



Artist websites with an appeal to record labels

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Bachelor's Thesis

2022

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Degree Bachelor of Business Administration
Report/thesis title Artist websites appeal to record labels.
Number of pages and appendix pages 34 + 2
<p>To get recognized and promoted worldwide, a musician could consider getting signed to a record label that can handle marketing matters for them. On the other hand, an artist needs a clear marketing channel to be exposed to the record label representatives who can determine if the artist is a good fit. One of the ways to introduce the artist and their music is a short website or a landing page. However, research needed to be conducted to analyze what makes an artist's website appealing to record label representatives. This thesis's project objective (PO) was to launch a user-friendly website for an artist to attract and appeal to record labels.</p> <p>The project was split into three phases. In the first phase, secondary research was conducted to understand website usability and design, the areas that make up a website. In addition, the competitor analysis was conducted to analyze the contents of appealing websites and identify similar patterns. The second phase included interviewing a label representative to get an insider's opinion on the topic. However, despite a thorough search, such an individual was not found, and the interview could not be conducted. The third phase included designing a landing page based on previous research, publishing it online, and collecting basic statistics on the number of visitors.</p> <p>The project objective was reached as the artist website was successfully created and launched. To prove its appeal, the website was promoted to the target audience through a social media channel for two weeks. As a result, it got a high number of visitors, which is close to 100. In case of future research, the project can be used as a reference for other artists needing a landing page that would help them get signed to a label.</p>
Keywords Artist, record label, website, landing page

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1. Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce the readers to the thesis, its purpose, and its main objectives.

This is the product type of a bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International business in the major specialization of marketing at the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. This chapter aims to introduce the readers to the thesis objectives, the publications, as well as the background of the music industry.

1.1 Background

The music industry is one of the fastest-growing industries due to the growing range of digital technologies and endless opportunities for individual artists. Only in 2020 alone, the industry's total revenues reached \$21.6 billion (IFPI 2021). However, with that comes a challenge for artists who begin their journey: breaking through and getting noticed by consumers, other artists, and labels. The competition is so high that the vast majority of artists are forced to have another full-time job and keep their artistry part-time, as the idea of a full-time occupation in music may never be realized (Rutter 2016, 5). To grow as quickly as possible, most artists prefer to get signed by record labels that take care of publishing, merchandising, and distributing music to a larger audience instead of self-promotion. However, how to get this valuable record deal?

One of the ways to raise awareness of one's music and potentially attract labels is to create a website and target it to the right audience. It can be a simple landing page highlighting the artist's newest release, tour dates, and merchandise. (Abrams 2021.) Although most artists prefer to have this information on their Instagram page rather than maintaining and paying for a website, a simple landing page gives more freedom with putting the information in the desired order, without any unnecessary content (such as personal pictures and videos). It also allows them to express their style in how the website will be designed, contrary to the limitations of the Instagram interface. As the goal of the author's commissioned artist is to attract labels instead of consumers, the landing page will work best in representing the music and other content that the artist produced.

1.2 Case artist

The commissioning artist is based in Helsinki, with consumers spread worldwide. However, the central part of the audience resides in Finland, Russia, and other European countries (Spotify for Artists 2021). The primary genres include pop, pop-punk, Latino, and the collective number of streams and views across streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music reached 10 450 as of October 2021 (DistroKid 2022).

The primary goal for the following year is to increase awareness by implementing different marketing techniques, including, but not limited to, social media marketing promotion. The awareness can also be boosted if a label sign is achieved. To get signed, it is vital to catch an eye of a label representative and make sure they have an overview of all of the artist's projects done since the beginning of their career. This can be realized with the help of a personal landing page.

Currently, the artist takes care of all the marketing activities herself and does not have an opportunity to recruit a team of specialists to help raise awareness and gain more streams. The artist's music's primary genre is pop, meaning the competition for listeners is high. Thus, one of the options would be to attract record labels who would be willing to sign her and take care of the promotion part. In this case, a website could do her a big favor, and it is thus essential to conduct proper research to see how it should look to fulfill its purpose.

Some of the biggest well-established record labels that specialize in pop/rap/rock music and have a branch in Finland are Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group (Liveaboutdotcom 2021).

1.3 Thesis topic

The topic of this thesis is exploring the aspects that an artist's website should have to be appealing to record label representatives. This thesis's project objective (PO) is **to launch a user-friendly website for an artist to attract and appeal to record labels**. To achieve the project objective, several project tasks were defined:

Project tasks:

PT 1. Preparing the theoretical framework for the project.

PT 2. Establishing similar patterns and techniques that are used and appear on the websites of famous artists through benchmarking.

PT 3. Conducting an interview with a record label representative.

PT 4. Designing a website that follows these common patterns would be informative and have a unique style.

PT 5. Launching and marketing the website via one social media channel and keeping track of website statistics and performance for two weeks.

PT 6. Evaluating project management and project outcomes.

1.4 Demarcation

Due to the time constraints of a six-month project, the scope of the thesis has to be narrowed down. The main criterion for this is evaluating how much time a specific task might take. For instance, analyzing all social media channels currently used for promotion could take weeks since there are many to cover. The same goes for launching any social media campaign since it requires an analysis of all the channels. Therefore, these are not a part of the project scope.

For the same reason, analyzing strategies to promote the launched website is a long process and, thus, will not be included in the project's scope. Another criterion for limiting the scope of the project is limited resources. For example, to conduct a survey, the researcher would need a group of people for data collection. However, the project only needs data from existing websites and a label representative; hence it will not include a survey.

On the other hand, searching for as many artist websites as possible to identify patterns and successful tactics is vital for the project goal and has to be included in the scope. Designing and launching a website that meets the criteria of successful websites is crucial to meet the end goal – attracting labels – and will also be included. In addition to that, it is essential to know what labels want and expect from small artists to be signed. Thus an interview with a label representative would provide vital information to start moving in the right direction. Finally, designing and launching a website based on the previous data will help the artist achieve the end goal – potentially attracting the labels.

1.5 International aspect

The international aspect required by the degree program of all theses is covered by the goal of the product – website – being launched online and visited by people from different countries. Another aspect is the artist's target audience, who reside in several other countries across the globe. These countries include but are not limited to, Russia, the Netherlands, the USA, and Hungary (Distrokid 2022).

1.6 Anticipated benefits

For the commissioning artist, this thesis will bring a well-structured website based on the common patterns appearing on the websites of successful artists. The website, in turn, will bring new customers and more profit. Most importantly, it is supposed to attract record labels or their agents. Later, other amateur artists willing to draw the attention of record labels could also benefit from this thesis's content and conclusions.

As the customers, in this case, are both listeners and record labels, they will benefit from a user-friendly website that is informative and attractive. It aims to help get to know the artist and her music.

Lastly, for the researcher, this project will bring skills related to web design and analyzing other well-made websites. This project should teach her how to communicate with record label representatives and find the right questions to ask. It should also expand the list of researcher's business contacts, which she, as an artist, will benefit from in the future.

1.7 Key concepts

Record labels are companies that manufacture, distribute and promote the recordings of artists that are linked to them. Their primary goal is to monetize music. From an artist's point of view, a label is a service that provides the musician with recording, manufacturing, and promotion funding. (Trumm 2020.)

Artist's website is a website that holds information about an artist, including their music, background information, contact information, tour dates, merchandise, and so on. In the early stages, the website's primary goal is to raise awareness about the artist and possibly attract listeners, investors, and labels. (Kealey 2021.)

Website statistics are key performance indicators of a published website. They might include page views, the number of sessions, subscribers, types of devices the website was accessed from, and so on. (Tilda Help Center 2021.)

1.8 Risk management

Regarding the research, several risks should be considered and analyzed before proceeding to the next stage. One of the risks that have a high chance of occurrence is being unable to persuade any label representative to give an interview. This issue can be

managed by getting a list of as many label representatives to contact as possible, increasing the chances of finding one who would agree. The second risk likely to occur is linked to technical issues that might appear before/while publishing the website. In this case, the solution would be to estimate how much time would go into resolving the issue and in case it goes beyond the scope of the thesis, the researcher would work solely with the design and analyze it alone. The subsequent potential risk is that the artist completely pauses or quits working on her music. In this case, the issue can be managed by working with her existing portfolio, which now consists of eight songs and two music videos. The next issue is an interviewee not allowing to publish some parts of the data. However, in that case, the researcher would proceed with working with the rest of the data that is allowed to go public, or they would agree that the data would be published without mentioning the company at any point. The last risk with a low chance of occurrence is the significant successful artists lacking a published website. However, a website is the only viable option for them to distribute merchandise across the globe, thus has to be in use at least for some of them. Alternatively, the author could research websites of middle-class artists.

Table 1. Risks and risk management

Issue	How likely to occur	How to manage
The artist is not able to produce music, quits or pauses the production and release	4/10	Work with the existing releases only
None of the record labels are available/relevant to give an interview	6/10	Make a list of as many interviewees as possible and try to get one of them to answer some questions via email as a backup plan
Big artists do not have a website, no data	2/10	Analyze middle-class artists
An interviewee does not allow to publish some data	4/10	Work with the data that is allowed to be published
The website cannot be published; technical issues	6/10	Set the launch date for later and work with the existing design of the website

1.9 Project management methods and report structure

Every project task needs to be planned, carefully considering data sources, data collection methods, data processing methods, and the expected outcome. It is also crucial to justify why the specific method was chosen.

For the first PT (preparing the theoretical framework for the project), the researcher would need to collect and carefully select the academic literature she will use in the research. The data collection method here is qualitative because she would need to research topics like the music industry and find descriptive data for them. The data processing method is qualitative for verbal data, and the outcome would be a list of theoretical literature.

For PT2, the data source will be other artists' website designs and content. The data collection method here is qualitative, and the data processing method is qualitative for verbal data. The outcome would be a written analysis of the content. For PT3, the researcher would be conducting an interview with a label representative. The collection and processing methods will be the same as above, and the outcome is data on website content and appearance. For PT4, the data source will be the outcome of the previous PTs. Again, the collection and processing methods will be the same as above, and the product will be website design.

The data source of PT5 is the outcome of PT1 and Tilda Statistics. Here, the data collection method is both qualitative and quantitative; the data processing method is qualitative for verbal data and quantitative for statistics. The task outcomes include the launched website, analysis of KPIs two weeks after launch, and written analysis of website performance. For the last PT, the data source is the outcome of all the previous PTs, the data collection method is both qualitative and quantitative, and the data processing method is qualitative for verbal data and quantitative for statistics. The outcome is the evaluation of project management and project outcomes.

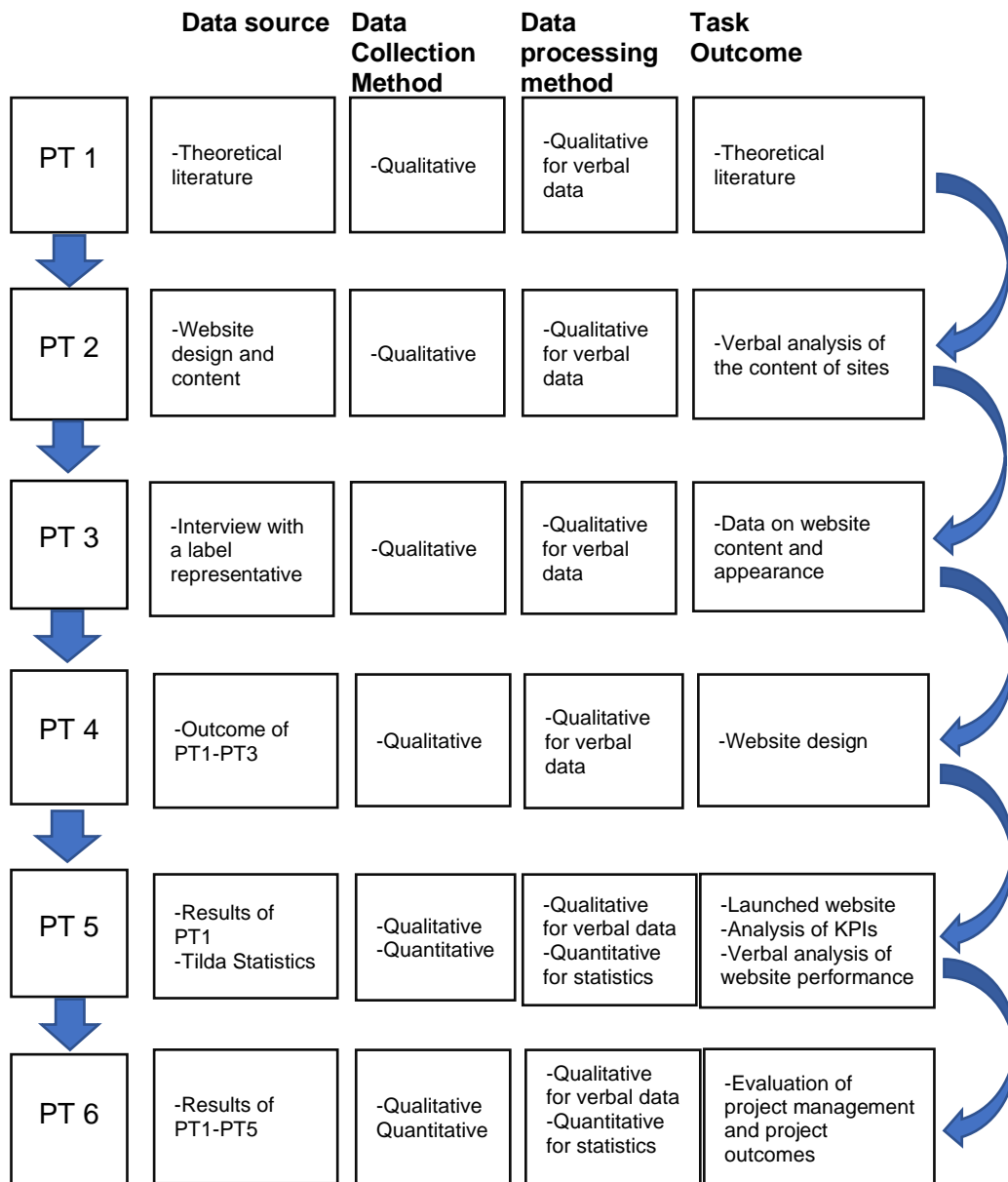


Figure 1. Project management methods

1.10 Areas to Analyze Before the Research

To achieve the project objectives, the theoretical framework must be described first. This includes the fundamental concepts, theories, and models crucial to the topic. The thesis's theoretical framework consists of the following concepts: music industry, website usability, website design, and social media promotion.

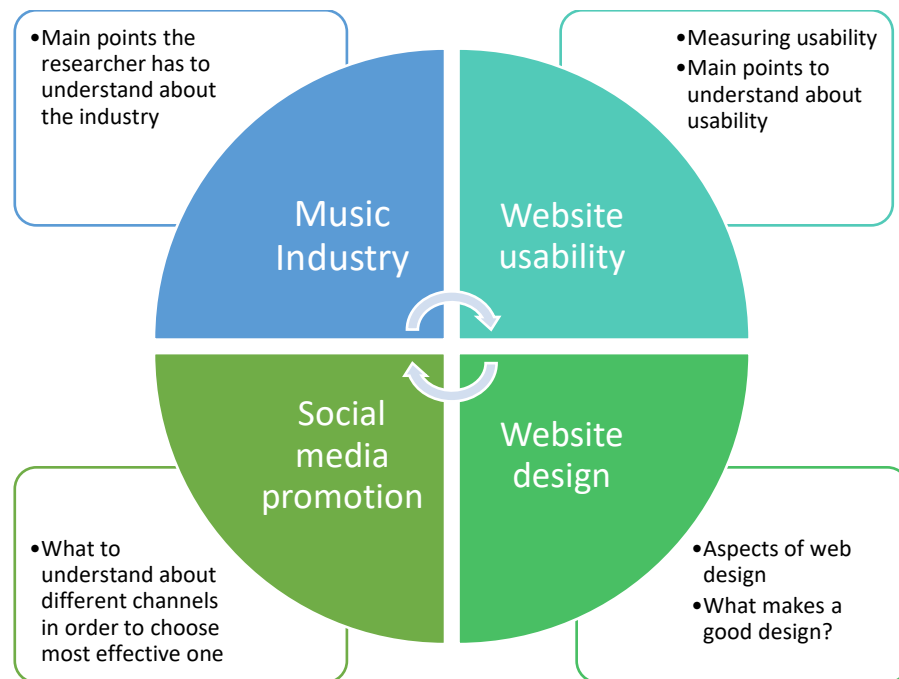


Figure 2. Theoretical framework

Four key concepts need to be researched before collecting the data. The first one is the music industry and the main points that have to be understood about the industry to create a good product. This includes books and articles on the topic found on HH Finna. The second concept to be researched is website usability. More specifically, the best way to measure it and what needs to be understood about usability in general. The researcher would utilize the up-to-date online articles from HH Finna for this one. The third one would be website design and its different aspects of it. Defining a good design and what stands behind it is also essential. Here, she would use up-to-date online articles from HH Finna and Google Scholar articles. The last concept is social media promotion and what criteria should be used to choose the most effective channel for advertising. The resources the author will take advantage of are books and articles on social media promotion found from HH Finna.

2. Understanding the music industry and website usability & design

To conduct proper research that would reveal an artist's website's appeal to labels, it is crucial to understand the basics of the music industry as well as get acquainted with website usability and design and how they are measured. The two concepts make up a well-made website that should be appealing, functioning, and useful to solve its purpose. (Widmer 2019.)

2.1. Understanding the music industry

The music industry has changed drastically over the past decade, as the internet made it possible to stream music online without buying physical copies. However, it was also followed by increased competition, as it became easier for artists to release their music and be discovered. To build the right marketing strategy, getting acquainted with all the modern ways to promote music and implementing these strategies regularly is more crucial than ever.

2.1.1 Music Promotion

For artists to become successful, their music has to be promoted or pushed to as many listeners as possible. There are at least two ways to handle promotion: by artists or by delegating it to a third party, which is a record label. Nowadays, the internet has allowed musicians to do self-promotion in a substantial way (Webb, 2022). For example, the case artist has been actively promoting herself on social media channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and VKontakte. Roughly estimated, the channels have helped the artist to be discovered by hundreds of people in 2021 alone.

However, even though technology-driven self-promotion brings numerous benefits to an artist, such as having better control over a developing career, it requires a considerable amount of time that the artist could otherwise use to improve their skills in music. In addition to being time-consuming, music promotion also requires significant financial investments. Even if the artist decides to avoid paid marketing channels, such as Facebook ads, the lack of time to spend on marketing would force the artist to hire a freelancer or an agency, both of which can be expensive (Chifley 2019).

2.1.2 Labels

In 2019, record labels were investing in Artist & Repertoire (A&R) and marketing US\$5.8 billion, which accompanies one-third of their revenue. This is done to support the musicians and to sell their music. (IFPI 2019.)

The primary goal of record labels is to manufacture, distribute and promote the recordings of artists that are linked to them in exchange for a service fee from them. Usually, the cost is deducted as a percentage of the artist's music revenue. Ultimately, record labels strive to monetize music as much as possible. From an artist's point of view, a label is a service that provides the musician with recording, manufacturing, and promotional funding. (Trumm 2020.)

Signing to a label can benefit an artist, but some downfalls must be considered. Most major labels have been in the industry for a long time, giving them the advantage of knowing the market, the right people, and the ins and outs of promoting one's music. In addition, their access to bigger budgets allows them to cut costs when doing business in bulk, entering the economies of scale in marketing. (Mcdonald 2019.)

Before signing an artist, labels need to do preliminary research on an artist: their music, their distinctive brand, and fanbase, as well as their web and social presence, among other things (Indiepanda 2022). The latter would include making it easier for labels to learn more about an artist after they discover, e.g., a track of theirs, through their social media or a professional website. Most importantly, artists must include links to the streaming platforms on their promotional channels (CareerInMusic 2022).

2.2 Website usability

To distinguish the features of a user-friendly web page, it is crucial to define the word usability in the context of web development.

Usability is a quality attribute that evaluates how easy something is to use. According to Organization of Standardization (2018), usability is used to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction within selected users in specified environments. Other words used when describing the term usability are "user friendliness" and "ease of use." In other words, usability can be defined as a tool that allows people to measure the quality of the website (Flavian, Gurrea & Orus 2009).

Usability is relevant for regular website use and the learning phase when users are getting acquainted with the product or service offered on the website for the first time (ISO 2018). Thus, tracking and measuring website usability is crucial to determine whether users achieve their goals when going to a specific website and whether it creates a good impression for visitors who may become clients in the future.

2.3 Measuring website usability

There are several different ways to measure the usability of a website. A couple of these include users, either an expert in the field or random people, visiting the website and acting as if they were the actual customers interested in the product or service, as well as questionnaires and interviews with the users. However, nowadays, the simplest solution is to measure website usability using automated evaluation (Wong 2021.)

When usability testing is automated, it essentially means that software is set up to run for the identification of problems in usability. Automating the process will require minimal human labor, saving valuable resources such as money and time. Although it requires a more significant investment at the initial stage, automated testing is proven to be ultimately cutting costs for the company, as it is supposed to be identifying bugs and poorly working functions that can be fixed before the release of the website to the public. (Wong 2021.)

2.4 Website design and its aspects

Website design or web design is creating a webpage from scratch. It usually encompasses the outer part of it, also called the layout. The layout includes, among other aspects, graphic design elements and the production and creation of content that will be visible on the website. (TechTerms 2013.)

Understanding that a good website design goes hand-in-hand with usability is vital. Following this line, a website with a good design should not only be attractive, but it should also encompass a high level of usability, in other words, be easy to use (Flavian, Gurrea & Orus 2009).

According to Chiu, Garrett, Young & Zhang (2016), 20 identified elements in design define the usability of the website: memorable elements, organization, valid links, content utility, navigation, learnability, purpose, simplicity, impartiality, consistency/reliability, accuracy, loading speed, security/privacy, interactive, strong user control capabilities, readability, efficiency, credibility, scannability, and graphical representation. The authors investigated

each of these to find out which elements were frequently mentioned in different sources. With the threshold value of 30%, they identified seven elements listed in descending order: navigation, graphics, good organization, content utility, purpose, simplicity, and readability. (Chiu et al. 2016.)

Table 2. Design elements mentioned most frequently and their brief definition

Design element	Frequency of occurring in sources	Brief definition
Navigation	63 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search and navigation features • Links and access to the website
Graphics	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images, videos, and other content • Colors, fonts, size of elements
Good organization	43%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical and hierarchical organization • Easy-to-understand structure
Content utility	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping users interested and making them come back by having the right amount of up-to-date information
Purpose	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways of interaction and distinctive identity • The goal is clearly defined (forms and contact information)
Simplicity	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple headings and layout • Design is repeated, and features are easy to process
Readability	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-written and grammatically correct language • Easy to understand and read

2.5 Establishing similar patterns and techniques on artist websites

To plan and execute a high-quality and user-friendly website that would appeal to labels, it is necessary to conduct a competitor analysis for the artist. This will allow the researcher to collect data and distinguish the common patterns and similarities between different websites to later apply to the design.

2.5.1 Competitor analysis

The range of competitors of our artist is reasonably broad: they are the fresh artists that are trying to gain popularity in a similar way, as well as well-established artists that are already assigned to a label and have a unique published website. In this case, the analysis will be focused on the latter, as the researcher needs to analyze websites that not many new artists might have. Nevertheless, any singer with a website will be included in our analysis, regardless of whether they have a big community of fans. Considering hundreds of artist websites are available to the public, the list must be limited primarily to the artists who fall under the same genres as our case artist. These include pop, pop-punk, and Latino.

First, the researcher will analyze some of the biggest names in the industry. Billie Eilish is a self-started pop artist who started by releasing music on the streaming platform SoundCloud and later was discovered by the talent scouts from Darkroom/Interscope Records, whose parent company is Universal Music Group. They signed a record deal with her in 2016 when she was 15 years old (Fountain 2021).

As of 2022, the website is dedicated to her newest album and world tour rather than a collection of all the existing projects. The web page type is a landing, meaning everything is located on one page and has to be scrolled down rather than jumping to other pages for specific information. (Eilish 2022.) This type of web page is mainly used as a part of a marketing campaign after potential clients click on an ad on social media, emails, or other marketing channels. The main point of landings is to convert visitors into leads or buyers. (Shore 2019.)

The landing consists of the main page and seven other sections: a section with her newest music video, the one with the official album playlist, a section that leads to the links to her new album on streaming platforms, the one with the dates of her world tour, the one with the link to the online store of her fragrance, the one with her fan store, and lastly, a section with an email subscription form and links to her social media channels. (Eilish 2022.) The web page has a distinctive color palette (beige/light brown), text in a specific font that is repeated throughout the whole page, and a simple structure with clear headings, unique images, videos, and other website elements. In addition, it has a clear goal – to lead visitors to buy or consume her products, whether it's music, fan products, or tickets to her tour. Alternatively, the users that did not find what they needed are offered to leave their email and receive updates on the new products in the future. (Eilish 2022.) Based on previous research, most of the 20 web design elements were considered and

well-executed while creating the website. The seven ones from the table above are considered the most significant ones. An exception that the researcher can point out is interactivity – the users cannot, for instance, post comments or receive recommendations based on their last actions/purchases. There could also be more animation that would keep the landing more dynamic. Otherwise, this website can be used by me as a reference when designing a page for the case artist.

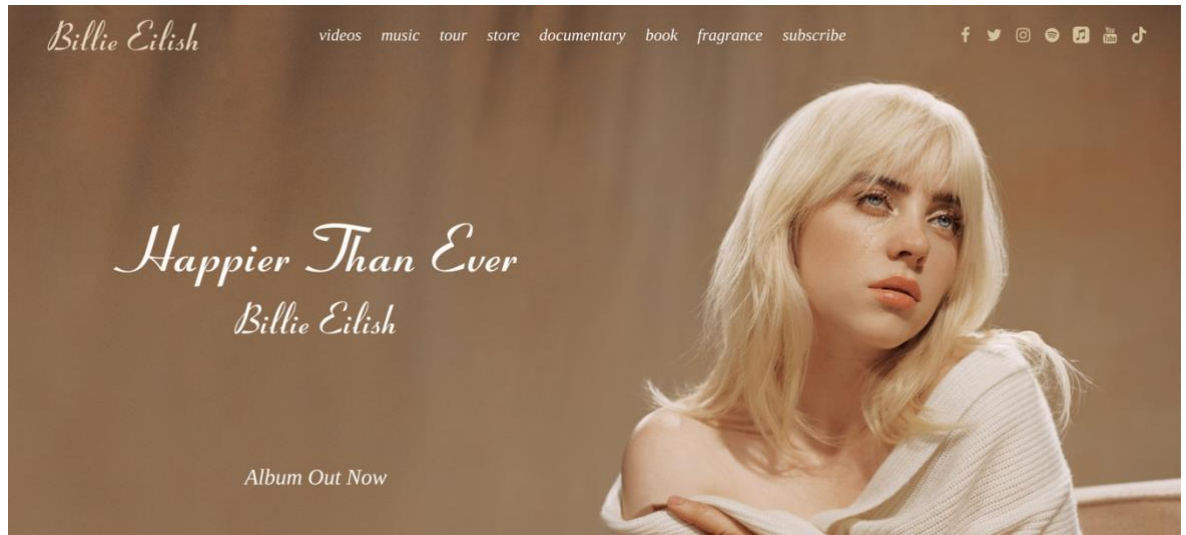


Figure 3. Billie Eilish Official Website

The next artist that will be investigated is Sarah Cothran, an American pop singer who got signed by Republic Records. This label became a part of Universal Music Group in 2021. Her website has a minimalistic design and a simple structure – on the main page, there is a full-screen picture of her and her latest releases with a link to stream or download them are located below. Next comes a section with her newest TikTok videos with an opportunity to scroll them back and forth, and lastly, there is a section with an email subscription form. Through the menu, it is also possible to access a page with the artist's merch and links to her social media channels. On the website, it is easy to see a distinctive color palette – several shades of pink, white and black – supported by a unique font for the headings. (Cothran 2022.) The web page is generally well-designed, has good navigation, is readable, and clearly defines the goal with several CTAs (calls to action).

Regarding improvement, the author could say the website might lack more graphics and personal information about the artist herself. Also, the merch could have been placed on the landing rather than a separate page, as the landing seems relatively short, containing only four sections. Otherwise, the website could be used as a reference, as it is high quality and belongs to a middle-class artist, which is more suitable for the thesis.



Figure 4. Sarah Cothran Official Website

The next website that will be analyzed belongs to Olivia Rodrigo, another American pop star who signed with the label Interscope/Geffen in 2020 (Ahlgrim 2021). This landing follows a similar structure and navigation as the former ones except for a few distinctions. The web page also consists of the main section, following a section with her biography, then comes one with her latest releases and her video performances, and concludes with a newsletter form. The difference that can be pointed out is that there is a possibility to scroll the first section to the side, revealing different contents one after another: an invitation to visit her tour shop, a link to her short movie, a call to watch her new music video, and so on. (Rodrigo 2022.) As a website visitor, this feature makes the page more dynamic and compelling, giving it a competitive advantage. It should not be overlooked while designing the case artist's landing.

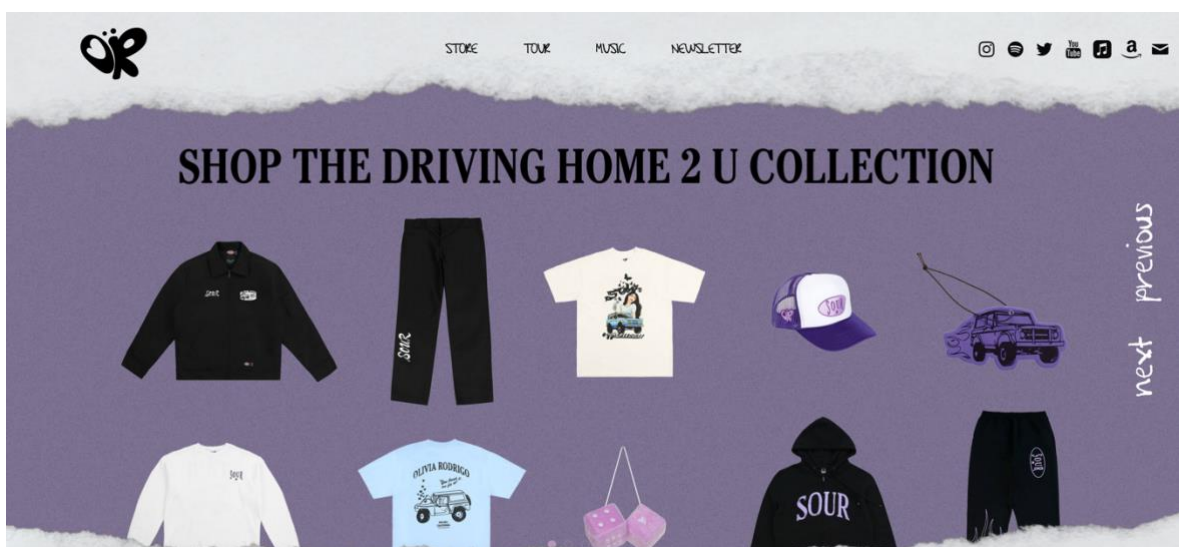


Figure 5. Olivia Rodrigo Official Website

Lastly, the researcher will analyze the website of the Finnish POP and R&B artist Evelina, who is a part of Def Jam Recordings Finland, which belongs to Universal Music Finland (Universal Music Group 2022). She has a website that captures her personality as an artist. Compared to the previous landings, hers has a darker tone, even though the structure and the idea behind the website are pretty similar. The first section has a full-screen picture of her with her logo in the middle; the second section includes widgets to her social media channels, the music video, and tour dates; the last section encompasses information about her contact personnel. (Evelina 2022.) Overall, this landing is a solid example of an artist's website. However, adding more unique elements, CTAs, and an email newsletter might be considered to raise engagement among the leads.



Figure 6. Evelina Official Website

2.5.2 Outcomes

Based on the research on aspects of web design, website usability is a feature that can define how easy something is to use. Usability can be further broken down into 20 elements, with the most important and most mentioned ones being navigation, graphics, good organization, content utility, purpose, simplicity, and readability. These aspects, along with the other ones, make up the design and functionality of the website and define the extent to which it is user-friendly and appealing to visitors.

Regarding the competitor analysis, other artists' websites showed significant similarities. These include the structure (the order of the sections), unique design features (using a specific color palette, fonts, and visual creatives), simplicity and readability (all websites

are short landings with a particular goal), as well as the usage of visual materials, such as pictures and videos.

3. Interview with a record label representative

It is crucial to get the insider opinion of a party involved in label talent acquisition to build a website that would appeal to record labels. Hence, several interviews will be conducted with label representatives to get an expert opinion on the artist's website's appeal to record labels. The construction of questions for the interview will be based on previous research related to artist marketing, website usability, and web design. Below are the questions that the label representative will ask to determine what makes up an appealing website and the reason behind these questions:

Table 3. Interview questions and justification behind them

Before signing an artist, labels need to do preliminary research on an artist: their music, their distinctive brand, and fanbase, as well as their web and social presence, among other things. (Indiepanda 2022.)	Would it be helpful if an artist you considered signing had an open landing page/website showcasing their work? Why/Why not?
Before signing an artist, labels need to do preliminary research on an artist: their music, their distinctive brand, and fanbase, as well as their web and social presence, among other things. (Indiepanda 2022.)	Have you ever checked if an artist had a website before contacting them regarding a potential deal?
Website usability and design are the concepts that make up a well-made website that should be appealing, functioning, and valuable to solve its purpose. (Widmer 2019.)	What would you say is the most crucial aspect of an artist's website?
According to Chiu (2016), identified elements in design that define the website's usability and are mentioned the most are navigation, graphics, good organization, content utility, purpose, simplicity, and readability.	Would you confirm that navigation, graphics, good organization, content utility, purpose, simplicity, and readability make an excellent and appealing artist website? Why/Why not?
The competitor analysis has shown that every artist's website has a distinctive style that is unique to the artist.	Would it have an impression on you if a website possessed a unique style that matched the style of the artist?
Website usability and design are the concepts that make up a well-made	Do you think the website is unsuccessful if it has a good design but is not user-

website that should be appealing, functioning, and valuable to solve its purpose. (Widmer 2019.)	friendly (hard to use)?
Before signing an artist, labels need to do preliminary research on an artist: their music, their distinctive brand, and fanbase, as well as their web and social presence, among other things. (Indiepanda 2022.)	Comparing two similar artists side by side – one having a well-done website and the other not having one – would you say the former has a better chance of being contacted and eventually signed? Why/Why not?
Usability can be defined as a tool that allows people to measure the high or low quality of the website (Flavian, Gurrea & Orus 2009).	What aspects of an artist's website would repel you as a label representative? For example, messy format, long loading time, hard-to-read fonts, etc.?
Before signing an artist, labels need to do preliminary research on an artist: their music, their distinctive brand, and fanbase, as well as their web and social presence, among other things. (Indiepanda 2022.)	Would you recommend aspiring artists spend some time compiling an appealing web page that includes all of their work to increase their chances of getting signed?

3.1 Meeting with the label representative

Unfortunately, the efforts made towards finding a label representative that would agree to an interview in a limited amount of time were not justified. Such people were attempted to be found through networking, existing contacts, email distribution, and social media, yet these attempts ultimately led to unqualified individuals for an interview. That said, collecting data on the opinion of label representatives on artist website appeal was impossible.

3.2 Outcomes

In conclusion, the chapter above was dedicated to meeting the label representative to get an insider's opinion on an artist's website appeal. Ten questions that could have provided a deep understanding of interviewees' views on how they perceive artists' websites were identified based on previous research. However, finding a label representative agreeing to a short interview through networking, social media, and email distribution was impossible. Hence, the thesis product – the artist's website – will be built based on the existing findings from chapter two.

4. Proposed website

The product of this thesis is a landing page that will be dedicated to the case artist. It will be designed in Figma, a design tool whose structure, elements, and logic will be based on the secondary research introduced and explained in chapter two.

4.1 Preparing the design based on previous research

As the previous chapters concluded, most artists have a short landing page showcasing their artistry. However, the website should meet specific parameters in terms of website usability and web design to appeal to users and be intuitive to use. The previous research suggests that a short landing page consisting of three or four blocks is the optimal format for the artist's website. In addition to paying attention to the user experience and web design rules identified in the second chapter, the structure of the case website would be based on the competitor analysis from the same chapter.

4.2 Outcomes

When it comes to the first main block, it is essential to use it to introduce the artist by including their high-quality picture and name and adding some elements that would be unique to the singer to make the website stand out. It should also have a menu listing what a visitor (a label representative in this thesis's case) should expect to see on the landing page. Lastly, there could be links to the artist's social media. Regarding website usability, all the elements must be easy-to-read, well organized, simple, and have a clear purpose (Chiu et al. 2016). Following these rules, below is the result of the main page for the proposed website.

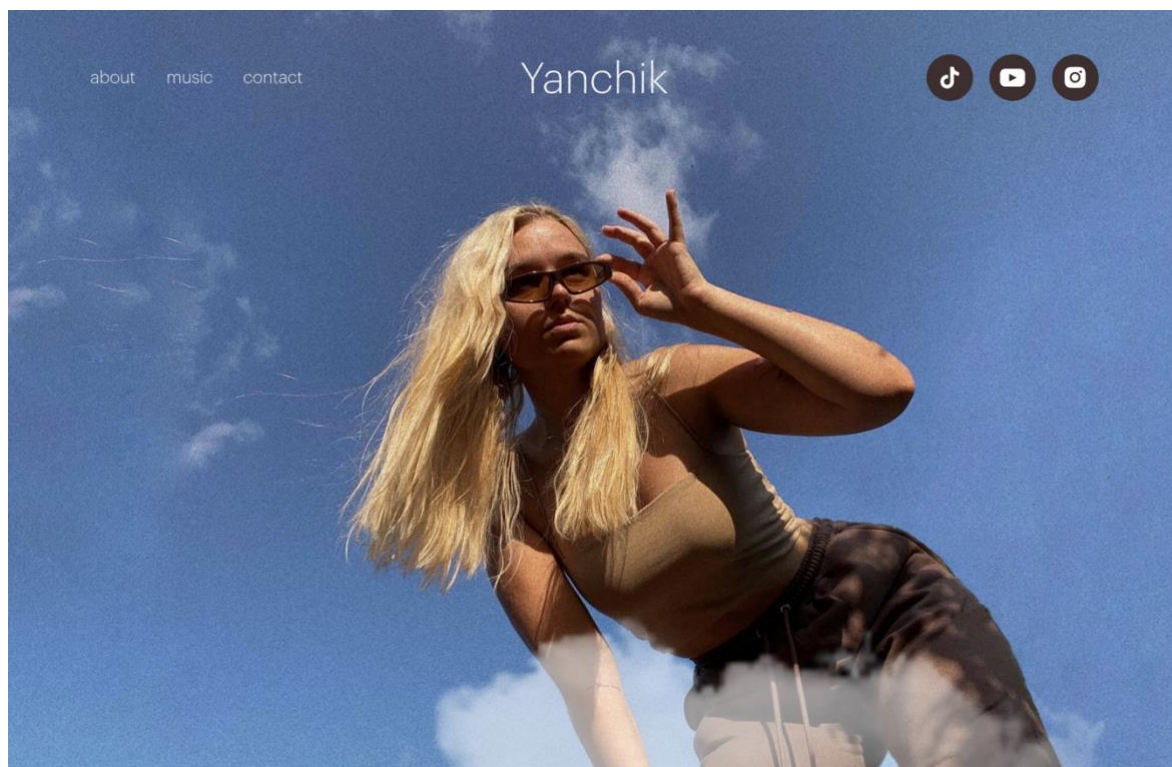


Figure 7. Artist's Proposed Website, Main Page (Liubarskaia 2022)

Since the artist is not yet well-known, it was decided to make the second block, which would be about the artist, to include a little bit more information about her and give more context to the visitors. In addition to having a short introductory paragraph, it would also contain another picture of the singer to accompany the visual part of the web page. For the overall design to have similar patterns, all blocks will be carried out using the same design elements, fonts, and colors. Below is the block "about the artist," created based on the outcome of the research:

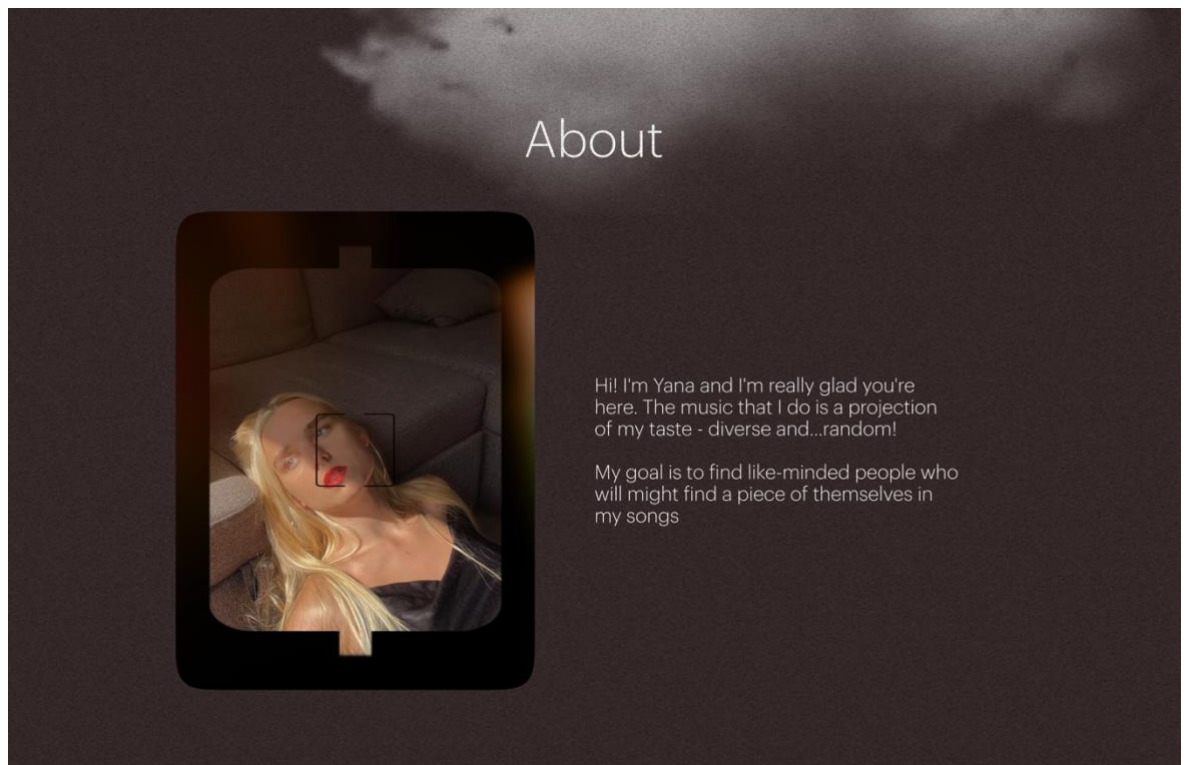


Figure 8. Artist's Proposed Website, Block "About" (Liubarskaia 2022)

As the prior research has proved, the most crucial part of an artist's website is a block that showcases their music and has a universal link to all the platforms. Thus, it was decided to include this block following the "About" page. The competitor analysis has shown that one way to do that is to display the new release, or the song uploaded to platforms the latest, in the block. The reason behind that is that the primary focus for artists is often to increase the streams/views for more recent content rather than the old one. Nevertheless, the link should still provide access to all the platforms and lead to all music and videos published by the artist. Below is the "New release" block created for the case artist website:

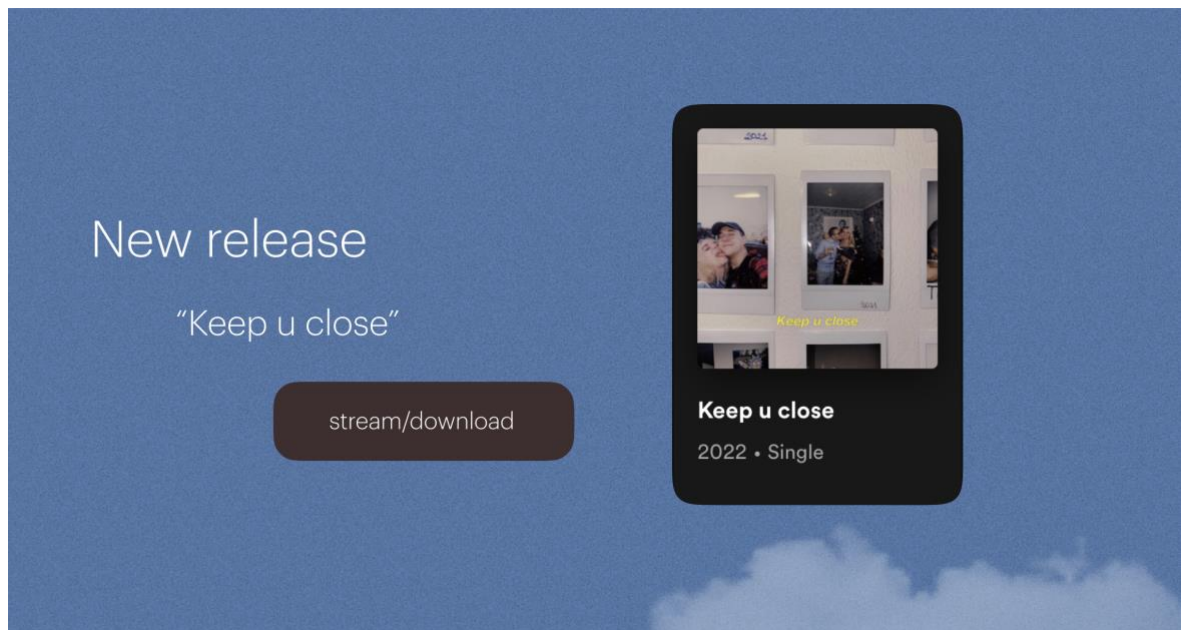


Figure 9. Artist's Proposed Website, Block "New Release" (Liubarskaia 2022)

After showcasing the music, the artist created, it would be beneficial to satisfy the visitors' interest in the artist and provide them with an additional CTA. The competitor's analysis has shown that it could potentially increase customer loyalty and interactivity between the artists and their audience. The input fields that occurred the most on similar websites were email address and country, thus were included in the case artist website. In addition to the sign-up form, the block supports the overall style and website usability rules identified for the landing page.

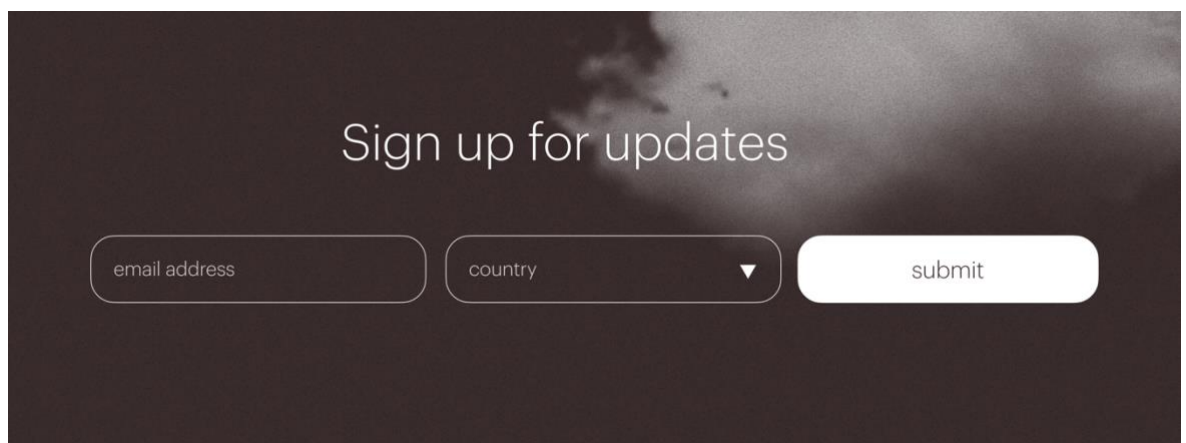


Figure 10. Artist's Proposed Website, Block "Sign up for updates" (Liubarskaia 2022)

Lastly, a website will include a footer containing links to the artist's social media channels to allow visitors to check them out after getting acquainted with the landing page. Additionally, the block will include a link to the privacy policy that is a part of the sign-up form on the previous block. Since website visitors can leave their personal details, such as email addresses, their data should be protected by law, and the terms should be clearly

stated on a separate page. Thus, such a page was created, and a link to it has been provided in the footer.

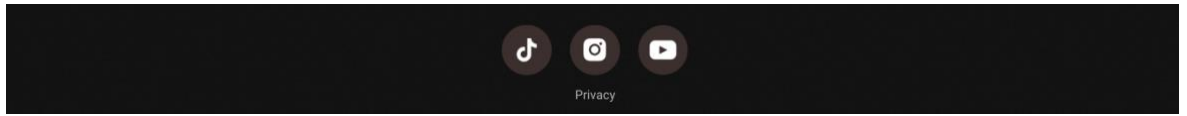


Figure 11. Artist's Proposed Website, Footer (Liubarskaia 2022)

5. Project outcomes and limitations

The official launch of the website happened on the 28th of October. After the website was published, it was promoted to the audience via Instagram for two weeks, until the 11th of November. This social media channel was chosen due to the artist's high number of followers and the high follower engagement rate. During the launch, the number of followers was 1171. (Instagram 2022.)

After two weeks of launching the website and promoting it using social media, the number of visitors reached 96 (Tilda Publishing 2022). The website statistics were tracked using Tilda Publishing, a service that acts as a host for the website and provides a domain name for it. The screenshot of the statistics can be seen below.

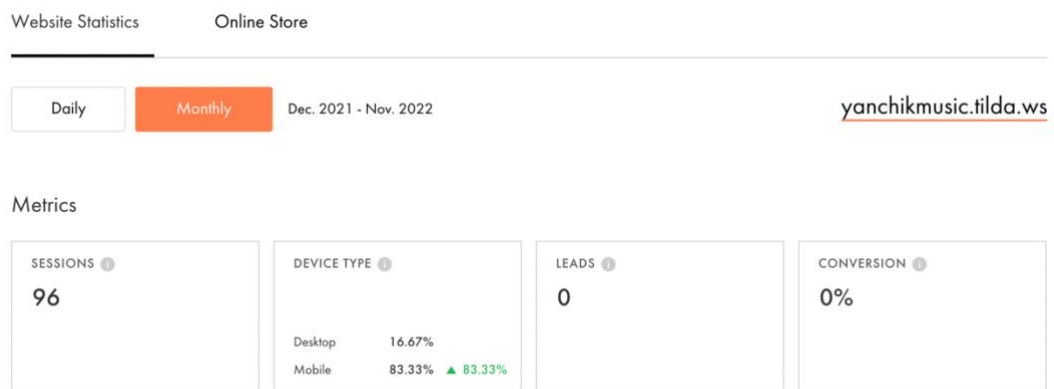


Figure 12. Website statistics (Tilda Publishing 2022)

Overall, the project objective of the thesis was successfully reached, as the product was created based on a vast amount of secondary research, getting a sufficient number of visitors as a result. Despite the inability to interview a record label representative, the secondary research made it possible to gather enough data and use it as a backbone while creating the product.

However, the lack of interview data should be considered a thesis limitation and could be considered in future research if necessary. Another limitation is the limited time allocated to conducting the research and writing a paper. In the future, giving more time for research as well as for the search for qualified interviewees might be considered.

5.1 Reliability and Validity

To accurately critique the research and make sure it can be trusted and accurately repeated, its validity and reliability need to be analyzed. Before that, the concepts need to be researched and explained.

The first tool to measure how trustworthy qualitative research is is reliability. It is defined as the consistency of an instrument. In other words, if the study were to be repeated, it would consistently get similar results. (Heale & Twycross 2015.) Reliability is mainly a primary research measure, which was unfortunately not obtained for this project.

The second instrument to evaluate how truthful the data is would be validity. Heale and Twycross (2015) define validity as the extent to which the source is accurate compared to what it was initially intended to represent. The quality and publication date of resources were considered to ensure the sources used in this research are valid. It was made sure the articles, books, and blog posts were from high-quality resources, researched from HH Finna or Google Scholar. Additionally, it was ensured the resources were not older than twelve years old, most written as recently as 1-5 years ago.

5.2 Further Research and Projects

In case the project was to be further investigated or developed by the artist, the researcher would have several suggestions to make. First, self-promotion for attracting record labels should not be limited to having an appealing landing page alone. The artist should also consider consistent posting across other social media channels such as Instagram and TikTok. In addition to growing the audience, it would also increase the chances of being exposed to record label talent acquisition. Another suggestion the researcher could make is to investigate whether setting up SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and SEM (Search Engine Marketing) would make the website more visible to the target audience and consider implementing them if the results suggest so.

5.3 Reflection on Learning

As part of the learning process, reflecting on personal learning experiences during the thesis writing process is crucial. That includes reflecting on research, working life, career path, and study plans.

The researcher has thoroughly enjoyed the path of doing research in marketing and creating the thesis product. She found it rather challenging, with the most demanding part looking for high-quality sources and producing the research part in chapter two.

During the process, she acquired new knowledge and became more interested in her major, willing to continue her studies in marketing in the future. Most importantly, she was able to get real-life experience designing a non-tangible product for an artist. This knowledge and experience will help her find a job or continue her studies in this area.

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Appendices


Appendix 1. Case artist website.

about music contact

Yanchik

about music contact

About



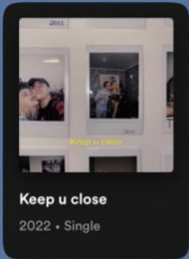
Hi! I'm Yana and I'm really glad you're here. The music that I do is a projection of my taste - diverse and...random!

My goal is to find like-minded people who will might find a piece of themselves in my songs

New release

"Keep u close"

stream/download



Keep u close
2022 • Single

Sign up for updates

email address country submit

Privacy

Appendix 2. Gantt chart presenting the thesis activities.

