

# **Marketing of the Official Music Charts in the Nordic Countries**

**How social media could improve the marketing of the  
charts?**

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Abstract  <p>The official music charts in Nordic countries produce accurate data weekly and annually of music sales nationally. The data charts produce is important to the labels and the music industry in general. For example, the charts give information of the state of the industry. For the public the charts show how trends change and what is at the moment the most popular music.</p> <p>The purpose of this work was to examine how social media could help to improve the marketing of the official music charts in the following countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The objectives were to find out if the countries had created clear strategies for social media channels used in each country and how they had implemented the possible strategies or plans created. Another objective was to consider the differences between the countries in order to find out what could be implemented in other countries, too.</p> <p>The study was qualitative case study that utilized mixed methods for data collection like a semi-structured interview, which had four participants. The interview was held in Helsinki on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016. In addition, the social media channels used by the countries to market the charts were observed for a two-month period from June to July.</p> <p>The study revealed that the countries had not created any strategies for the social media. Moreover, the social media presence of the charts was low. The greatest problem for the marketing of the charts was deemed to be resources, for example, lack of time, personnel and missing sponsors/partnerships. In conclusion, a written strategy for the social media would be a solution for improving the marketing and the social media presence of the charts.</p>		
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Työn nimi <b>Virallisten listojen markkinointi pohjoismaissa</b> Kuinka sosiaalinen media voisi parantaa listojen markkinointia?		
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Tiivistelmä  Pohjoismaissa viralliset listat tuottavat tarkkaa dataa viikoittain että vuosittain myydyimmistä äänitteistä maittain. Listojen tuottama data on yleisesti tärkeää sekä yhtiöille että koko musiikkiteollisuudelle, esim. Listat antavat tietoa musiikkiteollisuuden sen hetkisestä tilasta. Yleisölle listat näyttävät kuinka trendit muuttuvat ja mikä on juuri sillä hetkellä myydyintä musiikkia.  Tarkoitus oli tutkia kuinka sosiaalinen media voisi auttaa parantamaan virallisten listojen markkinointia Suomessa, Ruotsissa, Norjassa ja Tanskassa. Tavoitteina oli tutkia, ovatko maat luoneet selviä strategioita sosiaalisen median kanaville ja tutkia miten maat ovat toteuttaneet mahdolliset strategiat. Yhtenä tavoitteena oli myös verrata eroavaisuuksia sosiaalisen median markkinoinnissa maiden välillä, ja tutkia mitä voitaisiin hyödyntää muissa maissa.  Tutkimus toteutettiin luomalla haastattelu, jossa oli neljä osallistujaa. Haastattelu toteutettiin 26.5.2016 Helsingissä. Yhtenä tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin myös havainnointia, jonka kohteena olivat sosiaalisen median kanavat, joita eri maat käyttävät. Havainnointi toteutettiin kesä-heinäkuun aikana.  Tutkimus paljasti, etteivät tutkitut maat olleet luoneet suunnitelmia sosiaalista mediaa varten ja että sosiaalisen median näkyvyys oli heikkoa kaikissa maissa. Suurimmaksi ongelmaksi paljastuivat puutteet resursseissa mm. ajan, henkilöstön ja sponsoreiden suhteen. Tuloksien perusteella kirjallisen strategian luonti sosiaalista mediaa varten voisi olla ratkaisu, joka parantaisi virallisten listojen markkinointia ja sosiaalisen median näkyvyyttä.		
Avainsanat ( <a href="#">asiasanat</a> ) Musiikkilistat, sosiaalinen media, markkinointi strategia		
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## Content

1	Introduction .....	2
2	Strategic Social Media Marketing & Branding .....	4
2.1	Definitions .....	4
2.2	Social Media Strategy .....	7
2.3	Co-branding & Co-marketing .....	10
3	Methodology.....	12
3.1	Research Question.....	12
3.2	Objectives .....	13
3.3	Methods .....	13
4	Research results .....	18
4.1	Interview.....	18
4.2	Observation .....	20
5	Discussion.....	22
6	Conclusion .....	26
	References .....	27
	Appendices.....	31

# 1 Introduction

The purpose of the official music charts is to monitor the music sales of a nation and to produce accurate data for the public, labels and the industry in general on a weekly basis. The charts will also produce important data for the annual statistics gathered based on the music sales of the year. The official music charts are formed by IFPI – the International Federation of Phonographic Industry in the following countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. As a global organization, IFPI aims to secure the operating conditions of the music industry worldwide by monitoring and developing legislation in order for music producers to have sufficient legal protection and to be able to compete freely in the traditional markets and in the new digital environment (ifpi.fi). Each of the countries gather different charts based on the sales of their country.

The earlier studies on the official music charts has focused more on the formation and development of the charts in different countries. For example, such topics as chart positioning and popular music in different decades (Achterberg, Heilbron, Houtman, Aupers 2011) and how digitalization/file sharing has affected the music charts (Bhattacharjee, Gopal, Lertwachara, Marsden, Telang 2007) have been widely researched in many countries. The purpose of this study was to find out whether the marketing of the official charts had been implemented successfully. In case it was not, the aim was to examine why and how it could have been done differently in order to reach the desired outcomes.

The Official charts have existed for quite a while now and they have been delivering information to the public in different ways. The official music charts can be seen as services that offer valuable information not only for the public but also for the labels and the artists. The public will receive information about what music is currently the most popular nationally. Digitalization has become an important part of all

businesses in the way they work, communicate and connect with their audiences through various social media networking channels, such as, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, WordPress and Instagram. The list of the social media is growing all the time, due to the fact that new and faster ways of sharing content all over the world are developed by the professionals.

In this study, the focus was on the strategies and theories concerning social media marketing. There were two main reasons for this. The first reason was that the study was assigned by the Musiikituottajat – IFPI Finland ry which utilizes the social media to implement a zero budget marketing strategy in marketing the Official Charts of Finland. The second reason was the digital change that has pushed the customers/target audiences to the social media for quick information and for the opportunity to interact with each other. The principles of marketing have stayed the same, but the range of tools used has grown exponentially within the past few years.

Due to the nature of the study, it was implemented by using qualitative research methods, in other words, by observing and analysing the social networking sites used by the official music charts in each country. The thesis process also included a semi-structured interview that was aimed at the personnel forming, publishing and marketing the charts in the researched countries. The aim of this thesis was also to reveal whether there were clearly developed strategies that had been implemented by the countries and whether there was a way to improve the marketing with the social media.

## 2 Strategic Social Media Marketing & Branding

Changes in technologies and especially in the digital area have transformed the ways in which marketing tries to reach and engage the target audiences and communicate to them about the value created for the services/products. The old traditional tools of marketing (for example, television and magazines) have not disappeared, but the understanding of the new technology and the possibilities that the new interactive media have opened for the marketers is vital. Interactive media have made it possible to engage and interact with users in a way that requires the users' inputs (Investopedia). These interactive media, such as social networking sites, are discussed below with the marketing perspective.

The development of Web 2.0 (World Wide Web) has transformed one-way-communication into two-way-communication. This has also given people the freedom to connect with each other on the Web. In other words, the spark for the social media came from the development of Web 2.0. This gave an opportunity to multiple networking channels to develop. Suddenly, people were able to discuss with others from their home computers, which then later on spread to mobile devices. Now in 2016, nearly 80% of the time people use on social media is used on mobile applications (Sterling 2016). Moreover, from the marketing perspective, the developments in the interactive media have changed the way marketing professionals communicate and engage with their audiences by opening straight access to customers and their opinions (Smith & Zook 2011).

### 2.1 Definitions

The actual definition of the social media by Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen (2012) is *"a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content."* The definition of social networking in the same book is *"the*

*grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighbourhood subdivision, mostly carried out, in its most popular form, online.”*

(Kotler et al. 2012). On social media and the networking channels, the users are able to connect, share and discuss their interests with like-minded people all around the world (Barefoot & Szabo 2010).

Even though, the social media have changed the ways marketers communicate and engage with customers, the core ideas of marketing have not changed radically over the past years. However, the tools used in marketing have expanded in during the last few years. Especially the social media as a marketing tool have become one of the most widely-used in marketing among industries. The leading social networks have been ranked every year based on the active accounts. Facebook is the biggest of the networking sites, but there are also other popular sites, such as: Twitter, Whatsapp, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn (Statista 2016).

Before defining what social media marketing is, the term marketing should be defined. Philip Kotler (2013) defines marketing as follows: *“Marketing is the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit.”*

He has also stated the most important concepts of marketing to be *“segmentation, targeting, positioning, needs, wants, demand, offerings, brands, value and satisfaction, exchange, transactions, relationships and networks, marketing channels, supply chain, competition, the marketing environment, and marketing programs.”* (Kotler, 2003). In other words, marketing aims to create value to both services/products and the company in the eyes of the target audiences. Simultaneously, it also responds to the needs and wants of the target audiences.

Now that both social media and marketing have been defined as two separate entities, the focus should turn to social media marketing. At its core social media marketing means promoting products or companies on social media channels. Social media marketing can be seen as part of the electronic word of mouth marketing, which is



better known as viral marketing (Barefoot & Szabo 2010). Since the nature of social media is enabling people to connect with like-minded people and to share user-generated content, it is also vital to understand what viral marketing actually means. Viral marketing is a holistic commercial approach by a company aiming to create positive conversations among the customers about products, brands or services. Due to its cheap nature and ability to reach millions of people fast, viral marketing has made it one of the most effective social media marketing methods among the marketers (Wilde 2014). Simply put, it is about people discussing and sharing their opinions about products or services that they have tried with others.

However, since social media have become marketing tool used daily by the marketers and customers, it is important for every marketer to understand how to harness the social media. If one does not understand the fundamentals of the tools, then those cannot be used to their full potential. For example, using such online applications as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Wordpress, Reddit and LinkedIn in marketing, can expand the marketing to a totally new level by reaching and engaging the target groups while maintaining relationships with them. (CIRP 2016.)

The social media channels mentioned in the above paragraph are all based on user-generated content. The user-generated content has given freedom to the users of these channels to publish what they want. The content has become increasingly important when considering the social media marketing. Social networking sites have become a place where people share their opinions, reviews, videos with their closest friends, family and even strangers. The content has always played a big role in the marketing, but now it has increased its popularity since creating just mental images is not sufficient. For example, sharing interesting articles similar to the content of a certain page attracts more attention to the page. Content marketing is defined as follows by the Content Marketing Institute: *“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”* When understanding the target audience, it is easier to

understand what kind of content they want to see on their social media feeds. Since the focus is on the music industry and the charts, assumptions can be made that the target groups are interested in music-related content and the news that are fresh on the field.

## **2.2 Social Media Strategy**

Strategy is often seen as an outcome-oriented process that sets specific objectives and goals for the marketing personnel. Nevertheless, it is a plan that

*“integrates an organization’s major goals, policies, decisions and sequences of action into a cohesive whole. It can apply at all levels in an organization and pertain to any of the functional areas of management. Thus there may be production, financial, marketing, personnel and corporate strategies, just to name a few. If we look specifically at marketing then there may be pricing, product, promotion, distribution, marketing research, sales, advertising, merchandising, etc. strategies. Strategy is concerned with effectiveness rather than efficiency and is the process of analysing the environment and designing the fit between the organization, its resources and objectives and the environment.” (Proctor 2016.)*

However, as noted in the above citation, a marketing strategy should always be a part of the overall strategy of a business. A marketing strategy supports the main strategy even if it has its own objectives and goals to reach. The strategy should be seen in a bigger picture. A social media strategy is a key element to understanding the social media activities that a company are engaged in. It also helps to manage social media presence. Understanding the need for a social media strategy is important.

The nature of social media is that they are constantly changing, new channels are developed, new users appear, and the ways in which people use social media channels change all the time. Creating a social media strategy will help to concentrate and focus the marketing efforts on the right channels. In the end, the strategy will provide plenty of information about how active the social media channels are at the

moment and how they should be. In the beginning, social media were created for people for connecting with each other and staying in touch with friends and relatives. However, social media have transformed into a simultaneous flow of information and communication, offering, for example, real life news and connecting people. For a marketer it has meant great possibilities to reach and engage with the customers. A marketer may reach audiences by communicating and sharing relevant content that the customers find appealing and interesting. The social media also give the possibility to manage the brand image and monitor what is discussed online. According to Schaffer, there are certain elements, which a social media strategy should include: branding, content, curation, channels, frequency, engagement, listening, campaigns, influences and crisis management (Schaffer 2013). In other words, the strategy should have clear brand guidelines that are implemented online and state what kind of content should be shared on the channels. Curating the channels by overseeing what is written on social media helps to understand the target audiences better.

It also shows what channels are the most convenient to use and how to reach more people. Regarding frequency, having a timetable or a plan on how often something is posted on the channels can help keeping the channels active. In addition, they are kept active by creating appealing campaigns that encourage people to connect and to engage to them.

In addition, there are other ways to implement zero-budget marketing, for example, by having weekly e-mail newsletters considering the charts. (Kalb 1996). In Finland, implementing zero-budget marketing has been utilized greatly by creating social media campaigns in order to engage the target audiences to the labels which have provided materials, such as, new albums as prizes for online campaigns. The campaigns have aimed at making the target audiences spread the word and reach their connections that are interested in the same issues as the target audience. Moreover, e-mail based newsletters are sent to the media in order to create visibility to the charts.

For the marketing strategies of official charts and any other marketing strategy, it is important to define the target audiences properly. The challenge for the target audiences of music charts is that the range is wide. There is no single group that is interested in a certain music style, and, therefore, the diversity of the target audiences is great. Understanding and being able to set oneself into the position of the target groups is vital to any organization, profitable or not. The charts are like living organisms, they do not stay exactly the same all the time. Instead, every week there are small and sometimes even major changes in chart positions, such as number one of the week. More accurate information about the charts can be found on the website of IFPI Finland ry ([www.ifpi.fi](http://www.ifpi.fi)).

These changes should also be considered in marketing and to whom the marketing is targeted at, also taking into account what kind of campaigns are launched. For instance, if a metal band is number one of the week, it means there should be a completely different set of views when publishing it, but still remaining loyal to the brand image. When thinking from the perspective of music charts or any business, it is vital to find the target groups that are willing to engage in the conversation with the company. In addition, conducting market research that is up-to-date with the latest trends of the music industry, is a major advantage in gaining new people to the target audiences since there is a link between trends and charts. When the target audience and their behaviour is understood, it is the marketers' turn to decide which tools to use to reach them best. This is when the following aspects should be considered: what kind of content, how, what, when and where and to whom to communicate. (Kotler et. al. 2012).

Nowadays most of the social networking sites give the possibility for marketers to monitor their actions on the pages and to ease recognising the different target groups that are active and create traffic to the sites. For example, in the Facebook statistics of the Official Charts of Finland, the marketers can monitor their pages' statistics. For example, it is possible to find the target groups and find information on how many people and how many likes certain posts have reached, how many have engaged with the posts and page (Facebook, Help Center, 2016). Twitter also

includes these features. It helps the marketer to see analytics providing information on audience behaviour and, in particular, it helps them to see what works within their target audience. Following these statistics gives the marketers possibilities to understand their target audiences far better.

### **2.3 Co-branding & Co-marketing**

*“A brand is an intangible, legally protectable, valuable asset. It is how a company or product is perceived by customers (or target audience). It is the image, associations and inherent value customers put on your product and services.”* (Smith & Zook, 2011).

The above quote highlights why branding should be part of any marketing strategy even in the marketing of music charts. Branding is not the easiest part of marketing, and it can take years to create a solid brand for a service or a company. However, in some cases it can be developed quickly. In an article, Basics of Branding by John Williams (Entrepreneur 2005), it is stated that the foundation for the brand is a logo, websites, promotional material, packing and much more. *“A successful is an identified product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique, sustained added value that matches their needs most closely.”* (Kotler et al. 2012). However, these must be visually consistent with each other to create connotations in the minds of the target audiences when they hear, see or read about the certain services/products.

Williams (2005) explains that a brand strategy is *“how, what, where, when and to whom you plan on communicating and delivering on your brand messages. Where you advertise is part of your brand strategy. Your distribution channels are also part of your brand strategy.”* Branding is everywhere, for example, in the language used in the update of the services' Facebook pages, e-mails sent and customer services. The image that is given from inside to outside matters in the eyes of the target audiences.

However, co-branding and co-marketing should be considered when working with the charts. These terms are easily mixed with each other, but they are, actually, completely different. Co-branding as a term means two brands combining their competencies and reputations in order to create a new service or a product. Co-branding has also proven to raise consumer awareness of the brands, quality of the brands, brand equity and the attitudes towards the brands. (Singh, Kalafatis, Ledden 2014) Co-marketing, on the other hand, as a term means promotional collaboration between two brands. In other words, both brands promote a service or a product for each other and in the end share the results of the cooperation. (Sibley 2016).

Thinking of co-marketing and co-branding from the strategic perspective, the terms defined on above paragraph, fit the co-operations between labels and the charts and, of course, between commercial radios and the charts. The co-operations are beneficial for both parties, but the major benefits come to the charts. Co-operation with the major labels can be seen as co-marketing. The labels already have steady existing foundations in the eyes of their target audiences. Promoting the number one album of the week through the labels' and artists' networks widens the network for the official music charts so that they can reach new target audiences and gain more visibility to the charts. Co-marketing, however, should work both ways, and, considering this, the official charts offer the title of "number one" to the most sold album of the week creating credibility to the artist or band in the eyes of the target audiences at the same time. The title "number one" should be seen as a highly appreciated achievement, and marketing personnel should pay attention to the branding of the charts in order to create appreciated value.

Since co-branding is about creating something new with two brands, the co-operation between commercial radios can be seen as part of it. The commercial radios can produce radio programs based on the official charts that are offered to them. In a way, this creates a new service offered for the public.

This co-operation not only gives a major advantage in marketing the official charts by

giving a visibility and credibility to the charts, but also by being played on the commercial radio stations that already have established brands in the country. In addition, this co-operation offers the radios the possibility to create programs that shows what actually is the most popular music in the country on a weekly basis. Both of these co-operations are about giving and receiving.

### **3 Methodology**

The purpose of the paper was to research how marketing of the Official Charts could be improved by using social media marketing. The focus was on the Nordic countries, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. All of the countries do have social media accounts for the official charts, but they are not used to their full potential from the point of view of marketing. There is a recognized need for research with a special focus on the actual marketing operations and on how to improve the social media marketing in order to raise the value and visibility of the official charts in each country.

#### **3.1 Research Question**

The key question to which this study aimed to answer was how social media could help to improve the marketing of the charts? The sub-questions that aimed to help to answer the above question were:

1. Is there a clear strategy for the social media marketing of the official charts in each country?
2. How has social media marketing been implemented in each country for the official charts?

These research questions answered to the need to know what had been done, and they also revealed the weaknesses that should have been taken into consideration

while working with social media and the charts. These helped to find out how to improve from the current state.

### **3.2 Objectives**

Objectives for this study were to find out how the marketing is implemented in each of the countries this thesis considers. It also collected qualitative data from primary sources of the countries, this included conducting an interview which was answered by five participants working for IFPI in each of the researched country. They are specialized in marketing, promotion and communications in their profession. In addition, thesis analysed the social media pages used by the countries.

One goal was also to consider the differences of the possible strategies between the countries and how functional those have been in each country. Also to figure out whether the tools and methods used in the other countries in the marketing the charts could be included in the marketing done in Finland.

These objectives helped to answer the research questions in order to figure out the stage of the marketing in a wider scale of the charts.

### **3.3 Methods**

The study used qualitative methods to find out how the marketing of official charts had been implemented and what could be done in order to improve the current state. This study was in its' core a qualitative case study.

Qualitative research is usually seen as a study that deals with people, societies and is interested in understanding why and how people interpret the world and experiences they have in it. (Meririam 2014) Since the fundamental basis of qualitative research is to find out how something affects something or how something is implemented, it was logical to choose the qualitative research approach



for this thesis. This was to find out and to understand how the marketing actually had been implemented through social media, whether there were differences from country to country and what the were the opinions of the countries towards social media marketing. This also gave a basis for considering how it could be improved.

The study used mixed methods, which means that there were used more than just one qualitative research method to gain data. In the book, *Mixed Method Research: Merging Theory with Practice* (Hesse-Biber, Nagy. 2010) is defined five reasons to use mixed methods for a study: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion. Triangulation means using more than one research method to examine the research problem. This improves the credibility of the study's findings. Complementary, on the other hand, aims to give a better understanding to the researcher of the research problem and make results of research more clear. Development is about one method creating another method, for example statistics collected by a quantitative method can lead the reachers to create an qualitative method to help understand the researched problem. Initiation simply put means that there is a possibility, the research done raises more questions to be cleared out. This may also lead to a completely new research about the topic. In addition, expansion produce exact information of the research topic aiming to help the future studies. (Hesse-Biber, Nagy. 2010)

In this chapter is discussed the methods used in the data collection of this study and their reliability. Observing the social media channels was one way of researching the activities taken on the channels by the Nordic countries. In addition, an interview was conducted to learn more about whether they had applied an actual strategy or plan for the charts.

Due to the nature of the study focusing on social media marketing and the online platforms used by the countries to market the charts, observation was used in order to analyze and understand how the marketing had been implemented by each country on their social media channels. This research method goes under the name netnography which is one sector of ethnography that has developed from

anthropology. Netnography has been defined by Kozinets as follows: "*Ethnography conducted on the Internet; a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications*" (Kozinets 2006).

Netnography studies the communities that Internet users create by using the social networking sites. For observing these kinds of communities one should be part of them and, depending on the subject studied, take part in the conversations or be a passive observer. In other words, when anthropology studies groups and their behaviour in certain environments in real life, netnography studies the same but on the Internet (Kananen, 2014). The social media networking channels used to represent the music charts in each country can be seen as communities in which people interested in popular music gather information, share and have conversations about the music that is on the charts at that time. They also share information about their personal favourites while finding other people interested in the same music as they are.

What actually was studied and analysed of the social media pages were content, regularity of posting information and interacting with the target audiences, visual appearance and the integrity of the pages in case the country used more than just one social media tool in the marketing.

However, the observation method was problematic because of its' validity and reliability. The research was conducted under a short period of a time. The observation took place during June and July. It could have been recommended to have at least four months of observing the page in order to get more data to be analysed. The validity also suffered due to the ever-changing nature of social media and social networking sites. This is due to the fact that, they evolve based on the content created by the target audiences, developers of the pages, marketers and even the changes in the music charts.

These issues were taken into account and the study focused on the actions taken not

only during the observation months but also beyond them. It meant that the earlier activities of the pages were taken into consideration when analysing them according to their content, regularity and activity.

Another tool used for collecting qualitative data for this study was a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview is an open-ended interview, which is a lot similar to the unstructured interview. However, semi-structured interview does follow a list of questions written in advance but there is a freedom to decide how and in which order to ask the questions. For comparison, the structured interview follows tightly a set of questions asked in exact same order from all of the interviewees. This method is often used when there is only one chance to interview certain group of people or a person (H. Russell. 2011).

The interview provided primary data for the study, was targeted at people working with marketing, promotion and communication in relation to the charts under IFPI in the chosen countries. In the interview, participated five interviewees, Lisa Cronstedt (Head of Market & Communications at IFPI Sweden, Project Manager at Grammis), Pernille Møller Poulsen (Communication Consultant at IFPI Denmark), Roy Erland Funner (Project Manager at IFPI Norway) and Trude Løken (Promotion/Web at IFPI Norway) and Tommi Kyyrä (Deputy Director at IFPI Finland). The interview took place during a meeting held in Helsinki on 26.5.2016. The interview questions were sent to the participants beforehand to get familiar with. The interview gave a better look at where the charts stand in their countries and what has been done marketing wise with the charts.

Analysing the data from the interview was done using qualitative content analysis technique. In an article written by Shannon and Hsieh (2005), the qualitative content analysis is defined as a method to interpret text by process of classification of patterns, codes or themes. The data collected for this study through interview was first recorded and transcribed into a more readable form in order to be easier to analysed.

The next step was to create themes that then were analysed of the interview. The first theme was problems. This theme was to analyse what seemed to be the difficulties in each country faced in social media marketing of the charts. The second theme was opinions. This second theme was to analyse the thoughts of the interviewees towards social media strategies. The third theme was solution. Aimed to analyse the possible solution to the problems that the interviewees stated under the first theme.

Also qualitative content analysis was used on the observation of social media channels used by the countries. The themes used for this were: Regularity, content and visual appearance.

### **Scope**

The scope of the study was limited to the four (4) countries that were researched. The Official Music Charts are gathered and published all over the world based on the sales of the countries. The four countries were chosen due to interests of the IFPI Finland ry covering the nordic countries that are in the most significant role of publishing the music charts in the northern countries.

The study will focus on the social media marketing since it is the main focus in Finland. Each of the countries has been able to implement the marketing of the charts as they have wished and because of this, each of the countries needed to be analyzed separately.

### **Language of the research**

The study was done internationally among the countries that have different motherlanguages. The only possibility to keep the study reliable was to conduct the research in english which is used internationally in all of the mentioned countries.

## 4 Research results

### 4.1 Interview

It is obvious that the social media presence of the charts in each country has been poor for a quite long time. This is easily noticed when taking a look at the charts' social media pages of each country and the interview revealed the reasons for this.

One of the main research questions was whether the countries had created a strategies or plans for the social media marketing. The discussion revealed that the countries have not created any strategies for their social media marketing. The charts are published once a week and usually the social media pages like Facebook are updated according to it once a week. There is no goals or objectives for the social media or they have not given any guidelines for the labels or artists.

The interview also revealed that the countries do not have any sponsorship or partnership deals, which could provide income to the charts and maybe increase the marketing budget at the moment. According to the interviewees, they are looking for new ways to finance their charts and looking for new sponsorship and partnership deals. However, this also means that they need more reach, visibility and more value in order to get the possible sponsors to be interested in signing a deal. Poulsen thought that: "For us, we need to get the cash out for more people, to show the potential media coverage before we can have the actual conversation with the sponsorships because at the moment we don't have a lot of reach and we need to work on that before anyone would be interested..."

The lack of sponsors and partnerships also affects the marketing not only by not having money but also other resources. Sponsors means more channels to use and more people to do the social media marketing.

However, each of the countries has co-operations with local radio stations and the newspapers that play and publish the charts. Norway is the only one that co-operates with the biggest magazine in the country, VG magazine. VG publishes the charts on its' website and organizes a festival VG-Lista Topp 20 in Oslo and other bigger cities in Norway. This festival is organized under the brand image of the charts but has nothing but the name to do with the charts states Løken. In other countries, the charts are published on their websites or a specific website created only for the charts.

When asked what is the biggest issue concerning the marketing the charts on social media, the interviewees were unanimous about the fact it is the resources. Even though, there is plenty of interesting content and data concerning the charts that could be utilized, it is neglected. Also when asked whether it would be a good idea to share music industry related content on the charts' social media channels. All of the interviewees thought yes. There are plenty of content that could be used. However, this is because, there is no time to concentrate on creating a good plan how to use the social media and actually implement it. During the discussion Poulsen told that: "We had some ideas about the charts but it's not something that we at the moment prioritise that much. I think it's just due to resources and time it's not that we don't think it has potential but we just... if we really want to do something with social media then we probably would need some kind of social media agency to hire them for a period and transform it because we are not social media experts and we don't have the time and resources to do it ourselves... so but if we had some experts so then definitely." In other words, social media marketing does take time and personnel, which the countries do not have at the moment.

During the interview, it was discussed which social media platforms are the most popular in each country. The result did not differ from country to country, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook were recognised among the interviewees to be the most used in their countries. Facebook seems to be the biggest of them all and Snapchat is rising rapidly. However, Cronstedt argues that using all of the social media channels is a must and that the channels should be linked to each other to maximize the

reach.

According to Roy Funner, the charts have lost their value in Norway. It is not just Norway struggling with this problem but it can also be related to the other countries as well. In addition, since the core of social media is to share, discuss and connect with people, he also questions the fact, if the official charts are actually even a topic on social media. There is no a visible benefit of the social media at the moment for the charts from value perspective. However, in the discussion all of the interviewees thought that social media could benefit the charts if there was resources to implement it to the marketing somehow.

The interview made it clear that, the charts are mainly important to the music industry and artists. Pernille Møller Poulsen stated: "It is more important that we engage artists and labels, maybe concert places, like think out of a box, think who would be interested in talking about the charts and maybe it is less important how much activity we have."

When discussing about the engagement and the activity of the social media pages of charts. Artists and labels are the ones that are most influential and have the most followers on social media in the industry and can easily spread the word and engage their fan bases to the conversation. One of the challenges seems to be getting these parties to engage to the co-marketing with the charts.

## **4.2 Observation**

The second part of the research was observing the social media channels for two months period, June and July. It revealed the same problems that rose during the interview. The social media presence is low and the usage of the social media channels was monotonous. It did not encourage people to share or communicate with each other. The channels were updated once a week when the charts were published. The main channels each country uses have been Facebook, Twitter and the

websites of the charts.

However, one exception is Norway's VG-Lista Topp 20, which is used to market the festival held in Norway. This gathers the festivalgoers to see who is going to perform there. This is all done under the chart brand created in Norway but does not concentrate on the actual charts but the festival instead. In the interview, Loken stated that they have nothing to do with this event. The Facebook page of this festival is a good sample of sharing videos, pictures and information of the festival on the channel every day. The page looks interesting and gathers the fans of the artists to the page. Twitter and Instagram follow the same style. Exception is that Twitter is more news-like and Instagram to show the artists by pictures that will be performing in the event. Norway does not have an actual Facebook page or any social media channel for the charts. The charts are published on the website of the VG magazine, which explains the name of the charts as VG-lista. The visual look is created by the magazine and goes according to its' website visual look.

Social media channels that are used in Denmark are Facebook and Twitter. Of course, the charts also have their own website. The visual look of the charts goes hand in hand in each of the channels. However, the regularity of the post is once a week and state the number one of the week of albums, singles and vinyl. Nevertheless, the posts utilize pictures by weekly updating the cover picture of the page on Facebook. Denmark also links the website to the posts and tags artists that are number one on the week. In addition, Denmark has a hashtag for the lists #HitlistenNU.

In Sweden, in regular use are Facebook and charts' website. Once again, the post are made once a week, mostly just stating the number ones and linking the post to the website. Visually the pages are consistent.

In Finland, in the use are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram together with the website. The pages are updated at least once a week when the charts are published. There has been created clear number one visuals for the sites and for the posts. The activities include sharing music news to the artists getting number one trophies. The main



content is the charts and additional content comes from the music industry and its' latest news.

## **5 Discussion**

The study has exposed that the building blocks of understanding social media and the importance of having a clear social media marketing strategy for the charts is defective. Successful social media presence does not come without research, good planning and implementation. At the moment, each of the countries have focused on communicating the public the number one of the week on the charts when the charts have been published, even though there is plenty of additional and interesting content to share related to the charts. This kind of communication does not encourage the target/possible target audiences to take part into the discussion and communicate with others. It is one-way communication, which is not recommended on social media. After all, the nature of social media is to communicate together with others. For the social media channels of official music charts should be considered other content that is interesting and topic related to the music industry. This could help them to gain interest, reach more people through engagement and give charts more value in the eyes of the target audiences.

The purpose of this study was to find out how social media could help improve the marketing of the charts, whether there have been strategies that have been implemented and how the marketing has been implemented till today. It became very clear that there has not been any kind of strategies in Sweden, Norway or Denmark. In comparison to Finland, where has been created actual guidelines for the labels for the usage of social media in order to gain more visibility and followers to the charts. The marketing of the charts in each of the countries has been implemented once a week mainly using the Facebook pages, Webpage and Twitter. It has been strictly informative.

It is clear, what the countries should do: is to create a written strategy/plan that states the purpose of the official music charts, create a mission and vision for them, analyse the current state of the social media channels used, create clear objectives and goals desired to be reached within a certain timeframe, for example monthly rates how many new followers or how much activity the pages should have. Defining the social media channels that are used and how. Creating a guideline for the channels including timetable when to post, usage of hashtags, tagging and sharing. Also creating visual guidelines that help people to recognize the music charts brand when it is shared on different channels. It can create more value and trust to the charts. The guidelines should be shared with the labels' marketing department, artists and other partners to create a clear path to the music charts.

During the interview, it was discussed should the countries have the same guidelines for the charts. At the moment, each of the countries has been free to implement their social media marketing as they have wished. The charts are compiled of the sales of the countries and present the real positions based on the weekly sales. This makes the charts the trust worthiest of all the charts compiled. This should be communicated to the public. It was discussed how creating shared guidelines between the countries could create consistency between the countries and the official charts brand. If the countries had the same guidelines for the chart, it could create the trustworthiest and grow the desired image of the charts internationally.

Branding should also be reconsidered to be a great part of the social media strategy of the official charts. Branding is not the easiest part and it can take time to create a strong brand imagine. This is why for the charts, it is important to understand what is message to be communicated to the public. In addition, thinking about how to do it, when to do, where to do it and to whom to do it. The branding of the charts should be seen everywhere, for example, in the language of the posts on social media, the pictures created and shared, e-mails sent. Giving an overall look and experience that is consistence with the brand all the time is important in creating trust and engagement.

Considering the possible partnerships and sponsorships in the marketing wise can improve the image of the music charts and reach more people by giving more resources and channels to be used. The co-marketing gives the possibility to promote in collaboration with bigger brands in which both parties benefit from the agreement. Such collaboration gives more volume and channels to be used in promoting the official charts. In addition it can create trust in target audiences, in case if the partner is well known and has already established position in the music industry. For music charts, such partnership or sponsorship deal could be done for example with streaming services like Spotify, radio stations or any organization that somehow relates to music industry. However, there is need for more visibility and media coverage in order to get sponsors interested in the charts. This puts pressure on the overall marketing and the social media presence. The activity of the social media channels used for the charts should be something to be invested in, in order to gain the interest of the partners and sponsors.

In addition, the music charts are important source of information to the artists and to the labels. For the charts, it is important to have the music labels and their artists/musicians to co-market and engage in social media activities related to the music charts gives a great deal of visibility to the charts. The musicians are one of the most influential people on the social media. This is well demonstrated by the campaign “Music Fuels the Internet” created by RIAA (The Recording Industry Association of America). This campaign points out the most influential musicians on different social media sites by showing how many followers they have. If thinking this way, these highly powerful persons do not only reach huge amount of people when posting something on social media but they are also most likely get their posts going viral by the fact the fans share the content with other fans and the cycle is ready. In the point of view of the charts, collaboration with the highly followed musicians does give a great amount of publicity to the charts.

Social media channels should be considered according to the usage of those in relation to the music charts, the industry and what is at the moment used the most of the channels in each country. During the interview, it was discussed that the most

used social media are Facebook, Instagram and websites in Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The promoting and marketing of the charts has been focused on Facebook, websites and the radio stations including the social media channels of those. For the countries researched, Facebook, Instagram, Websites and Twitter would improve the visibility if used daily or at least three times a week. Noting that using the channels according to their nature but still remaining the overall image created for the chart keeps the channels consistent and keeps the chart brand clear.

One of the hardest and time-consuming parts is to create a value to any product or a service through marketing. During the interview, it became clear that the official music charts in each country have lost a lot of their value. The official music charts need plans that are followed on weekly basis creating clear image what the charts are and why those are published, partners and sponsors, improve activity on the social media. When starting from the building blocks of the charts and understanding the meaning of the charts for the industry, artists and individuals consuming music is where the value creation starts.

The biggest problem of marketing the charts on social media has noted to be the lack of resources like time and personnel. Creating a plan that gives straight guidelines when to post and what kind of content can help to ease this problem. Noting that, most of the social networking sites have the tools to manage the page, including timing the posts to be published on exact time of the day, a good example is Facebook. This gives the possibility not to stress about posting something on your free time.

There is also sites that offer such posting services on the social media that do not have the timing possibility, for example hootsuite.com that offers businesses a tool to time their posts but also to monitor what is discussed online and offers analysis of the activities, campaigns and such. (hootsuite.com) Using such platforms can help using social media a great deal. However, it is true social media takes time to become successful.

There is also ways to outsource the social media marketing to marketing agencies

specialized in social media. However, then the question is money and how much of the possible marketing budget can be used in the social media marketing. This on the other hand leads to the sponsors and partnerships of the charts. Using social media is not cheap even it might be thought so, it takes time and personnel to build a good social media presence.

## **6 Conclusion**

For the conclusion, this study was done under Musiikkituottajat – IFPI Finland ry. It researched how the social media could help improve the marketing of the charts in countries: Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. The research was a qualitative case study. It was implemented through an interview in which participated five interviewees working for IFPI in each country and by observing the social media channels used by the countries to market the official charts.

The results revealed that the countries have not created strategies or a clear plans how to use the social media channels to market the official chart. The biggest problems were recognized to be the lack of resources like time and personnel when marketing the charts. The lack of resources has also lead to the decrease of the value of the charts in the countries.

For the future, it could be studied and created a strategy/plan/guidelines that could be applied to all the Nordic countries. A clear strategy would not only help the personnel to know what to do and how to do but also the labels together with artists to know how to refer to the charts and what kind of actions to take on social media channels. Not only could the strategy help understanding how to operate with the charts but this would also help to see the charts and the positions of those in a bigger picture.

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## Appendices

### Appendice 1. Interview Questions

1. What's your name and how are you involved with the charts in your profession?
2. How do you see social media marketing benefiting the charts at the moment? Is it working?
3. What is done right now in the marketing the charts in your country?
4. What do you think is the biggest problem in marketing the chart through social media? Is it lack of time, resources, and interest from the possible target groups, content or something else?
5. How have you tried to engage the target groups?
6. What is the image you want to communicate to the public of the charts?
7. Have you ever considered or have you created clear goals or objectives what you want to reach through social media? Or have you created a specific guide to be followed when marketing through social media?
8. Should the overall look of the charts be consistent among the Nordic countries?
9. The charts represent the music industry on weekly basis. What kind of other content could be sufficient in your opinion when marketing the charts?

10. Do you collaborate with labels or radio stations?

11. Do you have any other comments about the charts and the marketing of those?

Appendice 2.            Second appendice

Social media channels observed

Norway – VG-lista

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vglista/?fref=ts>

Website VG: <http://lista.vg.no>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/vglistatopp20>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/vglistatopp20/>

Denmark – Hitlisten.NU

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Hitlisten.NU/?fref=ts>

Website: <http://www.hitlisten.nu>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hitlisten>

Sweden – Sveriges Officiella Topplista

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sverigetopplistan.se/?fref=ts>

Website: <http://www.sverigetopplistan.se>

Finland – Suomen Virallinen Lista

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/listaykkonen/>

Website: <http://ifpi.fi/tilastot/virallinen-lista/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/listaykkonen>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/listaykkonen/?hl=fi>