

KEY FACTORS IN COMMERCIAL SUCCESS OF RAP ARTISTS IN FINLAND

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The purpose of this thesis was to examine and define key factors affecting the successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. The research questions examine how success and commercialization are defined in the Finnish music industry currently, as well as what kind of a factor artist's personal set of business skills are in the process of successful commercialization. The scope geographically places in Finland, while industrially it covers the rap genre. Demographically, the interview participants were identified by the current metrics for success in the Finnish music industry from all over Finland.

The objective was to provide useful information for Finnish artists, artist managers, record labels and the Finnish music industry by defining the key factors. In the future, it may guide independent artists as well as recording artists towards a more successful commercialization, which in turn could increase their visibility, income and job opportunities.

Key concepts of the thesis were commercialization of rap music, success in music, business skills that artists possess and the successful combination of these all. In the perspective of data collection and analysis, the concepts created a strong knowledge base – a variety of literature and online sources, as well as prospect for multiple aspects to the interview process. The challenge was to find reliable data and remain constricted enough.

The method used in this thesis research was qualitative and consisted of a literature based theory together with interviews of Finnish rap artists. Grounded theory was used as a design approach. This method was the most effective in identifying the key factors the research was seeking, due to the subjective and interpretable experience data. This in-depth insight supported the understanding of the main concepts and examining the research questions.

The main findings showed that the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland are authenticity of artist, efficient marketing and constant self-educating in addition to the factors existing literature emphasized, such as broadness of audience, monetary profit and chart rankings.

Keywords music industry, commercial success, rap, popular music, success, business skills

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The popularity of the rap genre has been steadily rising in recent years, both in Finland and globally (Tervonen 2022). As an artist in the R&B and rap genre, the author was vested in understanding the reasons behind this phenomenon and the factors that contribute to the commercial success of rap artists. While success in music can be subjective and multifaceted, it cannot solely be determined by the amount of money or social media followers an artist has. Success could rather be achieved by creating music that resonates with both the artist and their audience. Through the following research questions and objectives, the thesis was purposed provide insight on this interesting matter.

1.2 Research Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the key factors that affect the commercial success of rap artists in Finland. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following research questions: how success and commercialization are currently defined in the Finnish music industry for rap artists, what the role of an artist's personal business skills in the process of successful commercialization is, and what are the key factors that contribute to successful commercialization for rap artists in Finland. Through this research, the intention was to provide a comprehensive theory of the key factors that influence the commercial success of rap artists in Finland.

To achieve the goal of this thesis, the grounded theory research design and qualitative data collection method were utilized. The qualitative research method involved interviews with key stakeholders in the Finnish music industry, a repertoire of rap artists. Meanwhile, primary and secondary data of the literature review involved academic books, articles, and industry statistics. Ultimately, the findings of this research may have contributed to the development of strategies that may help rap artists in Finland achieve greater commercial success in the music industry in the future.

1.3 Scope and Objectives

This research focused on the rap genre in Finland and aimed to identify the key factors that contribute to successful commercialization for rap artists in this context.

The objective of this thesis was to define the key factors that contribute to successful commercialization for rap artists in Finland. By doing so, this research aimed to provide useful information and guidance for stakeholders, who are Finnish artists, artist managers, record labels, and the music industry as a whole. In the future, this may lead to increased visibility, income, and job opportunities for rap artists in Finland.

To achieve this objective, the research involved conducting interviews with individuals, rap artists, who have achieved success variably in the Finnish music industry based on currently established metrics. These interviews helped identify the specific strategies, approaches, and factors that have helped these participants achieve commercial success as rap artists in Finland.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

To further understand and define the key factors in successful commercialization, primary data, which in this case was literature regarding the Finnish music industry, rap music, artists and commercialization, has been further explored.

2.1 The Music Industry, Rap and Artist

The music industry can be divided into three sectors worldwide, recorded music, music licensing and live music (Wikström 2014). As Patrik Wikström states, the industry consists of all these sectors in relation to each other in a structure that has been in place since the 1950s. In this research, the main focus is on recorded music and licencing.

According to Hirsch, the six fundamental roles in the industry are the artist who puts in the creative input, the agent who links the artist and the producers, the producer who manufactures the music, the promoters who create, plan and execute the promotion of artist, the gatekeepers who mediate between artist and consumers, and the public which consists of the consumers (Hirsch, 1970, 7).

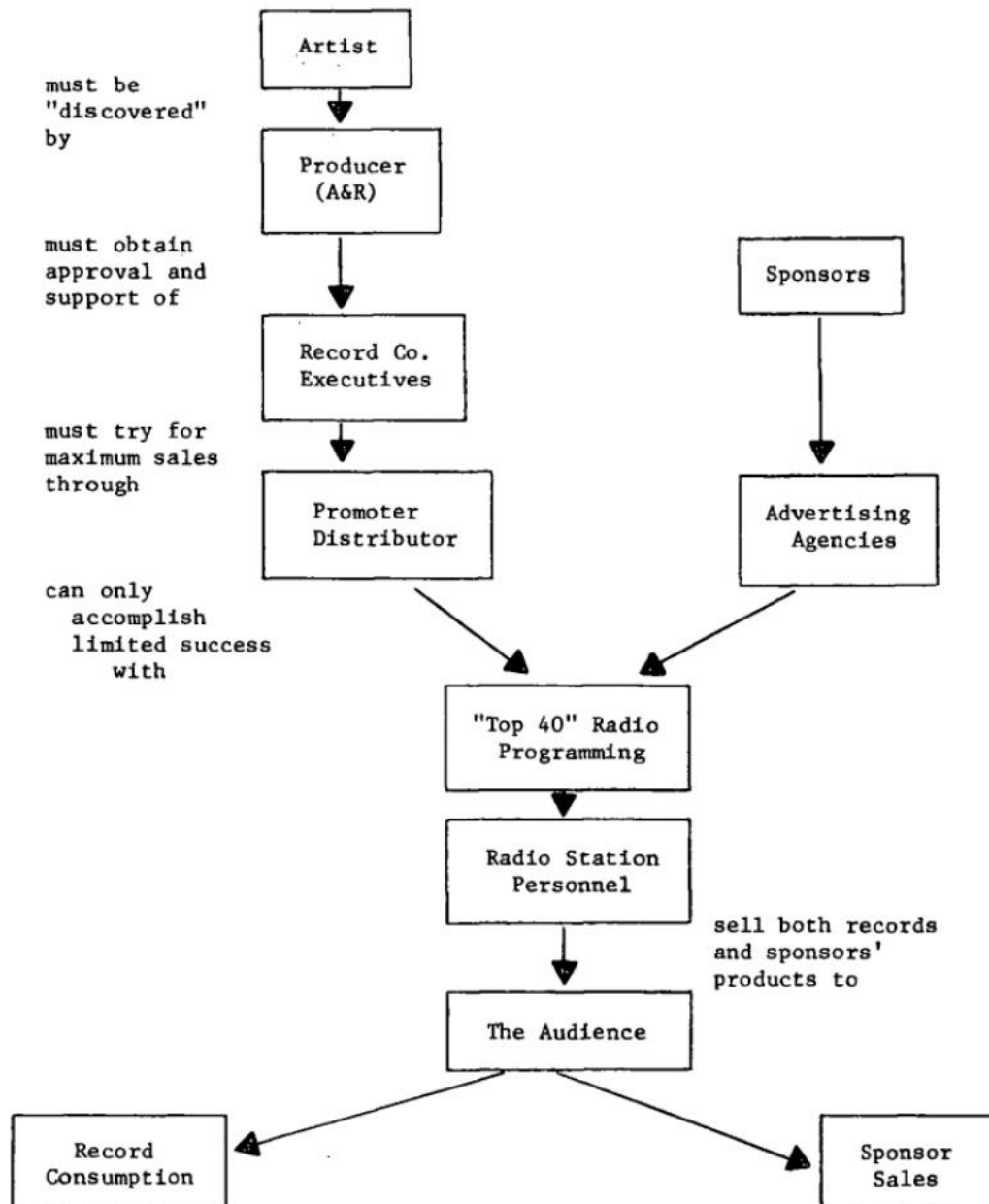


Figure 1. The Organization of the Music Industry. (Hirsch, 1970)

In this research, the focus was on the artist. According to Music Finland's survey (Music Finland 2012), presented in Figure 2, artist works across the three sectors by performing, composing, writing, arranging or recording. The role of an artist differs from other actors in the field in the way that artists are a part of each sector, recordings, live music and works, whereas other actors stick to their area of expertise and only function when an artist is involved (Music Finland 2012).

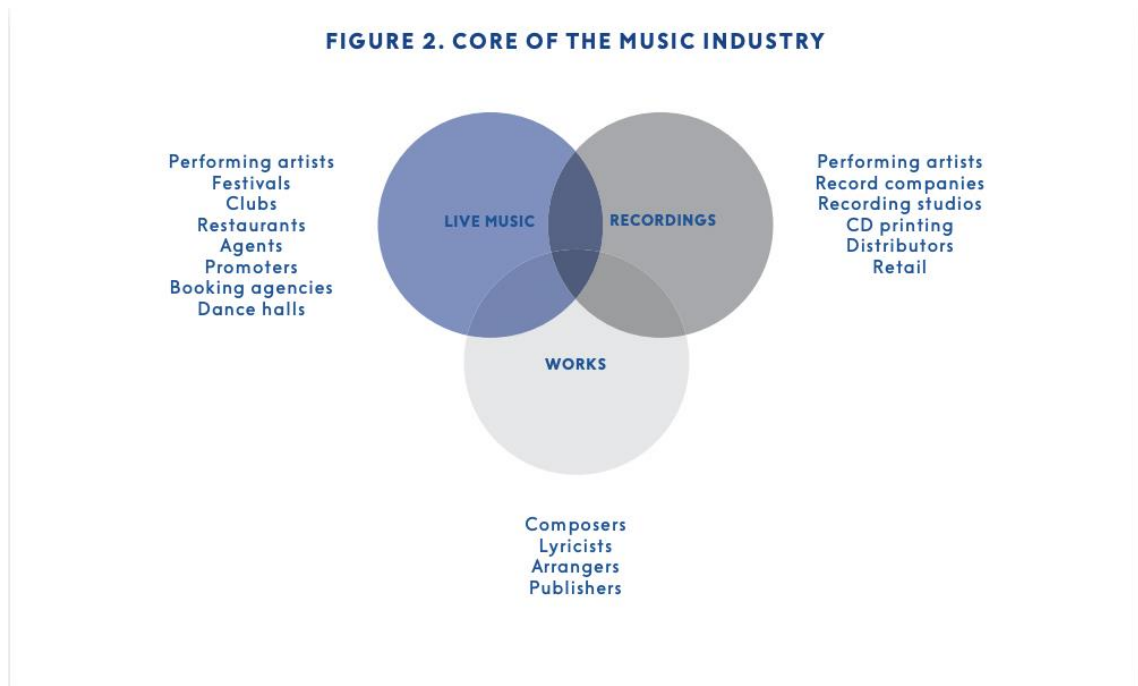


Figure 2. Core of the Music Industry. (Music Finland 2012)

Developed societies are currently in a time of digital distribution and the largest impact of this seventy-year-old era is detected in one of the three sectors, recorded music (Wikström 2014). While 1999 was the peak of global sales in the music industry, digital music has since disrupted the concurring dynamics of the music distribution for example in the form emerging digital platforms, such as the Apple iPod in 2001 (Günther, 1016).

Today, most music consumers are likely familiar with various online music streaming services such as Spotify, Deezer, SoundCloud, and others that are primarily aimed at the consumer market (IFPI 2015). The control of music distribution has reduced in the digital age due to the accessible form of music, for example on the previously mentioned platforms, which in turn affects the sales of this art form more than the other sectors because live music and music licensing are more regulated than recorded music which is digitally open to anyone (Wikström 2014).

Rap music emerged as a cultural movement in the United States in the 1970s, influenced by the New Black community street parties in New York City (Hilamaa,

Varjus, 2000.) As Chang (2005, 28) states, in the mid-1970s the wave of unemployment and racial discrimination in the South Bronx influenced the birth of the culture greatly. In Finland, the first rap songs and hip hop events took place in the 1980s, alongside the emergence of rap groups and the genre's further expansion in the 1990s (Toivonen 2020). In the beginning, rap songs were written in English but soon after the turn of the millennium, Finnish rap gained popularity among groups such as Tulenkantajat from Rovaniemi (Laine 2015).

The early 2000s marked the beginning of record company involvement in the Finnish rap scene, with artists being signed to major labels and others founding their own indie labels (Mikkonen 2004, 68-81). During this time, hip hop also became a mainstream culture globally (Mikkonen 2004, 68-81), leading to the continued global popularity of rap.

Today, rap is the third most popular genre of music in Finland (Tervonen 2022) as presented in Figure 3, and six out of the top ten most streamed songs in Finland in 2022 were rap songs (Yle, 2023).



Figure 3. Most Popular Genres in 2022. (Teosto, 2023)

Given the current popularity of the genre, it is worth noting that 13 years ago in 2010 there were no rap songs in the ten best-selling albums in Finland (IFPI, 2022), indicating a continuous shift in the genre's popularity over the past decade.

2.2 Commercialization and Success

In recent years, the commercialization of music in Finland has grown exponentially in terms of revenue and exports. One of the key drivers of this growth is the increasing popularity of Finnish music both domestically and internationally (Hottinen 2019). Another factor that has contributed to the commercialization of music in Finland is the rise of digital streaming services. Platforms like Spotify and Apple Music have made it easier for artists to reach a wider audience in Finland as well as globally (Wikström 2014). The growth of digital streaming has also changed the way in which people consume music, with a shift away from physical media and towards digital downloads and streaming (Hottinen 2019). The increase in online audio consumption is shown in Figure 4 (Teosto 2022).

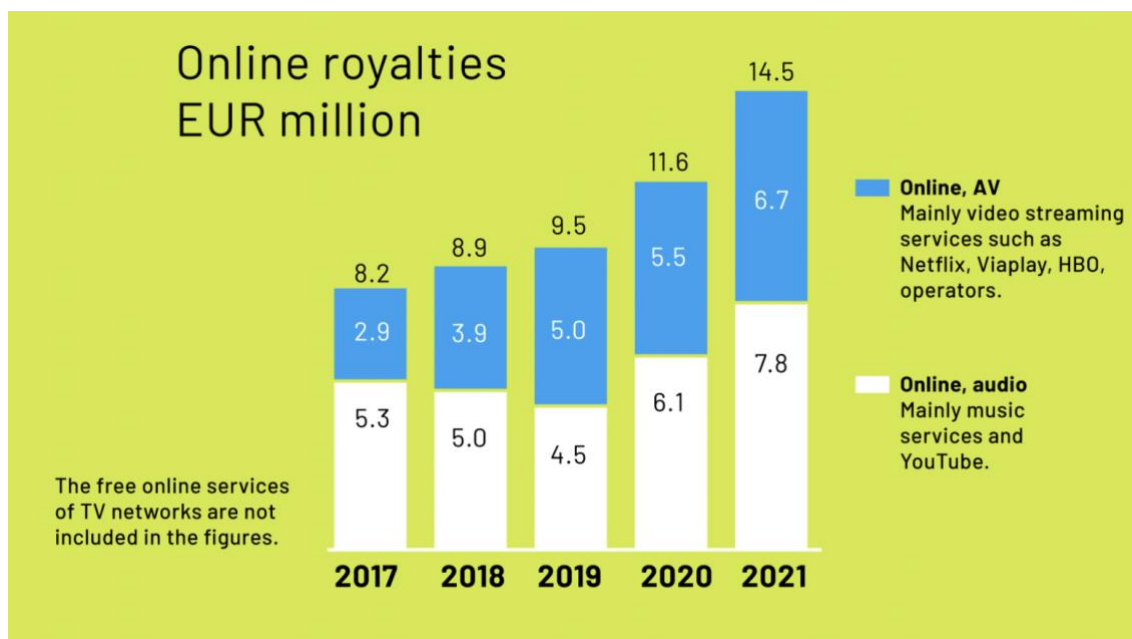


Figure 4. Online royalties EUR million. (Teosto 2022)

Overall, the revenue generated by the Finnish music industry has been steadily increasing over the years. According to a report by Teosto, a Finnish copyright organization (Salminen 2022), the revenue of the Finnish music industry grew by 6.4% in 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and majority of this revenue was

generated through digital music sales and streaming services. It is notable, that in 2016 the Music Consumption and Listening in Finland study (Teosto 2016), the listening frequency of physical recordings had already decreased by 50% in two previous years. See comparison to the 2022 study in table 2.

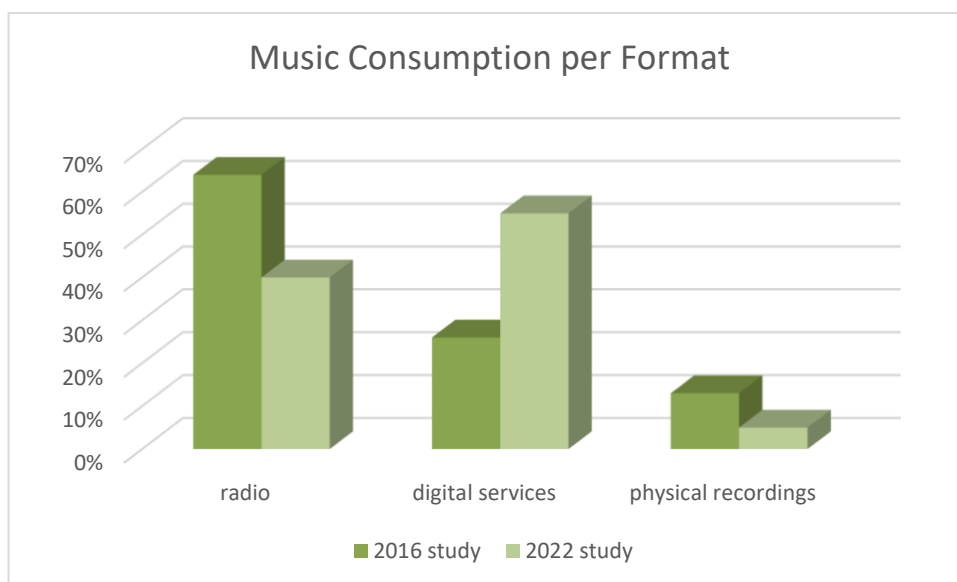


Figure 5. Music Consumption per Format. (Teosto 2016, Teosto 2022)

Along with growth of the music industry, the live music scene in Finland has experienced significant growth in recent years. According to a report by Music Finland (Hottinen 2022), the number of concerts and festivals in Finland has increased by 41% between 2013 and 2018. This growth has created more opportunities for Finnish artists to perform and earn revenue also from live performances (Hottinen 2019), in addition to revenue from recorded music.

Success is a multidimensional term that has been defined and redefined throughout history, and it can be viewed differently based on personal beliefs, cultural background, and societal values (Davis 2023). Generally, success refers to the achievement of goals, but it is more complex than just that (Alhanati 2022). Success is a combination of various factors, including wealth, fame, and recognition (Davis 2023). Further factors are personal satisfaction, achievement of goals, personal growth, social recognition (Alhanati 2022). However, success

cannot be reduced to a single metric or definition, as it involves multiple dimensions of well-being and fulfilment (Davis 2023).

In Finland, success in music can be defined in different ways. Common measures include chart performance, and recognition and awards (Music Finland 2012). The Finnish music charts are compiled by Musiikkituottajat, the Finnish Music Publishers Association (Musiikkituottajat 2023). The charts reflect the most popular songs and albums in the country based on sales and streaming data which reflects the earlier mentioned shift to digital platforms (Musiikkituottajat 2023). As a note to this, it is worth mentioning that in the top five rankings of Finland's official chart, three out of five albums are currently in the rap genre on March 1st 2023 (Musiikkituottajat 2023). The most prestigious music awards in Finland are the Emma Awards, which are presented annually by the Musiikkituottajat association (Emma Gaala 2023). The awards recognize achievements in various categories, including album of the year, song of the year, and best newcomer (Emma Gaala 2023).

Commercialization of music is also often considered as a measure of success in the music industry. This is because the level of commercial success attained by the artist is often seen as an indication of the degree to which the music has resonated with a large audience, generated significant revenue, and affected culture (Negus 2002). The commercialization of music refers to the process of turning music into a commodity for financial gain by promoting, distributing, and marketing music with the specific aim of making a profit (Frith 1988). It has accelerated in recent years by the digital revolution and has pushed greater emphasis on streaming numbers, social media presence, and other digital metrics as indicators of success (Twigg 2014). As a result, many artists are actively seeking to commercialize their music by producing chart-topping hits, collaborating with popular artists and engaging in social media marketing to increase their reach (Robinson 2011). Critics argue that this has led to a homogenization of music, with labels and artists catering to the demands of mainstream audiences at the expense of creativity and diversity (Twigg 2014) and argue that commercialization may not be the only measure of success in the music industry even though it is an important factor that cannot be ignored (Robinson 2011). Commercialization of rap music in Finland can be observed

through its dominance on album charts, most streamed songs, and shifts in award distribution (Musiikkituottajat 2023).

The commercialization of rap music in Finland on the other hand depends on a combination of separate factors, including authenticity, meaningful lyrics, engaging live performances, and effective marketing (Robinson 2011). Effective marketing today includes creating a strong online presence and utilizing social media platform, such as Instagram and TikTok, to engage with fans and promote artist's music (Reynolds 2009). By prioritizing these key factors, rap artists in Finland can increase their chances of achieving commercial success and building a sustainable career in the music (Frith 1988).

Determining whether a piece of music has had successful commercialization can involve several factors, for example the previously mentioned features chart performance, sales figures, critical reception, and awards and recognition (Music Finland 2012). Monitoring chart performance can provide a sense of its commercial success (Musiikkituottajat 2023), and following artists' sales figures can help assess their commercial success in numbers (IFPI 2022). A critical reception among music industry professionals helps generate commercial prospects and visibility (Emma Gaala 2023), while awards and recognition signal popularity and sales combined (Emma Gaala 2023).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of Thesis Progress in Phases

There were four phases in this thesis process, initiation, planning, execution and closeout. In the first phase, initiation, the focus was on idea development. It was important to find the topic and research questions swiftly, to gain insight on the matter, as well as to narrow the scope and methods. In this case, the topic was switched once in the beginning. Following the initiation phase, began the planning phase.

Plan development contained pinpointing information needs which in this case meant finding out what sort of literature and research could be found on the topic currently – there was not a great deal in the beginning. During the thesis lectures, the research process and options between research methods became more clear, leading to the choice of qualitative method. After understanding the process, it was time to focus on brainstorming with a mind map, breaking down the work structure and mapping out resources for the thesis work.

In the execution phase, the most essential part was to write consistently. The only way any work development is possible, is to keep working. Primary research was challenging to begin with, but became easier eventually through working. The final interview plan and schedule was created after the primary research, literature review, because important information from the primary research was implemented in the interview questions, as well as in gathering broader information to support the research questions. Next, it was time for secondary research and interviewees' perspectives. There certainly was in-depth contemplation to the secondary research. The interviews took place on the phone, as planned, and transcription happened through recorded and translated notes. Coding and thematic analysis were done by hand and with help of the Maxda software. Analysis chapter was the most challenging part of the entire process, while conclusion in contrast was the most enlightening to formulate.

The process ended in the two-part closeout phase which included finishing the final version, receiving feedback as well as waiting for the thesis approval.

3.2 Methods

The research methodology for this thesis was qualitative, and data was collected through literature and interviews – primary and secondary data. The interviews were conducted over the phone with Finnish rap artists who were selected based on current music industry metrics which will be further presented in the Interviews chapter. The metrics were related to visibility, recognition and fanbase. The literature review, in turn, was conducted by using books, articles, academic literature, and industry statistics and reports.

Qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study, as it allowed an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of both, the aspects of the artists and the music industry. The most fundamental part of successful commercialization are the artists, and as established in Figures 1 and 2, they are the only interrelated and essential role in all sectors of music.

As established in the primary data achieved from the literary review, related literature in addition to industry statistics helped to provide insights into the broader trends and issues affecting the music industry. It shows that there are many factors affecting successful commercialization in the music industry and musical success cannot only be measured in numbers. Consequently, through the use of interviews it was possible to gather rich and detailed data that provided insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by artists in the industry.

The selection of interviewees, which was based on current music industry metrics, ensured that the study was relevant and reflective of the current state of the music industry. This approach helped to ensure that the gathered data was useful and informative to industry stakeholders.

Secondary data was also an important aspect of the research, as it aided in providing a broader context for the study and to place the experiences of the participants in a wider context.

Overall, the combination of qualitative method, interviews and literature data provided a rich and informative dataset that was used to generate insight into the experiences of artists in the contemporary music industry. This approach helped

to explore complex social phenomena by collecting and analyzing non-numerical data. It also helped to ensure that the study was precise, enlightening, and relevant to the needs of the music industry.

3.3 Research Design

As has been established, the qualitative method was the best technique to achieve results for this thesis, while interviews and secondary data were required in order to conduct a multifaceted and informative research. After assessing multiple research design methods, grounded theory arose as a beneficial approach for this thesis, because there is a limited amount of pre-existing research on the topic, and the aim was to generate a theory to detect the factors that contribute to the success of rap artists in Finland (Glaser, 2022).

As explained by Barney G. Glaser, the originator of the grounded theory approach, the method is particularly useful when studying a phenomenon that is not well understood or has not been previously studied in depth. This certainly is the case with successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. The grounded theory approach is also well-suited to studying social phenomena, such as the music industry, as it allows exploration of the interaction and relationships between individuals like artists, groups like audiences and industry, and institutions such as copyright unions and labels. (Glaser, 2022)

Furthermore, the grounded theory approach is flexible and iterative, meaning that research questions and data collection strategies on complex and multifaceted topics, such as the commercialization of rap artists, can be modified as the research progresses, which has happened during this process as well. The approach grants the possibility to adapt research focus based on the emerging data which is reflective of the reality of the music industry in Finland. (Allen-Hammer, Goldberg, Kellogg, Underwood, Vander Linden, 2022)

This approach was implemented because it enables the development of new theories grounded in the data, which was essential for defining the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists. Additionally, the constant comparison of data with other data and with the existing literature was well-suited for exploring

how successful commercialization is currently defined in the Finnish music industry. (Nathaniel, 2022)

One potential weakness of grounded theory is that it can be time-consuming and require intense resources due to continuous data collection throughout the study. It also has potential for subjectivity as the approach allows leeway for interpretation of data. However, the approach provides some safeguards against it by involving reflectiveness in constant comparison of data. Still, the approach may not be appropriate for research questions that require a more confirmatory approach. (Lloyd, 2021)

However, one of the strengths of the grounded theories is that its flexible nature allows adaptation when new insights emerge during the research process. Another strength is its focus on empirical data, which allows developing new theories, such as defining theory of key factors, rather than relying solely on existing theories or assumptions. Grounded theory also enables reflectivity and awareness of researcher's own biases. By requiring to constantly compare and analyze the data systematically, this approach encourages to reflect these personal biases and assumptions while also to avoid imposing preconceived ideas onto the data. (Lloyd, 2021)

3.4 Data Collection

The purpose of the data collection process in its entirety is to gather relevant and reliable data that can be analyzed to address the research objectives and questions (Glaser, 2022).

The data collection process for this thesis research included primary and secondary data as well as the steps introduced in the following subchapters. Primary data was collected through literature of academic articles and industry reports related to the Finnish music industry and success, commercialization, rap and artists. Secondary data was collected through interviews to reflect and gain broader insight to the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland.

The steps included reviewing academic books and articles, and industry standards and reports. Interviews were conducted with variably successful rap artists via phone. The data from the interviews was transcribed and analyzed to identify additional factors that contribute to successful commercialization. Altogether, combining the interview and literature review data provided a comprehensive understanding of the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland.

3.5 Interviews

This chapter provides an overview of the interview process, including the sampling technique, data collection tools, and data analysis method.

The sampling technique used in this research was purposive sampling. The participants in this research were selected based on their success, knowledge and experience in the rap music industry in Finland. The selection criteria was based on their roles in the industry, as rap artists, varying in success. Three industry metrics were used as the selection criteria and defined the final sample. The metrics were the minimum amount of monthly listeners (Spotify 2023), Instagram and TikTok followers combined (Instagram, TikTok 2023), and current number of awards in terms of recognition during career in 2022 according to the participant. Each metric was measured on Thursday, 16th of March 2023 at 9.27. To gain further perspective, the sample was to include both men and women, artists over and under 30 years of age, and diversity of Finns, both Caucasian and People of Color.

The participants are referred to as participant A, participant B, participant C, and participant D. The background information contains geographical area, age, amount of monthly listeners on Spotify, year of first published music on Spotify, amount of followers on Instagram and TikTok combined, and amount of awards from the music industry. Participants are referred to as they/them to refer from revealing the identities.

Participant A is from Southern Finland and their age is 35. They have approximately 730 000 monthly listeners, approximately 784 000 social media followers, and 18 awards. They first published music on Spotify in 2011.

Participant B is from Middle Finland and their age is 29. They have approximately 730 000 monthly listeners, approximately 535 000 social media followers, and 6 awards. They first published music on Spotify in 2014.

Participant C is from Southern Finland and their age is 26. They have approximately 32 000 monthly listeners, approximately 156 000 social media followers, and 1 award. They first published music on Spotify in 2017.

Participant D is from Northern Finland and their age is 35. They have approximately 83 000 monthly listeners, approximately 18 000 social media followers and 1 award. They first published music on Spotify in 2014.

All of the artists are of rap genre and have been chosen for this research based on having more than 30 000 monthly listeners, more than 10 000 social media followers, at least one recognition from the industry, and their varied locations.

The sample size was determined based on the saturation point, which is the point where no new information is obtained from the participants (Rubin 2021). In this research, the sample size was four participants, including two rap artists who first published music to Spotify in 2014, one artist who first published music to Spotify in 2017 and one artist who first published music to Spotify in 2011. It is notable that the artists may have published music before that in other media, but for the sake of equality, the medium was chosen to be Spotify. The experience, visibility, fanbase and amount of recognition varied between participants which altogether brought diversity to data.

The data collection tool used in this research was a semi-structured interview. The interview questions were designed to address the research objectives and questions and translated to Finnish for the interviewees' sake. The questions were open-ended, allowing the participants to express their views and experiences freely. The interview questions were divided into three categories which were the definition of successful commercialization in the Finnish music industry, personal business skills and factors that contribute to successful commercialization, and challenges faced in the commercialization process. There were ten interview questions altogether and can be examined in APPENDIX 1.

The interviews were conducted with rap artists via phone. The participants were informed of their anonymity, as well as asked for their consent to be recorded, and the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. However, the interviewees were willing to share their identity in order to offer valuable insight for future stakeholders of the study, and so the identities were published in the study after all. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim, word to word, to ensure accuracy (Phillips, Stawarski 2008). The transcribed data was analyzed afterwards using coding, and thematic analysis which usually involves identifying themes, patterns, and trends in the data (Zeegers, Barron 2015). The data was also compared with the literature review data to identify similar and additional factors that contribute to successful commercialization. An important part of any methodology; validity, ethics and reliability of the research, are examined in the following chapters.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the thesis research, multiple data sources were utilized, including literature and interviews. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “triangulation involves the use of multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observation, and documents, to increase the validity of findings” (p. 193). By using multiple sources, the thesis research was able to cover a wide range of perspectives, which increases the reliability and credibility of the findings.

Moreover, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), defining key concepts and theories aids in selecting appropriate data sources and analysis methods, which is critical in ensuring research validity, and aligned research questions and research objectives. In addition, the validity of the interviews was enhanced by the fact that they were conducted with rap artists who have a proven track record in the industry, published music for a certain period of time, and have at least a certain amount of listeners per month. As noted by Sargeant and Jay (2004), the credibility of the research findings can be enhanced by selecting participants who are knowledgeable about the research topic and have relevant experience in the field.

Overall, by utilizing multiple data sources, clearly defining key concepts and theories, and selecting knowledgeable participants, this thesis research remained ethical and valid.

In order to establish reliability of data throughout the thesis process, a consistent and standardized approach to data collection was employed using the grounded theory design approach. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, grounded theory emphasizes the experiences and perspectives of the participants, with the aim of generating a theory that is grounded in the data – instead of an assumption. By using this approach, the artists' experiences were highlighted, and diverse data was collected to ensure that the findings were representative of a wider population.

Confidentiality and anonymity were promised to the participants, and personally identifiable data or personal information were not collected, to prevent biased interpretation of this study. However, as noted by Kitzinger (2005), ethical considerations around anonymity and confidentiality need to be balanced against the potential benefits of allowing participants to be identified. In this study, due to the surprising willingness of participants to reveal their identities, the background information was more broadly shared than originally intended.

The data was analyzed using a systematic approach to ensure that the findings are reliable, consistent, and objective. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, the findings are more likely to be reliable and consistent by using a systematic approach, and following each step. Additionally, as Kondracki and Wellman emphasize (2002), it also enables the researcher to identify patterns and themes in the data, which can help to generate new insights and perspectives. This method, as Charmaz indicates (2014), allowed for the identification of key themes and patterns in the data, which were used to develop a conceptual framework that can guide future research in this area.

To ensure that potential sources of bias and limitations in the research design were recognized and addressed, the researcher followed a structured and systematic approach to data collection and analysis. However, it is important to acknowledge and address the limitations of the study. As Shipman (2014) notes, "all research has limitations, and researchers need to be clear about them" (p.

56). In this study, limitations included the availability of secondary data sources and the perspectives of the rap artists interviewed.

Additionally, limitations related to the thesis process itself, such as the timeline and personal resources, were also acknowledged and addressed. As Armstrong and Overton (1977) point out, “limitations are not shortcomings, they are simply factors that could influence the outcome of the research” (p. 21). These factors were taken into account from the planning phase of the process and presented in the thesis plan, ensuring that the limitations were already recognized and addressed throughout the thesis process.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter presents the non-interpreted results of the interviews conducted with four participants in the Finnish music industry. Participants answered to ten interview questions were asked in three categories, the definition of commercial success, artists' business skills, and challenges in commercialization. The interviews provided a range of perspectives on the factors that contribute to successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland.

The first category aimed to investigate the participants' perspectives on successful commercialization of rap artists in the industry, where the participants were asked to define successful commercialization and to provide their opinions on the factors that contribute to it. In response to the first category of questions, all participants provided their definitions of successful commercialization, description of their personal experience with commercializing their music, and possible factors influencing their commercial success.

Participant A emphasized the importance of considering the target audience and maximizing the spread of music. They also highlighted the role of record companies in marketing and branding the artist. Participant A shared that commercialization comes when one finds their own niche, which people can relate to. They started making music for fun and built an audience that was willing to buy their music. To commercialize their music, they thought about selling music videos, merchandise, and building their brand. Participant A attributed authenticity, a strong vision, and a good team as crucial factors for success. Credibility, which is reflected in authenticity, is also essential in building a strong brand. Separating personal life from business is equally important. Being nice to work with and being seen everywhere can also increase opportunities.

Participant B's definition focused on the artist's popularity, including the number of listeners, gigs, and radio play, and the income generated from these sources. They also mentioned the importance of leveraging the artist's personal brand through influencer marketing and collaborations. Participant B started making music as a hobby but soon realized that it was something he wanted to pursue professionally. They started creating music videos, covers, and promotional

photos for event posters to create a brand for themselves. They shared that creating a music video was essential to get more visibility for their music. They eventually got signed by a record company, achieved commercial success, and learned about the importance of publication dates. Participant B highlighted the importance of high-quality music, a high-quality brand, and external factors such as international and local trends. A compelling story in interviews also helps in building a fan base.

Participant C's definition emphasized the artist's ability to support themselves financially through music, with visibility and commercial groups such as Spotify and record labels playing a significant role. They also emphasized the importance of staying current and anticipating trends. Participant C expressed that their music may not be commercial, and the industry has been challenging, especially as a minority artist. They created music for representation and culture, rather than aiming for commercial success. They acknowledged that commercialization can be difficult due to prejudices, as the biggest audience for rap music is white men. Participant C emphasized the need for different perspectives and visuality to stand out in a homogeneous genre.

Participant D's definition emphasized the connection between art and worldly benefit, with a focus on considering the listener's perspective and indirectly generating income through gigs. Participant D shared their views on commercialization in the music industry, stating that selling merchandise is commercial but emphasized the importance of making a livelihood from music. They stressed finding a balance between commercialization and artistry and cautioned against excessive profits. Participant D also discussed the trade-offs of commercializing music, including the potential benefits and drawbacks of publicity and popularity. They highlighted the importance of the musician's image in commercialization but shared their own approach of partially hiding their face. Participant D acknowledged the impact of social media in finding opportunities and enjoying the process of making music as crucial factors for success.

The second category of the research focused on challenges faced by participants in the commercialization process of their music in Finland and the tackling of those challenges.

Participant A mentioned that one of the challenges in commercializing their music was the pressure to meet customer expectations while maintaining artistic integrity. They expressed that it was difficult to balance between creating something new and unique while also delivering what customers are familiar with. They mentioned that sometimes the desire to improve and innovate on their work could distract them from focusing on the core of their art. They also highlighted that the tension between creating the best-selling product and staying true to their artistic vision was challenging to manage in the music business. Participant A highlighted the importance of managing expectations and dealing with disappointments, as well as the significance of learning from mistakes and using them as opportunities for growth and development.

Participant B identified the biggest challenge in commercializing their music as trying to find their unique sound that resonates with their own musical preference while also appealing to a wider audience. They mentioned that their music was alternative compared to the mainstream and commercial music consumed in Finland at that time, which made it harder for them to quickly gain commercial success. Despite facing this challenge, they expressed that they made a long-term choice to stay true to their own style and sound, which eventually gained them popularity. Participant B emphasized the importance of staying true to their own style and sound, even if it means not opting for quick wins or short-term gains. They mentioned that they believe in playing the long game and establishing themselves as pioneers and creators of a unique brand, which has helped them gain long-lasting attention and success in their field.

Participant C mentioned that as an artist representing a unique identity, it was challenging for them to break into the music industry and gain acceptance. They mentioned that they felt like they needed to prove themselves and challenge societal norms and expectations associated with their identity. They expressed that there was pressure to conform to certain expectations, such as using certain language or addressing specific topics in their music, but they chose a more

difficult route of staying true to themselves and their message. Participant C highlighted the significance of community support in tackling challenges. They mentioned that having a supportive community has been crucial in building their confidence and belief in their own work, which in turn has influenced how others perceive their artistic endeavors. They also mentioned the importance of having foresight and tackling topics in their music that can contribute to the normalization of certain issues, making it easier for future artists.

Participant D highlighted the challenge of viewing their own music as a product that could be commercialized. They mentioned that it was difficult to detach from their emotional attachment to their art and see it purely as a product that could generate revenue. They expressed that this mindset shift was a constant challenge in the process of commercializing their music. Participant D mentioned that they have always prioritized the quality of their music and trusted that it will find its audience. They emphasized the importance of letting their artistic vision guide their decisions in the commercialization process, rather than compromising their creative integrity for short-term gains.

The third category explored the contribution of artists' business skills to commercial success. The participants provided insights into their perspectives on business skills in the context of their artistic endeavors, possible lack of certain skills, whether information is available for artists, and the business skills that may be in need in the future.

Participant A emphasized the importance of identifying the right product and investing in it. They viewed business skills as crucial in the context of their record company and described the need for balancing art and commercial projects. They also highlighted the value of having a business-minded bandmate to complement their artistic focus. Participant A emphasized the importance of having a good team around an artist who can help with financial matters, collaborations, and record deals. This team can commercialize the product that the artist brings to the table, allowing the artist to focus on their art. Participant A revealed that artists' business skills are crucial for commercial success. Participant A acquired these skills by transitioning from a DIY approach to working with a major record company and learning financing from them. This experience provided them with

the knowledge necessary to found their own record company. Participant A suggested that although they lacked information and knowledge, this allowed them to learn through their mistakes and maintain a natural approach. Participant A highlighted the importance of adapting to the fast-paced changes in the music industry, maintaining an interesting brand and character, making use of social media platforms, and consistently producing content to stay relevant. The participant also noted that the length of artist careers is becoming shorter due to the constant introduction of new artists and songs.

Participant B emphasized the significance of having an instinct for making the right decisions in business. They emphasized the importance of knowing when to get involved and when to stay out of certain endeavors. Participant B argued that playing to one's strengths is crucial and that it is possible to afford to leave out many things, such as social media trends, when one's product is of high quality. Selective collaboration with other artists and avoiding commercial deals that do not align with an artist's brand were also important for maintaining a solidly built brand. Participant B emphasized the importance of modelling their career after successful artists and learning from their mistakes. They acquired these skills through research on the internet, including music videos, promo photos, album covers, artist biographies, interviews, and documentaries. Participant B constantly updates their data bank, as the music industry is constantly changing. Participant B expressed regret over their lack of expertise in financial decision-making, leading to losses in property. Participant B emphasized the importance of creating timeless, long-lasting songs and maintaining a good brand.

Participant C described various aspects of business skills, including effective self-promotion on social media, communication skills, basic bureaucratic skills, and the ability to ask for help. They also highlighted the potential trade-offs between using elbow tactics for commercial success versus prioritizing community well-being and avoiding harmful business practices. Participant C highlighted the importance of community well-being, communication skills, and basic bureaucracy skills. Participant C highlighted the importance of access to information, particularly through Teosto, pop-jazz conservatory, lawyers, musicians' unions, and social media. They acknowledged the obligation of silence in recording contracts but believed that communication with artists is crucial.

TikTok has revolutionized music marketing and business during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, making social media skills essential. Participant C emphasized the importance of staying true to one's values, even if it meant turning down commercial opportunities. They also highlighted the need for more courses and events to educate artists on the bureaucratic aspects of the music industry. Participant C stressed the need to market and sell oneself, produce relatable music, and create catchy music for short videos.

Participant D focused on negotiation skills in the context of contracts and revenue sharing. They highlighted the importance of being adept at navigating various situations that involve financial arrangements. Participant D learned from role models and by asking friends. They also acknowledged the importance of trust in the music industry. However, they noted that important information can be forgotten in the rush of things, and that it is crucial to give music time to find its audience before focusing on the next song. Participant D wished they had learned perseverance and long-term thinking earlier in their career, while also acknowledging the importance of balancing commercial success with artistic integrity. Participant D suggested that having good business skills in areas such as negotiation, networking, and financial management is crucial for commercial success in the music industry. Participant D emphasized cooperation skills and the importance of being nice to people, as this can have far-reaching effects.

In the next, analysis chapter, further insights are explored including the data analysis methods and interpretation of the results obtained from these interviews.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 Transcription, Coding and Thematic Analysis

Transcription of the interviews was carried out manually. Since the interviews were conducted in Finnish and the participants preferred using their mother tongue, the text was translated word-for-word into English using the researcher's personal language knowledge and a recommended translation application provided by the school.

For coding, Word software was used to transcribe and organize the text row-by-row. The researcher analyzed each row by noting related and important words from each line. Themes started to emerge as the researcher combined the row-to-row analysis with key words and concepts.

Thematic analysis was conducted using Maxda software. The coded words were transferred to the software, and new codes were identified using the coding tool. Words were highlighted and added to appropriate code categories. The analysis tool was then used to assess the proximity of codes and code categories, see APPENDIX 6 and 7. Based on the highest amount of codes, the codes were divided into three main categories: factors affecting commercial success, business skills artists need, and challenges in commercialization, which was added for the purposes of the research objectives.

As previously mentioned, the analysis was conducted systematically in order to remain objective and prevent personal biases from influencing the research results. Therefore, all the answers were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically in an identical manner, allowing for interpretation in the later discussion chapter where further reflection on the answers took place.

5.2 Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast the primary literature review data with the secondary interview data to address the research questions. The primary data focused on defining successful commercialization in the Finnish music industry, whereas the secondary interview data explored the role of personal skills and experiences in the process towards commercial success of rap artists.

5.2.1 Literature Data

According to the primary literature review chapter, success in music can be defined in different ways, such as chart performance, recognition, awards, and commercialization. Effective marketing today includes creating a strong online presence and utilizing social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, to engage with fans and promote their music. Determining whether a piece of music has had successful commercialization can involve several factors, such as chart performance, sales figures, critical reception, and awards and recognition.

5.2.2 Interview Data

Based on the coding and thematic analysis of the data collected through secondary sources, several key factors emerged as critical to the commercial success of rap artists in Finland. These factors include personal traits and skills, social media promotion and visibility, quality of music, and self-initiated knowledge gathering and following of trends.

Moreover, the results revealed that social media, promotion, and visibility are crucial factors in the commercial success of rap artists in Finland. Artists who are competent in using social media platforms, particularly TikTok, and staying updated with ongoing, past, and future trends are more likely to gain visibility and promote their music effectively. This suggests that social media has become a significant tool for rap artists in Finland to connect with their audience and build their brand, as weekly use of streaming services and social media in music consumption numbers shown in Figure 4 strongly suggest.

Musiikkipalveluiden ja -sisältöjen käyttö

	Viikossa	Päivässä	13-18-v. päivässä
Spotify tms. striimauspalvelu	66 %	51 %	88 %
YouTube (musiikkisisältö)	57 %	34 %	49 %
TikTok	34 %	28 %	73 %
Instagram (musiikkiartistitilit)	29 %	19 %	39 %
Vloggaajat/tubettajat	27 %	18 %	56 %
TikTok (musiikkiartistitilit)	15 %	10 %	37 %

Table 1. Use of Streaming Services in 2022. (Teosto 2023)

Additionally, the quality of music was identified as a critical factor in the successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. Artists who produce high-quality music that resonates with their target audience are more likely to achieve commercial success. This suggests that the artistic merit of the music itself is still a crucial factor in the commercialization process, despite the growing emphasis on social media and promotion.

However, this research suggests that commercialization in the music industry is a complex issue that requires balancing the economic benefits with artistic integrity. Musicians must find a balance between pursuing their passion and making a livelihood from their art while considering the potential consequences of commercialization.

The participants recognized the value of business skills in the pursuit of commercial success in the arts. These skills included identifying and investing in the right opportunities, making sound decisions, effective self-promotion, communication skills, bureaucratic knowledge, and negotiation skills. However, there were also varied perspectives on the trade-offs and ethical considerations involved in pursuing commercial success in the arts industry.

The research results indicate that artists' business skills are essential for commercial success. The study also highlights the importance of acquiring and

updating business skills, learning from role models and mentors, seeking information from various sources, and giving music time to succeed. Overall, the participants emphasized the need for a well-rounded understanding of the business side of the music industry to achieve commercial success while remaining true to one's values and artistic vision.

Nevertheless, challenges such as the pressure to focus on business aspects and the conflict between art and commerce can pose obstacles in the artistic process. The interviews revealed several key themes related to these challenges. The research findings indicated that challenges in the commercialization process of music in Finland included balancing between artistic integrity and customer expectations, finding a unique sound while appealing to a wider audience, navigating societal norms and expectations, and viewing one's own music as a product for commercialization. These challenges highlighted the complexities and nuances involved in the commercialization of music in Finland, and the participants' perspectives provided valuable insights into their experiences and struggles in this process.

Additionally, the struggles include perspective and experience of discrimination and lack of space for all artists. Luckily as doctor of research Inka Rantakallio states, the discussion about gender, racism and discrimination is reaching the already very male and white world of music too (Tuusvuori, 2023).

Furthermore, the participants' responses highlight the importance of managing expectations, learning from mistakes, staying true to one's artistic vision, building a supportive community, and having foresight in the commercialization process. These findings suggest that tackling challenges in the commercialization process requires a balance between artistic integrity and strategic decision-making to achieve long-term success in the creative industry.

In conclusion, the interpretation of findings proposes that successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland is influenced by a combination of personal traits and skills, social media promotion and visibility, quality of music, and self-initiated knowledge gathering and following of trends. Artists who possess strong personal traits and skills, effectively use social media for

promotion, produce high-quality music, and continuously update their knowledge and competence are more likely to achieve commercial success.

5.2.3 Comparison and Conclusion

The primary literature review data indicates that effective marketing, including a strong online presence and social media engagement, is crucial for successful commercialization. The secondary interview data suggests that artists who possess strong personal traits and skills, effectively use social media for promotion, produce high-quality music, and continuously update their knowledge and competence are more likely to achieve commercial success.

Based on the gathered data, commercialization of music is the process of making music a commodity for financial gain by promoting, distributing, and marketing music with the aim of making a profit. According to the literature review, success in music can be defined in various ways, such as chart performance, recognition, awards, and commercialization. In the Finnish music industry, commercialization of rap music is determined by factors such as album charts, most streamed songs, and award distribution. Effective marketing includes creating a strong online presence and utilizing social media platforms to engage with fans and promote music.

However, the research also identified challenges such as the pressure to focus on business aspects and the conflict between art and commerce, which can pose obstacles in the commercialization process. Successful commercialization requires balancing the economic benefits with artistic integrity, and musicians must find a balance between pursuing their passion and making a livelihood from their art while considering the potential consequences of commercialization.

5.3 Key Findings

The key findings and thus, answers to the research questions are presented in this chapter.

Overall, the discovery was consistent with previous research while no vast contradictions between primary and secondary data were established. The most

substantial distinction was detected in the skill of self-initiated education which the participants found especially important compared to no mentioning of it in literature data, whereas the participated did not find the amount of recognition or awards as significant a sign of commercial success as the literature suggested it to be.

To answer the three research questions which were seeking comprehension to the questions about the current definition of success and commercialization in the Finnish music industry, the role of artists' business skills in commercialization, and the key factors to commercial success, the results have been summed up to the following.

The commercialization of rap music in Finland is defined by a combination of at least nine separate factors, including authenticity of artists, meaningful lyrics, engaging live performances, and effective marketing in correct channels (Robinson 2011), quality of music, developing competence and updating skills and knowledge by self-education. It is also defined as turning music into a commodity for financial gain by promoting, distributing, and marketing music with the aim of making a profit (Frith 1988), and measured by chart performance, and recognition and awards (Music Finland 2012). The level of commercial success in turn, is defined by how much the music has resonated with three elements, a large audience, generated significant revenue, and impacted culture (Negus 2002).

As important business skills that contribute to commercial success, seven main skills were identified; personal traits and skills such as self-management, communication, courage, open-mindedness, and perseverance, along with having a loyal and competent team around the artist. The research shows the role of artists' business skills to be even more essential to the artists than the industry professionals would emphasize.

The key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland were proven in conclusion to be a combination of authenticity meaningful lyrics, engaging live performances, effective marketing, and artists' personal set of business skills. While chart performance, sales figures, critical reception, and

awards and recognition are used to assess commercial success, a strong understanding of the business side of the music industry is also crucial.

5.4 Usability and Ethics

The previous chapter presented the key findings of the research on the successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. This chapter aims to discuss the usability of these results for stakeholders and how they can achieve their research objectives effectively, efficiently, and with satisfaction.

The results of this study can be used by various stakeholders involved in the Finnish music industry. They can utilize the findings to understand the key factors and skills necessary for the successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. This practical and specific information can help them develop and implement effective strategies to promote and market their music, create engaging live performances, and generate significant revenue.

For example, artists can use the information on the importance of personal business skills, such as self-management, communication, courage, open-mindedness, and perseverance, to develop their skills in these areas. They can also use the knowledge of the factors that contribute to commercial success to focus on authenticity, to creating a clear, quality brand, effective social media marketing, to making music that resonates with a large audience. Managers, record labels, and marketers can utilize the findings on the key factors of successful commercialization to develop and implement effective promotional strategies. They can also use the knowledge of the importance of personal business skills to identify and support artists who possess these skills. This can lead to a more successful commercialization process and a higher level of satisfaction for all stakeholders involved. Event organizers can use the information on the importance of engaging live performances to create events that showcase the talents of rap artists and attract a large audience. This can also help increase revenue and promote the Finnish music industry as a whole.

Furthermore, the usability of the results for stakeholders can contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the commercialization process. By understanding the key factors and skills necessary for successful commercialization,

stakeholders can develop and implement strategies that are especially tailored to the specific needs and strengths of the artists they work with. This can lead to a more structured and effective commercialization process, which can ultimately result in higher levels of satisfaction and sense of accomplishment for all stakeholders involved.

Next, the ethical considerations involved in this research. During the research process, ethics were taken into account to ensure the well-being of the participants and the accuracy of the data collected. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews, and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were ensured. The participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions they had before the interview and the participants were fully informed of the research purpose and procedures, and they were not misled in any way. The participants' names were not included in any reports or publications, and their responses were kept confidential. The data was stored on a password-protected computer, and only the researcher had access to the data.

Moreover, ethical considerations were taken into account when analyzing the data and presenting the findings to ensure that the participants were not misrepresented.

5.5 Topics for Further Research Development

While insight into the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland has been provided, there are several areas for further research development that could enhance the understanding of this phenomenon. In this chapter, potential topics for future research that build on the findings of the present study were examined.

The research found that authenticity is one of the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. However, further research is needed to understand the mechanisms by which authenticity contributes to commercial success. For example, is it the unique sound of an artist that attracts fans, or is it the artist's personal story that resonates with the audience? Further research

could also explore whether the role of authenticity varies depending on the genre of music.

The findings also show that effective marketing is one of the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. Further research is needed to understand the specific marketing strategies that are most effective in promoting rap music. For example, does social media advertising or traditional advertising work better in promoting rap music? The effectiveness of different marketing channels in different cultures and locations could also be explored.

The grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data. While the research discovered the seven key business skills that contribute to commercial success, there may be other factors that could be added to the grounded theory model. Further research could re-evaluate the grounded theory model used in the present study and expand it to include other factors that may be important in the commercialization of rap music.

The study focused on the commercialization of rap artists in Finland. Yet, further research could test the grounded theory model in a different context or culture to see if the factors identified in this study hold true in other settings. For example, does the importance of authenticity and personal business skills vary in different countries or regions? The cultural factors that impact the commercialization of rap music could be further studied.

Additionally, the research did not examine any further impact of the structure of the Finnish music industry on the commercial success of rap artists. Further research could investigate how the structure of the music industry impacts the ability of rap artists to commercialize their music. For example, are there barriers to entry for rap artists in the Finnish music industry? Does the structure of the industry favor certain types of music over others?

The research also did not specifically address the impact of streaming services on the commercial success of rap artists in Finland. The impact of streaming services on the opportunities and challenges of rap artists to commercialize their music could be further investigated. For example, how does the revenue generated from streaming services compare to other revenue streams for rap

artists? Does the use of streaming services impact the marketing strategies used by rap artists?

After all, the key factors are only a beginning. Further research is needed to build on these findings and enhance our understanding of this phenomenon. The potential topics for further research development outlined in this study provided a starting point for future studies that could contribute to this theory.

6 CONCLUSION

This research aimed to identify the key factors in successful commercialization of rap artists in Finland. Based on qualitative analysis in commercial success of rap artists, role of business skills and the current definition of commercial success it can be concluded that there are clear key factors where literature and experience combine, and a theory could be formulated.

The results indicate that potential factors are more extensive than what is recognized in the literature and in the Finnish music industry currently – factors such as personal growth, constant learning and thinking of art as a product were emphasized by the rap artists.

This research clearly illustrates that factors of rap artists' commercial success are mainly based on the broadness of audience, amount of profit, authenticity and quality of the music and the artist as well as the volume of marketing especially in social media, but it also raises the question of how to balance business and art while trying to keep art personal and popular at the same time in the current climate of popular music and music consumption.

This research helped to solve the problem of measuring musical success only in numbers – success is certainly determined in a more broad-range way than solely the amount of money or social media followers an artist has. By being authentic, as suggested in the research, success may be achieved in creating music that resonates with both the artist and their audience as assumed in the beginning. The crucial gap in knowledge, the input of an artist and the opportunity for artists to personally influence their own commercial success, was reconciled with fulfilling information from secondary data which stated that artist's personal competence, knowledge and staying up-to-date in trends have much to do with commercial success. It is not random at all.

The findings of this thesis research confirm the initial assumption that success in music and factors in successful commercialization are consist of more than just numbers. However and more importantly, there is now a theory and practical knowledge for the stakeholders to use on their own artist or professional journey.

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APPENDICES

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HAASTATELUKYSYMYKSET

MÄÄRITELMÄ: KAUPALLISTUMINEN MENESTYS MUSA-ALALLA SUOMESSA

1. Mitä ymmärrät termillä: rap-artistin kaupallistuminen Suomessa?
2. Voitko kuvailla sinun kokemustasi musiikkisi kaupallistamisesta?
3. Mitkä asiat ovat mielestäsi vaikuttaneet menestykseesi musa-alalla?

HAASTEET KAUPALLISTUMISESSA

4. Mitä haasteita olet kohdannut musiikkisi kaupallistamisessa Suomessa?
5. Miten olet taklannut nämä kohtaamasi haasteet?

HENKILÖKOHTAISET BISNESTAI DOT, JOTKA OVAT VAIKUTTAVAT KAUPALLISTUMISEEN MENESTYKSEEN

6. Mitä tulee mieleen kun puhutaan bisnestaidoista?
7. Mitkä bisnestaidot on sinun mielestä tärkeitä artistille, jos miettii kaupallistumista?
8. Miten oot hankkinut näitä taitoja – onko tietoa saatavilla?
9. Mitä bisnestaitoja arvelet puuttuneen, joista olisit hyötynyt kaupallistaessa musaasi?
10. Minkä bisnestaitojen uskot olevan tulevaisuudessa tärkeitä rap-artistille, jotka pyrkivät menestymään kaupallisesti?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

DEFINITION: COMMERCIAL SUCCESS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IN FINLAND

1. What do you understand by the term: commercialization of a rap artist in Finland?
2. Can you describe your experience with commercializing your music?
3. What things do you think have influenced your success in the music industry?

CHALLENGES IN COMMERCIALIZATION

4. What challenges have you faced in commercializing your music in Finland?
5. How have you tackled these challenges you faced?

PERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS THAT INFLUENCE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

6. What comes to mind when you talk about business skills?
7. What business skills do you think are important for an artist if they are striving for commercial success?
8. How did you acquire these skills – is information available?
9. What business skills do you think you lacked that you would have benefited from when commercializing your music?
10. What business skills do you think will be important in the future for rap artists who aspire to be commercially successful?

APPENDIX 1. The interview Questions.

List of Most Frequent Codes

- **Category: Factors (110)**

- Color codes: ■ authenticity (3) ■ knowledge, trends (10) ■ personal traits and skills (35) ■ people around (5) ■ abstract features (11) ■ social media, promotion, visibility (15) ■ publishing music (7) ■ business, companies (4) ■ rap (5) ■ quality of music (15)

- Authenticity
 - Having studied the industry
 - Being a fan of music
 - Growth
 - Skilled people
 - Better product
 - Idea & vision
 - Having people around
 - Good photographers and producers
 - Credibility
 - Top-notch people
 - Credibility reflects authenticity
 - How one treats and interacts with people
 - Being good to work with
 - Being trustworthy
 - Being present and seen all over
 - Actively seeking new knowledge
 - Being present and up-to-date at all times
 - Being authentic
 - Making the most noise about oneself
 - Publishing as much music as possible
 - Knowing how to manage social media channels
 - Being interesting enough
 - Right place, right time
 - Years of work
 - Having momentum
 - New fresh sound
 - Quality music
 - Overall high-quality product, meaning the brand
 - Music videos
 - Promotional photography for social media
 - Being stylish
 - High-quality
 - Giving good interviews which increase added value to brand
 - Having an eye for the game
 - Staying on top of trends
 - Support oneself with music
 - Visibility
 - Commercial groups, such as Spotify
 - Record labels
 - Observing surroundings
 - Being trendy
 - Being interesting
 - Being on top of trends
 - Big features on songs
 - Doing research
 - Open-mindedness
 - Softening own thoughts and opinions
 - Having the right people around
 - Relying on other people
 - Having perspective
 - Visually
 - Investing in work
 - Appearance of artist
 - What artist represents
 - Being a ground breaker
 - Establishing different looking people can rap
 - What sells
- Quality product
 - Competitive product
 - Good music
 - High-quality exterior
 - Interesting speeches
 - Having opinions
 - Looking cute
 - Having a story, which pulls the audience close
 - Being liked
 - External factors
 - Rap music globally
 - The emergence of rap music
 - Rap being the most listened genre in the world
 - Rap being the most popular genre in the world
 - Instinct / intuition / hunch
 - Simply a good product
 - Good music
 - Quality music
 - Being silent instead of boosting to social media creates a powerful aura
 - Only quality products
 - Quality product
 - Believing in your product
 - Being musically talented
 - Quality product
 - Being self-sufficient
 - Having a solid foundation
 - Having respect
 - Timeless long-lasting songs enable a good career & offer replay value for the following years
 - An interesting catalogue
 - Interesting even after years
 - Keeping music at the center
 - Initial priority to make music
 - Quality of music
 - Longevity
 - Farsightedness
 - Publishing a lot of music
 - Continuity
 - Tik Tok
 - Viral hits
 - New song according to trend
 - Self-marketing
 - Constantly presenting oneself
 - Continuity
 - Social media
 - Seizing opportunities
 - Enjoying making music
 - Well-made music
 - Keeping music in the center
 - Promotion in the center
 - Publishing music
 - Pursuing growth gradually instead of avoiding quick profits

APPENDIX 2. Frequent Codes: Factors. (Maxqda, 2023)

• **Category: Business Skills (148)**

- Color codes: detecting good products, investing (12) people around (23) art vs. business skills (7) education, learning (18)
- record label (6) initiative learning (19) social media, trends, visibility (16)
- sales skills (2) marketing, promotion, brand skills (12) self-management (18) bureaucracy (2) personal traits (13)

- o Detect the correct product
- o Join good products
- b Investing
- o Detect which product may profit
- o Trace good products
- b Investing
- b Business person
- o Educated
- o Artist should focus on the art
- o Friends with business knowledge
- o Having a good team around
- b Artist doesn't have to possess business skills
- o Getting help
- b Money
- o Collaborations
- o Record deals
- o Smart friends
- o Having smart people around
- o Friends help
- o Important for artist to have a good team around
- b Someone else commercializes the product
- o Artist brings the product to the table
- b Artist doesn't need business skills
- o Having people around
- o Loyal people around
- b Win-win situation between artist and record label
- o Do-it-yourself artists
- o Learning from the big artists
- b Establishing own record label
- o Learning finance
- b Mutual benefit for artist and record label
- o Natural instead of business
- o Learning through mistakes
- o Trying to learn all the time
- o Constant changes of the industry
- o Artist must keep up with change
- o Promoting
- o Performing
- b Record label taught about the importance of time of publication
- b Sensing
- o Learning
- b Growing
- b Amount of work
- b Goals
- b Instinct
- b Intuition
- o Right solutions for business
- o Getting involved and out of the right things
- b Artist affords to leave out of deals if the product is simply good
- o Trends
- o Updating social media
- o Posting stories and photos to social media
- o Marketing
- o People around artist
- o Colleagues
- o Mentors
- o Watching
- o Discussing
- o Learning
- o Following
- o Learning
- o Interviews of successful people
- o Reading articles
- o Reading news
- o Finding information
- o Detecting the steps that lead successful people to success and failure
- o Following example career paths
- o Comparing own career to successful careers
- o Learning from role models
- o Skill of attentively gathering information
- o Learn from people around
- b Most skills come from the internet at home
- b Detect the correct product
- o Join good products
- o Referencing what music videos, promotional photography, album covers should look like
- o What music should sound like
- o Reading artist biographies
- o Listening to artist interviews
- o Watching documentaries
- o Gathering every possible piece of information
- o Following the career paths of role models
- o Following what other Finnish artists do
- o Constant gathering of information
- o Updating knowledge constantly
- o Constant change of times and things
- o Constant change of trends
- o Constant change of people's behavior
- o Constant change of the industry
- b Conscious, smarter actions
- o Updating information
- b Instinct
- b Sales skills
- o Social media skills
- o Self-promoting skills
- o Challenging oneself
- o Managing outside of comfort zone
- o Communication skills
- o Courage to contact and meet people
- o Open-mindedness
- o Opportunities
- o Open-mindedness
- o Bureaucracy skills
- o Knowledge about bureaucracy
- o Knowing how to ask help
- o Calmness
- o Patience
- o Building
- o Slowing down
- o Elbow tactics
- o Schools
- o Courses
- o Lawyers
- o Copyright unions
- o Record deal
- o Lawyer
- b Initiative
- o Social media skills
- o Tik tok
- o Marketing of music
- o Getting visibility through tik tok
- o Record labels focus more on creating content than music
- o YouTube was the channel for visibility before tik tok
- o Visibility
- o Self-marketing
- o Taking advantage of bad publicity
- b Thanking after a performance
- o Watching what other artists do
- o Following personal role models
- o Working well with people
- b Being able to trust
- b Mutual benefit
- o There is information if one is to seek
- o Asking lawyers for help
- o Asking friends for help
- o Asking other artists
- b Perseverance
- b Planning beyond one month
- b Thinking of own career as commercial
- o Understanding audience expectations
- o Matching audience expectations
- b Perseverance
- b Thinking beyond the next album
- o Branding
- b Pace of publishing
- o Listening to music

APPENDIX 3. Frequent Codes: Business Skills. (Maxqqda, 2023)

Category: Challenges in Commercialization (26)

- Color codes: ■ long, hard work (2) ■ disappointments (3) ■ business (9) ■ art (3) ■ mood (2) ■ self-doubt (3) ■ streaming services (1) ■ perception (3)

- Working on projects for years and years
- Wondering how the project could have been better
- Losing focus
- Sometimes artist does not want to make the best-selling product
- Sometimes artist just wants to make art
- Hard to stay focused on the business all the time
- If artist only focuses on the art, the product may not sell as well
- Hard to try to do better all the time
- Bad mood
- Hard moments
- Disappointment
- Without disappointment there wouldn't be such a strong will to push as hard
- At some point even the second most listened song of the year feels like a disappointment too
- Keeping artist's own sound
- Sticking to artist's values may prolong the takeoff of the career
- Prejudice
- Relatability
- Looking different
- Clearing the way for other artists
- Seeing songs as products
- Thinking of commercializing
- Seeing songs as a sales article
- Seeing the work as a product that can be turned into money
- Streaming services scheduling the birth of art
- Limited competence of artist

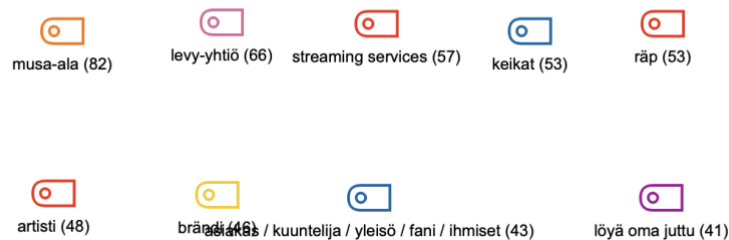
APPENDIX 4. Frequent Codes: Challenges. (Maxqda, 2023)

Code Co-occurrence Model (Code Proximity)

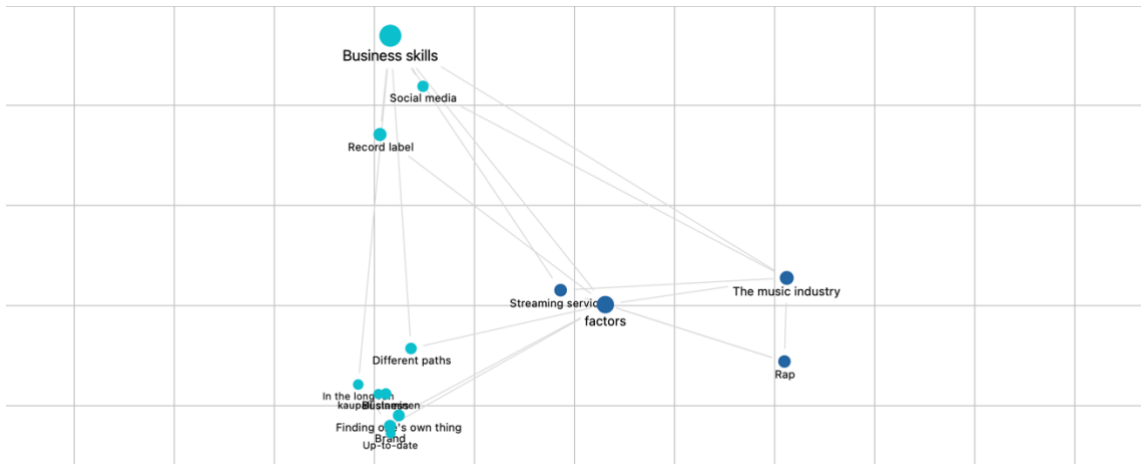
The Most Codes



Next Most Codes



APPENDIX 5. Code Co-Occurrence Model: Proximity. (Maxqda, 2023)



APPENDIX 6

Code Map: Overlap. (Maxqda, 2023)