

The Marketing Challenges in a Current Digital-Driven Music Market

Identifying the marketing challenges local alternative musicians face in Kosovo and proposing the best course of action to address said challenges.



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Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the marketing challenges that musicians in Kosovo face in today's digital-driven music market. The emphasis is on music promotion and distribution for local alternative musicians who struggle with marketing their music in comparison to mainstream/commercial musicians who are more appealing to the Kosovar audience. The music industry has encountered major changes due to the rise of the digital era which brought both challenges and possibilities. Kosovo's transition to the digital era was exceptionally tough. The author attempts to contribute to the literature on the music industry in Kosovo, which has been understudied in comparison to other European countries for a variety of socioeconomic and historical reasons.

This study was conducted using qualitative research with a set of semi-structured interviews as primary data. Secondary data is the theoretical framework which requires sources such as books, scholar articles, case studies etc. An objective for the author was to propose alternative solutions to said challenges.

The information gathered from the interviews reveals that the selected musicians do have their own strategies for promoting their music; nevertheless, these tactics are not proving the same audience reach and exposure for alternative musicians as opposed to mainstream musicians in Kosovo. The author provided a set of alternative solutions to the previous practices that could be put into action.

Keywords Kosovo, marketing, musicians, digital, music market, challenges, mainstream

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1 Introduction

In today's culture, music can be heard nearly everywhere. Since the beginning of human society, music has played an important role in people's lives in some capacity or another. Today, music can be found in virtually every culture that has ever existed on this planet. These days, music is a crucial component of both our daily lives and the social settings in which we find ourselves. Music is played at social gatherings, music can be heard in stores and restaurants, movies use music to emphasize what is happening on screen, and advertisers even try to push one into buying more with the help of music. Even if one does not actively listen to music, they are still being affected and influenced by it. Because music is so ingrained in our culture and our society as a whole, avoiding it is impossible (Bordowitz, 2007).

It's possible that the history of professional music had more humble beginnings; nonetheless, the rise of technology transformed everything, just like it did in many other fields. The era of acoustic instruments came to an end, and new technologies made it possible to record, capture, recreate, and transmit sound. It was no longer necessary to perform or experience music at a specific time and place in order to do so; instead, music evolved into a physical form that allowed it to be experienced at any time and in any location. This shift established the groundwork for the beginning of the traditional music industry in its modern form, which we are familiar with now. In the course of the previous century, this sector of the economy has developed into a massive market that is important on a global scale. The term "music industry" refers to the collection of people and businesses that are involved in the production, distribution, and performance of musical works, as well as those that play a supporting role for such endeavors (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

The music industry is trying to adapt to the digital era since physical music sales dropping gradually, and the industry needs to rethink its business models and discover new sources of income in order to thrive in this new environment. The rapid advancement of technology has had an impact on people's listening habits which led to the development of new consumer behaviors. When trying to think of new services or rethink existing ones, it is necessary to have a solid understanding of the customer and the factors that influence their behavior (Salo, 2012).

Companies in the music industry need to focus more than ever on satisfying the needs of their customers since they now have more purchasing power than in the past, and the internet gives them an almost unlimited number of free entertainment options to choose from. Understanding the consumer is a crucial concern when trying to predict and plan for the near future of the music industry; therefore, it is vital to find out the present behaviors and values that are affecting said consumers (Salo, 2012).

The rise of the digital age has presented members of the music industry with a plethora of fresh opportunities in addition to facing new challenges. Digitalization has had an effect on the business structure of the industry as a whole, ranging from the production process, all the way to the consumption patterns. The professionals in the sector have been forced to remodel their existing business operations and adjust their default strategies in order to keep up with the rapid pace of technological advancement. (Hull, 2011)

The total worldwide sales of music recordings in 2014 were 15 billion US dollars. Despite the industry's tremendous changes and some underlying difficulties, the numbers are still strong. The very factor that helped to launch this industry in the first place is responsible for those alterations. Music is a useful informational tool. Like with other information tools, the distribution of information has been significantly impacted by digitalization and the Internet. Skeptics predicted the demise of the music industry at the beginning of the digital era because businesses and music creators could no longer maintain a stable income. It would have been more accurate to predict the demise of the traditional music industry's business and income models. The music industry is still very much alive, despite some segments of it struggling—mostly those tied to the recording industry and their dropping sales. The conventional distinctions between positions within the industry and across sectors (such as the music industry and the software sector) are dwindling or disappearing, and in ten years the definition of the music business may have evolved to include new emergent business models (IFPI, 2015).

According to IFPI (2021), the global music market expanded by 7.4 percent in the year 2020. This occurred despite the fact that the world had to contend with challenges such as a pandemic, which led to the cancellation of concert tours—one of the industry's primary revenue streams. This is the sixth year in a row that the market has increased in size, and it

may be attributed to the proliferation of new digital technologies such as music streaming services.

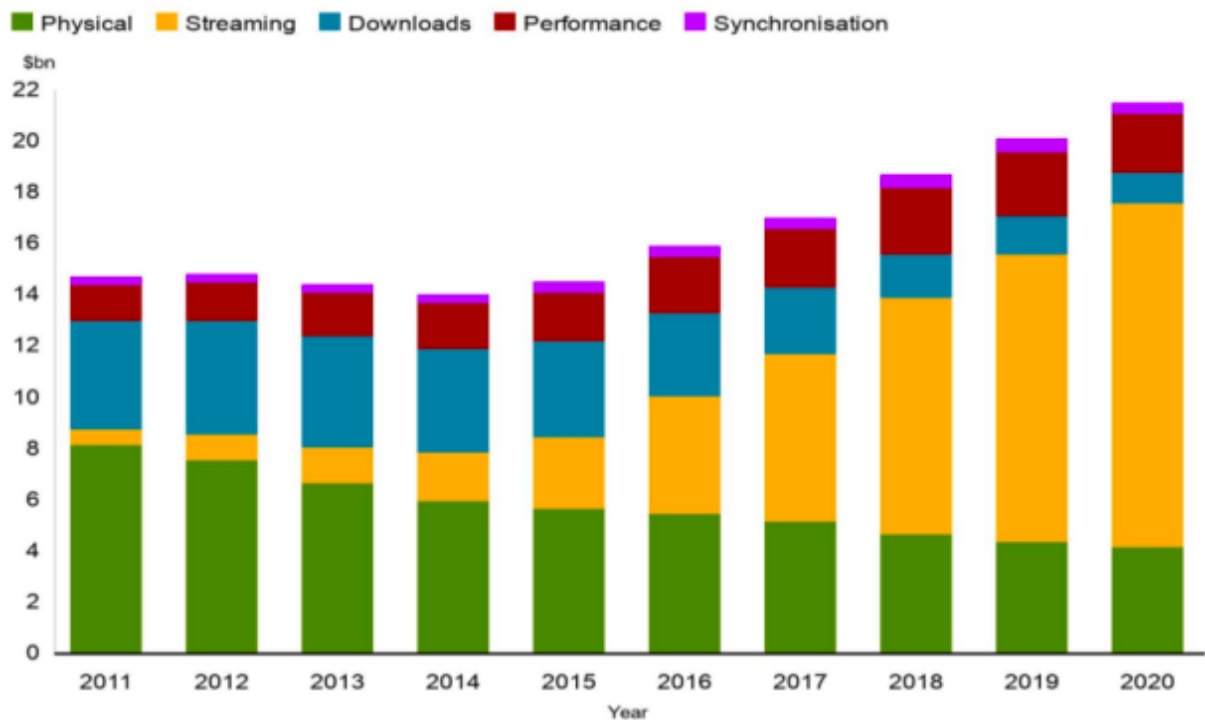


Figure 1. Music industry revenue 2011-2020 (IFPI 2021, according to Savage 2021)

Music consumption has not decreased even though music sales have. Digital songs, online music streaming, and watching music videos are replacing tangible music products like CDs in the music industry. More music is available to people than ever before, and they are constantly exposed to it. One does no longer need to visit a store to purchase music because they can get it anywhere at no cost. As technology assisted in transforming music into a physical, tangible entity, it has now assisted in transforming music back into an intangible object that can still be enjoyed and experienced whenever and wherever. Technology altered how music was distributed, made it possible for new types of music consumption, and altered consumer behavior. Live music performances are becoming more important as consumers place more value on experiences. Even though people appear to love music and realize its importance in terms of cultural and emotional aspects, the perceived financial worth of music recordings is also dropping (IFPI, 2015).

Additionally, the digital world is always evolving, which includes the introduction of new social media trends and social networks, advancements in the streaming service industry, and the introduction of other prospective new features. Therefore, there is an opportunity for expansion in the market, which is something that professionals in the industry ought to take into consideration when developing a strategy for their businesses. The development outlook of the music business in the not-too-distant future can be addressed from a business point of view by conducting research on the changes brought on by the digital era in the industry and by evaluating the current model (IFPI, 2021).

When it comes to Kosovo's advertising strategies, since the year 2000, the most common form was the use of more conventional methods such as television commercials. People have developed a cynical attitude as a result of the ever-increasing use of media such as television and radio to communicate and read. Anything that can get things going right away is exactly what we're looking for right now. As a direct consequence of this, the business owners in Kosovo have utilized a diverse array of different marketing strategies.

2 Research question and objectives

There are two primary objectives for this thesis. The goals are to analyze the biggest challenges that musicians in Kosovo face in the current digital-driven music market and to analyze the stepbacks in order to introduce some alternative solutions.

While conducting this thesis, the author came across various beneficiaries. It is crucial to mention and analyze them in order to have a better understanding of the purpose of this thesis. The main beneficiaries are the targeted musicians. In Kosovo, it is more difficult for musicians to advertise themselves as alternative musicians instead of as commercial musicians. The author believes that identifying the struggles and addressing them would be greatly beneficial for these musicians.

The second person benefiting from this, is the author herself. With the combination of music and marketing; two favorite fields of the author, this thesis brought the opportunity of gathering a large number of sources and information that hold big importance for their near future. Having to learn more about the music industry as a whole and what goes on within the

industry, while also getting to identify the biggest challenges that musicians from Kosovo face and gathering data in order to offer possible solutions, is also beneficiary.

The core of the study for this thesis was guided by the following question: “What are the marketing challenges local alternative musicians in Kosovo face in a current digital-driven music market?”

The author of this thesis intends to contribute to the literature on the music industry in Kosovo, which has been understudied in comparison to other European countries for a variety of socioeconomic and historical reasons.

3 Theoretical framework and key concepts

3.1 Music industry

The music industry is considered a vast and complex industry which encompasses a wide range of activities, disciplines, and organizations. The term "music business" usually refers to the entire range of economic activities required for the creation and delivery of music products and services (Strasser, 2009). It is comprised of individuals and businesses that make, sell, and perform music, or play a supporting role in these endeavors. (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012)

Throughout the years the music industry has gone through various format changes, from vinyl to CD to streaming. The phonograph was the first recorded music medium, followed by vinyl in the 1940s, which increased music consumption. Until the 1980s, vinyl was the origin of the album and controlled the music industry. Between the vinyl and the CD, there was the cassette format, that allowed listeners to create their own recordings and mix tapes which resulted in the first wave of music piracy. In 2016, streaming became the dominant listening format (Lee, 2018).

Prior to the streaming era, music promotion was based on an artist's album release cycle (Figure 1). An album cycle, in the case of a band, would last about 18 months. It all starts with the months-long process of composing and recording an album, which is finished with the assistance of producers and a big staff of label officials. Typically, the record company has already established a release date for the next album, to generate excitement among the band's core followers and avoid overlapping releases with comparable acts. The pre-release

period is the next stage of the album cycle. The pre-release phase involves the beginning of promotion preparation, with commitments made for radio play for the first single and promoting the approaching release, all leading up to the specified release date. The third stage is the release of the album. New albums are always expected to peak relatively fast over a few weeks, with the majority of sales occurring during the first few months after release. However, word-of-mouth will continue to generate some sales for the next six to nine months. The fourth step of an album's life cycle is touring. Prior album success, as well as early results from the current release, have a big impact on expected ticket sales, which affects the tour's size and venues. The album cycle continues again either during or after the tour, with the record company having a large say in how soon the performer must generate new content (Wagster, 2015).

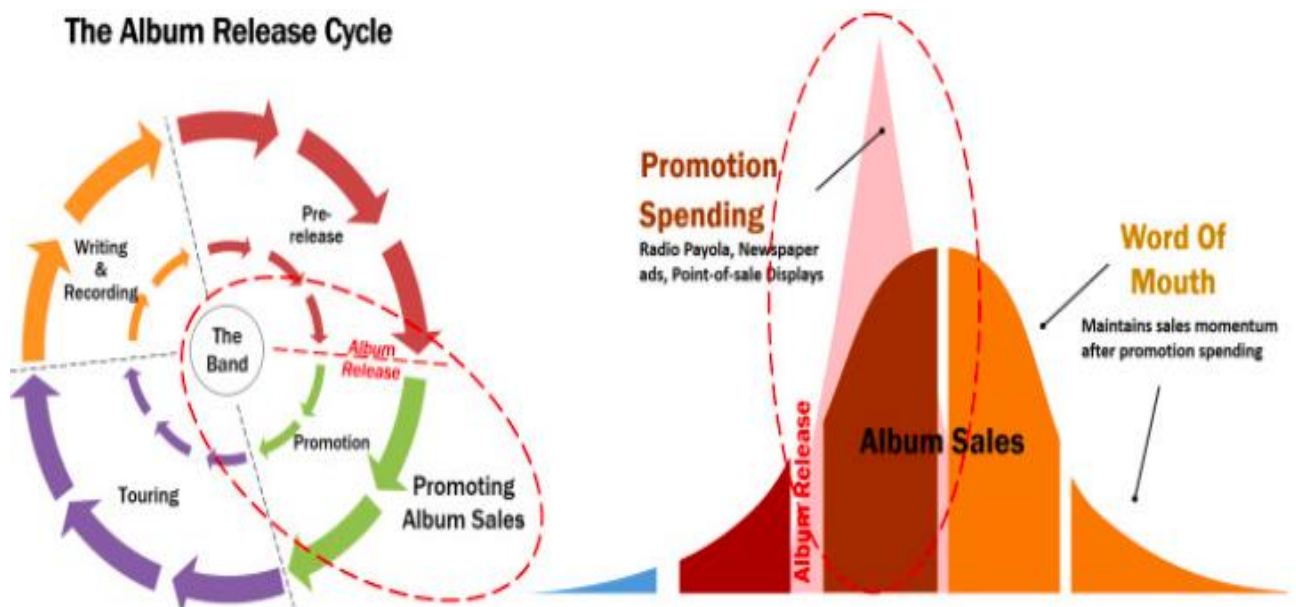


Figure 2. Album Release Cycle. Source: (Wagster, 2015).

Streaming has undoubtedly simplified one's connection with music and, in some ways, has become an integral part of the daily life, possibly without even acknowledging it. Rather than purchasing an album with set tracks in a set order, one can have access to a vast music library of songs from all over the world. There is no longer a need to buy an album or a song in order to listen to it anytime they want. There is access to music libraries containing tens of millions of tracks for a predetermined subscription charge or even for free. Streaming has been seen

as a savior by the music business, with increased profits and some even predicting that it will lead to a new golden age for the industry (Nicolaou, 2017).

Technological advancement has had a profound effect on the history of professional music. Recording, reproducing, and distributing sound became possible after the acoustic age came to an end. Music was no longer tied to a specific time and place but became a transportable physical thing that allows music to be enjoyed at any time and in any location. The traditional music industry as we know it today was born out of this transition. It has become a global company over the previous century. Those involved in the creation, sale, and performance of music are all part of the music industry. The music industry can be viewed as part of the cultural industries, manufacturing industries, creative industries, and/or copyright industries. The music industry is seen as a part of the creative and cultural industries, which are concerned with developing new knowledge through the creation of new media such as music and the sale of new products based on that knowledge (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

The music industry is under enormous pressure from consumers to keep up with their demands. It is changing with time, mostly owing to the expansion of the digital world, and has moved to a whole new level of sharing, purchasing, marketing, and distributing. As the Internet and online databases grow in popularity, record labels and independent artists are expected to develop new methods of communication and distribution for their music. To prevent it from falling behind, the industry professionals had to adapt to the new reality and restructure their present business operations (Hull, 2011).

Independent musicians, on the other hand, now have a higher chance of success than ever before, owing to the opportunity to sell music online and advertise themselves using digital channels to reach out to their consumers/fans. This abrupt shift in music business procedures is critical for aspiring musicians since they are now more in control of their own fate in terms of their possible future as artists (Hull, 2011).

Marketing and promotional strategies have long been a vital component of the popular music industry. They contributed to the development of what is now known as the worldwide popular music industry (Sylvester, 2017). Even the most skilled band or musician will be unable to establish itself, gain recognition, and attract new listeners without the assistance of marketing agencies. Marketing tools enable musicians to advertise their music as well as

themselves as individuals with their own surroundings and energy. More and more, fans are drawn to the performer as much as they are to the music. As a result, the musician becomes a trademark and must create his own brand (Wikström, 2009).

To gain recognition, artists must market and promote their work in the same way that companies must advertise and sell new products. This is especially vital for someone who wants to make a career out of music. People can now listen to music more easily because to the proliferation of streaming services. Without strong marketing, it is hard to survive or succeed under such circumstances (Wikström, 2009). Musicians can use marketing strategies to promote both their music and them as individuals with their own ambience and energy. Therefore, the musicians must establish their own brand (Hull, 2011). An artist performer or band, management, record label, artist and repertoire (A&R), product manager, promoter, and agents are all possible elements of a marketing campaign supply chain. As a result, it might entail one or more of the following actions: a band or artist releases a new album, extended play (EP), or mixtape, and/or announces a tour; a television station airs a documentary about a record label; a major music festival takes place, attracting tens of thousands of people; magazines, websites, and newspapers discuss the performance of the artists; music artists appear on talk shows or the front pages of media; fans search for musical work and music-oriented fan-groups with which they can connect (Frith, 2007).

Marketing in the music business is similar to other forms of advertising and was done through billboards, radio, television commercials, newspapers, and other sorts of print publications. While such advertising strategies are incredibly powerful, they are also quite expensive, making it difficult for independent musicians to properly promote themselves. With the rapid advancement of technology, music marketers may now take use of a plethora of distribution channels for their products and services. Music marketers must keep up with quick developments in everything from computer downloads to ring tones for mobile phones or risk losing money. Artists should market and promote their work in order to get recognition, much as businesses should market and sell new products. This is especially important if one wants to pursue the music career (Wikström, 2009).

People can now listen to music easier because of the abundance of streaming services. However, in this day and age of digital distribution, competition is fierce since it is so much

easier for artists to release their work. Today, the challenge is not producing the piece of music but marketing it to a specific target audience and connecting with any prospective opportunities. These music marketing platforms can be in the form of a streaming service, radio station, or social media post, all of which target a distinct demographic and audience (Wikström, 2009).

In order to lower the expense of advertising and distribution, music was sold as a compilation of several individual songs or instrumental pieces on an album, forcing artists to create multiple tracks in order for their music to be economically viable. This method inevitably resulted in the inclusion of a number of "not-so-good" tracks and/or instrumentals on an album. This also forced buyers to purchase an album to receive one or two songs or musical pieces of their choosing. Under this system, the big music labels were the most dominant power in the business. By owning key marketing and distribution channels and tying their artists to long-term contracts, labels have enormous power. Due to their restricted access to marketing and distribution channels, the majority of up-and-coming musicians cannot compete independently. They either join a record label or remain a small player in a niche market. This allowed music businesses to retain the majority of profits. In general, labels took between 85 and 90 percent of the revenue generated by music sales (Sen, 2010).

The pre-digital technologies increased the gap between professional artists and their audiences. A successful artist required not just creativity and talent, but also access to production equipment (studios, cameras, mixers, etc.) and mass distribution channels. The music industry expanded and became dominant due to the economy of scale. They could spend millions of dollars to produce and promote chart-topping tunes, so that radio and music television (MTV) would play them. They also owned the companies that produced vinyl LPs and CDs prior to the rise of home CD burners and MP3 players (Pareles, 2006).

Baker (2007) describes these three phases of marketing in his book *Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook*. He also notes that, while the three processes appear straightforward, in fact, most artists fail to give equal attention to all of them or even leave one out. As a result, he goes over each of these steps in great depth. He also adds to the first point that one must define the advantages one provides to their target audience. Furthermore, Baker emphasizes that it is critical to remember that interacting with their audience nowadays does not imply doing

mass promotions, but rather speaking to them individually and personally. This might involve actions like replying to messages and comments on posts, as well as just thanking fans. Baker concludes by saying that most musicians should have greater self-confidence and advertise their music to increase sales.

Bradshaw (2019) also describes a three-step method for a successful music career. First step is to create awareness by establishing the target audience and working on a target group. Second step, connecting with the audience using the marketing channels and tactics. It's vital not to quit existing relationships and instead to maintain them while gaining new fans. Finally, something must be sold, and cash stream must be maintained in order to secure success and the sustainability of a business.

Fundamentally, marketing music is not that distinct from marketing any other product or service. It is a strategy built on seven primary marketing components: internet media, publicity, radio, advertising, retail support, street promotion, and public appearances. From the viewpoint of a record label, all these aspects are given by the label. The goal of publicity is to get the artist out there and seen and heard. Depending on the stage of the artist's career and the genre of music, ways of garnering publicity might include television appearances, publications, opening for a more well-known musician, or just appearing at industry events, all with the goal of increasing recognition and getting people talking (Jones, 2015). While having a team at one's disposal to assist one achieve is a huge benefit, many musicians never have the opportunity to be backed by music companies due to the strong competition (Hull, 2011).

3.2 Marketing

Marketing is an organizational function and a collection of procedures that create, communicate, and provide value to consumers, as well as manage customer relationships in ways that benefit the firm and its stakeholders. Marketing management is the art and science of identifying target markets and acquiring, retaining, and expanding consumers via the creation, delivery, and communication of greater customer value (Kotler & Armstrong, 1990).

3.2.1 Marketing Plan

Marketing Plan is one of the most important measures that the company must take in order to reach the market and its customers. The planning process determines the goals or objectives to be accomplished, develops strategy to reach them, organizes or produces the necessary means, and implements, directs, and monitors all actions in their right sequence (Kotler & Armstrong, 1990). Investing time and money in this area will assist a company in answering the following key questions regarding their product or service: what, when, how, why, and how much. The Marketing Plan must include the following eight sections:

1. **Table of contents and executive summary-** A table of contents is followed by a brief overview of the plan's primary goals and recommendations.
2. **Current marketing situation-** Provides pertinent background data on sales, costs, profitability, the market, competitors, distribution, and the macroenvironment.
3. **Opportunity and issue analysis-** Identifies the product line or brand's primary opportunities, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and difficulties.
4. **Objectives-** Specifies the financial and marketing goals to be fulfilled.
5. **Marketing strategy-** Describes the overall marketing strategy that will be used to achieve the plan's objectives.
6. **Action plans-** Outline the broad marketing plans for accomplishing the business goals. To address these questions, each marketing strategy component must be elaborated: What? When? Who? How much?
7. **Projected profit-and-loss statement-** Action plans enable the product manager to create a supporting budget that includes predicted sales volume, costs, and profit. Once authorized, the budget serves as the foundation for creating material

procurement, production scheduling, staff recruiting, and marketing operations plans and schedules.

- 8. Controls-** The final part describes the plan's monitoring controls. Each month or quarter, the goals and budget are laid out so that the outcomes may be reviewed. To enhance the development of the Marketing Plan, it is critical to collect data from people who live in the environment in which the company intends to operate. This greatly helps in the transformation of the entrepreneur's dream into structured actions, establishing priorities and adapting the plan to the needs and understanding of the market, as well as being able to communicate with all those involved in the project and guiding the company's wants and capabilities.

According to Kotler, "the marketing process includes assessing market possibilities, researching and identifying target audiences, developing marketing strategies, creating marketing programs, and coordinating, implementing, and overseeing the marketing effort" (Kotler, 2012). The four steps of the marketing process are as follows:

Market opportunities. Identification of prospective long-term prospects based on the company's market experience and key skills. A marketing research and information system is required by the organization in order to evaluate its many prospects, assess buyer demands and needs, and quantify market size. The company may then research their prospective market's purchasing habits, perceptions, demands, and needs. Smart businesses also keep a close eye on rivals and hunt for important sectors within each industry that they can serve successfully (Kotler, 2012).

Marketing strategies. Preparing a positioning plan for each new and current product's progression through the life cycle, making product line and branding decisions, and designing and marketing its services (Kotler, 2012).

Marketing programs. Transforms marketing strategies into marketing programs, by making basic decisions in marketing expenditures, marketing mix, and marketing allocation. The first decision is about the level of marketing expenditures needed to achieve the firm's marketing objectives. The second decision is how to divide the total marketing budget among the various

tools in the marketing mix: product, price, place, and promotion. And the third decision is how to allocate the marketing budget to the various products, channels, promotion media, and sales areas (Kotler, 2012).

Managing the marketing plan. Means organizing the firm's marketing resources in order to implement and control their marketing strategy. The organization also need feedback and control due to surprises and disappointments during the implementation of marketing strategy (Kotler, 2012).

3.2.2 Marketing Mix

At the most fundamental level, artists must have a comprehensive marketing plan. They have what is known as the marketing mix at their disposal. It is a collection of strategic marketing techniques that enable a firm or entrepreneur (the selling side from now on) to tailor their goods to the needs of clients in a certain market. The marketing mix encompasses all efforts pursued by the selling side to generate and boost product demand (Kotler, 2004).

These activities fall into four categories known as "4P":

1. **Product** - This group includes the product, subsequent services, and all of their facets that a selling side provides to clients.
2. **Price** - This factor shows the amount of money a client must pay to purchase the goods.
3. **Place** - encompasses all actions that result in the product being physically accessible.
4. **Promotion** - includes any actions that induce a buyer to learn about and want to purchase the product (Kotler, 2004).

Another viewpoint provides a unique perspective. It claims that the "4P" theory only addresses the seller's perspective and not the customers. From the consumer's perspective, the whole marketing mix may be characterized as "4C":

1. **Customer solution** - the offered product offers value to the customer.
2. **Customer cost** - a customer is concerned with all the expenses they may incur for a product, including those associated with its use and/or disposal.
3. **Convenience** - A consumer wants a readily accessible product or service.

4. **Communication** - If a consumer has a need for any type of product-related information, there must be extensive communication between both parties (Kotler, 2004).

3.3 Digital marketing

Digital marketing is dynamic and ever-changing, compared to traditional marketing which is static and known as a one-way communication process. It refers to any form of marketing that is done through utilizing electronic technology including internet-based marketing initiatives. Digital marketing encompasses a variety of activities such as social media, blogging, and online communities, all of which include the creation and maintenance of connections through a network of diverse stakeholders (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Digital marketing is diverse and beneficial in multiple ways. It enables businesses to reach customers through social media, videos, and online publications. Digital marketing has a global reach since customers can use the internet from any location, allowing businesses to promote and sell to customers in other states and nations. Digital marketing targets certain demographics of customers. Engaging customers in a certain field, industry, or social channel helps companies in reaching their target demographic. Customers are increasingly demanding that companies connect with them on their grounds and on their platform of choice. Therefore, companies with efficient social media marketing strategies, will develop long-term connections with their present and potential consumers (Bala, 2018).

With the rapid advancement of technology, music marketers may now take use of a plethora of distribution channels for their products and services. Music marketers must keep up with quick developments in everything, from computer downloads to ring tones for mobile phones or risk losing money. Artists should market and promote their work in order to get recognition, much as businesses should market and sell new products. (Wikström, 2009).

In order to reach a larger audience and save costs, online peer-to-peer communication is becoming increasingly popular. Viral marketing is a significantly more efficient means of reaching a large audience and disseminating a message than more traditional methods. Because of this, it is critical that businesses implement a viral marketing strategy (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008; Fill, 2009; Harvey, Stewart and Ewing, 2011; Nigam, 2012).

Word of Mouth Marketing (WOM) has also provided a synergistic opportunity for commentary, recommendation, suggestion, and referral via the Internet (Dellarocas, 2003). Word-of-mouth is an alternative way to get users to know about a new album, product, service, or piece of content quickly. Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been described as communication between customers regarding a product, service, or firm in which the sources are deemed independent of commercial influence (Litvin, 2008). These interpersonal encounters offer access to information about the consumption of that product or service that goes beyond the signals supplied by the companies and involuntarily impacts the individual's decision-making (Brown et al., 2007). WOM is often viewed as one of the most powerful variables influencing customer behavior (Daugherty, 2014).

On the other hand, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) is the flow of knowledge from person to person by oral communication. Advertisers utilize consumer incentives and social media to promote products and spark customer discussion. The goal of word-of-mouth marketing is to spread product information with little to no commercial expense. Consumers have the ability to promote items just by talking about them. When consumers discuss items online, this is referred to as electronic word of mouth (Wright, 2009).

Electronic word of mouth has grown in importance since the rise of the Internet. For many businesses, online customer opinions have become a type of virtual currency that can make or break their products (Wright, 2009).

Prior research has shown that internet product reviews have a major impact on customer purchase decisions, affecting sales, and are as significant as advertising. Consumers use E-WOM for the same reasons that they use traditional WOM, such as information gathering to decrease risks, information saving to compare with other information sources, and information sharing to influence others (Pollach, 2006). E-WOM is thus seen as an extension of traditional WOM but differs insofar as the internet is utilized to exchange information among consumers. As a result, E-WOM differs from traditional WOM in three important ways: its availability, amorphousness, and international context (Litvin, 2008).

3.3.1 Digital marketing implementing strategies

An organization needs to adopt a planned, systematic approach to realize the benefits of digital marketing, therefore Chaffey D. & Chadwick F. (2019) outline a strategic approach to digital marketing that aims to minimize these risks while also maximizing the benefits of online media.

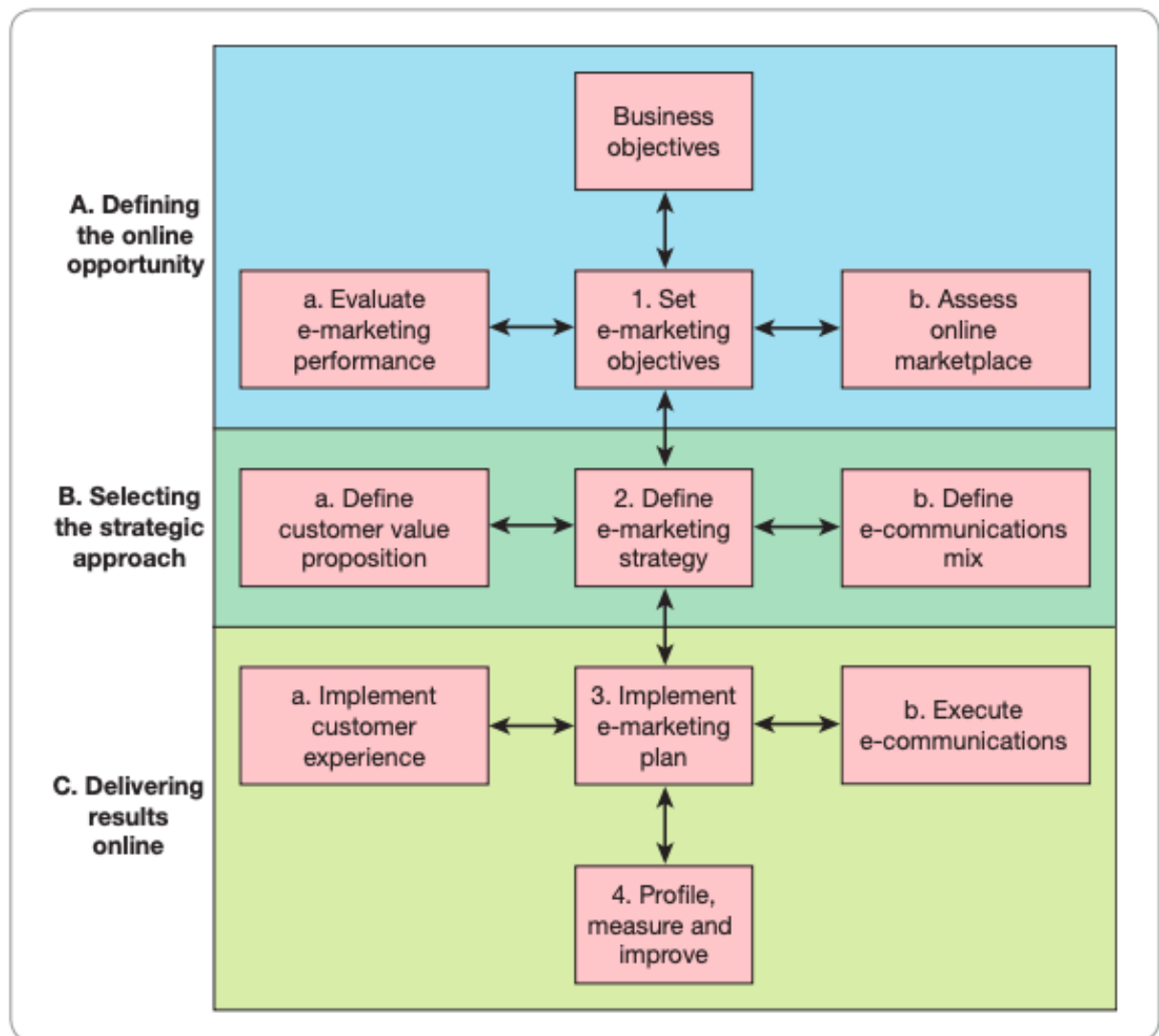


Figure 3. A generic digital marketing strategy development process. Source: (Chaffey, 2019)

To comprehend the significance of digital marketing for the future of marketing in general, consider the types of audience interactions companies must comprehend and manage. Today's digital marketing encompasses far more than just online connection with customers. It entails utilizing the '5Ds' of managing digital marketing interactions, evaluating user

acceptance and determine how a company can manage them to meet marketing goals (Chaffey,2019).

Digital devices- Our customers engage with companies through a combination of smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, TVs, gaming devices, virtual assistants, and other devices forming the Internet of Things (IoT) (Chaffey,2019).

Digital platforms- The majority of interactions on these devices take place via a browser or applications from the main 'platforms' or online services, such as Instagram™, YouTube™, LinkedIn™, Google™ etc (Chaffey,2019).

Digital media- There are several communication channels available for reaching and engaging audiences, including advertising, email and message, search engines, and social networks (Chaffey,2019).

Digital data- In most countries, the information businesses obtain about their audience demographics and interactions with businesses must now be secured by law (Chaffey,2019).

Digital technology- Technology is digital. Businesses utilize this marketing technology to build interactive experiences spanning from websites and mobile applications to in-store kiosks and email campaigns (Chaffey,2019).

3.4 Social media marketing

The evolution of social media on the Internet has significantly altered how individuals connect with one another. Social media is defined as a range of new online information sources generated, launched, shared, and used by customers focused on educating one another about products, companies, services, personalities, and concerns. It is a catch-all word encompassing social networking sites, creative work sharing sites, blogs, and forums (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004).

Social media marketing (SMM) refers to marketing campaigns that take place on social media platforms. It is information shared on a peer-to-peer basis, giving the impression of one-on-one conversation (Hayes, 2021).

This new media type is having a growing impact on consumer behavior in the marketplace, notably on awareness, information gathering, opinion development, and purchase behavior. Consumers are abandoning traditional media and advertising mediums such as television, radio, magazines, and newspapers in favor of new media that provides them with quick access to information at their leisure. Social media is seen as a more trustworthy source of information than traditional advertising and communication since it is user-generated. As a result, people are turning to social media sites for information and purchase decisions (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media marketing is an effective modern marketing tool. It encompasses all strategies and methods used by businesses and organizations, groups, political parties, and public personalities, to utilize social media services as a marketing tool to achieve their brand communication and marketing objectives (Hayes, 2021).

Despite the fact that social media marketing is a potent modern marketing tool, it has downsides. One of the most important is audience reaction. If the reaction is positive, it appears to the corporation that there is no problem. However, a negative reaction has the potential to ruin the company's brand and public image since information spreads quickly and people prefer to discuss unpleasant things more frequently. As a result, the company must deal with significant criticism and implement a PR recovery strategy (Hayes, 2021).

Musicians are becoming interested primarily in the most efficient marketing methods for reaching their target audiences. Marketers can now contact potential music customers via social media, because of the digitalization of music, the rise of social media technology, and the popularity of social media (Salo, 2013)

The subject of digital marketing has lately received a lot of attention, but there is still little study on the influence of social media marketing in developing markets in general, and particularly in the Kosovo market. Even though there are certain obstacles in developing markets with social media marketing implementation, the process is growing rapidly due to the benefits it brings to both companies and businesses (Tamilmani et al. 2018).

3.4.1 Honeycomb model

Kietzmann's Honeycomb model of social media websites identifies seven functional blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Figure 3).

Each block enables to grasp the social media site's structure depending on the services it offers to its users. These components are not mutually exclusive, and they are not present on every social networking platform. These structures are the building elements that help understand how various degrees of social media functionality can be implemented (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

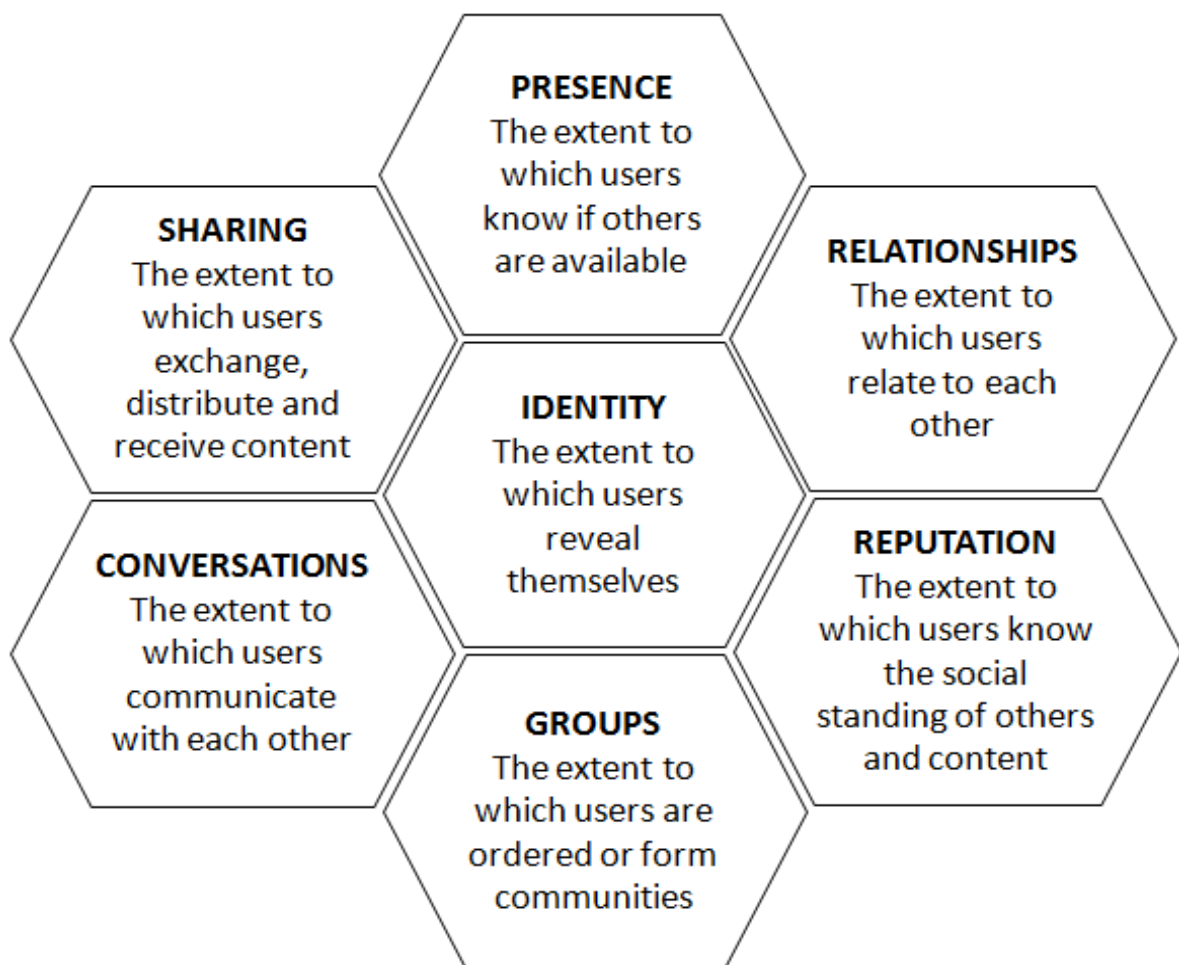


Figure 4. Honeycomb model. Source: (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Identity**

The identity dimension refers to how much personal or corporate information (name, age, gender, occupation, and location) is disclosed in a social media platform by individuals or

companies. Individuals also disclose additional information about themselves – consciously or subconsciously – that enables them to be portrayed in certain ways through self-disclosure of subjective information like thoughts, feelings, likes, and dislikes (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Presence**

The presence dimension refers to an individual's ability to determine whether or not their peers are online. The location of each participant in one's network in the virtual and/or actual world is included in the presence dimension. In certain ways, the presence dimension serves as a link between the physical and virtual worlds (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Relationship**

In a social media setting, the relationships dimension refers to the extent to which one individual may be associated to other individuals. The term "relate" refers to the sort of relationship that develops between people (for example, befriending, joining groups, or co-presence on a social media site), which can lead to communication and sharing (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Reputation**

In a social media setting, the reputation dimension is determined by the extent to which each individual can recognize one's relative position (including one's own position) in society. In social media, reputation is acquired through shared content, expressed ideas, likes and dislikes, rather than given to people based on their revealed identities. The same is true for businesses that want to create or enhance their reputation by applying social media strategies (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Groups**

The Groups dimension is determined by the extent to which each user can build communities and subcommunities in a social media setting. The more social a network is, the more groups, communities, followers, and contacts it has (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Conversation**

The Honeycomb Model's conversations dimension is involved with the extent to which individuals connect with one another in a social media space. The primary goal of most social media platforms is to enable interaction among people and interest groups (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

- **Sharing**

The sharing dimension refers to how much content an individual exchanges, distributes, and gets in a social media situation. Individual exchange is a critical role on social media platforms, as the name "social" indicates. Ultimately, social media is about individuals expressing their identities and lifestyles through relevant material (i.e., groups, text, videos, photographs, audio, and links) (Kietzmann et al, 2011).

3.5 Branding

Procter & Gamble (1925) developed brand management; but, in the twenty-first century, the concept has proven difficult to define. Branding is not just for fashion companies, as many people believe, but is a strategic essential for all manufacturers.

Brand refers to the promise that a company stands for or a set of mental associations that the company wishes to convey (Rainisto & Kotler, 2007). According to Cohen (2014), a brand is a mix of physical and irrational characteristics that communicate product benefits to consumers. It is important to emphasize that a clear distinction should be maintained to avoid confusion between brand and branding.

While a brand is a marketing tool, branding is an action, activity, or practice. Branding is a series of actions that a company does to create and monitor a product in order to affirm its identity in the eyes of the public and separate its products from competitors'. The practice initially orients the company's employees and then determines how tasks should be carried out. The practice's second orientation is to the customer, with the total of acts aimed at satisfying them and gaining their loyalty (Kärreman, 2008).

Another viewpoint of branding is that it is a company's goal to strike a balance between its existing and desired image (Ryu, 2011). This is a method used to close the gap between how the company is perceived and how it wants to be perceived. Such a concept limits branding to a set of measures aimed mostly at redesigning a company's image and overlooks contributory factors that might motivate people to perform better (Kalafatis et al, 2012).

Brand identity is how a company wants to be perceived by customers. According to Aaker (1996), brand identity is a critical component of a company's strategic vision since it gives the brand with direction, purpose, and meaning. It is fundamentally a company-driven activity that is accomplished by directing the brand identity components, such as brand name, communication style, logo, or other visual aspects, towards the desired brand image (Investopedia, 2012).

Brand image refers to how people view a certain brand, regardless of how the firm want to present itself. Brand image is a distinct set of connections in target consumers' thoughts that indicate what the brand now stands for and suggests the current promise to customers. Consumers' perceptions of brand image are current, but brand identity is aspirational from the perspective of brand owners (Aaker, 1996).

Alina Wheeler's brand identity design process is a useful tool for brand creation, and it includes five distinct stages. To get the most out of this approach, all stages must be strictly implemented without neglecting or underestimating any part of the process, regardless of how time consuming is or how many resources are required (Wheeler, 2009).

3.5.1 Wheeler's Brand Identity Design Process

Alina Wheeler's brand identity design process is a useful tool for brand creation, and it includes five distinct stages. To get the most out of this approach, all stages must be strictly implemented without neglecting or underestimating any part of the process, regardless of how time consuming is or how many resources are required (Wheeler, 2009).

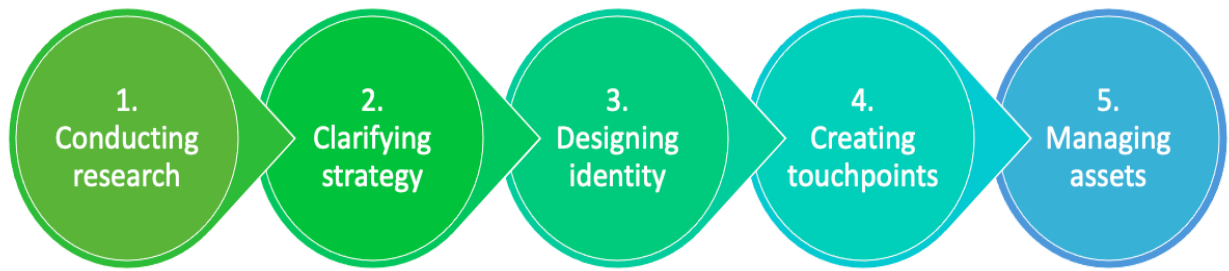


Figure 5. Brand Identity Design Process. Modified from (Wheeler, 2009).

Wheeler views this procedure as a competitive advantage for a company because it ensures that a tried-and-true method is used to achieve business goals, and it generates trust, credibility, and confidence in the identity team, which results into stronger identity solutions (Wheeler, 2009).

According to (Wheeler, 2009, 90), this model requires a high level of inquiry, strategic thinking, management abilities, design quality, patience, perfectionism, and the capacity to accumulate huge volumes of information. Furthermore, for the process to be effective, all employees must collaborate and commit to it (Wheeler, 2009).

Conducting research- Finding the essence of the firm begins with a review of its important characteristics that help shape the organization itself, such as purpose, vision, values, strengths and weaknesses, corporate culture, business strategy, potential future threats, and so on (Wheeler, 2009).

Clarifying strategy- It is the process of translating the obtained facts and information from the study into compact concepts for selecting a strategic posture. It takes methodical analysis and strategic creativity to design a valuable positioning plan that is succinct, straightforward, and as clear as feasible. It also includes the creation of the brand brief and naming strategy (Wheeler, 2009).

Designing identity- The identity design phase is where the creative design process takes place. It is the process of translating a complicated thought into a visual representation. This phase focuses on the visual components of the brand, such as the logotype, signature, colors, typography, sound, and motion, which help with the development of visual strategy. It is a

complex procedure that clearly requires skills, attention to detail, and strict discipline in order to better fit into the organizational culture (Wheeler, 2009).

Creating touchpoints- The phase of design identity definition, finalization, and development that involves the creation of touchpoints. A trademark procedure, letterhead, business cards, collaterals, website, favicons, signage, product design, packaging, advertisement, and so on are all included. "A brand identity program includes a distinct visual language that will be expressed across all applications. Regardless the media, all applications must function in unison" (Wheeler, 2009).

Managing assets- It is the final stage of the brand identity design process and the start of what the author refers to as "the hard part." This phase's primary initiatives include summarizing the previous process, performing an internal launch, and communicating internally about the new identity, and developing standards and guidelines to be utilized for future brand application purposes. (Wheeler, 2009).

3.6 Kosovo Context

The author chose to give a brief introduction to Kosovo and its challenges and opportunities as a young and poor country because of the absence of documented data to support this chapter.

Yugoslavia was freshly reconstituted as a multiethnic nation in the year 1946, immediately following the end of World War II. From that point forward until 1991, it was made up of the six independent republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, as well as the two autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, which were located inside Serbia. Yugoslavia started to fall apart in 1991, which led to a string of bloody conflicts in the region. This occurred at the same time that socialist nations throughout southeast Europe were collapsing. Following a brief period of violence in Slovenia, large-scale conflict broke out in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and ultimately Kosovo. By the year 2006, each of the country's six republics had successfully transitioned into their own independent nation-state, and in 2008, Kosovo became the seventh republic to declare its independence (O'Connell & Castelo-Branco, 2010).

Prior to the year 2000, marketing in Kosovo was of a traditional nature, with an emphasis on commercials that are now regarded obsolete. Marketing teams are all observing the continual expansion of television, radio, and print media; but consumers are jaded by these forms of communication and reading. They require something that induces immediate motion. Different entrepreneurs in Kosovo have chosen diverse marketing methods to satisfy their demands in this manner (Bytyci, 2016).

Without excluding the marketing of social networks, "guerrilla marketing" is a form of marketing that is well-suited to the requirements and economic potential of these businesses in the present day. Guerrilla marketing is a marketing strategy that does not demand a significant amount of financial resources and is suited for businesses that cannot commit a large portion of their budget to marketing. In addition, the current trends in line with technological advancements require aspects that are suitable for many businesses in Kosovo, particularly those in the private sector, such as small and medium-sized businesses or organizations, associations, and movements that lack the financial resources to conduct extensive traditional marketing campaigns (Bytyci, 2016).

Most newly independent nations are grappling with how to 'package' their new identities while adhering to both collective local aspirations and the laws that govern the globalization in which we live. Furthermore, the situation in Kosovo is becoming increasingly complex as a result of several economic and political obstacles that have delayed progress in general and isolated enterprises in particular during the last fifteen years (Demi, 2015).

Until recently, there were misleading ideas and views regarding marketing in Kosovo, particularly among small businesses; the belief that companies that advertise their product/service do so because their product/service is of poor quality. The good news is that these impressions are progressively diminishing and disappearing (STIKK, 2013).

While Kosovo has done an excellent job of following worldwide development trends in terms of internet access and usage, it still falls short in exploiting this market for marketing purposes, remaining closer to the client, and meeting their demands. The abovementioned digital marketing prospects in Kosovo are highly appealing for firms to take advantage of. Furthermore, clients would profit from more convenient services as well as increased market power. In today's environment, following consumer trends, being close to them, and satisfying

customer's needs while being present for the client, is critical to a company's success (KPM, 2013)

Considering the lack of documented data regarding the music marketing dynamics in Kosovo the author interviewed an experienced musician who has years of expertise in the music industry prior digitalization who provides a brief overview of the music marketing scene in Kosovo both before and after the war. This interview was chosen to be conducted on purpose with the intention of providing in-depth information regarding music marketing in Kosovo prior to the digital age, as well as to analyze and compare the changes that have occurred over the course of time.

The interview was conducted with Labinot Krasniqi, who began playing bass guitar professionally at the age of 17, which he has been doing professionally ever since. As a bassist, Krasniqi L. was a member of nine different bands and contributed to their albums. His own band, "ODA," is known as Kosovo's best local rock band since the 1990s and continues to be so today. Being a part of the reunion concert, as a bass guitar player of one of the greatest rock bands of the 80's, Gjurmët, is one of Krasniqi's additional achievements. He is also a sound engineer by profession.

In this interview L. Krasniqi stated that during the 1980s, there was hardly any promotion of musical artists or albums. In addition to occasional mentions on a radio station, live performances were publicized through the use of a single panel located in the heart of the city. Albums were not released very frequently, and when they were, there was very little promotion for them. The most effective method of disseminating information regarding music was word of mouth. The situation began to improve in the nineties when bands started playing live in bars, and the bars began promoting the shows for their own benefit, which in turn promoted the bands and their music. This was a win-win situation. By the late 1990s, when the use of email as a method of disseminating information was becoming more widespread due to the growth of the internet, music promotion had advanced. And then everything went downhill with the political situation and the war in the region, which also reflected in music and forced the bands to stop their activities. Eventually, everything came to a complete and utter standstill. Following the conclusion of the war in 1999, conditions gradually improved, leading to a period during which the music scene flourished. Once more, the internet served

as the primary channel for unpaid promotion. After some time had passed, music promoters emerged on the scene. These were primarily a few businessmen who saw an opportunity to take advantage of already famous bands by promising to take their fame to the next level by managing and promoting them. They did this to take advantage of an opportunity to take advantage of already famous bands. In addition to that, they utilized newer and less well-known artists. And last but not least, the advent of social media brought with it a new and very helpful method for promoting musical artists and their work, which was especially helpful given that virtually everyone had access to the internet through a personal computer. Even in this day and age, the best and most widely used way to promote music is through social media, primarily because it is free.

When asked about their marketing strategies L. Krasniqi says that there was will, but there was no strategy to do so. This is due to the fact that being in a band, even one of the most successful bands, would not provide enough money to put food on the table. Because there was no other way to make more money playing music, even bands that had regular gigs were unable to put together the financial resources necessary to hire a marketing expert who could devise a plan that would bring in additional revenue. His primary objective was always to satisfy the fans who would appreciate his music, and he wanted them to spread the word about it to those who hadn't heard it yet. This is why fans played such an important part in his career. There is no greater sense of accomplishment than when your fans acknowledge the value of your artistic creations and spread the word about them.

4 Methodology

Qualitative research is a market research method that focuses on gathering information via open-ended and conversational communication. Qualitative research methods are aimed to show the perceptions and behavior of a target audience in relation to a certain subject. In-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic research, content analysis, and case study research are all common forms of qualitative research methodologies. The outcomes of qualitative approaches are more descriptive, and conclusions may be derived relatively easy from the data gathered (Fossey et al., 2002).

The author chose to implement a qualitative research method with semi-structured interviews to learn more about the major challenges regarding Kosovo's music marketing in a digital-driven market. The targeted musicians are Arber Salihu and the band Syte. The author made a deliberate choice to interview this duo because they are musicians who create non-commercial music. It is more difficult for them to market themselves as alternative musicians in Kosovo compared to mainstream, commercial musicians. Alternative musicians must go the extra mile to promote themselves because commercial music is more appealing to the Albanian-speaking audience.

The process of conducting interviews with the targeted musicians took approximately one week, depending on the musician's availability and preference of interview form after initial outreach to those musicians for the purpose of conducting interviews (video meeting or written form).

Considering these musician's extremely busy schedules, the interview with the band SYTE was conducted through a set of emails and the interview with Arber Salihu (La Fazani) was conducted through a video meeting.

5 Results

The following section includes the results gathered through interviews conducted with the targeted musicians. In this regard, the author focused on identifying the process of entering the music market in Kosovo and its challenges, the musicians' marketing strategies and social media and streaming platforms used by the latter in order to promote their music. In addition, the study sheds light into the musicians' perspectives about the marketing dynamics in Kosovo.

At first, when respondents were asked about their strategy for breaking into the music market in Kosovo, the results varied depending on the type of music that they were producing. Other interviewees shared personal experiences, some of which included the challenges they faced while going through this process, in contrast to Sytë Band, who said that their new and distinctive sound was what helped them breakthrough in the music market. In this regard, Arbër Salihu (La Fazani) stated that the lack of mainstream in his music made it harder to penetrate a music market where commercial music is preferred.

Afterwards, the author moved on to the next phase of the interview, which consisted of asking the interviewees about the actions that they had taken to promote themselves as upcoming artists. According to the findings, the most common things that artists do in order to market themselves are releasing music on all music platforms, creating visual content to go along with it (music videos, photo-shoots, etc.), playing a lot of live shows, doing TV/Radio interviews, and being very active on social media profiles. In addition, the most common things that artists do to market themselves are releasing music on all music platforms, creating visual content to go along with it (music videos, photo-shoots, etc (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, TikTok, Twitter).

However, reach: "constraints imposed by social media platforms", poses one of the biggest challenges. According to the musicians, the content has a much better chance of going viral when it is posted on a larger account that has a higher frequency of posts than when it is posted on an account that has a lower frequency of posts. The world that emerged after the internet is a place that is constantly evolving, and it can be very difficult to keep up with the changes that are taking place. Having said that, a great deal of importance is placed on the process of creating content that is entertaining for their followers. The musicians claim that the interaction with their supporters and followers is generated primarily through contact made on Instagram. Arbër Salihu admitted that when he first created his Instagram account, one strategy that he utilized was to follow as many other Instagram users as he possibly could. As a direct outcome of his actions, he now has more than 5,000 followers who are devoted admirers of his musical work. Although it was not the most ingenious marketing strategy, this artist found that making their fans feel valued, responding to their messages, and engaging with them through Instagram polls were all successful ways to market their music. Furthermore, according to Sytë Band, one efficient way to elevate their marketing strategy was to partner with AWAL to help them distribute their music. This was one of the ways that AWAL was able to assist them. In addition, prior to the release of each new album, they collaborate with a public relations firm in order to increase awareness of their music on a global scale.

"Nowadays artists have to use every channel possible to promote themselves, and I don't think one is more important than the other. So, as much as you have to use platforms like Instagram and TikTok to create a brand and an image around yourself, you have to send those

fans to good quality music that can be streamed on Youtube or Spotify. At the same time, as much as you promote your music on Spotify playlists, if those fans like it, you have to send them to Instagram or Facebook to promote your image and what you stand for as an artist” stated Sytë Band in the interview.

Respondents emphasized the significance of branding and advertising by making the argument that what musicians do is essentially show business because as soon as they make their music available to the general public, they are beginning the process of promoting their product (the product being their music). The formation of a personal and emotional connection with listeners and fans is more important to musicians than the sale of a commodity; as a result, the image of the musician as a brand is extremely important.

Lastly, the musicians who were questioned believe that the relatively small market in Kosovo is simple to enter, despite the fact that its presence is difficult to manage. They continue by explaining that individual marketing is frequently outcompeted by the marketing that is conducted by mainstream establishments in a market that is relatively small like Kosovo and where there is a high level of competition. It is not effective to rely solely on social media, especially for younger artists.

The market in Kosovo prefers certain types of music over others, and this preference changes depending on the type of music. It would appear that if one creates music that is commercial and mainstream and that is appealing to an Albanian-speaking audience, it is very simple to promote oneself as a musician. On the other hand, making alternative music requires going out of one's way to promote oneself, as this is the only way for one's music to be associated with and heard by a larger audience.

6 Recommendations

During the course of the interviews, it came up on multiple occasions that Kosovo has a relatively limited market that, despite being simple to enter, it is challenging to manage successfully.

In a market with a relatively small size and a high degree of competitiveness, such as Kosovo, individual marketing is typically outcompeted by the marketing undertaken by mainstream

establishments. Depending primarily on social networking is ineffective, especially for younger artists. It appears to be quite easy to advertise oneself as a musician if one writes music that is commercial, popular, and appealing to an Albanian-speaking audience. However, producing alternative music necessitates self-promotion, as this is the only method for one's music to be identified with and heard by a bigger audience.

The fundamental rules of marketing apply to this scenario. The authors Kotler and Scheff describe three crucial steps. The organization (the musician in this scenario) must first identify a market for its products. Create new demands rather than simply satisfying current ones. As previously said, an artist must find an audience and grow their market. Kotler and Scheff referred to so-called audience education when they said that the artist must acquire a new audience for his or her music. Thirdly, an arts organization must maintain its audience. Additionally, individual artists should maintain communication with former consumers, even though they may not buy a new gig for a while. The necessity might arise at any moment. "Arts marketer must be aware of and sensitive to the different and perpetually changing interest and needs of a wide variety of audience segments." (Kotler & Scheff, 1997). People often listen to a variety of musical genres, and new musicians are constantly entering the market. A musician must remind listeners of his or her own music in order for them to recall it in the future. The objective is not to listen to the audience, determine what they want, and then alter one's music to match that vision. Artists must maintain their artistic integrity. Instead, the artist should listen to the various audience groups to determine who needs their song now. (Kotler & Scheff, 1999).

Melanie Kealey, who is a Communications Manager at music website platform Bandzoogle has provided a few marketing strategies that the author of this thesis believed, were very useful in this scenario.

M. Kealey stated that in order to build a marketing plan that will reach the largest potential audience, one must first identify their fans. To do this, consider data such as the location of your audience, their age, and where they spend time online. Knowing your audience can assist you in developing a marketing approach that more effectively reaches them. In addition, if you target people who are interested in your music, your marketing efforts will be more effective than if you promote to those who are uninterested. Utilize the available metrics in

order to determine who these fans are. This might include built-in reports on your artist website that track site views. If you are active on streaming platforms, data awaits you there as well as on your social media networks. Learn your audience's demographics, search phrases, and interests to better comprehend them.

When you begin marketing your music, you should prioritize your present audience. But you should also consider how to expand your audience. Distributing music online and expecting that listeners discover it is unlikely to yield the desired effects. When you keep your individuality as an artist, your music marketing will be effective. This involves interacting with your existing followers via email campaigns, your music website, playlists, and blogs. These are the fans that will not only support you, but also assist you reach additional listeners by sharing your songs. Work on expanding your popularity by attracting new followers with fresh, engaging material. Drive listeners to your website and offer them a gift in exchange for their email address. Then, utilize this list to maintain the connection (Kealey, 2021).

Whether you're attempting to promote a new album or encourage people to attend your shows, social media is a useful tool for determining who might enjoy your music. From there, you may contact those individuals directly. Use social media to attract followers back to your website, where they can explore your material and music in greater detail, so increasing the likelihood of turning them into actual fans who will continue to connect with your music. When developing a plan to sell your music, you should identify the platforms you are familiar with and use frequently. Then, create relevant social media content. This may include behind-the-scenes films, relevant blog articles, and non-musical content that helps to construct your tale. Once you've solidified your ideas, stagger your updates, and promote sharing. Keep this in mind if you specialize at sharing spontaneous material. Consider using paid social media advertisements into your plan to better target and reach prospective listeners (Kealey, 2021).

To ensure that your fanbase will continue to be interested in your music, increase your fan involvement. It is simpler than ever to reach fans directly, but you must first choose which music marketing methods are most appropriate. Then, when it comes to fan interaction, employ consistency, honesty, and sustainability. This is crucial for keeping your current audience informed and engaged in your work. Develop personal ties with your fans. Start by compiling a mailing list. Participate in social media. Try selling merchandise online or at a table

after your performance to ensure audience interaction. Selling fan memberships as a method to consistently develop compelling content and stay in touch with your followers might be a second level of engagement. By emphasizing a feeling of community among your audience, you will be able to construct a story that holds everyone's attention. This community will then gather around your planned performances, listen to, and share your music, and support your endeavors (Kealey, 2021).

If you are promoting an album, releasing your music in advance will help you gain traction and reach as many people as possible. As part of your music marketing activities, you might pitch your song to the press in order to receive publicity. Any mention of your music from outside sources may be beneficial for your marketing efforts; in addition to helping you reach additional listeners; it can also improve the search engine optimization of your band's website. Create an electronic press kit that reflects your objective, whether it is to acquire a spot for a premiere or to promote a single. Then, explore music blogs and Spotify playlists, make a spreadsheet, and send an email with a link to your electronic press kit (EPK) to those that are a suitable fit. You may need to send dozens of emails before receiving a favorable response but persist. Momentum can begin with as few as two individuals becoming devoted fans of your music, and then evolve into something more substantial (Kealey, 2021).

Band websites are crucial for establishing a musical identity and gaining new followers. Social media may assist with this, but it can also restrict your artistic reach. Create a website for your music that reflects your artist brand, then direct followers from all of your social and streaming networks there. Your website will not only be a more permanent and professional area to create your fanbase, but it may also generate online cash for your music and merchandise (Kealey, 2021).

If you have a budget for music promotion, you should consider employing a radio tracker or publicist to assist get your song noticed. The amount of money you will spend will depend on the size and breadth of the campaign you want to conduct. Keep in mind that real effects may not occur until thousands of dollars have been spent, and that there is no assurance that your music will be examined or picked up by radio stations - so plan properly and invest prudently. If you cannot afford a radio campaign, you may put in extra time and effort to get your music

on the radio by contacting stations. You may also devote more effort to advertising your songs online by yourself (Kealey, 2021).

As it was mentioned during the interviews, since Kosovo's music industry is mainly filled with mainstream/ commercial music which is appealing to the Kosovar audience, artists with other genres such as alternative or indie, have a difficulty promoting themselves in the same efficient way. Marketing yourself as an alternative or indie musician in Kosovo, without a marketing manager or team, is difficult. On the other hand, it's the concern of finding the proper person or team to help promote the musicians without affecting the brand identity that the musicians have created and try to shift into a commercial form.

Neil Patel also suggested some marketing strategies for musicians. He said if you intend to sell yourself online, you must possess a website. It provides comprehensive information on your act. If I want to check out your tour dates, book you for a performance, read your bio, or purchase merchandise, I will visit your website first. Another important reason why you should develop a website: It is an area over which you have complete control. You'll also want to create a following on social media, but those sites are owned by third companies. These third parties can (and do) make regular algorithmic modifications that may lower your reach overnight by a significant amount.

Making the appropriate connections may be quite beneficial in the pursuit of recognition. However, you cannot just wait for these linkages to develop on their own. You must expose yourself and create opportunities through networking (Patel, nd.).

Here are some essential networking strategies by Neil Patel:

Reach out via social media: Identify individuals who operate in the appropriate areas of the music industry, locate them on social media, and engage with them. When reaching out, do not immediately want a contract or booking. Engage in discourse.

Get face-to-face: Simply said, one has to be as engaged as possible in their local community. Participate in as many performances and open mics as possible, attend seminars and conferences, and hang out at venues that frequently book local performers.

Adopt a networking mindset: Every conversation is a potential networking opportunity. One may be dealing with a local performer who is interested in collaborating for a few gigs or someone from a charity that is planning a festival. Become used to carrying business cards and maybe demo CDs, USB sticks, and download cards.

Eighty percent of non-routine sales transactions require at least five follow-ups. Music is likely comparable. If one does not make an attempt to resume halted talks, they cannot expect networking to produce results (Patel, nd.).

Multiple-sense-engaging content increases the likelihood that customers will see their brand favorably and purchase their goods (in this example, their music). Additionally, 43% of customers favor interactive video content over other forms of media. Why? Because it allows people to choose what information to view and when to view it (Patel, nd.).

One's music marketing's ultimate objective is to reach new audience; therefore it makes sense to reach out to people and outlets with their own engaged audiences (Patel, nd.).

7 Conclusion

This thesis intends to clarify the marketing methods used in Kosovo's music industry and the challenges musicians face in the current digital era, as well as to provide alternative solutions based on the learnings. The author aspires to contribute to the literature on the music industry in Kosovo, which has been understudied relatively to other European countries for a range of socioeconomic and historical reasons. It is beneficial to understand more about the music industry as a whole and its operations. In addition, it is important to determine what the primary challenges are for musicians in Kosovo and to gather data in order to identify potential solutions.

As stated throughout this thesis, technological development has had a tremendous impact on the history of professional music, and it is under immense pressure to keep up with consumer demands. It has shifted to a whole new level of sharing, purchasing, marketing, and distribution as a result of the expansion of the digital world throughout time.

After conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants, the author was able to obtain more knowledge about the chosen subject and to better grasp the prospective solutions.

The information gathered from the interviews signifies that the participating musicians have their own strategies for promoting their music; nevertheless, these strategies do not provide them with the same audience reach and visibility as mainstream musicians. There are certain types of music that are more popular in Kosovo than others, and this preference shifts depending on the type of music being played. Music that is commercial and mainstream and appealing to an Albanian-speaking audience would appear to make it easy to promote oneself as a musician. Making alternative music, on the other hand, requires a lot of self-promotion, as this is the only way to get their music heard by a wider audience.

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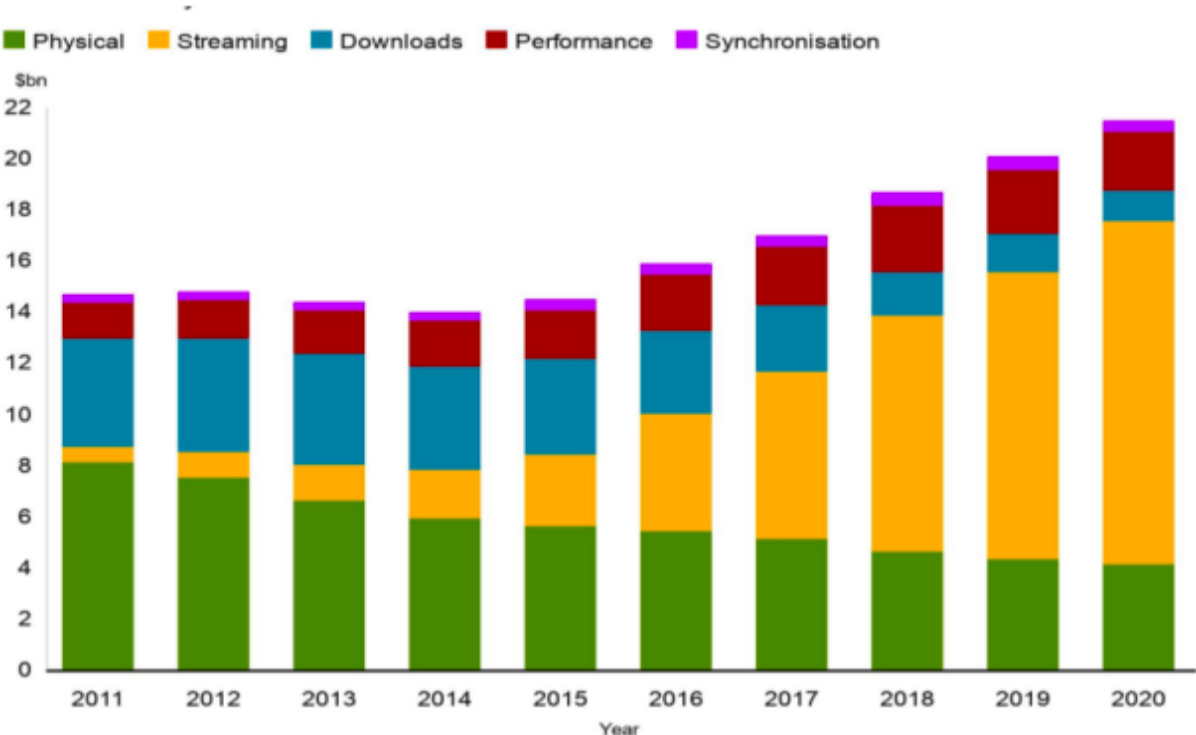
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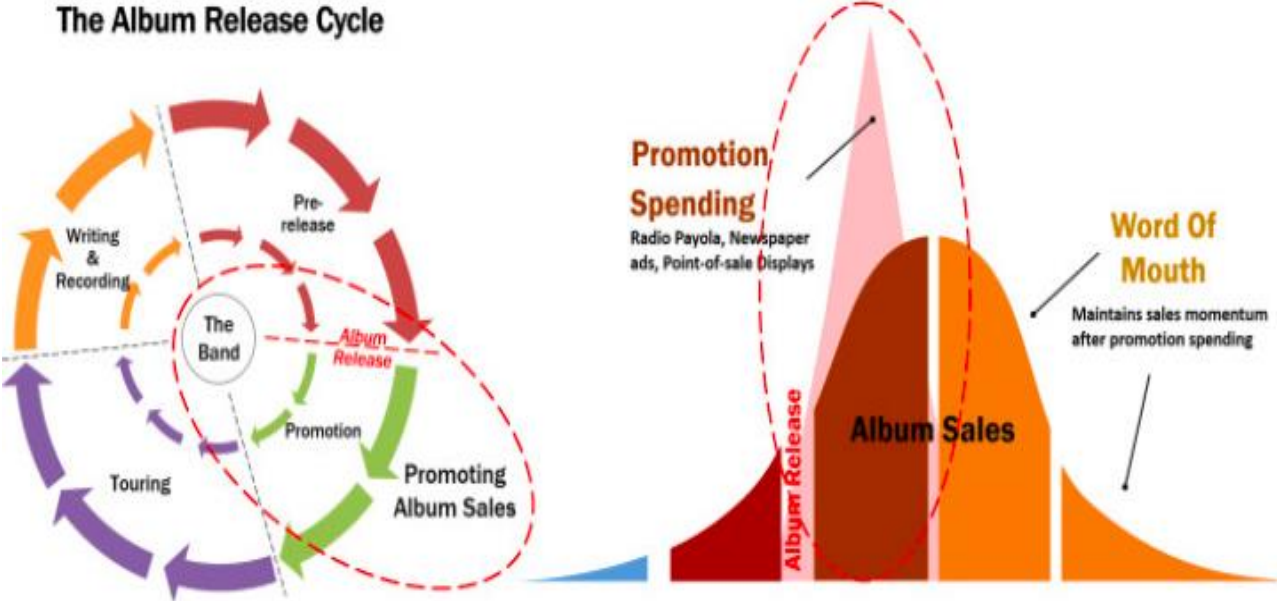
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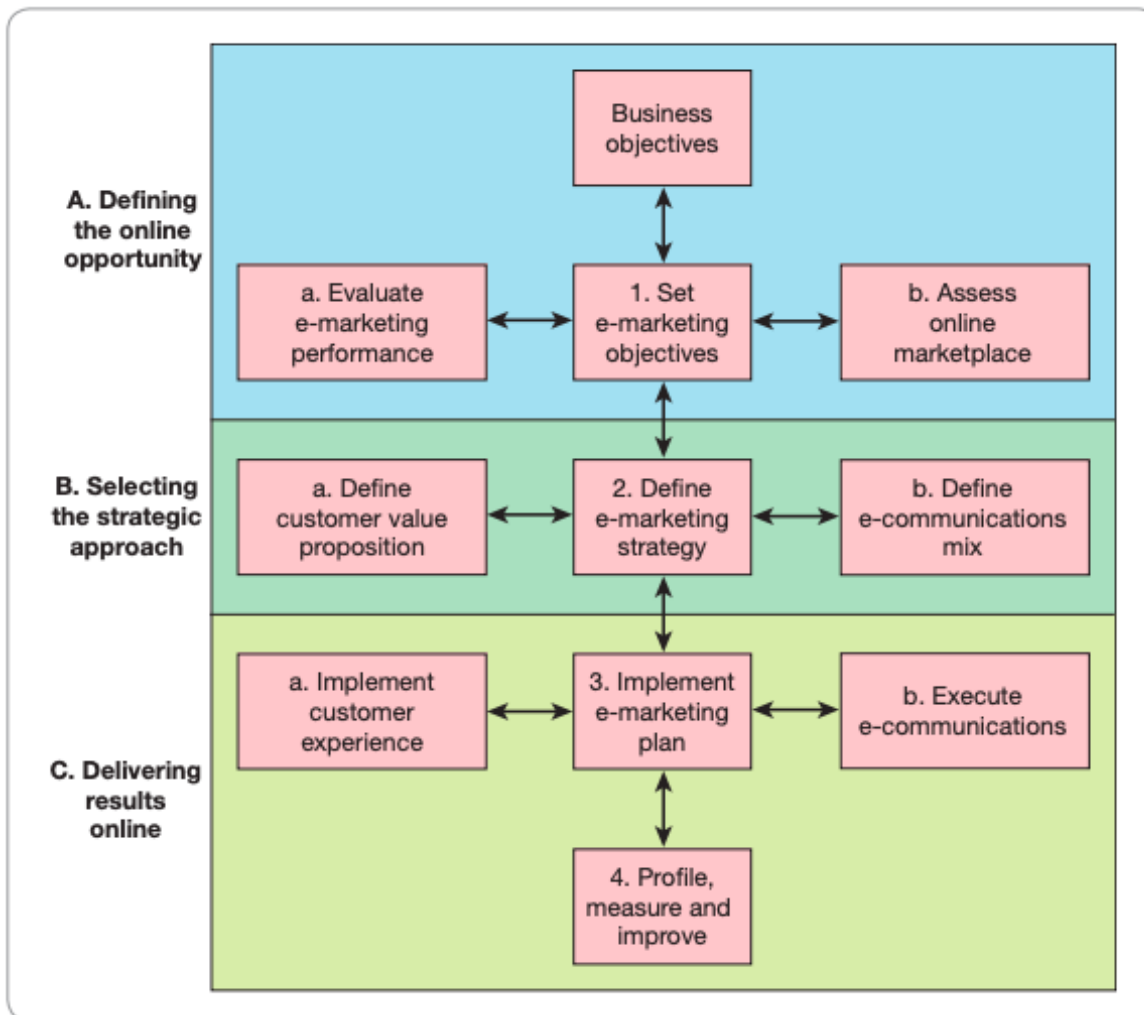
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Appendix 1: Figure 1. Music industry revenue 2011-2020

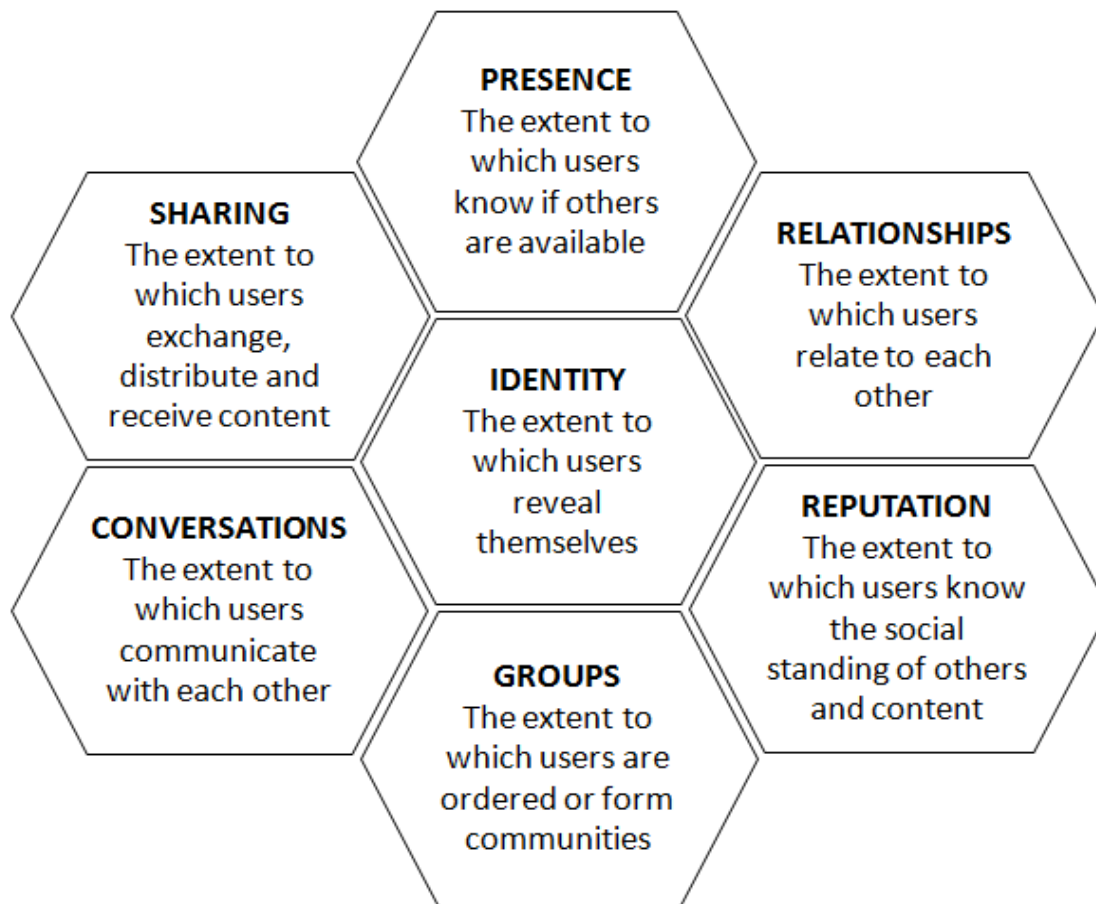


Appendix 2: Figure 2. Album Release Cycle



Appendix 3: Figure 3. A generic digital marketing strategy development process

Appendix 4: Figure 4. Honeycomb model.



Appendix 5: Figure 5. Brand Identity Design Process.



Appendix 6: Interview questions 1.

1. Would you please give a high-level overview of your professional and academic career to date, including years of experience and biggest achievement so far?
2. How did you promote your music in the pre-digital era, specifically in the years preceding and following the Kosovo war?
3. Was there a strategy to differentiate your band from the other musicians and establish a brand identity and image, despite the absence of digital marketing channels?
4. In what ways did your fans/listeners play a part in your music's success and recognition?
5. Could you describe the early stages of digital marketing in Kosovo and how it affected all the artists at the time?

Appendix 7: Interview questions 2.

1. Would you please give a high-level overview of your music career to date, including years of experience and biggest achievement so far?
2. How was your process of entering the music market in Kosovo? Were there any challenges?
3. What were the actions you took in marketing yourself as an upcoming artist?
4. How do you market yourself as an artist? What is your marketing strategy when it comes to promoting your music? Which of those were efficient?
5. What are the best methods to interacting with your listeners? Please consider social media, media streaming platforms, distributing channels etc. when answering?
6. What social media and streaming platforms do you typically use to promote and distribute your music? Briefly explain why those?
7. Do you have a marketing team or are you in charge of your own advertisement?
8. What would you have done or would do differently to market yourself with the knowledge/experience you have now?
9. What do you think about the marketing dynamics in Kosovo? Is it easy to market yourself as an artist in Kosovo?