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## The Use of Social Media for Marketing by Independent Musicians

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# The Use of Social Media for Marketing by Independent Musicians

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## Abstract

Many musicians have social media presences, but not many know how to begin or how to market their music. Instead, artists find themselves searching for other forms to help them market their music. This leads them to overspend on expensive services in hopes that they can get their names more known. Musicians may feel discouraged when they don't see the results they hope for, especially online and with other competitors. Because of this, musicians feel less confident in their success in the music industry. There is an imbalance between what the musician wants to achieve and what they need. Through research of different marketing strategies, musicians can use tools and strategies to facilitate, monitor, and plan their content without needing a third party.

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## Framework and History

### Introduction

Every musician has a goal: to get their name known in order to sell their music. Independent musicians without a record label must find a way to market themselves to their target audience in the competitive music industry. The way music marketing has evolved today is far different from what musicians in the 20th century experienced. Without the knowledge of a solid marketing plan or skill, an independent musician will have a difficult time remaining relevant on online platforms. Marketing oneself is becoming more important as aspects of our lives are becoming increasingly dependent on networking and advertising through social media. With the right networks and resources, musicians will surely find success. Through the use of social media marketing, it will allow independent musicians to find their audience effectively. Fortunately, with how accessible so many social media platforms are becoming for independent artists, it is not impossibly difficult for them to market themselves. The importance of this form of marketing has increased as some artists have struggled, considering that most of their revenue from their recorded music would need to come from streaming or live stream from an online platform. It leads artists who usually generate revenue from live performances to hold virtual live concerts as well. Independent musicians need to leverage a range of social media tools to market themselves to build a brand identity to reach and engage potential fans. Moreover, independent musicians will learn how to keep their audience engaged through the process of marketing without spending thousands of dollars for services to become successful, considering that early

independent artists don't have the benefit of record labels' financial backing or their large revenue.

## Background

Marketing started at an interpersonal level. Musicians would rely on print media to promote their music events to gain recognition. Much of the music promotion from using print media would rely on word-of-mouth, and print media would include scheduled information about an event (Aitken, "The Internet"). However, a downside of print media was the physical limitation. A person would need to purchase a copy of a magazine or newspaper to get news related to musicians (Aitken, "The Internet"). However, flyers and posters advertise upcoming local events and do not require people to purchase magazines or newspapers. The flyers and posters would be placed in locations the target audience would most likely notice the artist events and information. Referring to the tangibility of print media, physical copies of print media and flyers and posters can also be shared with other people. This in turn, would provide free advertisement for the musician because print media can be used and seen multiple times. Reporters have also interviewed musicians for years, which allows fans to connect more with the musician. Through interviews, musicians are able to gain publicity which helps build trust. Interviewing a musician would allow the audience to learn about upcoming future events or albums. Moreover, by interviewing the musician, other listeners can implement word of mouth to create buzz with the new artist.

Radio was the next natural progression of media. Radio gave musicians a widespread reach, considering that independent artists didn't always need to hold a live performance to meet

their needs. Radio would determine what people wanted to hear and this would directly link to higher sales (Goslich et al.). Getting music on the radio was the main marketing goal. For example, The Weeknd's song "Blinding Lights" was played for about 19 weeks on the top spot on radio ("The Weeknd Makes Radio"). People can't skip songs on the radio or search for a song to listen to. When a person turns on the radio, the radio station decides what song will be played. The radio helps new artists or songs be discovered, but the artist would have to be noticed by the radio station first through promotional work. While radio stations remain relevant, the mediums through which music was played continued to evolve.

Music videos took off after MTV created a TV channel dedicated to musicians. This was a way to market popular music. MTV personified musicians to build a deeper connection with their fans, thus creating fan loyalty and engagement as well as influencing culture (Richardson). Similarly to radio, up and coming artists could get featured and benefit from the attention MTV got on a regular basis. Independent artists learned what kind of music trends arose during the year, which was a great way for them to adjust or modernize their music according to the market. The direction of music videos lead to fan curiosity about getting to learn more about an artist.

Given the range of opportunities for marketing and the skills involved in doing it well, it is not surprising that some independent musicians don't have the proper knowledge of how to market themselves to their crowds. Over most of the history of the music industry, musicians had to travel and go out in order for them to inform people that they exist. They also had to find a way to make a living out of music. Because of this, musicians would work for other people or collaborate with other musicians. There weren't enough opportunities to seek help from other people or a label other than the musician's own self-branding. There were not enough resources

or companies dedicated to helping independent musicians learn how to market themselves. For this reason, musicians had to put in extra work to be recognized. It was not impossible to promote themselves, but it was more difficult to do. At this point, getting noticed by other people would be difficult to succeed without a label. Musicians without a record deal had no marketing help.

## 20th and 21st Century

Social media marketing arose as an important tool at the end of the 20th century and 21st century. In the latest parts of the 19th century, musicians would rely heavily on “performances, newspapers, player pianos and sheet music as their channels of distribution” (Ogden et al. 123). This did not mean their reach to be heard was limited, though: “The advancements in technology and business practices allowed companies to add additional channels of distribution” (Ogden et al. 123). As time progressed, the 20th century saw the creation of more distribution channels, this allowed artists to be recognized by more people across the world. Independent labels expanded, this meant that there was high demand for popular music (Ogden et al. 123). However, this also meant that more artists felt the need to join record labels because of the established connections the label had for marketing. Artists felt that because of high demand for popular music there would be more artists creating more music. This would lead to anyone who did not have the proper representation becoming obscured.

In the 1960s as technology advanced, marketers were able to appeal to the audience with better sound quality to drive up sales (Ogden et al. 124). Moreover, around the early 1980s music marketers started to implement a new marketing skill to sell to music lovers. Marketers began to



focus on promotional tactics that include the research of learning what people wanted and then making a music product out of the idea of the listeners (Ogden et al. 124). They began to turn their attention toward the customer and their listening habits and music taste as well as focusing on what marketing tactics would catch the audience's attention as opposed to focusing on the artist's music.

In the 1990s, MP3 started to take off, and it began to affect many musicians' music sales. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, music sales and music marketing had dramatically changed. Towards the end of the 1990s, a 19-year-old college student released Napster, software that focused on downloading songs illegally, which caused a 26% decrease in music sales (Ogden et al. 124). The brand Apple made an MP3 device named the iPod, which caused more illegal MP3 downloads because people wanted to add music to their devices. More illegal torrent sites began to propagate starting in the twenty-first century, which made it easy for people to not buy music. However, it also motivated music companies and music industries to find other ways to promote music (Ogden et al. 124).

Though changes were required, another older marketing strategy was used predominantly during this time: musicians would go out and appear in stores and employ the positive relationships by mentions in magazines or newspapers (Ogden et al. 124). Moreover, music labels would utilize guerrilla marketing, a form of marketing to create an advertisement that people can interact with on a day-to-day basis (Ogden et al. 124). For example, a flyer of piano lessons with tear of contact tabs shaped as the piano keys is a form of guerrilla marketing. In addition, musicians have found online advertisements on sites like Facebook and YouTube easier

to use to promote themselves. However, many independent musicians face a number of struggles when it comes to properly marketing their career.

### The Struggles of Rising Independent Musicians

A common struggle musicians face when they first start off is the lack of connections. An artist who is starting out does not have enough connections, and for the matter, has less recognition. For example, music students who go to school are able to build professional connections with other musicians or instructors as well as having other resources within the school that helps them make connections with other professional organizations within the field. Record label artists have connections within the industry, and signed artists are able to collaborate with other musicians who are under the same record label. Signed artists have additional resources such as managers, producers, and other professionals who help them make connections beyond the record label. Artists under a label contract are heavily marketed through commercials, interviews, ads, social media, magazines, and more by the people working inside the record label. However, independent artists who aren't in either of these types of organizations don't have quick connections at hand. Even though social media platforms are accessible and make it easier to find online connections, sometimes the connections online are short-lived. It's difficult to make sustainable connections when online communication is limited. Without a label, independent artists are not taken as seriously because they don't have a group of reliable connections ready to market. This is one of the reasons why independent artists take a longer time to have a breakthrough and be recognized by others.

Alvaro Martinez, creatively known as Evan Voids, is an electro-pop musician based in Chihuahua, Mexico. When Voids first decided to begin his journey of creating a social media presence dedicated to his music, he realized that his only connections were his family and close friends (Martinez). He knew he had to find a way to expand his following on social media. His first approach was to create a YouTube channel where he began posting other artist's instrumentals as well as his own covers. This was his way to draw in people who like electronic-pop to attract his potential target audience with his music similar to Lady Gaga. The only problem was that he still needed to reach more people. He began to attend places that allowed him to perform live. Once he performed live, people would come up to him and ask about his social media to follow him (Martinez). Voids would gladly share and exchange information with his new followers.

He was growing his fanbase steadily by performing live, however, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, all business and local places began to close down. Voids was no longer able to perform live and had to turn to social media to promote his new music. He would run YouTube campaigns to land more traffic to his page. Voids mentioned, "I feel like I have spent more money than I have earned so far," and pointed out that, "as long as you're not signed to a major label, you have to cover all of your expenses" (Martinez). A way he was able to reach more people was by using follow loops on Reddit, where the goal is to follow and interact with others to increase engagement. By using Reddit and advertising his page on other platforms, he was able to quickly increase his follower count by approximately 1,000 followers on Instagram in a short period of time (Martinez).

Abe Guzman, known by their stage name of Tallon Ted, is a hip-hop artist based in Salinas, California. Ted first started by learning to play guitar and practicing his stage presence and musical skills at Hartnell Community College. He had a vision to create his own band, but realized that it is complex to find the right people who shared the same priorities and passion as him (Guzman). It was tough to find someone who was dependable, as many of the people who he approached treated music as a side project rather than a long-term commitment (Guzman). The lack of investment led to a lack of effort, and it was hard to advertise himself while also coordinating an apathetic group. Ted also realized that it was difficult to afford equipment for an entire group. This led him to create his own record label called Buhmee Productions and adapt his style to hip-hop as he found it convenient to arrange and produce his own music with his digital audio workstation (DAW). This allowed him to create hip-hop beat instrumentals for other artists who he met while performing live. It was significantly easier to plan and coordinate his public image without having to worry about any conflicting opinions to make a decision. When Covid-19 hit, East Village Coffee Lounge in Monterey and XL Public House Bar in Salinas were where Ted would perform live with limited customers (Guzman). It's difficult to find the networking online as there isn't that physical connection Ted experiences in person. However, with the limited audience Ted was not able to reach enough people and maintain his performance skills. An independent artist has to find their own target and also compete with other record labels to reach that audience (Guzman). This is another reason why Ted finds it difficult to earn a stable living through just music.

Benjamin Kofi Daniels, known professionally as King Kofi, is a singer, songwriter, and hip-hop artist based in North London. In 2014 Kofi went to a university in London to study

graphic design, but realized that graphic design wasn't for him and decided to continue pursuing hip-hop instead. His goal was not to become a famous hip-hop artist, but he would release songs on Soundcloud because he loved to create music. After releasing his music for free, Kofi got 500 plays on Soundcloud, and he realized that his music could go further than what he had expected (Daniels). He began taking his music more seriously and would go use a free studio that only allowed half-an-hour sessions per week. It took him 6-8 months to finish his EP. His first EP attracted his first fans, and that is when he realized that he could make music for people outside his family and friends circle (Daniels).

In order to promote his music, Kofi would create stickers that had his social media information and handles, and he would stick the stickers on the London Underground stations. The way he would know it worked was when he would receive messages and photos from strangers that had found his stickers in places he stuck them. Based on who reacted to his stickers, he would get a good idea of what areas had more traffic and, by extension, a more interactive audience (Daniels). He would utilize Soundcloud and Instagram as well as Reddit by using a follow-for-follow technique to receive more reliable engagement as well as making it easier to observe how people think and enjoy by reading comments and post reactions. He created an Instagram account that would focus solely on music. He later released his album *Summer With The Wolves*, and at this time he decided to treat his music at a more professional level. Kofi began to develop a record label called This Is Not Yellow, with the help of his friend Joshua Igbo, to have the imprint to use when he would release his music (Daniels). Kofi and his friend would get in touch with the London press, and both would do much self-marketing. Through their efforts, Kofi was featured in an indie magazine. For six months after the album

was released, Kofi would go out into the streets of London to sell his album for 5 pounds each. He was able to raise 20,000 pounds (Daniels).

One of the challenges Kofi mentioned about selling music on the streets was that he did not see himself doing it long-term, but he did continue for 18 months with many struggles. The struggles he faced with it were the motivation to go out and sell while simultaneously marketing himself even though he genuinely felt unhappy about having to sell music on the streets. This led him to have a mental health decline, especially when the 2020 pandemic hit where many things began to shift for him. During the 18 months of selling his album, his career began shifting and he met his manager. He was able to travel to Los Angeles in hopes of getting recognized by Kanye, considering at the time Kanye followed him on Twitter. Kofi's manager mentioned that it would be a great idea to release a music video. After the release, that is when music record labels recognized him, but he mentioned that "it's harder for other companies to invest in you plus the crisis." Companies may hesitate to invest too heavily on artists at the beginning of their career because they are unsure whether or not they'll make a desirable amount of return on their investments. It's too difficult to get enough backing initially. Even if Kofi faced many trials and errors with marketing, consistency, and learning about how to create Facebook ads, it taught him valuable lessons to maintain a positive outlook on situations.

Not all independent artists have a solid foundation about how to start their own music business or how to market themselves. The issue is that learning how to brand oneself seems deceptively intuitive: it seems easier than it is. Many independent artists create social media posts regularly, but they aren't always able to take into account what other factors come into play when creating a successful post. This is made more difficult as many independent artists don't

know how to create feeds that stand out from other artists that are also trying to develop their own brand. Furthermore, learning about business marketing can be overwhelming for independent artists who are barely starting out in their career. It becomes discouraging to try to learn a new concept.

Sometimes the reason independent artists grow slowly is because of the lack of resources and funds. In addition to having resources to market and promote themselves, artists need to have enough equipment to create their own music. Some examples of quality sound equipment are DAW, microphone, pop filter, interface, monitors, headphones, instruments, and soundproof items. It's possible to get away with \$400-\$500 recording bundle equipment, but if an artist wants the best sound for their music, they'll be looking to invest at least \$2,000-\$3,000, not to mention the space to set up the equipment. Additionally if they hope to hire a freelance musician or producer to help them with a track or record in a professional studio, they'll have to pay them too. Because of this, their expenses can quickly stack up to become unaffordable.

### Independent Musicians who Became Famous

Chance The Rapper, a hip-hop artist, released free music up until he started to gain more attention after his first solo mixtape *10 Day*, which led him to be featured by *Complex* magazine in their "10 New Chicago Rappers To Watch Out For" article in 2012 ("Chance The Rapper"). During the same year, Chance collaborated with Childish Gambino on the song "They Don't Like Me" and was invited to a tour to open for Gambino. This gave him the exposure necessary to start taking off. Then he released his next mixtape *Acid Rap*, which he released for free once again, in the year 2013 "10 New Chicago Rappers To Watch Out For" ("Chance The Rapper").

Jane Weaver is an independent songwriter and runs her own record label called Bird Records. She was able to release her songs through her own record business as well as helping to promote other lesser-known female artists. This allowed her to keep running Bird Records ("About"). Through releasing her music and performing live, her music started to get more recognition as well as have others mention her because she'd help other artists to release and market their music. Weaver was an independent artist up until she signed with Fire Records in 2017 ("About").

Frank Ocean's career started out by renting a recording studio in New Orleans. He would work multiple jobs to earn enough to get his own music equipment and create his own music recording studio. However, after a tragic storm hit his hometown, it forced him to relocate to another city (Harris). Ocean decided that moving to Los Angeles, California would provide new music opportunities. He found a recording studio to work with, where his journey to ghost writing began. Ocean ghost wrote for famous artists like Beyonce, which connected him to people related to his music goals (Harris). This would later help him gain more recognition. His journey to become a great hip-hop artist allowed him to work with other hip-hop artists and led him to develop his own unique style of music. Through all the connections he made during his time in Los Angeles, it helped shape him into the artist he is today. He was able to learn from other artists related to his genre of music and how he would be able to market himself to other people. It slowly connected him to Tricky Stewart who helped him get signed with Def Jam Recordings (Harris).

Napsey Hussle was inspired to become a community activist and entrepreneur after his three-month trip to Africa. He lived in Los Angeles where he created mixtapes and released them



independently. Hussle would incorporate techniques and humor in his lyrics that were inspired by other artists like Snoop Dogg and Ice-T while adding his personal touch in his raps and rhythms (Yeung). He received more recognition through the hip-hop community by releasing his songs. This attracted many potential listeners to hear his music. He later released his *Crawshaw* album that was priced at \$100, which despite a large price drew more attention to him, and he still placed top 40 in *Billboard* Heatseekers chart (Yeung). His collaborations with other artists helped spread the word about who he was.

Zoë Keating is an avant-garde contemporary classical independent artist who also uses recording technology to create creative sounds and loops that modernize her classical music. When starting out as a musician she created a blog dedicated to her music and personal life. She knew she would have to learn the ins and outs of the music business to be able to negotiate royalties and learn where her money goes to decide on a fair deal (Keating, “Another Post”). Her true independent music journey started after her husband's death. She became a single mother. Music was Keating's way to heal and cope with her struggles. She started to create more music of her own and play more in concerts. She also moved out of the forest and into a city where she was less isolated and easier to make connections (Keating, “TED: Making Sense” 7:12-7:21).

Ani DiFranco, an independent folk singer, established herself as independent after releasing her debut in 1990 (Ankeny). In the few years after her debut release, she managed to sell thousands of albums. DiFranco produces, markets, and releases her original music through her own label called Righteous Babe Records. Her songs address political issues that people care about, which makes her an activist for the community. She was able to market herself without any help from a major music recording company. Because DiFranco does not have to recover an

advance from a record company for marketing or distribution, she is able to save up for future projects:

Most artists don't sell enough to reimburse their companies for the \$300,000 to \$1 million in cash advances spent per project on studio recording, video production, radio promotion and tour support. As a result, record companies lose money on the majority of their releases, and many artists signed to standard long-term contracts remain in debt throughout their careers. (Philips)

Many of the artists who don't meet the requirements of selling albums are pressured by the recording label company to change their way as an artist in order to generate more sales.

DiFranco doesn't like the idea of that and had hoped to rise as a musician on her own terms and create music that she cares about. This was the main reason why DiFranco created her own company: to avoid others taking advantage of her. Aside from music, DiFranco creates her own artwork for her music and "spends no money on record promotion" (Philips). Because DiFranco has her own business, she owns full rights to her music and how she distributes it, while earning a high profit margin. When DiFranco opened Righteous Babe Records, she created 500 copies of her first album, which she would later sell at local area clubs, bars, and churches. She would tour and gain more fans who would buy her albums and buy tickets for her concert (Philips). Over the years of touring and selling, DiFranco Righteous Babe Records began to grow with the help of her manager. They were able to slowly hire more people to work for Righteous Babe Records (Philips). At that point, it was when DiFranco's career had turned into a bright future.

In 2015, Billie Eilish, an independent artist at the time, wrote a few songs and uploaded them to Soundcloud for free. Later, her brother Finneas O'Connell wrote a song, originally for

his band Slightly, called “Ocean Eyes” and had Eilish sing it. After uploading it to Soundcloud in two weeks the song received thousands of views, which led to her rapid popularity (Ahlgren et al.). Similar to Chance, she initially offered her songs for free in order to get her name known. This is a strategy that may apply to musicians by uploading to music listening streams such as Spotify, Soundcloud, or other music streaming services. By uploading to streaming services, the independent artist can be discovered and receive a label offer if they choose to accept it. Most importantly, receiving a label offer is an indication that labels want to have them. This means the artist is already receiving attention and may continue to learn how to market themselves.

Another way that Eilish as well as other artists market themselves is through the sale of merchandise, which is something from which independent artists can benefit as well. Artists need to establish themselves as a brand to be recognizable to people. Artists can sell merchandise through multiple mediums to establish their brand. When artists create personalized merchandise, it creates a personal and emotional connection with their fans. Once fans buy and wear the merch, it will act as a free advertisement for the artist. A study of 650 companies conducted by Yale School of Management and industry research firm Cambria shows that 87% of buyers think that merchandise contributes to success in marketing as well as engaging with customers (“Why Promotional Merch”). Moreover, artists do music or merchandise giveaways to excite their audiences and increase engagement. The more interactive the content is, the more engagement increases.

### **Social Media Monitoring Marketing Tools Independent Artists May Use**

There are various ways independent artists can increase traffic flow to their websites or social media pages. Social media monitoring marketing tools can help collect data by keeping

track of their key terms and mentions as well as offering a way to see all their social media accounts in one page. By using monitoring tools, an independent artist is able to see what's trending about them and what people think about them without anybody having to use hashtags or mention tags. An independent artist is able to monitor a specific key term like "music" to get a general idea about what is trending. The artist is able to understand what conversations people are having about a specific idea or what they like. For example, if people begin to talk about liking sad music with heavy bass, the independent artist is able to record that to implement it in their music. This allows independent artists to keep track of what is trending on social media to remain relevant and keep up with what other users see. Moreover, by using the tools available, independent artists don't need to pay focus groups for research, and it's free marketing. Artists are able to freely analyze other competitors as well and what their fans are saying about them. By analyzing other pages, it can potentially open other opportunities that the independent artist wouldn't have known. Without the tools, much valuable information may go unnoticed because it's hard to track specific key terms and conversations using only social media platforms.

Hootsuite is a monitoring tool that allows users to track mentions, specific key terms from conversations or posts, and schedule posts through social media. Artists may decide to upload their personal accounts on Hootsuite, which then divides every connected social media platform into columns. By connecting their social media platforms, artists can track, like, and comment all at once without having to sign in individually through their social media pages. This allows artists to save time, while still being able to engage with all their followers by using one tool. Hootsuite has a "Professional" plan for freelancers or social media experts for about \$49. The professional account allows 10 social media accounts for managing, tracking, and reporting

on performance, an optional \$500 for social media boost, and a 24/7 live chat support (“Professional”). However, many artists may not find it necessary to buy the “Professional” plan as the free plan allows up to 2 social media accounts for managing, scheduling posts across other platforms at the same time, self-serve support through the “Help” center, and additional free apps (“Free”). The free version of Hootsuite does enough to monitor the social media pages that an independent artist can use it successfully, while allowing them to save time.

Semrush helps optimize and build an artist’s website. Semrush can monitor keywords artists can use to appear at the top of the page. With Semrush’s free subscription, although with limitations, the user may use the “Keyword Magic Tool” to help them monitor what keyword would be optimized to appear easily at the top of the search results (“How to use Keyword Magic Tool”). For example, inserting “music” into the search bar of the “Keyword Magic Tool” gives the top searched words that people search online daily. The tool allows the user to understand if their content would become obscured using the most frequently used key term. This could mean that the content would be hard to remain at the top if “music” or “youtube music” were used as their keyword. “Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach” recommends to “use hashtags, descriptive titles” which “help measure the popularity of specific content” (Barker et al. 171). For example, an independent artist may use additional terms after “music” for hashtags to find it easier to be discovered on social media. Moreover, this would mean that the musician will need to know their audience to learn what effective words would be useful to help optimize their page.

One tool every independent musician should have is Google Alerts. With Google Alerts, the artist may use their email to receive notifications of alerts from a chosen key term (Barker et

al. 225). After inserting a specific key term an independent musician may like to see, Google Alerts shows various Google searches in real time that include relevant topics based on the keyword. This can be useful if the artist is wondering about what people are saying about their competitors. Additionally, they are able to monitor various words, and they're able to compare what keywords would be more useful for free. The artist has the option to receive alerts based on region and language. After the artist signs up to receive notifications about their desired keyword, they'll receive emails every time new posts, blogs, articles, news, or other data appear on Google.

Google Trends is a free search monitoring tool that every independent artist may use to track topics or trends based on location. Independent musicians may search trends all around the world, however it may be best to focus on specific locations (Barker et al. 256). Independent musicians can use this to focus on specific regions. By searching the specific term, Google Trends is able to show data on how popular the trend was in different periods in time from recent arrangements to as far back as over decade. By using monitoring tools, independent artists will have an easier time navigating their social media platforms in a way that will maximize their audience interaction.

### **Social Media Platform Strategies**

Social media platforms have become a huge aspect in our lives. Many people of all ages use social media, and it has become part of our daily lives. With how prominent social media has become, marketers and advertisers have turned their attention towards reaching audiences through different social media platforms. Setting up a social media strategy will help independent artists set a goal to carry out when using social media platforms. By creating a well

defined strategy, the artist is able to understand what areas they're doing well in or areas that need improvement.

Launched in 2003, Myspace was a place for messaging, streaming, profile page customization, photo and video sharing (Aitken, "Myspace"). Many independent musicians found Myspace a great way to get their names out there. When Myspace Records was launched in 2005, popular music was promoted in the page (Aitken, "Myspace"). Because Myspace made profile web customization for individuals, people were able to add a music play button to their profile. This could also be used to promote new and up and coming bands that users were interested in to be discovered by people. It allowed many independent musicians to be successful because of how accessible music was in Myspace (Aitken, "Myspace").

An example of success stories stemming from Myspace are the Arctic Monkeys. While the Arctic Monkeys didn't directly do the marketing, friends created their Myspace page. Later, fans would share posts about the Arctic Monkeys, which resulted in many people following their page. Using the popularity of Myspace, the band was able to get recognized. Record labels began noticing and connected with the Arctic Monkeys, who later signed a deal in 2005 (Ainsley). These strategies of sharing music, even sharing content for free on popular platforms, can be applied by independent artists today.

Due to the downfall of Myspace, Facebook became the new most popular social media platform. With the personal profile and the opportunity to create another page for friends to like, many Facebook users saw this as an opportunity to do all types of business. For independent musicians to promote their music, they had the option to join groups relative to their business. Moreover, they were able to use Facebook to create their own ad campaigns. Independent

musicians are able to use their uploaded content to promote their music. This can help increase music sales. For instance, to drive sales, Tash Sultana uses ads to promote her video along with her targeted audience “followers of similar artists, related festivals, and music outlets on Facebook” (“Facebook Ads”). By promoting a video, musicians can find their targeted audience, based on who interacted with the ads (“Facebook Ads”). Ads could also be used as a way to find out if audiences will engage with the post before the artist publishes. A way Esperanza Spalding was able to increase awareness about her new album *12 Little Spells* was by emphasizing the number “12” in the title. She then set up a countdown, promoting her album everyday at 12:12 PM for 12 days before the album release date. Besides releasing music videos everyday for 12 days, Spalding engaged with fans through comments, Facebook Live, Instagram IGTV, and allowed a Facebook Premieres function where fans could converse amongst each other through the videos live chat (“Esperanza Spalding”). By using ads, artists are able to measure the “increase video views, sales, awareness, or conversions” (“Facebook Ads”). Through the statistics shown for the ad, the artist can get an idea of what people want to see or would like to see less of. The artist is also able to use a “look alike” audience from their previous ads who engaged with the ad to promote other things like merchandise or online events. Facebook ads may also be connected to Instagram (“Facebook Ads”).

Instagram’s initial release was in 2010. Facebook bought Instagram 2 years later (Ians). The start of Instagram was with pictures being the main focus, but users were allowed to post only 15 second videos. A few years later, after Instagram’s competitor Snapchat “Stories” feature attracted enough attention, Instagram decided to implement a “Story” feature of its own, and the video time was increased. Businesses began to use Instagram to promote and learn more about



their audience through story polls, quiz, or questions. Slowly, many users thought Instagram could be a helpful way to grow their fanbase. One of the strategies businesses implemented was filling out their Instagram introductory profile along with their contact information and a link to their website (Leighton). Filling out the introduction page is a great way for independent musicians to let other people know what the page is about, when the next event is, or when an album will be available (Leighton).

Having a strong theme and unique presence on the Instagram page will help attract more people. Many users look up to the people they follow, so it is important to create original story-like content that is relatable to what the target audience enjoys. Since the rise of TikTok's popularity as a competitor, "Reels" and "IGTV" have continuously been pushed so more people would spend more time on Instagram. Reels are similar to stories, but without the disappearing feature. Users are able to create a 15-second video, add fun effects, and music. IGTV, on the other hand, allows users to create longer videos. Because of this, independent musicians have the opportunity to post their music through a Reel or for others to use and share. Video is a way to build trust and engagement with the audience. In reference to Facebook and Instagram being connected, independent musicians can post and invite their Facebook followers to join their Instagram account and help spread the word through a click from Instagram. For independent musicians to reach more people, including focused hashtags and post location on posts to reach the target audience is important (Leighton). It is a way musicians can be discovered. To aid with the reach, public profiles have "Insights" that allows users to note what posts have more saves, shares, engagement, how many followers they received through the post, and what the best times

to post are. With the feature, independent musicians can study the post that received the most engagement to improve their future posts.

Considering how popular videos have become, it is important to consider the influence TikTok had had on other social media platforms. TikTok has been rising in popularity since its release in 2016 with “689 million active users worldwide” (Mohsin). Much of what attracted people to TikTok was its relation to Musica.ly where most of its audience consisted of a younger demographic ranging from ages 10 to 29, who were spending about 52 minutes on the app per day (Mohsin). TikTok's mission is to motivate users to express themselves through creative videos. This showed competition to YouTube because it also consists of creating videos. Many of the audience on TikTok like watching videos for quick and short entertainment. What attracted independent musicians to TikTok was its simplicity and faster profile growth, considering that there are more people using TikTok. What makes it so unique is that independent musicians can upload a video with original audio for their audience to use. Independent artists may utilize the viral trend of dueting a cover song or their own song in order to receive direct interactions with the audience. The “Duet” feature invites people to sing or play along to a common song they love. This will result in free enjoyable marketing. By followers posting the duet, the original poster is able to reach a wider target audience through these branches. As other users discover and use the music, more people become aware of where the song comes from. If a certain number of people use the creator's original audio, TikTok compensates the creator \$0.02-\$0.04 per 1,000 views (King). However, unless artists are able to create viral videos on a regular basis, TikTok would not be a reliable source of income. The independent artist would have to seek other ways to promote or collaborate for their source of revenue.

A case study about a 19-year-old indie-pop artist, named Ella Jane, showed how she promoted her music and writing process through TikTok. She amassed a following on TikTok and proceeded to share her videos with her most viral video totaling 1 million views. This led her song “Nothing Else I Could Do” to reach No. 16 on Spotify (Millet). Due to how accessible TikTok is, it is beneficial to independent musicians to promote their music through the app. Although there’s a large audience on TikTok, there are also plenty of people who don’t use or have access to it.

YouTube has been around for 16 years. With how accessible and user friendly YouTube is, it is no wonder YouTube has become such an integral part for the growth of independent artists. Independent artists who have officially released at least 3 songs with a music distributor may qualify for the “Official Artist Channel” (“YouTube for Artists”). It is a bonus boost for the independent artist, but is not necessary to have the title in order to succeed. Artists have been able to connect with their viewers through the Community, Live, and Ticketing features (“YouTube for Artists”). The Community tab helps YouTube creators engage with their followers with features similar to those as Instagram (i.e. polls, posts, comments). YouTube had a live feature where youtubers could livestream, however, YouTube has developed an alternate version of live streaming available that has been stylized to be similar to Instagram’s live streams. The ticket feature placed under the artist’s YouTube video allows viewers to find and buy tickets of their upcoming shows (“YouTube for Artists”). With these features, artists can build fan loyalty. Once the artist has established a fanbase, the artist is able to advertise their live concerts on their videos so fans can buy tickets. Independent artists are able to track and measure how their videos are doing with their audience using YouTube Analytics. Similar to Instagram Insights, YouTube

allows users to measure and analyze their videos by how many users spend watching their content. The artist is able to compare and improve their videos based on the timestamps and engagement times from their audience. This allows the artist to get to know their audience based on what they like to increase their viewer rate ("YouTube for Artists"). Similar to TikTok, YouTube also compensates creators who receive many views, but the artist would have to seek and market their music on different platforms rather than relying on YouTube for monetary gain. This is due to the low amount of revenue per stream of \$0.00154 on YouTube ("2019-2020 Streaming Price Bible"). This means that artists would need to have a constant large amount of views to reliably make a living through only YouTube. Sites like Patreon have been rising in popularity and reliability for content creators.

Patreon is a website that offers exclusivity to audiences through subscriptions. These subscriptions give paying audiences the opportunity to access content first before anyone else. It also offers subscribers perks and bonuses by receiving personalized content from the creator ("The Story"). By including the personalized content to subscribers, it increases fan loyalty. With enough funds from Patreon, independent artists are able to create more content. Because other sites like Youtube and TikTok don't compensate enough for starting artists, artists can promote their Patreon link to receive a more stabilized income ("The Story"). With the stability of income, independent artists will be able to focus on creating more quality content and have enough time to advertise themselves more through social media. Another way to earn more revenue would be live streaming.

Ever since the beginning of the 2020 pandemic, musicians have relied on live streaming their music. Twitch is a platform for live streamers who generally receive donations from their

viewers. Most of what independent musicians have done since the beginning was collaborate with other musicians. Musicians can recommend their viewers to another streamer's broadcast ("How to Promote Music"). This can help gain a new streamer friend for later collaboration. The streamer may also choose to return the favor, which can increase the artist's viewers. Because Twitch is more community focused than other platforms, the independent artist will most likely have to interact with the audience while performing live. Independent artists who use Twitch encourage people to comment for suggestions or thoughts about the song as well as responding back to their audience. In this case, it's possible that the viewers will want to request songs. Twitch offers the audience the chance to have a more personal connection with the artist. This is a great way to keep the audience engaged while performing live. Artists who use the Affiliate program may earn more revenue from ads, "bits" which is a form of virtual tips that represent \$0.01 per bit, and subscribers if they meet the requirements. Independent musicians may earn money by monetizing their streams and promoting their links to receive "bits" during a live stream or by joining the Twitch Affiliate program. ("Joining The Affiliate Program") This could motivate the independent artist to continue their work, when they see the positive engagement for their stream. Another way artists could find more musical connections is through Fiverr.

Fiverr is a freelance platform that connects independent artists with each other for collaborative projects. Freelancers at Fiverr are allowed to arrange a price for their work (Bakken). Independent musicians can promote their music through Fiverr while showcasing through video what they can do as a music freelancer (Bakken). It also helps collaborators to share each other's work through other social media means once the project is done. This can help boost the independent musicians reputation, when they are given positive feedback (Bakken).

Moreover if a musician does not want to pay expensive services for music promotion, then they can look into Fiverr for people who offer services of promoting artists' songs to their own connections for a cheaper price. Independent musicians are also able to connect with someone with a larger audience on places like Twitter.

Twitter is different from social media platforms that focus on creating videos and pictures to attract audiences. Twitter is a site that focuses mainly on writing messages named "tweets." For independent artists, every social media platform offers a different audience to connect with. For Twitter, independent musicians focus on connecting with people who "can provide the exposure" the artist needs to attract fans ("Twitter - A Guide"). This includes using hashtags or mentioning venues the artist played in, bloggers, instrument brands, or other musicians that may relate to the artist's goals for marketing purposes ("Twitter Tips"). The reason for this is because a large portion of Twitter users tend to be located in large cities where it is easier to connect with people working in the music industry. It is important to keep social media accounts focused on one specific audience ("Twitter - A Guide"). When the independent artist has a clear plan on what they will be using each social media platform for, it'll become easier to connect with more people. Since Twitter focuses on posting written messages, another platform to gain more exposure, besides Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, is Snapchat.

Snapchat is another social media platform with which independent artists can benefit from getting involved. When Snapchat users see music in the app, they are able to see the artist's information and seek out more content from them. When the artist's music is published on Snapchat, the artist may influence their fans to sing along to their music for more exposure. Because Snapchat consists of posting disappearing stories, independent artists may use Snapchat

to show the behind-the-scenes music process to their fans (Harb). This can make fans feel more connected to the artist, when the artist shares content that is not only pre-recorded or edited. This allows the artist to demonstrate to their fans that they are like any other person who is also faced with challenges in life.

### Independent Musicians Learn New Skills

In conclusion, social media is not limited to local communities; for musicians, it's better to connect with people all around the world. Eventually, the artist will be able to use those connections later, in case the musician decided that they wanted to tour in other locations or collaborate. There are different marketing strategies and tools that facilitate, monitor, and plan the marketing content of independent musicians without the need for a third party. These tools, which include social media platforms, have made it easier than ever to spread their content around and take matters into their own hands. It's given artists hope and opportunity so that not being able to be signed with a label no longer means the end of their career. Independent artists can find their own opportunities for social media marketing.

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