then present the most favorable social media marketing strategy for beginner independent record labels and artists without requiring strong backing.

For this thesis, the author proposed finding the most effective free social media marketing method for increasing online visibility and community-building activities on Instagram to ANTICREW OÜ, an Estonian beginner independent record label and the commissioning company of this research.

Reviewing the literature on the historical background of Estonia and its reference to music, analyzing cultural events connected to music, and examining how digitalization affected them were the first steps taken by the research writer. To gain a better understanding of the set of rules, concepts, contracts, and definitions of the modern music business, the author explored and presented intellectual property law and copyrights, record deals and their types, and record labels concepts and the hierarchy behind them.

Following a discussion of music marketing strategies used by major labels in Estonia, the author introduced a free social media community-based marketing strategy based on Lil Peep's rise phenomenon and DTA Records' modern Instagram promotion operation, which featured such artists as Avril Lavigne and Jxdn.

Based on the results of this thesis, the author attempted to increase the existing data about the power of fandom to drive business in the modern music industry. Moreover, it was found that fandom has a significant impact on artists' development and popularity growth, which would make it helpful for ANTICREW OÜ and its artists' Instagram promotion strategies to make a difference.

Keywords independent label, major label, marketing, music industry, Estonia, community-based marketing

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# **1 Introduction**

Throughout its history, music has come through various significant changes that made it possible for the industry to keep the lights on, and the show to continue while tackling the constraints of a fast-changing world. And the most crucial change in this business industry is undoubtedly technological change, which constantly alters the operations of the overall business model, marketing strategies, distribution possibilities, and artist management services.

In this thesis, the author aims to discover how technological change has affected the marketing strategies of the music business industry, for both independent and major labels in Estonia.

This thesis considers an artist to be independent when the musician does not belong to or use the promotional, distributional, or concert arrangement services of major labels, whereas the labeled artist does the opposite. While the artists signed by major or affiliated record labels get promoted on the daily basis through social media websites, television, and radio, the musicians, who recognize themselves as independent artists, struggle with handling the marketing campaigns on their own or with the help of independent record labels.

Although the before mentioned statement is veracious enough, the eighties invention that has connected the whole world during the last forty years was able to turn people's perception of art and artists' possibilities upside down. This invention was called the Internet. Considering Estonia's strong technological base, this is the main reason the author chose this country for the research.

In this thesis, the author researches marketing strategies for independent record labels utilization, compares them to ones that sub-labels and major labels in Estonia take advantage of, and introduces the most beneficial ones, focusing on social media marketing strategies and tactics that will not require heavy investments from beginner independent labels and artists.

## **1.1 Research motivation**

The research writer considers mentioning being an independent artist himself. Although the author's career as a full-time musician, artist, or music producer has not yet started, the writer has

been practicing the skills of music production, instrumentals creation, and media content preparation thoroughly throughout the last three years of studying at Häme University of Applied Sciences.

The author's stage name is Beid, which will be mentioned further when referring to the research writer as an independent artist.

The music of Beid is a combination of such genres as alternative rock, rap, trap, indie rock, punk, and even metal, mixed in a way that would sound pop at the same time. From the beginning of the project until present, Beid has been an experiment for the author, which would either work out in the future, gaining a mass audience that would feel the music he produces, or lay low as an underground niche for a narrow audience.

The commissioning company for this thesis is ANTICREW OÜ. ANTICREW OÜ owns SONUS CAPSULA, a Tallinn-based independent record label that provides local artists with online distribution possibilities. ANTICREW OÜ was officially registered on the 13th of January 2020 as a firm in an Estonian credit database. (E-Krediidiinfo, 2020)

ANTICREW OÜ was handling the concert arrangement activities in the popular Estonian nightclub Club Hollywood for the past two years before it decided to change its operational services. (E-Krediidiinfo, 2020). One of the main reasons for the change was the global pandemic situation, which restricted the availability of holding public events of any kind in the territory of Estonia. Regardless of the COVID-19 related restrictions, the company did not stop its development, but on the contrary, decided to start off as an independent record label.

A crossroads has arisen in the label's efforts to promote independent artists they collaborate with on its Instagram profile. Since SONUS CAPSULA does not have any capital investment outside the company, the author suggests finding the most effective free social media marketing methods for increasing online visibility and community building of the independent label and the artists it collaborates with.

The feeling of belonging to a community of independent Estonian artists that could collaborate, exchange audiences, and later grow into something bigger led the author to the idea of writing a

thesis on the topic of finding the similarities or differences in social media marketing strategies of independent and affiliated or major record labels.

This thesis would help the commissioning company of the author's choice by providing it with valid information on the current market dynamics in Estonia, the advantages, and disadvantages of belonging to one of the Big Three major labels, as well as providing it with modern social media marketing strategies and tactics, such as community-based marketing, and social listening.

Taking the information mentioned earlier into account, the author proposes the following research question:

"How does community-based marketing become a distinctive value for artists when dealing with major or independent record labels in Estonia?"

The researcher uses mixed methods to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data. To gather information on the effectiveness of community-based marketing in today's music business industry, the author uses a case study about the interconnection between Lil Peep's community and his rapid popularity growth.

The researcher also conducts a social listening of the DTA Records label, owned by Travis Barker, and 300 Elektra Entertainment, a Warner Music Group subsidiary label. (Warner Music Group, 2021)

As part of the author's research, Instagram is monitored to look for mentions of the label as well as keywords related to the business on Instagram. Nevertheless, the researcher considers that the number of times the label got hashtagged does not tell the whole truth in this case, and it is necessary to look beyond this number to consider the mood behind the data, analyzing the sentiment on social media, one of the most important components of social media listening. It would provide insight into DTA Records and their competitors' performance. Researcher would look for insights from social conversations rather than simply counting the number of times the label was mentioned.

The author would look up two Instagram profiles of the artists signed to DTA Records, which on the moment of the 7th of September, were mentioned in the profile header. As part of this

research, the research writer examines Avril Lavigne's and Jxdn's Instagram profiles for similarities and differences in social media engagement, social visibility, and fandom. To gain deeper insights, the research writer investigated what these artists talk about in their posts, what is the engagement, if they have a community, how they engage. Finally, how Avril Lavigne and her label promoted the latest album a month before and after the release.

In addition, in order to gain a complete picture of how independent artists and labels would need to act on social media platforms to create communities of people actively engaging with their content, the author connects the dots and indicates similarities and differences between the information gathered from Lil Peep's case study and the social listening data collected from DTA Records' and the two artists' Instagram profiles.

After the research is completed, the author expects to help ANTICREW OÜ to be able to better understand what DTA Records does on its social media channel to promote its two artists a month before and after their music releases, what the label and artists' tone of voice is, and how artists interact with the label on Instagram. In order to engage, enhance social media presence, and create a fandom on Instagram, the data collected from Lil Peep's case study will help connect the dots between the importance of community-based marketing on social media platforms and the current social media tactics of DTA Records and two of its artists.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Estonian music culture & digitalization**

Estonia is a Northeast Europe Baltic country with more than 1.3 million inhabitants. The country announced its political and economic independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Throughout the years of its existence as an independent country, Estonia has gained a status of a promoter of a high technology information society that developed the principles of e-government. (Kalvet, 2012) In 2012, Estonia was ranked 1st in the accessibility of government online services, and 2nd in the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for governmental purposes. (Kalvet, 2012) Estonia is also known for its unique culture, which is strongly connected to music. (Schwab, 2017)

### **2.1.1 Estonian Song Festival & Tallinn Music Week**

Estonian song festival Laulupidu, which was originated in 1869, gathers the country's 20,000 to 30,000 choirs every five years and attracts more than 100,000 people to enjoy the event. (Schwab, 2017)

The main idea of the festival that celebrates the language and traditions of the nation interested the communist regime when Estonia was the Soviet Socialist Republic, at years from 1940 to 1990. As a result, the Estonian Song Festival was obliged to play songs in Russian, referring to the idea of representation of Soviet patriotism on a national level. (Pawlusz, 2016)

However, the festival, on the contrary, provided the singer choirs from all around the country with the ability to civil resistance by encouraging singing in the Estonian national language, thereby popularizing the civil freedom movement. (Pawlusz, 2016)

Laulupidu retained the status of "the celebration of freedom" in 1990 when Estonia announced itself as independent from the Soviet Union. (Pawlusz, 2016)

And even though the history of the festival goes back to the 19th century, the main idea of the Laulupidu event remains the same - a celebration of the control of Estonia's destiny, freedom, and independence. (Schwab, 2017) This case strongly represents the power of music in the Estonian culture, bringing people together, thereby giving a sense of belonging and strength to overcome all the difficulties that the country faced throughout its years of existence.

However, because of the global and country's rapid digitalization, current Estonian artists are poorly inspired by its national music. On the contrary, they look up to worldwide pop trends, which originally come from the United States of America. (Schwab, 2017) Because of the global digitalization, diversity, marketing strategies, and competition in the worldwide industry, music charts set rules for all countries, which requires artists to follow them to succeed.

In addition to the historical Estonian Song Festival, the author finds it crucial to mention the modern event, which was taking place in the city of Tallinn since the year 2009. (Music Festival Wizard, n.d.) This event is called Tallinn Music Week.



In the early years, the festival had a different concept from the one it has nowadays. Tallinn Music Week was a showcase event in which the communities of artists from all around Europe met each other and shared their creativeness and art. (Music Festival Wizard, n.d.)

In May 2022, the festival not only happened in different city venues, letting the audience choose from various concerts by the best-known artists in their genre but took place in two cities - Tallinn and Narva. (Tallinn Music Week, n.d.)

Acknowledging the success of the modern Estonian music festival - Tallinn Music Week, and the historical background of Laulupidu, these music festivals will remain to attract more and more people inside and outside of the country to enjoy its national music while, at the same time, give them opportunities to get to know a new generation of Estonian artists and their craft.

## **2.2 Intellectual property & Copyright**

Among all industries, recorded music is no doubt one of the most visibly impacted by digitization. Over the past 20 years, music retailers have ceased to exist, and online music retailers, such as Spotify and Apple Music, have become the primary distribution channels. Apart from online distributional channels development, digitalization created the mass exposure of file-sharing technology that made it possible for consumers to produce and spread digital music files around the globe for free using peer-to-peer networks. Therefore, the copyright regime has weakened substantially. (Zhang, 2016)

As a result of the before-mentioned case, intellectual property protection was introduced. An Intellectual Property right also called a creative right, is a broad framework of legal rights that protects creative works, such as music, design, art, and movies, to name a few. Artistic, inventorial, and creative work, in general, is protected by intellectual property rights, which ensures these people will be recognized and rewarded. In May 2022, there are four types of intellectual properties existent: patents, trademarks, registered designs, and copyrights. The last one in the list gives artists the right to exclusively use their creative works. (Lowe, 2020)

It was for this reason that the Copyright Act was introduced. By creating favorable conditions for writers, performers, musicians, broadcasting service providers, movie creators, database makers,

and others specified by this act for the creation and use of works, the Copyright Act aims to ensure consistent development of culture and protection of intellectual property, and cultural achievements, as well as the development of copyright-based industries and international trade. (Riigikogu, 2017)

Intellectual property is one of the key elements that artists need to consider before signing to a major label. It is important to note that whenever music is distributed without a record deal, all creative works' rights belong to the artists. Despite this, even if the artist joins a label, releases an album there, and then decides to leave, the label will keep the copyrights. (Lindvall, 2009) In the current music industry, keeping intellectual property rights is without a doubt one of the main benefits of remaining independent.

### **2.3 Record labels**

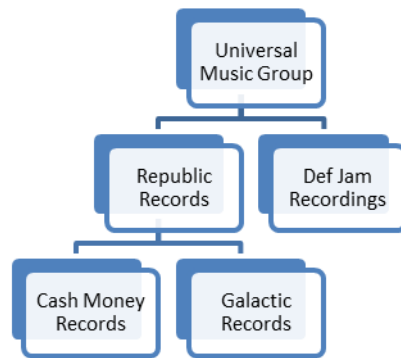
The record industry includes companies, whether large or small, that produce, distribute, and market the recordings of affiliated musicians. In a record label, there are various different departments that cooperate to best sell the music, and, what is more important, the brands of their artists. (Davis et al., n.d.)

The main objective of a modern record label is to search for potential talented artists to make a brand out of them. In the era of free downloading, the key concept is the branding of an artist, rather than recording the music or distributing the audio materials to online platforms or physical music stores. The reason for that is relatively straightforward - revenue streams of the complete music sales dropped twice in the period from the year 2000 until 2016, and they keep falling. (Macy et al., 2015, pp. 8-9)

A record label can be categorized into three types: a major label, a subsidiary of a major label, also known as affiliated label, and an independent label.

#### **Figure 1**

*The music labels industry hierarchy*



*Note.* Adapted from *Our Labels & Brands*, by Universal Music Group, n.d, Universal Music Group (<https://www.universalmusic.com/labels/>). In the Public Domain.

The graph depicted above represents the hierarchy in the music labels industry. This exact graph is an example of a small branch of a Universal Music Group chain. As it can be seen from the figure, Universal Music Group owns both Republic Records and Def Jam Recordings. However, the difference depicted in this graph is that Republic Records works with smaller affiliated labels, such as Cash Money Records and Galactic Records (Republic Records, n.d.-b), while Def Jam Recordings is an independent records label, which only uses distributional services from Universal Music Group. (Universal Music Group, n.d.-a)

And this is where the definition of an independent record label becomes uncertain. There are examples of independent labels that do not receive any funds from any other business outside of the company, while most of them, at least, use the distributional services of the Big Three major labels. Affiliated and non-affiliated independent labels only differ if they share their services with a major label as part of an agreement or not. (Davis et al., n.d.)

### **2.3.1 The Big Three**

The Big Three major record labels are from the United States of America and are Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group, and Universal Music Group. (Lesser, 2018)

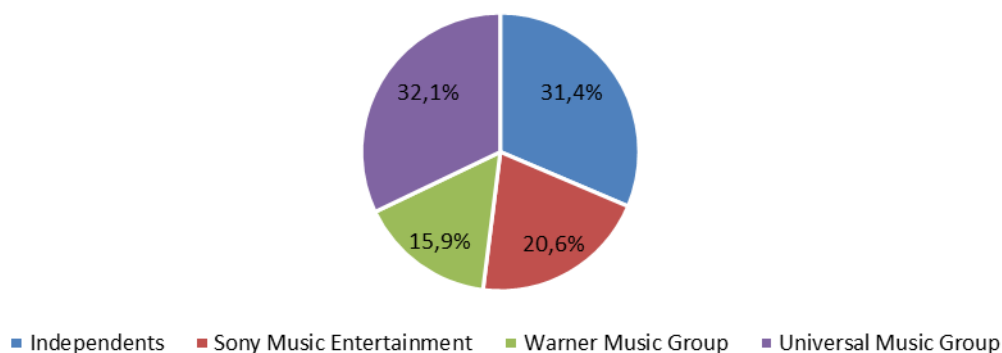
However, it would be compulsory to mention that such labels as Capitol Music Group, Atlantic Records, and RCA Records refer to the major labels' list. Although these labels are not on the Big Three labels list, they are the representative operators of the Big Three major record labels. In fact, each of the Big Three labels has its main record labels. (Davis et al., n.d.)

For instance, such labels as EMI Records, Republic Records, Capitol Music Group, and Def Jam Records, to name a few, are some of the main record labels of Universal Music Group, also known as UMG. (Universal Music Group, n.d.-b) Sony Music Entertainment (SME) operates with labels such as Columbia Records, RCA Records, Epic Records, and Provident Label Group. (Sony Music Entertainment, n.d.) While Asylum Records, Atlantic Records, and Parlophone, to give an instance, are in the Warner Music Group (WMG) directory. (Warner Music Group, n.d.)

In 2016, it was estimated that the Big Three major labels made a profit of 62.4% of the overall music revenue worldwide. (Lesser, 2018) In 2020, however, the total music market share in percents for the Big Three major labels increased: Sony Music Entertainment - 20.6%, Warner Music Group - 15.9%, Universal Music Group - 32.1%, Independents - 31.4%. The total share of the Big Three major labels of the global music revenue was already 68.6%, which is 6.2% more compared to the results of the year 2016, and this percentage keeps constantly growing year by year. (Statista, 2021)

## Figure 2

*Total recorded music market share worldwide in 2020, by label*



*Note.* Adapted from *Total recorded music market share worldwide in 2020, by label*, by Statista, 2021 04, Statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/947107/recorded-music-market-worldwide-label/>). Copyright by Statista.

One of the main reasons for this constant growth is the developing need from the artists to get signed by a major label to increase the chances of becoming successful in the industry. A financial

support and increased reputation are one of the most valuable benefits that the artist, who would be signed by a major label get, just to name a few. (Lesser, 2018)

However, the percent of the music market share, that independent artists and labels shared in 2020, which is 31.4% is relatively big, comparing it to all of the Big Three major record labels separately. (Statista, 2021) The percentage of the independent labels' share in the total recorded music market in 2020 represents the worldwide artists' tendency towards owning rights to their intellectual property without having to sign any contracts with major labels.

## **2.4 Record deals**

The record deal, sometimes referred to as a record contract, is a legal agreement between an artist and a record label, through which the artist grants the label full rights to their music in exchange for various aspects of development, such as recording, distribution, and marketing.

Depending on the contract agreement, the label earns capital from different sectors. Retail sales (CDs, vinyl, cassette tapes) and streaming platforms (Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer, etc.) are the most common revenue streams for the label. Some contracts do also include revenue from the number of concert tickets or tour tickets sold, as well as merchandise sales. Typically, artists receive the so-called royalties at the end of each quarter, which is a percentage of sales of music, based on the contract terms. (Spinnup, 2013)

There are a variety of record deals depending on the split of expenses determined beforehand by the label and the artist, the overall budget, the duration of the contract, and which countries are included or excluded. (Spinnup, 2013) There are 14 types of record deals in April 2022: standard record deal, distribution deal, major label deal, anti-360 deal, single deal recording contract, profit split record deal, joint venture record deal, deals between labels, 50/50 deal, artist deals, licensing deal, EP deal, production deal, and 360 deal. (Schurb, 2020)

There has been a perception for a long time that labels take too much from artists and offer little in return. The author would like to make deeper research, and see if this is a belief or not, and if it is not, what is it that labels take from the artists in exchange for the capital provided to the artists as an advance.

In the upcoming subchapter, the thesis writer would consider analyzing a 360 deal because of its relevancy and the willingness of the labels to use it more often than the other ones in April 2022.

#### **2.4.1 360 deal**

A 360 deal is a unique contract between an artist and a record label that provides the musician with the help of covering the upfront costs of marketing campaigns, concerts, tours arrangements, corporate sponsorships, and merchandise products. Under this contract, the record label later has the stake from sales of the music and receives the percentages from sales of all the before-mentioned activities, which they provide the artist with in the first place. (Macy et al., 2015, pp. 8-9) It is imperative to note that 360 deals have become commonly used by both independent and major labels in 2022 because they saw the sales of recorded music drop and envisioned a music industry that promotes artist branding rather than music sales. (Lesser, 2018)

The advantages of signing a 360 deal for an artist are unambiguous at first glance, as the artist receives a decent monetary help, which could be invested in multiple artist's brand development sectors, such as: studio recording, publishing, merchandise, touring, image development, social media marketing, etc. (Marshall, 2012) The last point, however, would interest the author the most when researching on this topic, as in nowadays realities, the capital invested in the promotional campaigns on Instagram and Facebook, for instance, strongly affects the output of the advertisement itself, which can be measured in number of views, likes, comments, and profile or community subscriptions.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider how the label is partnering with its media companies. An artist should therefore be patient and willing to read the contract agreements carefully, looking for points that would increase exposure through other media channels rather than social media. Television, film, and radio industries operate closely with the Big Three major labels, which can provide an artist with the possibility of being featured in a movie scene, being a guest on a talk show, or even writing the soundtrack for a blockbuster movie. (Gaille, 2019)

In addition, signing a 360 deal with a label allows artists to take advantage of professionals from different fields and specializations. Having signed a 360 deal with one of the major labels means that the label will provide the artist with their music producers, engineers, and marketing experts

who would help to develop the artist's brand, thus helping the artist to develop a distinct musical style and image. (Gaille, 2019) However, it totally depends on the contract conditions and varies from artist to artist.

The most beneficial part for a record label signing an artist to a 360 deal is that it perceives rights or subsidiary rights to multiple revenue sectors of an artist. Later the label receives the percentages of the artists revenue streams from all or most of the revenue sectors, depending on contract conditions. The last point, however, varies from artist to artist, as the author mentioned earlier. (Marshall, 2012) The medium percentage that the record label gets from non-recording sectors of revenue varies from 20 to 30 percent. The percentages vary depending on the musician's bargaining power and a revenue sector. (Marshall, 2012) The author would specify that even though signing this contract would mean a world for some artists, for others, on the contrary, it might lead to bankruptcy.

As physical music sales, meaning CDs, vinyl, and cassette tapes, have become a part of history, one of the primary revenue streams for the artists, apart from merchandise sales and quarterly royalty payments, remained concerts and touring. This fact made record labels aim at perceiving percent from revenues and managing tours themselves as one of the conditions in a 360 deal. A 360 deal may give record labels the authority to manage tour details, including choosing promoters, tour routes, timetables, etc. Although, as the author pointed out earlier, the conditions of a 360 deal vary from case to case, this disadvantage has become one of the most significant drawbacks of this deal for artists. Not only was this caused by a smaller stake in the revenue streams of tours and concerts, but also by the inability to choose where to give a concert, what time, and what date. (Karubian, 2009)

Apart from that, in the situation when no one attends the artist's shows or purchases the album after receiving a 360 deal, the label will want to recover its losses. Artists are often given a deadline by which they must achieve certain sales numbers, otherwise, the labels stop working with them or worse, put them in debt. Because of the terms of the contract, the label covers all the upfront costs incurred by the artist to produce a single, an EP, or an album. A recording artist who spends all the capital that was invested to record music, or what is more common, to buy expensive clothes, cars, and houses, creating his or her image, but does not meet the numerical data from streams expectations from the label, is liable for the money invested. The reason is

simple - the label lends capital to the artist, which they must fully comprehend in the long run, as well as gaining a percentage of sales of merchandise, music, tickets to the concerts, etc. (Schwartz, 2020)

Finally, the artists who sign a 360 deal lose full rights to their craft. If the artist created the music, mixed it, mastered it the way that he wanted it to sound, and then performed it live, it does not mean that the artist owns this song, mixtape, or album. Copyright is typically owned by record labels, which can be appealing to an artist when he receives an advance from the label but can be off-putting when he leaves the label because he can no longer meet the label's expectations and loses the rights to the songs he had been writing for years. (Wang, 2020)

The music industry has also seen cases where artists not only left labels, losing their copyrights to the songs, as it was mentioned previously, but also lost their stage names, leaving the rights to the label. An example of such a case is Levan Gorozia, popularly known under the stage name L'One, who left Black Star Inc. in Russia in 2019. In the spring of 2012, Levan did not read the contract condition accurately, which led to losing the stage name and music he has been developing for the past seven years. (Coppershop, 2020)

There have also been cases, in which the artist was able to get back their music rights from the labels. Prince Rogers Nelson, better known as Prince, protested against Warner Records' contract in 1996, when he appeared on stage with the word "slave" on his cheek and changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol that was known as a "Love Symbol". After gaining ownership of his music in 1996, he acquired the rights to his early songs from Warner Records in 2014, releasing two new albums for the label in exchange. (Dodd, 2019)

According to the information presented, there is no right or wrong when signing a 360 deal with a label. In the music industry of 2022, the 360 deal is the most common contract agreement, which is used by independent as well as major record labels, which brings the author to the conclusion that studying the contracts before signing them, as well as asking for a lawyer's expertise is the most crucial part.



## 2.5 Music market in Estonia

When defining the main factor that differentiates Estonia from its European neighbours like France, Spain, and Germany, it would be fair to state that it is the relatively small size of the overall music market. The Estonian music industry ecosystem involves non-governmental organizations, independent producers and musicians, and privately-owned corporations. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021) In April 2022, there are all the Big Three major record labels officially operating in Estonia - Universal Music Estonia (Universal Music Group, 2022), Warner Music Baltics (Warner Music Group, 2022), Sony Music Entertainment Baltics (Sony Music Entertainment, 2022).

The most popular Estonian artists and bands who signed to Universal Music Estonia are marp\$, fenkii, Merilin Mälk, Pitsa, 5MIINUST, villemdrillem, Heleza, Maian, Elina Born, and Jüri Pootsmann. (Universal Music Group, 2022) Warner Music Baltics in Estonia features such artists as ANDREAS, Gameboy Tetris, Karl Killing, Liis Lemsalu, and NOËP. (Warner Music Group, 2022) Finally, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics in Estonia's musicians base involves Andrei Zevakin, Ariadne, Clicherik & Mäx, Eleryn Tiit, Ewert and The Two Dragons, Ewert Sundja, Frankie Animal, Iiris Vesik, Jaagup Tuisk, Lenna Kuurmaa, margiela, Mihkel Raud, Miljardid, Pluuto, and Tanel Padar. (Sony Music Entertainment, 2022)

Referring to the information retrieved from the official major labels' websites in April 2022 on the Baltic signed artists' lists, Estonian artists are the most signed ones comparing Latvia and Lithuania. The thesis writer calculated the number of Estonian artists signed to all the Big Three major record labels, summed up all the representatives from Latvia and Lithuania, and created a comparison table.

**Table 1**

*Number of signed artists from Estonia, Latvian, Lithuania, by label*

	Estonian artists	Latvian artists	Lithuanian artists
Universal Music Baltics	10	8	2

Sony Music Entertainment Baltics	15	3	0
Warner Music Baltics	5	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>

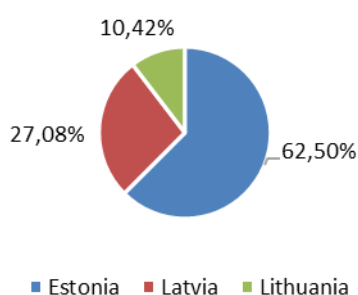
*Note.* Adapted from *Artists section*, by Universal Music Baltics, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics, Warner Music Baltics, n.d, Universal Music Baltics, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics, Warner Music Baltics (<https://universalmusic.ee/#section-1>; <https://baltics.sonymusic.com/#artists>; <https://warnermusicbaltics.com/artists/#domestic>). Copyright by Universal Music Baltics, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics, Warner Music Baltics.

Regarding the numeral data represented in the table above, in April 2022, the total number of Baltic artists signed to one of the Big Three major record labels is 48.

After taking the above-mentioned number into account, the author calculated the percentages of the market share between the three Baltic countries with the Big Three major labels operating altogether.

### Figure 3

*The market share of Baltic countries within the Big Three major record labels in percents*



*Note.* Adapted from *Artists section*, by Universal Music Baltics, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics, Warner Music Baltics, n.d, Universal Music Baltics, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics, Warner Music Baltics (<https://universalmusic.ee/#section-1>; <https://baltics.sonymusic.com/#artists>; <https://warnermusicbaltics.com/artists/#domestic>). Copyright by Universal Music Baltics, Sony Music Entertainment Baltics, Warner Music Baltics.

Referring to the results represented in the circle graph, in April 2022, Estonia owned the highest share among the three Baltic countries in the number of artists signed to one of the Big Three major labels - 62.5%. Latvia had a share of 27.08%, while Lithuania had only 10.42% of the overall major labels' music market share in April 2022.

The gathered data sheds light on the current music market situation, presenting Estonia as the most developed Baltic country in the music business industry, giving it more chances for future development in the European and global music business sphere.

## **2.6 Music marketing strategies**

Moving to the music promotion part that Estonian artists and labels take advantage of the most, especially when mentioning mainstream artists, remains the same - radio is one of the most favoured choices up to this day. The main reason for this pick is the constant plays and a variety of radio stations that the potential hit song might end up being featured in. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021)

In April 2022, the most favorable radio stations are ERR Raadio 2, Sky Radio, NRJ FM, Retro FM Estonia, Star FM, MyHits, and Sky Plus Radio. (myTuner Radio, n.d.)

There is a diverse list of radio stations specializing in streaming a variety of music genres from different periods of time. For instance, Retro FM broadcasts the most prominent rock and pop songs from 1980 to 1990. Retro FM is also known for playing Estonian cover versions of the hits from the same period mentioned earlier. (LiveOnlineRadio, n.d.)

Although two of the radio station, ERR Raadio 2 and Sky Radio, do feature the newcomers' music in their broadcasts, most of the Estonian radio stations rely on the hit songs of the past. This action does not pave the way for the modern music market popularization and radio listeners' music perception development.

Estonian radio stations need to be analyzed on the content they broadcast by independent labels and artists, major labels, and artists' managers to pick the radio stations from which the musicians' craft depending on the genre, will benefit the most. However, radio is not the only option for

getting to know the new artists and their craft nowadays, especially, when mentioning younger audience.

According to the survey, “Me. The World. The Media”, conducted by Tartu University in 2014, a little bit less than a third of the respondents aged 15 to 29 completely stopped perceiving radio. (Opermann, 2018) Acknowledging the results of this survey, it would be precise to state that technological change, which introduced more ways to look up to artists' content, has evolved during the past 12 years, ending up in an even fewer number of younger audience radio perceivers in April 2022.

Apart from radio promotional campaigns, labels make use of television channels for the viewers to recognize the artist's faces, listen to their stories, and see them perform, thereby developing the cult of personality of the artist.

The list of Estonian TV channels involves such channels as: Alo TV, ETV, ETV 2, Kanal 11, Kanal 2, Seitse, Tallinna TV, TV3, TV6. (Ranker, 2019) One of the most relevant TV shows in which Estonia artists' managers and major labels take advantage of participating in is “Eesti otsib superstaari”, which is an analogue of an original British show – “Pop Idol”. (TV3, 2021)

Apart from that, the television shows, such as “Eesti Laul”, after which the winner of the competition is honoured to participate in the Eurovision Song Contest, would be the right choice for the mainstream Estonian artists and their labels. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021)

However, the strategy that is essential and appealing for one artist will not simultaneously work and fit all the others. Unfortunately, this statement not only relates to independent music artists but also to less popular ones that are signed by major or affiliated Estonian record labels. There are several reasons why label managers would doubt choosing these strategies for unknown or beginner artists.

Firstly, radio stations and television will refuse to play or feature the songs of an unknown artist because of the several factors, which are a lack of presence on other media channels and the fact that the audience needs to recognize the artists whose songs are playing. As well as one of the most popular Estonian radio stations: ERR Raadio 2, does not have a playlist system, which means

that a guitar ballad song might end up playing in between jazz compositions, to say something. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021)

Secondly, these activities would be worth a large amount of capital invested, which is more likely to be a waste and is better to be spent on an artist's brand and community creation, developing media presence, and gaining mass audience awareness first. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021)

For many people around the world, music is an integral part of their everyday lives. In music, different genres and moods bind different audiences, forming communities and subcultures like punks, goths, and metalheads. The result is that music became a powerful tool for artist branding and community building.

Identity, engagement, and currency comprise the core values of the artist's brand brought about by music. Choosing the right tone of voice, music genre, and telling a story is essential to building a community for an artist. Listeners are emotionally attached to the music they listen to, and they need to be heard and understood.

By creating different concepts for upcoming releases, the audience could be targeted at a wide range of ages, genders, and musical tastes, which would facilitate fan growth. Being true to the fans, not creating fake images, and switching genres dramatically are the only things the artist needs to keep in mind while building the artist's identity. (Soundsgood, 2016)

Music marketers of the labeled artists and independent artists should strive to get their audiences to feel emotionally connected to an artist's brand, which enhances engagement on online music platforms and the artist's social media channels. As the artist's fanbase expands, it will become an organic endorsement and push of their beloved brand through social media tools like reposts, likes, and subscriptions. (Soundsgood, 2016)

Creating an artist's identity will, in turn, generate association from the listeners' perception when they hear or see more relevant content from the artist who touched their hearts once. By providing more relevant content, the artist will be able to generate more engagement. (Soundsgood, 2016) In this case, word of mouth would serve as an essential tool when building a fan base or a community.

The term word of mouth music marketing refers to authentic conversations people have with each other about the music they like and originated way before social media was invented. Although this is one of the most powerful marketing tools, both offline and online in social media, independent artists and musicians should focus more on connecting with their fans rather than trying to collect them. (IM, 2015)

During the last twenty years, the boundaries between music production and marketing blurred, and in this case, the social media channels stood up as game-changers. It is no secret that the social media music marketing of an artist turns into more or even the foremost important key to an artist's success in the worldwide music industry nowadays. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021)

Today, various social media channels of a famous artist operate as different media companies because of a need to constantly share new content with the fanbase. (Jarvekülg & Wikstrom, 2021) In fact, if the artist is planning to release something, regardless of the size of the project, whether it would be a music video, a new single, or an album, there needs to be a lot of preparation done from the marketing side beforehand for the upcoming content to be recognized by the fan base and the potential audience.

For instance, if the artist is planning to share a new single with the fan community, reaching out to new people at the same time would require a “warm-up” of the audience first. Snippets sharing on social media channels like Instagram, TikTok, or Triller, visual materials creation like banners, cover arts, and short video previews, as well as a strong media presence before and after the song release, are just a few actions that need to be taken from the artist or his media creators’ team before the new music comes out for it to gain audience awareness.

Additionally, it is essential to test what kind of content fans and supporters want to see more frequently on the artist's social media channels. The content that fans are most likely to want to see published is that which enables them to engage in a conversation with the artist, thus strengthening that bond between the fanbase and the artist. To succeed in the music business, the community needs to be more engaged and share content, while the artist gets an engaged audience, which is a vital part of success. (Ditto Music, 2021)

### **2.6.1 Community-based marketing**

The research writer considers that the definition of a community must be established before community-based marketing can be specified. In essence, a community is either an online or offline environment that consists of people who are connected by similar interests, habits, and values. (Duel Tech, 2020)

Consumers today expect more from brands than transactions, longing to see their identity, worldview, or beliefs reflected in the brands they support. This has forced marketing experts worldwide to reinvent how they market to attract and retain customers, and a significant part of this is community-based marketing, in which brands and their customers can build strong relationships based on two-way communication. (Kula, 2022)

Following this principle, community-based marketing is defined as an organic process in which members promote a community, organization, or brand they find themselves belonging to through word-of-mouth marketing to other potential community members. (Mobilize, n.d.)

Whether a brand creates its personal community-based group or works with an established one, both options could be a focused objective in community-based marketing. At its core, community building is about relationships, and great relationships require trust and time to thrive. Therefore, community-building is a long-term process that takes care and consistency. (Duel Tech, 2020)

In the case of this research paper, if acknowledgment, support, interaction, and value are taken into consideration, a practical outcome that the strategy will bring to the brand or the artist is that, in turn, community members will be loyal to the artist or the brand through engagement and sharing information about the community, including why they should become a member. (Mobilize, n.d.)

While this marketing strategy does not require a lot of investment from marketers or independent musicians, there are still some ups and downs associated with it. At this point, it would necessitate the author to allocate the pros and cons of this marketing method.

Whenever discussing the benefits of community-based marketing campaigns, it is important to note that, firstly, the members of the communities like any other human being must fulfill a social

connection need, a need that was particularly evident during the COVID-19 outbreak, when people had no other ways of sharing their fears, thoughts, or feelings. (Marin, 2021) It is imperative to point out that music can be an excellent tool for connecting with others mentally, and musically as well as through lyrics, artist brand representation, or subculture.

Secondly, a community-based marketing strategy provides marketers with deeper insights into their customers' needs, hopes, and expectations, as well as a way to handle customer complaints or, for instance, gather user feedback. Brands can use the insights of active community members to deliver the best possible experience to the whole community. (Duel Tech, 2020)

Using the deeper insights of the most engaging community members, the author would emphasize this point concerning music marketing strategy for artists. It is possible for the artist to decide whether their fan base prefers this type of sound or another sound, whether they prefer albums or singles, etc.

The research writer considers community-based marketing to have some potential drawbacks, including its inability to produce results immediately. Community marketers or artists must continuously communicate, listen to members' opinions, suggest activities for interaction, and attract new members to build a unified community that includes followers and active members of the community, or fans. (Marin, 2021)

It does not, however, comply when it is viewed from an artist's community perspective. This point should be considered rather a drawback if the artist's marketing expert or independent artist wants to become a "one-hit wonder". On the contrary, community-based marketing is essential for building a long-term relationship with fans.

### **3 Research methodology**

As the author explained earlier in the thesis, the author used mixed methods in this chapter to conduct research. Although the case study about Lil Peep required qualitative analysis, a comparison of some numerical data between DTA Records and its competitor and two of the DTA Records' signed artists was necessary for the social listening method, therefore requiring the researcher to also analyze quantitative data.



As a first step, the researcher conducted a case study, which involved qualitative data, as well as screenshots of relevant information connected to the significance of social media marketing strategy, known as community-based marketing, and its profound influence on artists' popularity, significance in the industry context, and the legacy left behind.

The author found it crucial to analyze and collect data from the case study about Lil Peep because he stood up being an unintentionally community-based marketing rose artist who found his way into the global music industry through fandom creation and further community engagement on the streaming service - SoundCloud and his Instagram profile. The researcher intended to use the collected data to link the phenomenon of new generation music produced by Lil Peep and the impact of the community on its popularity.

Apart from that, the author utilized the gathered information in the second research method when finding relevance between the Lil Peep case study and the current social media marketing strategies of DTA Records and its two signed artists - Avril Lavigne and Jxdn on Instagram. In the same way as Lil Peep, Avril Lavigne and Jxdn are both part of the emo rock and rap genres scene, standing out as either worldwide stars such as Avril Lavigne or upcoming artists such as Jxdn. As part of the research, the author had to determine whether Lil Peep's social media tactics of increasing his popularity through the Instagram profile were still being used and developing due to the popularization of the genre and the social media channel, and, if so, how they differ depending on the image, popularity, and media presence of Avril Lavigne and Jxdn. By using the social listening method, the researcher selected one month before and one month after the release of Avril Lavigne's *Love Sux* to determine how the label and the artist made the community and fandom engage with the Instagram posts to promote the release.

### **3.1 Case study – Lil Peep**

Gustav Elijah Åhr, who is also known as Lil Peep, was an American rapper who gained a mass audience all around the world, being one of the pioneers of such genres as SoundCloud rap and emo rap, pushing boundaries in merging emo rock and hip-hop music. (Tenreyro, 2017)

Unfortunately for all of the fans and the music community, Lil Peep has passed away at the age of 21 in 2017 due to a drug overdose. However, even though Gustav's music career, which started in

2013, did not last long, his influence on the nowadays music industry is major, as well as his legacy, which on the moment of September 2022, still makes people think that he is alive. (Fletcher, 2017)

Lil Peep's legacy not only inspired various rising artists like Lil Aaron or Smrtddeath but is also recognized by mainstream artists. As an example, one of those artists' names is Travis Barker, a drummer from Blink-182, which is one of those bands, that once influenced Gustav, or Post Malone, who tattooed Peep's face on his arm as a sign of respect and influence. (dave.js, 2019)

From this point, the author would like to relate this case study to the significance of community-based marketing, connecting the dots between the artist's distinctive brand and community or the fanbase's impact on the artist's popularity. Alongside new genres and artists, nowadays music industry has brought about new terms and concepts. For instance, the so-called "SoundCloud era" stands for the period from 2010 to 2020, when yet unknown artists would post their music onto World Wide Web, giving a chance for people from all around the world to listen to and spread their music for free. (Rindner, 2021) The reposts feature that was suggested by SoundCloud, stood out as the turning point for the music industry and as a new ultimate tool for music marketing. SoundCloud artists would later repost music they listen to, or the artists they appreciate thereby exchanging audience. (Rindner, 2021) This way new music was promoted worldwide, gaining a mass audience of people, who got tired of the mainstream sound, giving preference to something modern and unique.

Lil Peep started publishing his music on SoundCloud in 2015 when he finally got heard and followed. The idea of belonging to a community or a brotherhood of like-minded artists and fans, as well as the constant followers' growth motivated Gustav to publish more music over time. (Official Website of the Estate of Gustav Ahr // Lil Peep, 2019)

Peep did not see himself as a pop artist at the beginning, opting for a secluded underground scene, but the massive community that he gained on SoundCloud over one year made him sign a contract with First Access Entertainment in 2016. (Bernstein & Wang, 2020) Peep's contract remains a point of contention to this day among marketing experts. Although a financial ability to record professional quality albums and a chance to tour is undoubtedly beneficial for any artist, Lil Peep was not aware of the pitfalls that he would face later after signing a contract. The case

mentioned earlier later led to constant drug use, depression, anxiety, and a lethal outcome. Even though there is still no resolution to the connection between Lil Peep's death and his label operations, one fact remains clear: Gustav's community is what made him rise, and it is what drives the label to release his music still in 2022. (Caramanica, 2018) His fan base is what commemorates him and preserves his legacy. And this is what labels certainly search for in modern independent artists.

Lil Peep is one of those artists who has practiced community-based marketing throughout his career. Prior to seeing the community's engagement with Gustav's music, he was antisocial. (Official Website of the Estate of Gustav Ahr // Lil Peep, 2019) Lil Peep fulfilled Gustav's message, and fans were able to connect with each other, which is one of the primary benefits of community-based marketing. Nevertheless, this principle also worked the other way around in this case, as Peep needed to feel like he belonged to something, he wanted to be understood, and music helped him do so.

**Image 1.** *Lil Peep's Official Instagram Profile* (Meta, n.d.-f).

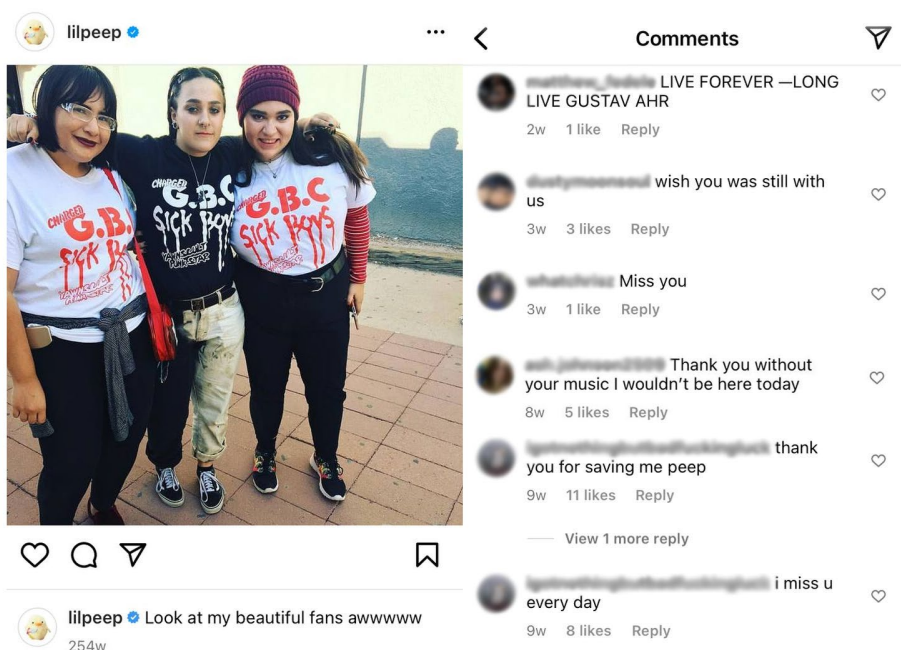


While Lil Peep is no longer alive, he contributed not only to the emergence of new music genres but also to the return of emo music to the mainstream. However, some takeaways remain uncertain for the author, and an analysis of his marketing strategies is required to determine the reasons for his rapid community growth.

For this case study, the author posed two questions: "What marketing strategies were unique for Lil Peep at the time?" What was he specifically doing to engage the audience and gain their love, even if his interactions with the fanbase were unintentional?"

His album *Come Over When You're Sober Pt. 1* debuted in the Billboard 200 at 168th place the same week he passed away, which, unfortunately, turned out to be his most statistically successful marketing campaign. (Coleman, 2017) As sad and paradoxical as it may seem, Gustav's creative works have always dealt with death, drugs, broken hearts, designer clothes, alcohol, and cigarettes. However, what is more important, his music was honest, and his struggles with drug addiction and depression were never hidden from his fans. As a result of his honesty in lyrics and the interconnection with his artist's brand, he developed deep relationships with his fans. Since Gustav's passing, his fans have always said: "Lil Peep's music saved my life." (Guo, 2017)

**Image 2.** Lil Peep's last Instagram post and fans engagement (Meta, n.d.-f).

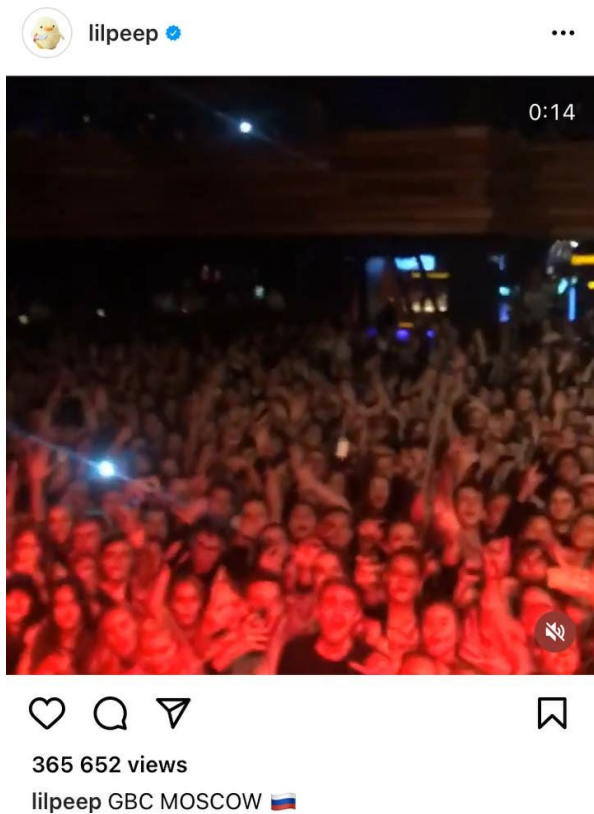


Additionally, Peep has always cherished his fans throughout his short music career. Keeping fans safe was one of the reasons he kept making music, he said, and the love he received from his fans kept him going. (Saunders, 2017)

To meet all his fans worldwide, Gustav started his tour from Russia at the beginning of 2017, a country where he did not expect to have that many fans, at first. However, it was quite different in Russia, where three of the clubs where he performed were sold out, fans were yelling out lyrics to every song he played, and he could not go anywhere peacefully in the streets of Moscow without being recognized. (Verrico, 2017) Lil Peep's Russian fanbase ended up being as big as any other,

and they could feel his music not through lyrics but because of the music he produced, the brand he manifested, post-soviet era depressive gray streets, the overall atmosphere, and the appeal of the underground scene. (Neil, 2018)

**Image 3.** *Lil Peep's Moscow Concert in 2017* (Meta, n.d.-f).

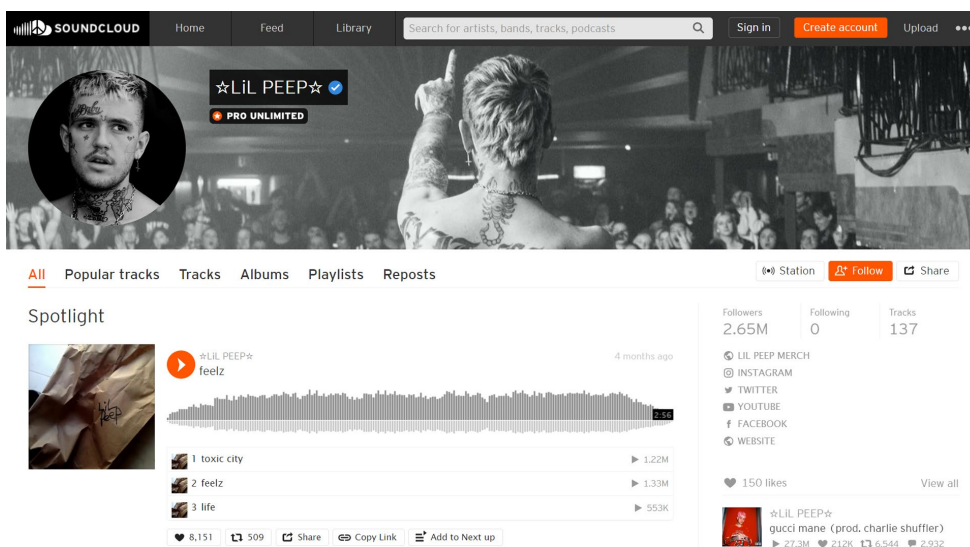


Finally, it is vital to mention the strategy connected with SoundCloud, a platform on which Gustav was able to create Lil Peep and gain recognition and understanding. SoundCloud at the time, unlike any other music distribution platform, allowed artists to connect with their audiences through the comment section, as well as to upload music free of charge. (Dhillon, 2022) It resembles YouTube, which does not require paid subscriptions from artists or viewers to upload videos, watch and give feedback. Besides that, it was the only platform other than YouTube where Gustav only uploaded video clips, which was used for music distribution when he released his first mixtapes in late 2015, *LIL PEEP PART ONE* and *Live Forever*. (Tenreyro, 2017) For Lil Peep, though, SoundCloud was crucial at the time because it did not require high-quality videos or big budgets for him to produce. Using SoundCloud as the only music distribution service, he was not only able to share his works freely and frequently, but he was also capable of bringing everybody and

everything together on one platform without switching between them, creating a sense of exclusivity and presence.

As a conclusion to this case study, the writer would like to summarize the key takeaways that were very useful for this thesis. As a result of his community-based marketing strategy, Lil Peep's real-life and social media activities became intertwined. Throughout his career, he has toured numerous countries, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and even Russia, to reach out to his fans. (Songkick, n.d.) On Instagram, he posted pictures of his fans, showing his affection and respect for them. Nevertheless, Gustav's most valuable marketing campaign would have been to give his fandom a chance to connect with him by allowing them to listen to his music for free without having to pay for it and letting them chat with each other and him in the comment section. It is a very effective and inexpensive marketing campaign that has evolved over the years.

**Image 4.** Lil Peep's Official SoundCloud Profile (SoundCloud Limited, n.d.).



### 3.2 Social Listening

Travis Barker, the drummer for the punk rock band Blink-182, founded DTA Records in 2020. The label believes that a combination of rock and hip-hop will soon conquer the music industry. As a result, the first artists to use this combination and get signed were Avril Lavigne, who was not in

global spotlight for a long time, and Jxdn, the rising TikTok star, who was personally invited by Travis Barker to sign a contract with DTA Records. (Genius, 2020)

**Image 5.** *Official Instagram Profile of DTA Records (Meta, n.d.-c).*



The author analyzed keywords and sentiment of DTA Records Instagram profile as a first step of social listening. Comparatively, the author did the same for Republic Records band City Morgue. Founded by two artists, Zillakami and SosMula, the band also combines rock and hip-hop in their music. (Republic Records, n.d.-a) In this thesis, the author suggested drawing comparisons between DTA Records and City Morgue's Instagram profiles since both share the same ideology, produce similar content, work in the same music genres, and are sponsored by major labels, even though City Morgue is not a subsidiary nor independent music label.

**Image 6.** *Official Instagram Profile of City Morgue (Meta, n.d.-b).*



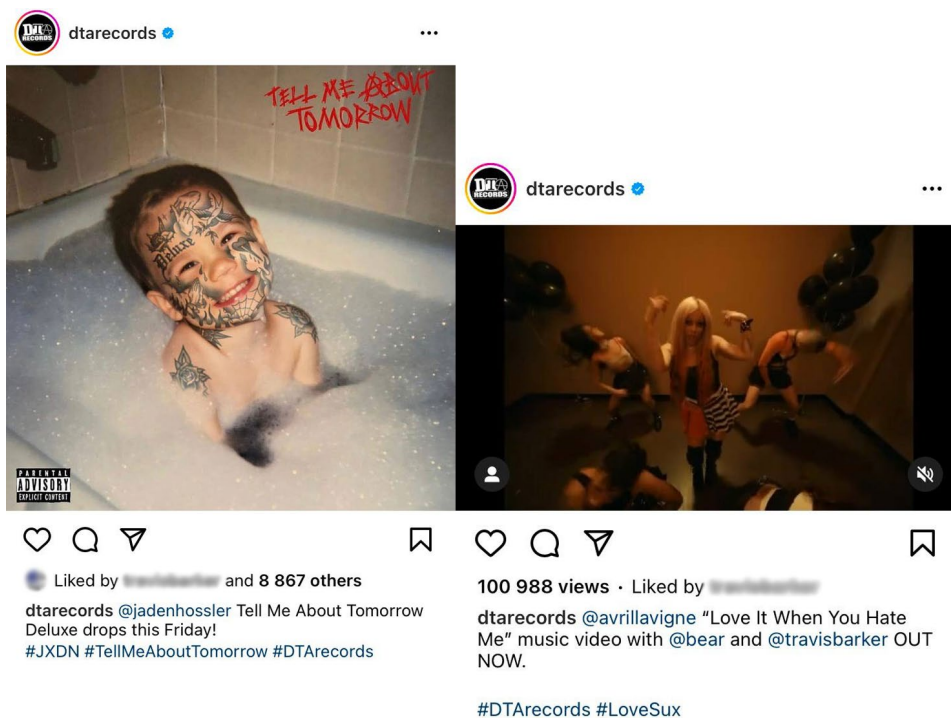
The author notes that from the beginning, there was a clear difference between the two profiles because DTA Records was only two years old and had 79,6K followers on the moment of the 4th of October 2022. Its strategy was based on targeting its artists' profiles than on its own, giving preference to posts about concerts and release highlights, tagging their artists' profiles in almost



each post. City Morgue is not a label but a band that started making music in 2016 and ended up with 276K Instagram followers by the 4th of October 2022. In contrast to what one might expect, City Morgue's post descriptions rarely tagged both artists, thereby focusing the fanbase on the band's creative works rather than their solo projects.

Besides tagging their artists in most of the posts, DTA Records used the hashtag #DTArecords and the release title under the hashtag to attract people to the label and the music release, encouraging them to interact. However, instead of asking for comments or sharing, DTA Records asked the fans to listen to the new album or single.

**Image 7.** Official Instagram Profile of DTA Records (Meta, n.d.-c).



Comparing #DTArecords to Avril Lavigne's related hashtags separately, it was found that the fanbase did not frequently use #DTArecords hashtags compared to the ones dedicated to Avril Lavigne. #DTArecords hashtag was used in 4.5K posts, in comparison to #AvrilLavigne hashtag, which was mentioned 1.1M times. The author pointed out that this was closely connected to the overall concept and strategy of DTA Records' Instagram profile, which was more formal and informative than open to fandom interaction.

**Image 8.** A search for #DTArecords and #AvrilLavigne hashtags on Instagram (Meta, n.d.-d).



#dtarecords  
4,5k posts

#dtarecordsceo  
1 post

#dtarecords 🇺🇸 🍌 🌈  
1 post

#avrilavigne  
1,1m posts

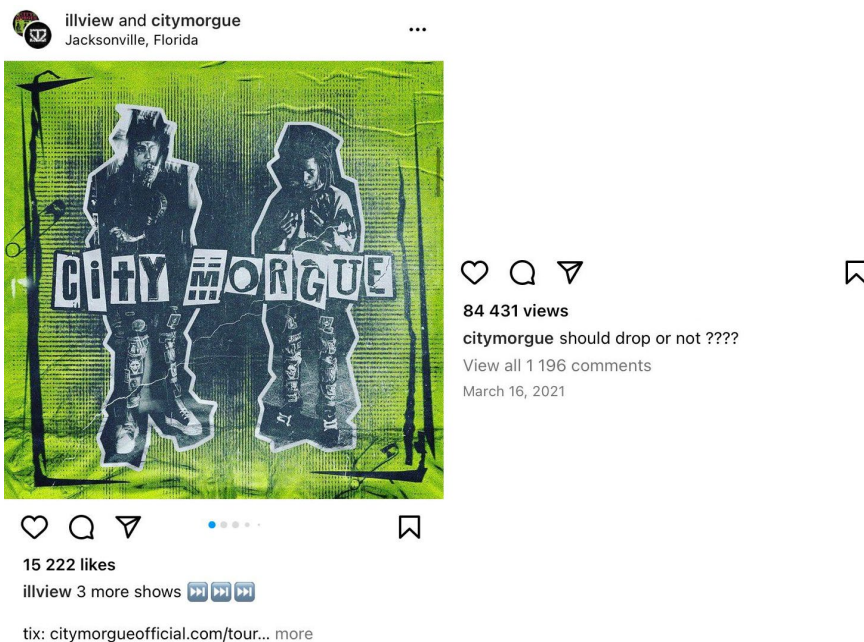
#avrilavigneedit  
43,8k posts

#avrilavignefan  
59,8k posts

#avrilavigneforever  
57,6k posts

Instagram's profile of City Morgue allowed fans to interact more freely. Some posts asked for opinions, which led the followers to comment, thus creating a sense of meaningfulness for fans and artists being listened to and welcomed. The targeted audience was also given links to purchase tickets for upcoming concerts, in addition to video previews of what their gigs usually look like, making them wish they could still afford tickets.

**Image 9.** Official Instagram Profile of City Morgue (Meta, n.d.-b).



While DTA Records regularly used hashtags in their descriptions, City Morgue relied more on the names of music video directors and cover art producers or used call-to-action texts asking for feedback. The City Morgue Instagram profile, as an exception, included a hashtag #CityMorgue in some of the posts' descriptions and a hashtag #RollingLoud, for example, so potential festival visitors, listeners, and fans searching for set times would know the band was performing.

**Image 10.** Official Instagram Profile of City Morgue (Meta, n.d.-b).



Despite the posts' designs, music genres, and artists' brands appearing similar at first glance, the research writer found that their operations were what distinguished two of the competitor profiles most. Unlike City Morgue, DTA Records' Instagram profile aimed at letting fans know when their signed artists' albums or singles were available, thus driving traffic to their personal accounts. In spite of the differences in strategies and concepts between each of the profiles, the author believes there is nothing wrong with either of them.

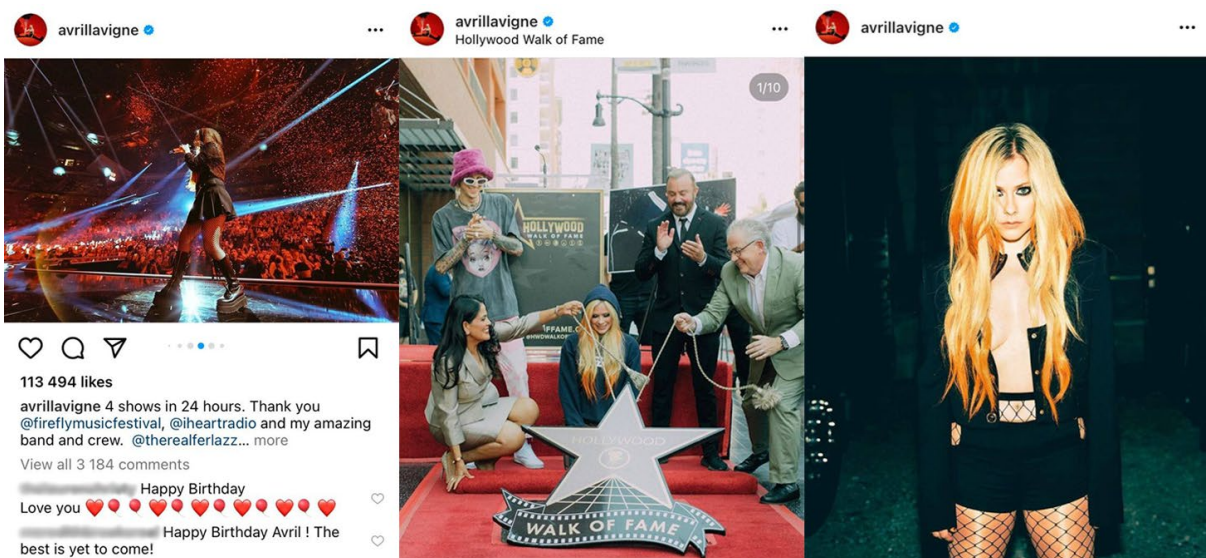
Thereby, as a second step, the researcher examined both Jxdn's and Avril Lavigne's strategies, comparing them and examining their engagement with their fans. To compare the strategies of the artists, the author analyzed three criteria: social visibility, fan engagement, and the manifestation of the artists' brand.

**Image 11.** *Official Instagram Profile of Avril Lavigne (Meta, n.d.-a).*



Avril Lavigne's Instagram profile was active on the 5th of October 2022, when she posted four Instagram Stories about recording a new song with Travis Barker. In September 2022, she published seven posts about unveiling her Hollywood Walk of Fame star, performing at rock concerts, and trying on rock-style Versace pieces for a professional photoshoot.

**Image 12.** Official Instagram Profile of Avril Lavigne (Meta, n.d.-a).



In her last post on the 26th of September, Avril Lavigne posted videos and photographs of her performing at four shows in 24 hours. There were 113494 likes and 3184 comments on this post. It is estimated that approximately every 35th person who liked the post also commented on it. In addition to wishing her a happy birthday, many people asked her to perform in a city or country near them, which indicates that fans are still looking for more concerts and content from Avril Lavigne, even after a long break from the music business. Moreover, Avril Lavigne answered

multiple comments, started a conversation in the comment section, and made fans feel heard and understood.

**Image 13.** *Official Instagram Profile of Avril Lavigne (Meta, n.d.-a).*



According to Avril Lavigne's Instagram profile, she or her marketing expert understood and perfectly highlighted her punk rock persona and artist's brand through her color scheme, which is certainly red, pink, and purple, as well as her tone of voice, which includes capital letters and many emojis in her posts' descriptions. As a result of her posts and Stories on Instagram, fans and newcomers could get a complete idea of what Avril Lavigne is about from the very beginning. This profile was an excellent example of how an artist's brand manifests, and it was evident why the traffic from DTA Records' Instagram profile is directed at her.

**Image 14.** *Official Instagram Profile of Jxdn (Meta, n.d.-e).*

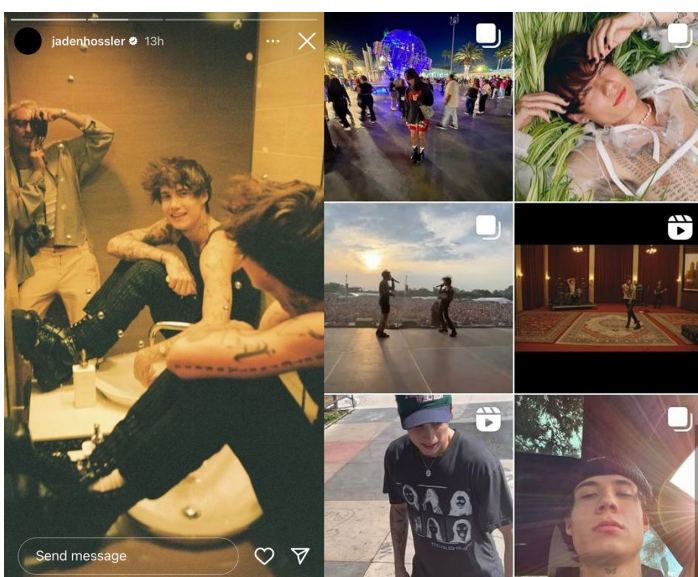




Taking a closer look at Jxdn's Instagram profile, the author would point out that he is not yet the famous artist that Avril Lavigne is, as evidenced by his 4.4M followers in contrast with Avril Lavigne's 11.8M. While DTA Records has high hopes for Jxdn following his appointment as Travis Barker's protege, they expect him to take over the rock music industry soon. (Kent, 2021)

On the 6th of October 2022, Jxdn posted four Instagram Stories, of which two were mysterious posters, and the other was a lifestyle video and a vintage-style photograph. The artist posted six posts during September 2022, including performing at the rock fest, doing a professional photoshoot, shooting at the Monster Energy commercial video, and posting a few lifestyle photos and videos.

**Image 15.** Official Instagram Profile of Jxdn (Meta, n.d.-e).





openly. Music is often thought to speak for an artist, but compared to Avril Lavigne, who frequently replied to fans, showing that she cared, which is the best way to practice community-based marketing, Jxdn lacked this ability, which the author believes should later be improved.

In the third step of the social listening for DTA Records and Avril Lavigne, the research writer examined how the artist and the label promoted *Love Sux* a month before and after release. Furthermore, the author analyzed the fanbase engagement on the label's and artist's Instagram profiles for this period of time.

Avril Lavigne's *Love Sux* came out on the 25th of February 2022. Before the album came out, two singles were released, and the marketing campaign mentioning the album title began with a post depicting the album's cover art on the 13th of January 2022. There were 730260 likes and 7232 comments on this post, for an approximate likes-comment ratio of every 100th person liking and commenting.

**Image 17.** *Official Instagram Profile of Avril Lavigne (Meta, n.d.-a).*



In the month leading up to the release of her album, Avril Lavigne posted several photoshoots for magazines for artist's brand promotion purposes as well as a post featuring Blackbear, a collaborator on the album. Taking a moment to inform her fans that the album is only a week

away from release would spark a conversation in the comment section, where fans began trying to figure out what they would be hearing.

**Image 18.** Official Instagram Profile of Avril Lavigne (Meta, n.d.-a).



In the meantime, DTA Records released two posts, one of which shared the album cover. It was published the same day as Avril's post. Its main idea was to tag Avril Lavigne's profile in the post's description and bring all the possible traffic to her since the profile's main purpose is to be informative. The second post maintained the same concept, including the animated album cover video as well as the post description mentioning Avril Lavigne's album release.

**Image 19.** Official Instagram Profile of DTA Records (Meta, n.d.-c).

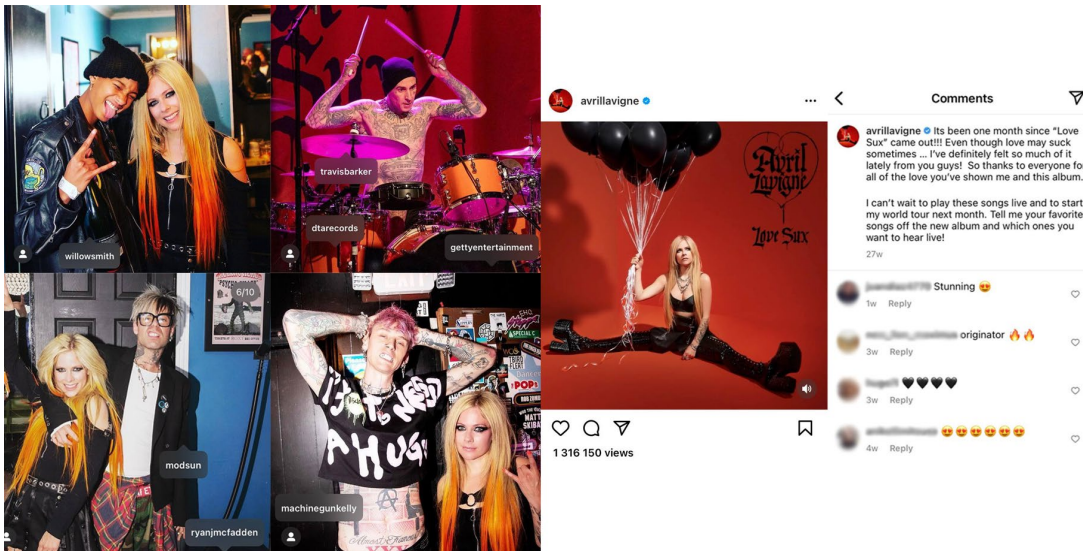


On the contrary, Avril Lavigne's post about the album releasing got 986401 views, 189633 likes, and 3386 comments. Avril Lavigne posted photos from the album's release party, journal covers, photos from the iHeart Radio Awards, and an alternative version of the animated album cover a month after the release. Despite getting more views than the original album release post -



1316155 views - the post behaved statistically the same. It received fewer comments and likes, making it equivalent to the first post (174077 likes and 2893 views).

**Image 20.** Official Instagram Profile of Avril Lavigne (Meta, n.d.-a).



Avril Lavigne's profile on Instagram is an excellent example of how community-based marketing works. Being socially active, she posts Instagram Stories and posts frequently about everything from lifestyle and studio sessions to concerts and magazine shoots. In addition to seeking opinions from her fans, she also replies to them in the comments section of her posts, thereby building stronger relationships. A similar strategy was used by Lil Peep when he posted lifestyle updates on his Instagram profile, and his fans believed him, his music, and his brand because he was real. Today, community building is a key component of music marketing in general, and independent artists and labels should keep this in mind when working on artists' brands and developing marketing strategies.

## 4 Results

To create a community of fans emotionally attached to the music the artist releases, along with the artist's brand and manifestations, the artist would practice a community-based marketing strategy, which would not require heavy investments from the artist's or the label's sides, thus making it ideal for both independent and signed artists at the same time. A case study of Lil Peep's music legacy and community-based marketing strategy was conducted by the author, and

according to it, Lil Peep would have succeeded in creating a valuable marketing campaign by allowing his fans to interact with him by listening to his music for free without paying for it and communicating with each other in SoundCloud comment section tab and under the Instagram posts. As a result of doing social listening for DTA Records and two of its artists, Jxdn and Avril Lavigne, the author introduced more relevant data that reinforced the idea that this strategy has evolved and is now essential for both independent artists and signed artists, as labels today are looking for independent musicians with a cohesive and trustworthy fan base rather than a talent.

## **5 Recommendations**

The following recommendations for ANTICREW OÜ are based on the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the literature review and research methodology sections of this thesis: 1) As far as future development opportunities are concerned, Estonia would be an ideal country of origin, due to its advanced e-government principles, its historical connection to music, and its current market dynamics and state, where it has the most artists signed to the Big Three major labels from the Baltic region. 2) The label should not neglect the possibility of running campaigns on such channels as radio and television since they have a broad audience pool, but the research findings would recommend starting with the label's Instagram profile since it can bring all its artists and fans together by constantly sharing content, which keeps the fanbases warmed up and ready to interact while practicing community-based marketing and social listening.

## **6 Conclusion**

After a thorough analysis of Estonian music culture and the two of its festivals: the Estonian Song Festival and Tallinn Music Week, the author discovered that Estonian musical background is closely related to the country's historical background. Apart from that, the research writer analyzed the effects of digitalization on the country in general and discovered that Estonia was among the first countries to develop e-government principles and gain the recognition of a world-class information society. As a result of free file-sharing technology and rapid digitalization over the past 20 years, the author revealed the reason for the introduction of intellectual property protection. Apart from that, online distribution platforms, such as Spotify and Apple Music, and

the Copyright Act were developed, which altered the operations of the overall business model as well as music marketing strategies.

Alongside revealing the concept of music labels industry hierarchy and introducing the Big Three major labels, the author presented a graph that depicted the total recorded music market share in 2020, in which 68.6% were major labels, and 31.4% were independent labels and artists. As a result of a significant number of independent artists in the market growth, the author introduced the concept of record deals, with deeper insights into a 360 deal, which turned out to be one of the most common in the world. Based on an analysis of Estonia's music industry eco-system, consisting of non-governmental organizations, independent producers and musicians, and privately-owned corporations, the author concluded that all the Big Three major labels were present in Estonia in April 2022. In addition, Estonia had the highest share of artists signed to one of the Big Three major labels among the Baltic countries, with 62.5%, followed by Latvia with 27.08%, and Lithuania with 10.42%.

The author identified that signed artists and labels in Estonia used a variety of marketing strategies, including radio campaigns, which they continue to use despite a constant loss of perceivers. It was also revealed that the strategy that is appealing for one artist may not work or be suitable for others, as demonstrated by being featured in TV shows like "Eesti Laul" or "Eesti otsib superstaari". Neither independent artists nor signed artists should neglect to develop their brand, which is comprised of three key values: identity, engagement, and currency. And as was expected, the audience felt more emotionally connected to the brand once it has been developed.

Considering the results mentioned earlier, the author formulated the response to the initial research question because when comparing the marketing campaigns of major and independent labels in Estonia, it was clear that the number of channels and capital invested in the promotion of signed artists differs from those of independent artists. It was more important, however, to examine the similarity between the two, namely social media community-based marketing, which was at the same time free and effective to use. According to the author, this social media marketing strategy turned his perception of the contemporary music industry upside down, and it is still a topic to be explored by major and independent labels in Estonia.

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