

The Influence of Social Media on Independent Artists:
Shaping Audience Perceptions and Music Consumption Behaviors

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Abstract

Background: In recent years social media has become an essential platform for independent artists to promote their work and grow their audiences, while for listeners it is a platform to discover and consume music. Understanding the dynamics between social media, artists' reputations, and music consumption behaviors can give important insights to both artists and listeners. So, the study aims to investigate the impact of social media on independent artists' reputations and the music consumption behaviors of listeners.

Method: The method chosen for this research is qualitative through conducting semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of eight independent artists and twelve music listeners between 18 and 25 years old. The interviews were held through means of an interview guideline which included topics such as Social Media Usage, Audience Engagement, Reputation, Music Discovery, and more. To gain insights into the impact of social media on independent artists' reputations and the music consumption behaviors of listeners.

Results: The findings showed that social media has become an essential part of independent artists, where the most important part is balancing promotional content and content regarding a genuine self-representation to shape a positive reputation. While popularity is often measured with likes and the number of followers, music quality and authenticity are more valued. In addition, social media plays a prominent role in music discovery and consumption and offers many opportunities to join community-related groups.

Conclusion: The study showed the essential role of social media in shaping audience perceptions and reputations of artists and influencing music consumption behaviors. For artists to optimize their social media strategy, there needs to be a balance between promotional content and engaging content to positively influence their reputation and music consumption behaviors. Further research should explore the effects of social media on different platforms, and the algorithm within the platforms, on audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors. These insights can help artists, record labels, and music listeners to make formed decisions regarding music promotion, audience engagement, and music consumption.

Keywords: Social Media, Reputation, Music Consumption, Artists, Listeners

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, technological developments, such as the rise of the internet and social media, have reshaped the music industry, changing the way how artists operate, and how music is discovered, engaged with, and consumed by listeners. In the current times, the amounts of online platforms where artists can upload their music as well as connect with their audiences have increased significantly, which creates many possibilities. Online platforms used the opportunities by putting users through algorithms, and databases, and delivering them with new music of their taste. For instance, Spotify uploads every Monday, Discover Weekly for users where the users receive a playlist with new songs based on their listening behavior (McCourt & Zuberi, 2016). In addition, the increasing reliance of artists on social media platforms for the promotion of their works and connection with their audiences created a need to understand the extent to which social media shapes audience perceptions of artists' reputations and music consumption behaviors, which influences the success of artists in the music industry. These insights are valuable for both artists and music listeners since they could help artists optimize their social media strategies and enable listeners to make more informed decisions about the music they consume and the artists they support.

As a result, social media has become an essential tool for artists, changing both their promotional strategies and their interactions with audiences. Social media created opportunities for artists to grow within an instant (Bodde, 2023). Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are used to connect with audiences all over the world. However, artists can have multiple goals for social media, including music promotion as well as audience engagement to get a closer connection with their fans. Social media offers artists an opportunity to use different marketing strategies online for free, which gives small artists the same reach as bigger artists. Additionally, audience engagement became more prominent with the uprising from social media platforms (Sandi & Triastuti, 2020). Artists have created dedicated fan communities and close connections with listeners through thoughtfully created posts, stories, reels, and even interactive live streams.

While social media has transformed the music industry, enabling artists to promote their music online and connect with their audience, it also influenced the dynamics between independent artists and record labels. The role of a record label is to produce, distribute, market, and promote the music of the artist however, in return, the rights to the music go to the label (Amuse, 2024). In contrast to independent artists, who create, release, and perform their own music. It used to be that to grow a career as an artist, having a record label was a must, however in the current days having a record label is not obliged anymore due to the opportunities that social media created (Icon Collective, 2024). More and more artists chose to remain independent since with the opportunities that social media has created this is possible (Mulligan, 2019). Without a record label, these independent artists keep all their music rights and do not have to cut a part of their profit. The promotion of new music can all be done through social media, which is one of the most powerful tools in marketing new music currently ending the need for a record label (Lindsay, 2016). A few popular independent artists examples are Macklemore, Frank Ocean, and Lauren-Spencer Smith (Savage, 2022). These artists show that it is possible to work in the music industry without a record label.

Besides reshaping the music landscape dynamics between independent artists and record labels, social media also played a significant role in shaping the audience's perceptions of artists' reputations. Many musicians believe that building their reputations within the established music industry is important for career success (Everts et al., 2022). Therefore, many artists focus on the reputation management of their image. It is shown that an artist's personal branding has a significant impact on the development and maintenance of reputation (Eigler & Azarpour, 2020). Currently, social media plays a huge role in personal branding strategies. A reputation on social media can be formed through the content posted and the overall profile. However, more importantly, there are factors influencing a reputation on social media. The reputations can be affected by interactions, authenticity, and collaborations. Therefore, social media has become essential to strategically manage artists' reputations and personal branding, influencing their career success in the music industry.

In addition to audience perceptions of artists' reputations being influenced by social media, social media also has an impact on the music consumption behaviors of music listeners. Music habits of listening, sharing, and discovering music have shifted with all the new technological developments (Sharakhina et al., 2020). Technological developments such as the upcoming streaming services, personalized playlists, and recommendations through algorithms changed the landscape of music consumption behaviors (Freeman et al., 2022). All these new developments not only influence artists' strategies for promotional strategies regarding releasing new music and reputation management online, but they also advance fan engagement. Social media platforms facilitate opportunities for fan engagement, the formation of fan communities, fandoms, and participatory culture within the music industry (Sandi & Triastuti, 2020). Which can all affect the music consumption behaviors of listeners.

As social media is influencing the music industry greatly, the study aims to research the impact on independent artists' reputations and the music consumption behaviors of listeners through means of interviews. In the current music industry, with all the new technological developments, including the use of social media, it becomes crucial for new independent artists, industry professionals, and marketers to understand these dynamics to operate effectively in the music industry. By exploring the concepts of social media, reputation, and music consumption, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the changing relationship between social media and the music industry.

This qualitative study semi-structured interviews will be conducted, transcribed, coded, and analyzed to address the research question.

How does the use of social media by independent artists shape audience perceptions of their reputation and influence music consumption behaviors?

In the next chapters, all these concepts and theories will be explored in the theoretical framework. Following, in the method section the approach of this qualitative study will be explained. After this, the results section and discussion will present and interpret the findings for a final conclusion to be drawn.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This theoretical framework will form a guide through the theories and concepts regarding the influence of social media on the reputation of independent artists and the music consumption behavior in the contemporary music industry. Multiple theories and concepts concerning social media, reputation, and music consumption are explored to ground an understanding of this research. In the theoretical framework, first, theories regarding social media and its role in the music industry are explored. It then delves into theories and concepts in relation to reputation, exploring how social media influences an independent's artist reputation. Finally, the theoretical framework dives into theories and concepts regarding music consumption behaviors in the context of social media.

2.2 Social Media Usage

Artists are using social platforms to promote music, as well as develop connections with their fans. In this research, social media is one of the prominent concepts, including different aspects such as parasocial interactions, social influence, and network effects. Therefore, first, the important concepts of the social media theory are discussed, followed by an exploration of the theories of the social media influence on music promotion, and lastly, it addresses the effect of social media on audience engagement.

2.2.1 Social Media Theory

As social media plays a crucial role in relation to artists' reputations and the music consumption behaviors of listeners, it is important to dive into the concepts related to social media itself. The first concept explored related to social media usage is network effects. Network effects exist when one's payoff depends positively on the number of other people who consume the product, and therefore are affected directly by others' actions (Qiu et al., 2015). In the case of social media and music consumption, the music consumption increases, when an artist is more viewed on social media. The artists are more easily discovered, recommended, and engaged with. Once certain content is viewed and interacted with often, the

probability of others interacting is higher. So, network effects are important for artists because they strengthen their visibility and engagement on social media. This influences their reputation and music consumption behaviors by receiving more interactions.

Closely related to network effects is the concept of social influence. Social influence is defined as the change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviors that results from interaction with another individual or a group (Rashotte, 2007). In the context of social media, social influence is important for artists, since if people see others interacting with an artist, they are more likely to do so as well. If there is a sense of popularity surrounding an artist, it creates a feeling of credibility which can influence people to interact with the artist as well and change their perception (Stamkou et al., 2018). Thus, social influence, as well as network effects have an impact on artists' reputations and music consumption behaviors.

2.2.2 Influence of Social Media on Music Promotion

An essential part that social media is used for is music promotion. So, the influence of social media on music promotion will be examined, including the different marketing strategies. In the current digital world, social media has become an unmatched utility tool for all marketing (Bodde, 2023). Especially in the modern music industry, it has become necessary to use social media. Social media creates many opportunities for independent artists, who arrange their own marketing and promotions. Platforms empower marketing tactics, with the help of the algorithms implemented in the online platforms, to reach new people easily (Owusu, 2023). So, artists use marketing tactics that can shape network structure to achieve long-term success (Ansari et al., 2018). These marketing tactics can increase visibility, which would positively influence network effects and social influence. Next, it is important to dive deeper into the specific marketing tactics used by artists.

An understanding of the approaches of social media in the marketing of musicians is crucial. The research from Matikainen (2018), showed that most of the mainstream social media channels are used with each an individual nature to be approached. Those differ from only music audio to photos, videos, and

playlists that can improve engagement. Especially exclusive or unreleased content from artists is more impactful from the fan's perspective than only promotional materials (Salo et al., 2013). For instance, the use of Instagram Stories with behind-the-scenes in the daily lives of artists may lead to more engagement (Wert, 2021). Therefore, social media provides opportunities for promoting music as well as their brand as an artist.

An example of the use of social media platforms where the promotion of new songs can go viral is the platforms that serve as online entertainment such as TikTok and YouTube. The study of Hardy et al. (2023) suggests that TikTok plays a significant role in the promotion of music. The main reason behind going viral on TikTok closely relates to the self-determination theory, which proposes that humans have three fundamental psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The need for relatedness is the most important. It refers to the extent to which individuals perceive others as relatable or similar to themselves, allowing them to establish a sense of connection and understanding (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This relates to the effect of TikTok where users connect with artists creating a connection when the artists are perceived as relatable and authentic, for instance by content relating to their personal lives, their experiences, and emotions. When there is a feeling of authenticity a video is more likely to become viral (Okanovic & Trouchaud, 2023). So, when artists promote videos online it is important to create a sense of relatedness to become viral. Songs that are featured on TikTok tend to experience greater success (Hardy et al., 2023). In conclusion, understanding how social media influences music promotion is essential, as it is the first step to the influence of social media on audience engagement which will be explored next.

2.2.3 Audience Engagement through Social Media

Besides promoting music, social media can be used by artists to create a connection with their audiences. Before social media, the fans of artists were mostly an undifferentiated and unidentifiable mass, communicated with the help of record labels and the press (Baym, 2020). In the current times, this completely shifted, many artists are present on social media to create a connection between the artist and their fans. Artists can strengthen their social media presence and so encourage relationships among their

fans, to gain enduring advantages in terms of music streaming and engagement (Ansari et al., 2018). This relates to the concept of social influence. If people see others interacting with an artist, they are more likely to do so as well (Rashotte, 2007). Therefore, it is important for independent artists to create connections with the audience.

The connection between artists and fans in online communities strongly relates to the concept of parasocial relationships. This is the concept created by Horton & Wohl (1956), in which parasocial relationships are defined as a one-way mediated relationship where the audience experiences the illusion of a personal relationship with a media personality. This concept has become more relevant over the years, due to the online environments where everyone is connected, including media personalities like artists. In the study by Garcia (2016), it showed that 75% of Millennials connect more with artists who are more open on social media. Furthermore, the study of Kim and Song (2016) researched that the sharing of both professional and personal details on social media creates a stronger connection with the artist they admire. Therefore, over the years the connection between artists and their audiences has grown through the use of social media, where both professional as well as personal details can be shared.

2.3 Reputation Perception

The new interactions between artists and fans in the digital age have transformed audience engagement but can also influence the reputation and perception of artists according to their audience. Understanding how impressions and therefore reputation, are formed and influenced on social media is essential to examine the influence it has.

The first step is to define reputation as it is a leading aspect throughout the thesis. Reputation as defined by Chun (2005), can be seen as an umbrella construct, referring to the impressions of internal and external stakeholders. The constructs within reputation include image referring to the external view, identity to the internal view, and 'managing reputation' to the overall activity. In this study, reputation is closely related to brand image, since it measures the external views of the artists as a brand. Brand image is defined

as, the sum of a customer's perceptions about a brand generated by the interaction of the cognitive, affective, and evaluative processes in a customer's mind (Lee et al., 2014). In essence, how audiences perceive the artists' reputation is interlinked to the artists' brand image. Both concepts shape the audiences' perception and influence the dynamics of the artist-fan relationship in the digital age.

2.3.1 Factors Influencing Reputation on Social Media

While focusing on the influence of social media on audience perceptions of reputation, understanding how impressions, and therefore reputation, are influenced by social media is essential. It is important to examine what factors can influence a reputation. Therefore, exploring these factors can provide insights into the influence of social media on the audience's perceptions of reputation.

To begin, active engagement and interactions are the foundation of a music artist's presence on social media. Without engagement from the artists, many people from the audience would lose interest over time. Brands and artists recognize the importance of engagement within social media and one of their main goals is to build engagement with their audience through their social media content (Dolan et al., 2015). This also closely relates to the concept of social influence where the audience can see that artists are actively interacting with others, so they are more likely to do so as well. In the study by Turri et al. (2013), it was found that the emotional relationships between fans to their artists are created by the intimacy and self-connection they hold towards the artist. This emotional relationship can lead to an active commitment. For an artist active commitment is valuable since it leads to loyalty in the form of purchase behavior, reduced digital piracy, support of artistic vision, and advocacy for the artist (Turri et al., 2013). An example of the positive impact of active engagement and interaction with fans on social media is the 5 Seconds of Summer's "Spilling the Quarantea" video that the band uploaded to their YouTube channel after it was privately recorded. This was a video that included band members talking with each other and listening to their music, it was very new content that doubled the promotion of the band's newest album (Bougatef, 2021). So, active engagement can have a positive influence on artists' reputations.

Besides active engagement, within the domain of artist-fan interactions on social media, authenticity and transparency also emerge as essential principles. It influences the connections established between artists and their audiences. The research of Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016), showed that authenticity and emotional attachment were found as favorable aspects of following artists on social media. Moreover, it positively influences the outcome of word-of-mouth and purchase likelihood. This means that it has a positive impact on an artist's reputation. However, authenticity is a multi-dimensional concept, consisting of sincerity, truthful endorsements, visibility, expertise, and uniqueness (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Each of these elements has effects on the audience's evaluation, willingness to follow the artists, and purchasing intention (Lee & Eastin, 2021). An example of authenticity with artists was shown in the study of King-O'Riain (2020). This study showed that K-pop fans rely on multiple sources to define the authenticity of their favorite K-pop artists, including the consistent content across multiple digital platforms, as well as the content of these platforms with the cultural roots of K-pop. According to the study, this would lead to trust in their engagements with fellow fans and the artist. So, authenticity and transparency are essential principles in the relationship between artists and fans on social media.

While authenticity and transparency are essential, the reputation of artists on social media can also be influenced, both positively and negatively, by collaborating with other artists, influencers, and brands. By strategically collaborating with the right people for their target audience, an artist can increase his/ her reputation and establish a successful brand while possibly also reaching a new target audience(Lo & Peng, 2021). Furthermore, engagement with followers also influences this since the more a person or brand engages with their followers, the more likely this person or brand is a good collaborating partner (Lo & Peng, 2021). So, it is important to do research before collaborating. In the past, there have been many successful collaborations between music artists and brands. For instance, in 2014 with the Football World Cup, the video clip "La La La" performed by Shakira. The video became one of the most shared advertisements with the Activia yogurt company, and for both parties, it worked out greatly (Lefait & Villers, 2022). Since the song got a lot of attention from the public due to the advertisement which was

beneficial for Shakira. While Activia got a lot of attention due to the popularity of the song. Another development was that music videos as promotional media allowed record labels to reduce the cost of music video production and to make a profit out of it (Lefait & Villers, 2022). So strategic collaborations with influencers, brands, or other artists offer great potential for enhancing an artist's reputation on social media.

The final factor, influencing an artist's reputation on social media, explored revolves around public perception management. In this case, public perception management revolves around media coverage and scandals that influence the artist's reputation. In a recent study, it was found that sixty-four percent of consumers have avoided a brand/ person because of a bad experience they had within the last year. Almost half (47%) say they have avoided a company because of its online reputation (Mobley, 2019). Therefore, the online reputation artists hold on social media is important, since this influences the audience's music consumption behavior. An example of an artist who mismanaged public perception online is Robin Thicke, whose career suffered, after a series of controversies that went viral on social media. After the release of his song "Blurred Lines", there was a debacle surrounding an inappropriate performance in which he blamed other people for his own actions, and people online blamed Robin Thicke who was not responding well to the whole incident (Poisuo, 2019). This ended up with Robin Thicke being canceled which ended his career. Therefore, the importance of public perception management in shaping an artist's reputation on social media cannot be overlooked. While public perception management and reputation are closely connected, there is still a difference between these concepts. Public perception management actively revolves around strategic efforts to manage all information, and messages around artists to create a favorable reputation (Mobley, 2019). In contrast to reputation which is, the sum of views of both internal and external stakeholders (Chun, 2005). Concluding, all these concepts are influencing the reputation of artists online.

2.3.2 Aesthetics on Reputation

Besides factors influencing reputation, aesthetics also have an impact on reputation with regard to social media. There are two main factors relating to aesthetics in reputation formation on social media. First,

there is the presentation of a profile. Within a social media profile, multiple important aspects influence reputation formation, including the profile picture which creates a sentiment about a person (Stopfer et al., 2013). Besides the profile picture, textual cues are crucial as well. In the study by Pelled et al. (2017), it showed that textual cues play a dominant role in the digital world. Textual cues on social media include a bio, and comments under a post. The last element of the profile presentation includes visual elements that are linked to different personality traits. In the research by Osterholz et al., (2022), multiple personality traits were examined with different types of content. Several relations were found between the types of posts and these personality traits. Examples of personality traits that are connected to shared content include openness, extraversion, self-esteem, emotional stability, narcissism, and conscientiousness. So, the profile presentation including textual as well as visual elements is important in reputation management online.

Besides the regular profile presentation, recent studies highlight aesthetics' crucial role in driving user engagement and influencing audience response, essential for shaping the reputation of the artists. In the research paper from Kusumasondjaja (2020), different brands were studied, and the effects of content were measured. It turned out that brand posts using expressive aesthetic images received more engagement than classical aesthetics. Besides, an important part of having an aesthetic profile, which is part of having a positive first impression, is color congruence. Color congruence, regardless of what the posts include, influences the flow and aesthetic experiences of people visiting. As well as it affects marketing effectiveness (Luarn et al., 2024). So, within the reputation formation process online, profile presentation and aesthetics play an essential role.

2.4 Music consumption

After exploring the impact of social media on the reputation of artists, the factor of music consumption will be examined. The impact of social media on music consumption behaviors, it is essential to examine how platforms facilitate music discovery, as well as fan engagement.

2.4.1 Social Media and Music Discovery

Social media plays a prominent role in music discovery in the current digital landscape. The study of McCourt and Zuberi (2016) showed the rising quantity of music online provides opportunities for technological interventions. Online platforms are using the opportunities by putting users through algorithms, and databases, and delivering them with new music of their taste. For instance, TikTok has a “For You” page based on algorithms that analyze previous watching behaviors, which can put new music into the spotlight for users. This personalized approach can lead to more targeted music consumption behaviors.

Besides the algorithms, peer recommendations are important as well in music discovery online. The study of Garg et al. (2011), examined music discovery in online communities. It found that online users have a statistically significant influence on other peers in the discovery of music. Online users are six times more likely to discover new music because of their peers in an online community when compared to discovery in the absence of those peers. Additionally, other factors influencing music discovery from peer recommendations are the trust in the recommender’s abilities, expectations regarding the delivery, and the respondent’s taste (Lee et al., 2019). Therefore, peers can have a positive influence on music discovery if the message is delivered in the right circumstances.

Another influence on music discovery online is the cross-promotion and collaborations, partnering with other artists, and brands to reach broader audiences. The study of Silva et al. (2019) showed that the collaboration between artists can significantly impact their success. Successful artists have been found more likely to have profiles with a high degree of interaction and high diversification (Silva et al., 2019). Which influences music consumption behaviors positively. These factors all influence music consumption separately, however in reality it is often that these factors are combined. For instance, an artist discovered on Spotify Discovery can be recommended by a peer.

2.4.2 Fan Engagement

Music discovery is an essential part of music consumption nevertheless, another part related to music consumption relates to engagement with artists. Social media platforms facilitate opportunities for fan engagement, the formation of fan communities, fandoms, and participatory culture within the music industry. Examples of fan engagement on social media include live Q&A sessions, fan-created content, and more. The study of Sandi and Triastuti (2020), revealed that fans find pleasure in being actively involved in their communities to connect with one another and with their favorite artist, interpret meanings in the creation of content, and perform their identity as a part of the fandom. All these interactions are mostly viewed as an emotional reward, which motivates to engage in the artist's activities and create a reward for the industry as well as the artist (Sandi & Triastuti, 2020). Thus, the engagement that fans have with other fans, and the artists plays a significant role in driving music consumption behaviors, since fans share enthusiasm and recommendations within their networks.

While fan engagement is important in relation to music consumption, the concept of network effects is relevant in this situation as well. In the music industry this means that if a lot of fans actively engage with artists, others are more likely to engage as well. All this motivates fans to engage in the artist's activities and create a reward for the industry as well as the artist (Sandi & Triastuti, 2020). This is in line with the study of Steward (2013) where a positive relationship was found between "Engagement", "Response to Music" and "Response to Artist". Thus, network effects and fan engagement are important factors in modern music consumption behaviors.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework presented multiple theories and concepts regarding the influence of social media on the reputation of independent artists and music consumption behavior in the contemporary music industry. Multiple theories and concepts concerning social media, reputation, and music consumption were explored to ground an understanding of this research.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

In this qualitative interview study, the impact of social media on the reputation of artists and the music consumption behavior of listeners is researched. The method used was semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews consisted of premeditated topics and questions. A semi-structured interview provides the opportunity to include topics and questions that were not initially thought of. This led to more insights into the perceptions of the artists and the music listeners since an interview encourages participants to speak freely for themselves and in their own way. For the independent artists and the music listeners, there was a different interview guide made with different topics, such as Social Media Usage, Audience Engagement, Reputation, Music Discovery, and more. Both interview guides can be found in Appendix A and B.

Additionally, it is an inductive study since the study involved understanding and interpreting new phenomena, including the influence of social media on artists' reputations and music consumption. The study also started with the inductive approach, where there are first observations and data, followed by developing theories or generalizations.

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of two different sample groups. The first sample group was independent artists, the sampling procedure for the independent artists was partially purpose sampling. This sample group were asked about their social media strategies, audience engagement, online reputation, networking and collaboration, and their future. The inclusion criteria of this group were artists in the contemporary music industry who are not affiliated with major labels. Additionally, the music produced can be throughout the whole industry however, they do have to produce full songs and not only beats. Furthermore, the artists needed to be self-promoting their music and active on social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok

where the minimum number of followers on one of the platforms should be 750 or more to have a steady social media base.

The second sample group was music listeners, this group was sampled through convenience. The music listeners were asked about their social media habits related to music discovery, engagement with artists, and consumption preferences. As well as their perceptions of artists online in the contemporary music industry. The inclusion criteria for this sample group were that the participants should daily listen to music throughout the contemporary music industry and actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, or TikTok. Besides, the age category of this sample should be between 18 and 35 years old and living in the Netherlands. This age category was chosen, due to the fact that this age group is most affiliated with social media.

The sample size contained eight independent artists and twelve music listeners. The sampling procedure for the independent artists was partially purpose sampling, while the sampling procedure for the music listeners was convenience sampling. One artist was known through me by a friend. Five other artists were first searched for online through TikTok and Instagram while looking for “small artists” or “sing and songwriter” in the search bar. The other two artists were found on Spotify in a playlist called “Underrated songs from small artists”. Contact was made through Direct Messages on Instagram, or TikTok, after which a date and time was discussed to participate in the study. The participants were all aged between 20 and 25 years old and were a mixture of European and American. The social media usage of this sample group differs with 2,516 followers on Instagram on average. TikTok differs more with a range between 25 and 70,500 followers. A description of the participants and the interviews can be found in Table 1.

The music listeners were sampled through convenience. The sample group consisted of people who were already known to me. The music listeners were contacted in person or via a WhatsApp message. These participants were also all between the ages of 20 and 25 years old, and with a European nationality. The most used social media platform was Instagram and TikTok while the most used music platform was Spotify. Table 2 shows a description of the participants and interviews of sample group two, music listeners.

Table 1*Description of participants Artists and the interviews*

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Instagram Followers	TikTok Followers	Likes on TikTok	Most streams on Spotify	Interview Length in Minutes
1	20	Female	Dutch	1.334	346	25.900	7.600	26
2	21	Female	Dutch	1.042	229	6.579	3.346	25.5
3	22	Female	Belgian	1.060	25	98	-	28
4	24	Male	Dutch	3.120	347	4.035	585.042	36
5	21	Male	American/German	374	70.500	3.000.000	-	28
6	21	Male	American	5.330	3178	432.500	602.900	27
7	21	Male	Dutch	784	162	1.083	-	26
8	21	Male	American	7.084	132	3.057	47.889	26

Table 2*Description of participants Music Listeners and the interviews*

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Social Media Platform Music related	Music Platform	Interview Length in Minutes
1	22	Male	Dutch	Instagram	Spotify/ Radio	22
2	21	Female	Dutch	Instagram	Spotify	24
3	23	Female	German	Instagram/ TikTok	Spotify	24
4	21	Male	Dutch	Instagram	Spotify	23
5	20	Female	Dutch	Instagram/ TikTok	Spotify/YouTube	23
6	23	Female	Polish	Instagram	Spotify	28
7	25	Male	Dutch	Instagram	Spotify/YouTube	21
8	21	Male	Spanish	Instagram/ TikTok	Spotify	20
9	21	Female	Dutch	Instagram	Spotify/ Radio	21
10	24	Male	German/ Spanish	Instagram	YouTube	20

11	22	Male	German	Instagram	Spotify/ YouTube	24
12	23	Female	German	Instagram/ TikTok	Spotify	25

3.3 Procedure & Instrument

To ensure the research passed the standards for ethically responsible research practices, the study was reviewed and approved by the BMS Ethics Committee of the University of Twente. All participants were above the age of 18 and provided with informed consent. The interviews started with the informed consent form, where there was detailed information about the purpose of the study, the interview process, and their rights as participants. The form ensured that the participants understood the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses. Moreover, the interviews were audio recorded, and consent was ensured in the informed consent form. Following was the interview according to the interview guidelines, which included premeditated questions and topics. However, since it was semi-structured interviews if new questions and/ or topics occurred, these were still asked, which led to more insights.

Different interview instruments were used in different interview settings. From the artists two interviews were held in person, of which one was at the University of Twente, while the other interview was in a music studio in Utrecht, the other six artists were interviewed online through Microsoft Teams. For the music listeners, eleven participants were interviewed at the University of Twente, and one participant was interviewed online through Microsoft Teams. In the online setting, the platform Microsoft Teams was used. The interviews were also recorded within this platform and afterward transcribed through the software Amberscript. In the physical setting participants were in a room with the researchers, and all participants were offered a cookie to be made at ease in the setting. All interviews were recorded with the recording app on the iPhone from the researcher. All audio files were transcribed with the Amberscript software as well.

3.4 Analysis

After completing the interviews, the audio files are stored in OneDrive from the University of Twente, and deleted from the phone of the researcher, as well as the other documents. After the study, the audio files will also be completely deleted from the OneDrive of the researcher. After the completion of the interviews, transcriptions were prepared for data analysis, with the software Amberscript. During the preparations of the transcriptions, all personal information was deleted that can be related to the participant, including the following elements: Name, Work, Friends, and more.

After finishing the transcripts, the open coding process began. This means that data is put into different parts, which are then closely examined to identify concepts from the raw data provided by the transcripts (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). Based on the open coding process, interviews were read, and certain codes were created based on the content of the transcripts. The units of analysis during the coding process were thematic coding, in which bigger pieces of text were assigned a code. For the interviews of the artists and the listeners, there were different codebooks. The creation of the codebooks was through means of inductive coding, which means that codes and themes were developed during the coding process. By assessing codes through pieces of text from the interviews, connections were made, and themes were discovered. For both codebooks, the basis was similar to the theoretical framework. So, the main categories included Social Media Usage, Reputation, and Music Consumption. These groups were later extended due to the information retrieved from the interviews. Both updated codebooks can be found in Table 5 and Table 6.

After the creation of the codebooks, inter-reliability was measured with another researcher. Inter-reliability ensures that the assessment of codes is reliable and consistent which ensures validity and credibility of the findings. The measurement for the intercoder-reliability of the codebook was Cohen's Kappa. With Cohen's Kappa, the agreement between two coders can be checked and therefore check the reliability of the codebook that has been developed (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). For this research, one other researcher was asked to code one existing interview from both the Artists and the Music Listeners, so that

for both codebooks the reliability can be assured. For a codebook to be substantial Cohen’s Kappa needs to be higher than 0.60, and higher than 0.80 to be great (Landis and Koch, 1977).

The Cohen’s Kappa for the codebooks was calculated in the software RStudio. The Cohen’s Kappa for the Artist’s codebook was 0.747 which showed that the codebook is substantial. Furthermore, Cohen’s Kappa per section was calculated besides the overall Cohen’s Kappa. However certain concepts were not substantial. Changes were made in the descriptions of these concepts in contact with the second coder to increase their reliability. This together is presented in Table 3 for the codebook of Artists.

Table 3

Cohen’s Kappa Artists

	Alpha
Complete Codebook	0.747
Concepts	
Audience and Fan Engagement	0.429
Collaboration and Connections	0.333
Future Directions and Past Experiences	0.474
Impact on Artists’ Reputations	0.882
Impact on Music Creation and Quality	0.572
Social Media Usage and Trends	1.000

For the codebook of the Listeners, Cohen’s Kappa was also calculated. The Cohen’s Kappa for the Music Listeners’ codebook was 0.730, which meant that the codebook was substantial as well. However certain concepts were not substantial. Changes were made in the descriptions of these concepts in contact with the second coder to increase their reliability. In Table 4 the Cohen’s Kappa for the codebook of Listeners is shown, as well as the Cohen’s Kappa per section.

Table 4*Cohen's Kappa Listeners*

	Alpha
Complete Codebook	0.730
Concepts	
Background Information	1.000
Discovery of New Music	0.545
Music Consumption	0.328
Reputation	0.429
Social Media Engagement	0.500
Social Media General	0.318

Certain codes were changed, because there were certain conflicts in how the codes would appear in the transcripts. In Table 5 and Table 6, the updated codebook that was used for the remainder of the transcripts can be found. Changes were made to “Audience and Fan Engagement”, “Collaborations and Connections”, and “Future Directions and Past Experiences” due to their low reported Cohens Kappa for the Artists codebook. While for the listeners codes were altered in the concepts of “Music Consumption”, “Reputation”, and “Social Media General”, due to their low Cohens Kappa.

Table 5

Codebook Artists

Code	Definition of code	Example
Audience and Fan Engagement		
Audience Engagement	Artists engaging with their audiences through social media posts	“I want to keep the people who already follow me and who already know me informed about what I am doing and what is happening.”
Authenticity Social Media	The perception of artists' genuineness and authenticity in their social media presence and posts	“Next to a release I post my own stuff. Then I can show more of who I am besides music.”
Emotional Impact of Social Media	The emotional effects of social media on artists	“Seeing all the statistics is stressful sometimes.”
Negative Fan Engagement	Instances where fans' interactions with artists or their content are negative, such as criticism	“I have had a few hate comments throughout my artistic career, but it has not been too many yet.”
Positive Fan Engagement	Instances where fans' interactions with artists or their content are positive, such as praise, support, and enthusiastic participation	“I always find interactions from fans who have been following me for a while and know me a little better to be very nice. And then it's not about the music.”
Collaboration and Connections		
Artists Collaborations	Collaborations between artists	“During Covid-19 I collaborated with an artists online through Zoom.”
Influence of Mentioning Other Artists	The impact on an artist's reputation and audience engagement when they mention or collaborate with other artists on social media	“I posted a radio interview I had done, in which I talked about Charli xcx, who I think is a very nice artist. I realized I also got new audience from that.”
Offline Connections Importance	The significance of offline relationships and connections in the music industry	“In the industry a big part is having connections, also offline.”
Online Artist Connections	How artists connect with each other online, including networking, collaborations, and support	“But I it's definitely been a great way to like just talk with other artists about, you know, their art or, connect. Like actually I met my manager through social media.”

Record label vs Independent Artist	Perceptions between artists signed to record labels and independent artists	“If you want to be signed to a label, they first look at: are you somewhat popular? You can handle social media well and then they look at music. That's really a trend now: can this person sing? Yes, yes, that's a nice bonus, they just throw autotune over it.”
Sentiment about Collaborations	The general feelings and attitudes towards collaborations between artists	“I don't really like working together as in. That sounds very strange, but I think so. I sometimes enjoy working together, but what I enjoy most is just doing my own thing here.”
Future Directions and Past Experiences		
Negative Sentiment Social Media	Instances where participants express negative feelings about the role or impact of social media in music	“Like other social media, get banned in the future because they are just like shit for everyone, for society. I don't even know if it's good that I am doing music on social media because I'm keeping people on the platform.”
Positive Sentiment Social Media	Instances where participants express positive feelings about the role or impact of social media in music	“I think it's helping me build a fan base around the world. I think that's like the biggest thing. And I'm excited to sort of scale that, to be even bigger in the future, because I definitely have fans all over the world, which I'm really excited about it.”
Social Media in Future	Predictions and thoughts about how social media will evolve and influence the music industry in the future	”I mean, I think that like, the industry is always changing and like I'm sure that 20 years ago or 30 years ago, you know, people would have said that like CDs were going to be forever. Or people are always going to discover music from radio. And of course, radio is still big, but like, I think it's bound to keep changing.”

Impact on Artists' Reputations and Careers

Artists' Goals	Goals that artists have regarding their careers, social media presence, and music production.	"It is my goal to build a sustainable career."
Artists' Social Media Profile	The characteristics and details of an artist's social media profile	"I think it is very important that everything is correct and that the colors match each other. It looks good, the profile photo is correct, the biography, that's what I'm constantly working on. It's actually a kind of a business card, that's how I really see it."
Break through Career	Key moments that helped an artist gain significant recognition and success in their career	"My whole career can be thanked to TikTok, that video was really my break through."
Career Importance of Social Media	The role that social media plays in building an artist's career.	"I can't imagine I mean, like, t there's no way to, I think like currently, like I said, I think you can't build a music career without social media like that. You can't start from nothing without social media."
Daily life of Artist	The everyday activities and routines of artists	"I have quite a lot of school, so that's mainly what I have and besides that it's actually I usually have one writing session in one week. I try to write for myself and then I have one rehearsal a week with my band."
Online Identity	How artists manage their identities on social media	"Yeah, I think with social media, I was able to sort of build an artistic image of myself."
Reputation Impact Negative	Negative effects of social media on an artist's reputation, such as scandals	"So, in a manner of speaking, if you follow an artist and he never posts anything. In the minds of his followers, he doesn't do anything, so to speak."
Reputation Impact Neutral	Where social media has had a neutral impact on an artist's reputation	"I mean, it really depends on your content how you come across and it's also a big part of your visuals so yeah, you can just bring a lot of how you want to be seen as an artist into it."
Reputation Impact Positive	Positive effects of social media on an artist's reputation, such as increased credibility and fanbase growth	"I noticed that I then had an audience that saw the video of people who also really liked her. I'm getting a bit of a reputation for being connected to that."

Social Media Promotion	Strategies and activities for promoting music, events, and artist brands on social media	“So when I release new music, of course I do, because then you simply create content in advance, to promote the release.”
Success Metrics Social Media	Measure success on social media, such as followers, likes, shares	“I am busy with it, but mainly related to music.”
Impact on Music Creation and Quality		
Artis Music Experience	The overall experience of artists in the music industry	“Yeah, I've been making music for, since I was in, like, sixth grade. I was probably like, I don't know how old I was 12 years old or something like that. I started like, on my school.”
Changes in Music Consumption	How patterns and habits of music consumption have evolved over time	“I think with sort of a growth with sort of, um, I think everyone's attention spans are also getting lower and lower, which is why a short form content is on social media. I think with that as well, like social media is sort of more important for musicians to do.”
Music Produced	The music produced by artists	“I make Dutch pop music with some influences from alternative and hip hop and very occasionally some rock influences.”
Negative Impact on Music Quality	Perceptions that social media had a negative effect on the quality of music	“I honestly think overall it's negative, especially TikTok, like I mean even in like the way that it like impacts sounds that artists chase and, like the way that they create music. “
Social Media Usage and Trends		
Personal Management	Social media handles personally by artists	“Yes, I make almost all the posts myself, often with a friend.”
Social Media Platforms	Social media platforms used by artists	“Yes, a lot of Instagram and TikTok every now and then too.”

Social Media Strategy	The strategy used by artists to build their presence and engage with audiences on social media.	“On Tuesday reel and on Friday a reel and then on Tuesday something of a song that I play or sit or do, and then on Friday something else. So sometimes that can be a reel.”
Time Investment	The time it costs to maintain the social media	“Yes, those reels, that, that takes a really long time, I just spent three or four hours on them, so that takes a really long time and that for a real 60 seconds.”
Trends in Social Media Usage	The use of trends by an artist on social media	“No, you just have to go along with it. You just have to go with the trends but put your own spin on them. That's the whole thing.”

Table 6*Codebook Music Listeners*

Code	Definition of code	Example
Background Information		
Participant Introduction	Basic information participant	“I like listening to music. I'm also not much of a music person myself otherwise, but the listening part I like.”
Music Platforms Used	Music streaming platforms participants use	“Mostly on Spotify.”
Social Media Platforms Used	Social media platforms participants are active on	“Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. I do not have TikTok. “
Music Preferences	Genres, artists, and types of music participants prefer	” Basically everything except for like metal or rap. So like, I listen to a lot of pop and indie rock and just everything kind of around that.”
Artists Followed Social Media	Artists that participants follow on social media	“I follow a couple. The more current ones. So like Taylor Swift, Harry styles. I also follow Madonna.”
Discovery of New Music		
Algorithm-Based Discovery	Participants discover music through algorithms provided by music platforms	“If Spotify, recommends you weekly the new music and I may look into that.”
Discovery of Small Artists	How participants discover lesser-known artists	“Yes, for example, those who started small, yes, that was also an American artist, who is now completely hip.”
Discovery through Social Media	How participants discover new music through social media platforms	“Underneath a TikTok video, but sometimes I also like to watch those concert videos and then you sometimes discover something new.”
Discovery via Collaborations	Participants discover new music through collaborations between artists	“No, then I would also take a look at the smaller artists. And then I'm curious: hey, what is the connection between the two?”

Example of Online Music Discovery	Specific examples how participants discovered music online	“I think I've had a lot with TikTok. I think the biggest artist I now really like, listen to a lot that I knew existed, but like got to know more via TikTok is bad omens. Yeah. So like I, I saw a lot of videos of them on TikTok and I was like, oh my God, it's great music.”
Other Discovery Methods	Other methods of discovering music that do not fit in to the categories	“I also get to know new songs through series or movies that I watch.”
Peer Recommendations	Role of friends in recommending new music	“When you hear from friends, they often know you well, so they often have good advice.”
Social Influence on Music Discovery	Likelihood to check out new music due to friends or peers engaging with a post.	“Yes, I think, but that depends on who. Because when I see that friend has liked this, I think: Funny, she's listening that, I'm gonna listen too.”
Traditional Discovery Methods	Discovery through Radio, or Tv	“Yes, I also listen to the radio, we have that at home in Enschede and I usually listen to Top 40 music there, or the Top 2000.”
Social Media General		
Importance of Social Media	Importance of social media for artists and music consumption behaviors	“It's way easier to find your audience and also to play at bigger venues if you use social media and if you have a great following.”
Neutral sentiment Social Media	Neutral feelings about social media	“Yes, I think it depends a bit on what kind of music you make.”
Artists' Social Media Profiles	How artists' profiles on social media impact participants' perceptions	“I mean, usually you can see quite well when they, like, just published a new single and then it's all in that color style, kind of. So I think I do pay attention to that.”
Artists' Online Presence	Influence of artists' online presence on reputation and music consumption behaviors	” There is a band that it's their music is not the greatest, but they do specialize in making those, videos that are just amazing. So, I follow them.”
Sentiment Collaborations	Sentiments regarding collaborations between artists on social media.	“Well, if they are artists that I both like, then I think oh nice.”

General Social Media Usage	How participants use social media in general	“Yes, I am generally not someone who likes and comments a lot on Social Media.”
Influence of Friends on Social Media	The influence of friends to look up content of artists or music related content	Yes, probably, but it is also that social media also influences my friends, and they also influence me, so I don't get influenced directly.
Social Media Promotion		
Positive Promotion Impact	Positive impacts of social media promotions on participants' music discovery and engagement	“I do think that of course, the promotion is also very important for them to get people to know about. Okay, this is when I bring out a new album. This is when I have a concert.”
Negative Promotion Impact	Negative impacts of social media promotions on participants' music discovery and engagement	“The other thing I get to know anyways if I want to. So that's not really of much interest for me.”
Social Media Engagement		
Positive Audience Engagement	Participants positive perception of audience engaging content on social media	“Yes, content for your own audience is more fun.”
Negative Audience Engagement	Participants negative perception of audience engaging content on social media	“Rarely it's more about the music and, their tours. Yeah. Nothing personal.”
Connection with Artists	The feeling of being connected with an artist	“Yes, that you get a little insight into their lives and then you think: oh, yes, that's what I'm doing now too. We are the same man, but that's nice, you also get to know the person behind the music.”
Engagement with Artists	Participants engagement with artists online	“Just liking commenting almost never.”
Fan Engagement	Artists engaging with fans on a more personal level	“He is very like connected to his fans. And those people really want to use social media to connect to people. Like he sometimes has this thing that he calls like five fans or so on Instagram or whatever, you know?”
Music Community Engagement	Engagement with music communities, groups, or other fans on social media.	“I am in a Yungblud discord.”

Reputation

Reputation Formation through Music	Participants form opinions and reputations about artists based on their music.	“No like first I listen to the music. Sometimes I don't, but I might find out something about them.”
Reputation Formation on Social Media	Participants form opinions and reputations about artists based on their social media	“I think then the Instagram page is like maybe it's like, that looks nice. But I would never be like, that person doesn't post anything. Or that person posts every day that's annoying.”
Positive Reputation Impact	Positive impacts of social media on artists' reputations	“So for me, of course, when they share nice pictures and videos, that might make my opinion better of them to be like they seem like a authentic person, like a happy and outgoing.”
Negative Reputation Impact	Negative impacts of social media on artists' reputations	“Yes, for example Frans Bauer or something, then I think yes, what are you doing? Or that Dries Roelvink. Yeah, that doesn't really make sense either.
Neutral Reputation Impact	Neutral impacts of social media on artists' reputations	“It does make a little bit of a difference, but I try to look past it.”
Credibility and Authenticity on Social Media	How social media affects the credibility and authenticity of artists	“Definitely. Like especially if you compare their social media and like they are in person or what kind of music they make like sometimes it can just not go together hand-in-hand at all.”

Music Consumption

Social Media Impact on Music Behavior	The overall impact of social media on participants' music listening	“Yes, exactly, but sometimes you see a song or something like that. On social media, a sound is then used in a Reel or something and then you bring back those wonderful memories. And then you think, oh, yeah, well, I'm going to listen to that again.”
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Social Media Impact on Music Preferences	How social media influences participants' preferences and tastes in music.	“TikTok makes it more generic. My music tastes. Like everyone listens to things and then it's on TikTok, of course, and then I'm like, oh, this is great, you know? So I think it was a bit more unique before I started looking at TikTok videos.”
Reputation Impact on Music Behavior	How artists' reputations influence participants' music behaviors.	“But when we are thinking about Kanye West, for example, I cannot put that behind. Like, I cannot think about this person and his art as two separate things.
Motivation for Discovering New Music	Reasons and motivations behind participants' desire to discover new music.	“I am not actively looking it appears on my feed.”
Music Industry Impact		
Positive Effects of Social Media	Participants' perceptions that social media has a positive effect on the music industry	“I think it's made certain artists much bigger than they could have become otherwise.”
Negative Effects of Social Media	Participants' perceptions that social media has a negative effect on the music industry	“So for the artist itself, I would say higher pressure.”
Negative Impact on Music Quality	Participants' perceptions that social media has had a negative impact on the quality of music.	“You don't have any more like the ten minute songs or the seven minute songs. Even 4 or 5 minute songs are rare. Yeah. It's like it feels like it's not always about making great music anymore, but, like, going viral.
Neutral Impact on Music Quality	Participants' perceptions that social media has had a neutral impact on the quality of music.	“So to speak, on the other hand you also have plenty of artists who just make good music.”
Future Impact of Social Media	Participants' thoughts on how social media will impact the music industry in the future	“I think that maybe on social media it will be kind of the same, but like, I feel like everyone or it's like a general shift that everyone is realizing, hey, social media has like these negative points.”

4. Results

In the following section, the main findings regarding the coding process are shown. This section is divided into different subheadings that were presented in the theoretical framework. However, it is split between Artists and Music Listeners. The questions as mentioned in the methodology were different depending on the sample group Artists, or Music Listeners. The results that are presented, are used to further analyze and discuss any patterns that have presented themselves.

4.1 Social Media Usage

The concept of Social Media Usage covers several elements, including codes relating to Social Media Theory, Influence of Social Media on Music Promotion, and Audience Engagement on Social Media. During the interviews, both artists and music listeners discussed the use of social media and their perspectives relating to the social media usage behaviors of themselves and those they follow. This section will present the main findings regarding the coding process, presenting the different patterns and themes discovered within the interviews of both artists and listeners.

4.1.1 Artists

The eight artists that were interviewed had all agreed that social media is an important tool for an artist's career. Some participants stated that their entire careers have solely been built through social media. For the use of social media, most of the participants are using a social media strategy. However, the use of this social media strategy differs. While some participants use their social media strategy consistently, others only apply it during the release of a new song or album. During these times, the use of social media is mentioned as 'crucial'. For the strategy most participants use multiple social media platforms, including Instagram and TikTok, to promote their music and connect with their audiences. However, almost all artists have a preferred platform in which they are more active.

Besides the social media strategies, the artists also participate in trends on social media. Some artists have expressed struggles with trends because most trends include a pre-existing sound. Artists rather share

their own sound instead of a pre-existing one. Nevertheless, especially on TikTok trends are important as one of the artists explained: “I use it, especially on TikTok. You have to see which one fits you, because if it does not suit you then there is no point. People who see it, do not fit your style or music. So, you have to look for a trend that fits and then give your twist on it and make it a little more personal to also make people curious.” (Participant, 2, personal communication, April 25, 2024). Artists expressed that TikTok trends have quite a high potential to go viral, which is a boost for an artist’s career.

Additionally, artists mentioned two other elements that are important for social media usage. This includes codes for ‘Authenticity on Social Media’ and ‘Audience Engagement’. The coding process revealed that these elements play a prominent role in the social media of artists. They have found also more positive sentiments regarding social media. One artist expressed: “I think it's a great way that I've been able to, connect with people who like my music and, like kind of build more of an audience base and stuff like that. That's not just aside from promotion. I mean, that's how you got in contact with me. So, I think it's great to just be able to connect easily.” (Participant 6, personal communication, April 28, 2024). Especially connections that have been established through social media have been found rewarding.

4.1.2 Music Listeners

The social media usage of artists is different from the usage of music listeners since both groups have different intentions regarding the use of social media. During this part of the coding process, the usage behaviors of the music listeners are mapped out. Initially, the music listeners were asked about some background information relating to their Social Media Usage. Following, the effects of social media theory were explored. After, information regarding the perspectives of the music listeners regarding Music Promotion and Audience Engagement was redeemed.

The results of the interviews revealed that the most used media platforms regarding music-related content are Instagram and TikTok. While Spotify and YouTube are the preferred platforms for listening to music. Reflection of music listeners regarding the effects of social media theory, including codes such as

network effects and social influence, on their social media usage as well as their music consumption was quite similar between the listeners. Network effects refer to music consumption increasing when an artist is more viewed on social media. The overall agreement between participants was that although the number of followers does represent the popularity of an artist and therefore also the music consumption. It does not necessarily represent an artist's talent. One of the participants mentioned: "My favorite example is Jason Derulo. I really liked his music when he was like in the beginning, you know? And now I heard that a lot of times already, but he's just making TikTok music, so music that can be used for dances on TikTok or just as a sound and for, in my opinion, that's not really music you want to listen to just randomly during the day." (Participant 3, personal communication, April 30, 2024). This indicates that network effects can increase music consumption but, if an artist is making music for the wrong reasons, it can also backfire.

Social Influence in the context of the music industry means that if people see others interacting with an artist, they are more likely to do so as well. This creates a sense of credibility and can influence perceptions. One participant mentioned the following, which represented the overall sentiment regarding social influence online: "Yes, I wouldn't necessarily say that 'likes' influence me too much. However, I do have some friends that I know have a bit of the same taste in music as I do. If they use, for example, a song in a story then I would check it out." (Participant 11, personal communication, May 01, 2024). As other participants mentioned as well, the chance of looking into an artist increases, depending on who is interacting with the song or artist.

Regarding the influence of social media on music promotion music listeners mentioned that they acknowledge the importance of music promotion for artists on social media. Due to the fact that social media is the main means of communication between artists and their audiences. However, the type of content for music promotion is disagreed upon between the music listeners. Some participants expressed that they are only interested in music-related content and not in authentic or personal insights into the artists' lives. These participants preferred posts related to new music releases or concert experiences, especially pictures taken at concerts they have attended. One of them expressed: "Well often when I go to a concert

afterward, I want to watch some videos because I never film much myself, so then I look at their Instagram and then I like these videos better than them talking about themselves.” (Participant 2, personal communication, April 30, 2024). On the other hand, other listeners valued seeing more of the person behind the camera, as they believe this authenticity helps them connect with the artist on a deeper level. This connection can increase their engagement with the artist's music and promotional content.

The last concept related to social media usage is audience engagement. The participating music listeners were quite divided in their opinions regarding this topic. Certain participants were positive about the content that was more focused on connectivity and authenticity online. One participant expressed, “I like especially the audience engagement, it is like we are the same man, but that's nice, you also get to know the person behind the music.” (Participant 4, personal communication, May 02, 2024). Another participant mentioned as well that the content does not necessarily need to be related to music, but more about the artists themselves, to feel more connected, similar to a parasocial relationship between the fan and artist. However, other participants were not interested in artists’ personal lives at all, and only in the promotion. An example of a participant’s reaction regarding this topic was this: “Rarely for me, it's more about the music and their tours. Yeah, nothing personal.” (Participant 10, personal communication, May 01, 2024). This shows that while audience engagement for most people can be seen as one of the main reasons to follow an artist on social media, others are more focused on the promotional side and not interested in the personal lives of artists.

4.2 Reputation Perception

The concept of Reputation Perception covers several elements, including codes relating to reputation formation, and factors influencing reputation. During the interviews, both artists and music listeners discussed the influence of social media on artists’ reputations and their perspectives relating to the sentiment the participants hold towards this influence. This section will present the main findings regarding the coding process, presenting the different patterns and themes discovered within the interviews of both artists and listeners.

4.2.1 Artists

In relation to reputation perception, this is something that artists take quite seriously. The reputation formation of listeners starts from the first glance at the profile and the content that is posted there. Participants are aware of what they post online and try to make a difference between promotional content and authentic, audience-engaging content. One artist explained: “It is a very direct and fast way to get very close to your fans. So, what you say on your socials, as an artist for example, Doja Cat just does not care and very much through social media by just saying what she wants, and that's how she dresses. It is also through branding, but social media can really reinforce that.” (Participant 7, personal communication, May 21, 2024). It can create an online identity that visualizes the reputation of the artists.

Factors influencing the reputation of artists are active engagement and showing authenticity online. Artists have discovered that interacting actively with fans and creating connections with these people online can create a bond. Some artists even have found fan pages, due to the multiple interactions they had with their fans. Furthermore, artists expressed that being authentic online is crucial for their reputation. One participant expressed: “If you want your followers to get to know you that way and want them to see what you do and who you are, then yes, you have to show that, because if they see you once every year at a show and that's it, they don't get that. So, I really think it's extremely strongly related to your reputation.” (Participant 4, personal communication, April 29, 2024). Therefore, artists try to actively engage online and show authenticity.

Artists also expressed their opinions during the interviews regarding collaborations and their influence on their online reputation. Most had a neutral sentiment towards collaborating, due to the fact for the collaboration to be positive it should be a good fit, which is not always easy to find. Most artists were not actively looking for collaborations at this point. In the past some have had collaborations with others, which was positive, however, the collaborations were one-time and not continued. Nevertheless, the most important part according to the artists is creating connections online since this is an essential part of the

whole industry. Thus, according to the participants especially for upcoming artists it can help to reach out to other more advanced artists.

4.2.2 Music Listeners

While for most participants the reputation of artists is based on the music produced by the artist, social media also plays an important role in reputation formation. Results showed that the social media profile of the artist is often viewed as a reflection of who they are in real life. In the formation of a reputation on social media, aesthetics does not necessarily play an essential role. The more important parts according to the participants are the content, authenticity, and overall presentation of the profile. One participant expressed themselves with an example: “Recently I looked up Kid Laroi, who now is in some sort of relationship with Tate Mccrae, so I wanted to look him up. But the profile did not look so nice. The profile, but also not the content. It was just like, I don’t think you sell yourself in the right way. So, I thought, I am also not going to put in the effort to see if I like your music or not.” (Participant 5, personal communication, April 30, 2024). This shows that first impressions of an artist on social media can influence the reputation, and therefore also music consumption.

After reputation formation, other factors are still influencing artists’ reputations on social media. Where according to the participants, authenticity and credibility are the most important to be shown on social media. The participants expressed that content should not be staged and should show a reflection of the artist as a person. One of the participants even mentioned that the music experience could be enhanced: “If you see what artists are doing in their daily lives and see where songs are coming from. For example, if you follow their lives, that can definitely help their authenticity, and can even improve the song experience. It can even make you more liked as an artist.” (Participant 6, personal communication, April 30, 2024). However, trying to be authentic on social media can also be counterproductive, since if it does not feel authentic it can feel fake, which is negatively impacting the reputation of the artists. Participants expressed that in certain cases it feels like the way that certain artists are interacting does not seem natural and

connecting with the people. As if someone else is creating the social media posts. This lack of personal connection negatively impacts the reputation of an artist.

Besides authenticity influencing an artist's reputation, other factors such as active engagement, and public perception management, influence the reputation as well. The music listeners expressed their positive sentiments towards the active engagement of the artists online. Especially, when artists take time to respond to fans, for example in their Instagram Stories, or do an online Q&A. However, too much engagement can again be counterproductive. One music listener expressed: "I think that definitely like posting too much or too little can have a bad effect. Or like, like the specific content they post, like if it's just not what I like or if it's just like saying bad things about or like giving opinions that are really bad or something I don't agree with. Yeah, I'm more likely to stop engaging." (Participant 12, personal communication, April 30, 2024). Therefore, creating the right balance in online engagement is crucial.

The last concept that the music listeners mentioned regarding reputation was public perception management, especially with regard to other media posting about the artists, this includes both scandals and positive media. Participants were divided regarding this topic, while some mentioned being influenced by the media around the artist and the reactions that artists give regarding this topic. Others mention that a clear distinction is made between the art and the artists and that the feeling around the music is the same as before.

4.3 Music Consumption

The concept of Music Consumption covers several elements, including codes relating to Music Discovery and Fan Engagement. During the interviews, both artists and music listeners discussed the influence of social media on the music consumption behaviors of listeners and their perspectives relating to the sentiment the participants hold towards this influence. This section will present the main findings regarding the coding process, presenting the different patterns and themes discovered within the interviews of both artists and listeners.

4.3.1 Artists

The participants in the sample group artists are always trying to expand their network to enhance the music discovery of listeners. The participants discovered an effective method to enhance their reach and create a larger network. Multiple participants have used the technique of mentioning other, more popular, artists that they would like to be associated with. Either this is within an interview, or through singing a cover from this particular artist. The strategy has had a positive impact and is now used more often to enhance music discovery.

Additionally, participants try to actively engage with their fans by frequently responding to comments, and messages, with the intention to further boost music consumption and loyalty. Multiple ways of engaging have been used. One of the participants mentioned: “So I try to make my music touch people, not just like for them to listen, but like if they can connect to the music. I would love to hear how they connect. So, I always sort of mentioned that in my posts. Like how do you connect with this? And things like that. And then I do get a lot of messages too, which I definitely look at and I don't respond to everything, but I respond to a lot of them.” (Participant 8, personal communication, May 31, 2024). Connectedness has been found a central theme throughout the interviews. To create this feeling of connectedness between fans as well, certain artists have created a music community online on platforms such as Instagram.

Another influence on the music consumption is network effects. The sentiment of artists toward network effects is neutral since they do not want statistics on their social media to influence their emotional state. However, still, attention is paid to these metrics. One participant has for instance even made a formula for it: “I have like this little formula for myself that for every thousand views that I get. It's always divided by ten. Every video performs well when there are like a thousand views and a hundred people like it. That's like a decent video. Everything above it is pretty nice for me. The same thing with saving, but then divide it by ten again. So, it is like a hundred likes. And then if ten people saved it, that's like. Good for me.” (Participant 5, personal communication, May 09, 2024). The attention to statistics varies among participants since some others do not focus on these statistics at all.

4.3.2 Music Listeners

A prominent part of music consumption is music discovery. The discovery of music can be done through multiple methods. During the interviews with music listeners, questions relating to their methods of discovering music were asked. The most used method to discover new music is social media. Followed by, peer recommendations, and Spotify algorithm discoveries.

Additionally, the results showed that social media had an impact on the music preferences of music listeners. Certain participants discovered a few new artists, while others discovered a whole new genre that they never used to listen to. Especially the genre of indie rock became more popular with the participants by using social media. Another example by a participant from social media having an impact on music preferences, “I saw on Spotify that they published their new album, and I didn't know them before. Then I gave it a listen. I was like, not impressed. And then their songs went viral. And now I like, like the popular songs.” (Participant 11, personal communication, May 01, 2024). Other participants also mentioned that when a song goes viral on social media they would be more likely to add it to their music playlist, while otherwise, they would never listen to such a song.

Another concept related to music consumption is fan engagement. Most participants were not too interested in actively engaging with artists. The following of an artist and liking the posts was active enough for them, they were also not interested in joining any music-related communities. However, a few of the music listeners were interested in this and were positive towards joining fan-related activities, which also positively influenced their music consumption towards this artist. One participant mentioned also actively looking for fan-engaging content, to see what other people are doing relating to that artist, in order to stay up to date.

4.4 Music Industry

The final concept discussed is the Music Industry. This covers several elements, including codes relating to how the music industry was affected by social media. During the interviews, both artists and

music listeners discussed their sentiments towards this concept. This section will present the main findings regarding the coding process, presenting the different patterns and themes discovered within the interviews of both artists and listeners.

4.4.1 Artists

The evolution of the music industry has been constantly on the minds of artists since the rise of social media. The effects of social media have been prominent, both positive as well as negative. One negative effect mentioned by artists is the effect of social media on the quality of music. One artist expressed their frustrations: “Songs have become so short and snappy. They have just added one supercool element within the song that is super cool and reposted these a hundred million times on Instagram, and the rest of the song is just mediocre.” (Participant 4, personal communication, April 29, 2024). Multiple artists expressed this frustration that certain artists focus more on being an influencer instead of the music, which decreased the music quality in the industry. Another artist supported this by stating: “But I think honestly overall it's negative, especially TikTok, like I mean even in like the way that it like impacts sounds that artists chase and, um, like the way that they create music. It's just like, yeah, I can't endorse it.” (Participant 6, personal communication, May 01, 2024). Such sentiment is shared between the different artists interviewed.

Other negative effects of social media brought up by artists include the forced feeling to use social media as an artist and the time investment in social media. This feeling of being forced to use social media is connected to the requirements of record labels. To be able to ‘make it’ in the industry a good social media presence is necessary, which is now one of the most important requirements for record labels. As one of the participants expressed: “If you want to be signed to a label, they first look at if you are a bit popular. If you are good with social media, afterward they look at your music. If people can sing that is only an extra advantage, otherwise they just use autotune. So, you should have ‘made it’ before you can actually sign with a record label.” (Participant 7, personal communication, May 21, 2024). Multiple artists supported this statement and concluded that that is the reason they have stayed independent besides other reasons.

On a more positive note, social media provided also opportunities according to the participants. The most important factor of social media according to the artists was the ability to connect with others. Connecting with others includes connecting with fans, potential audiences, and other artists. This is also closely related to the positive effect, of opportunities for small artists. The bigger reaches and connections opportunities that social media has created have given small and upcoming artists the chance to grow quite quickly.

4.4.2 Music Listeners

The interviews revealed insights into how social media influences the music industry according to music listeners. One important negative effect that was mentioned by the listeners, as well as the artists, was the decline in the quality of the music. One participant expressed: “I think what is also happening, is everyone thinks they can make music. All kinds of influencers are making songs because they think like, hey, I can just hop on the train and be in the music industry, and it works for some reason or for some people.” (Participant 12, personal communication, April 30, 2024). This sentiment was shared by other participants who felt that this trend negatively impacted music quality.

Another negative effect according to the participants of social media was the pace at which the music industry is changing, which makes it hard for musicians to bring out good music rapidly. Additionally, social media has become a part of being a musician which makes it hard for some musicians who are good at making music to get into the right algorithm on social media, and that is why they never make it. Lastly, the listeners share the sentiment that artists get too easily judged, since you cannot post just anything anymore, and you need to be aware of what you post, otherwise, there is the chance of being canceled, which is also pressuring the artists.

On the positive side, participants acknowledged the advantages social media has on the music industry. According to music listeners, artists have a greater reach than before. This means that almost everyone can try to become an artist and have more opportunities to break through with their career and create an audience

online. Moreover, another reason that music listeners have a positive sentiment towards social media is due to the fact that they feel more connected to the artists. Since they see more personal elements due to social media, which enhances their overall music experience.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the most relevant findings from the results that were found. Interviewing 20 participants of which eight were artists and twelve were music listeners, enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the impact of social media on the reputation of artists and the music consumption behaviors of listeners. The discussion will outline the main findings enabling a conclusion to be drawn for the main research question.

The goal of this study was to investigate the effect of social media on artists' reputation and music consumption behaviors of listeners, to answer the following research question: "*How does the use of social media by independent artists shape audience perceptions of their reputation and influence music consumption behaviors?*".

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This part will discuss relations between findings made in the theoretical framework and outcomes presented by the participants of the study, to provide an overview of the effect of social media on artists' reputations and the music consumption behaviors of listeners.

5.1.1 *Social Media Usage*

Social media usage is an essential part of determining the popularity and reputation of artists. The interviews showed that although the number of followers represents the popularity of an artist and can influence music consumption, it does not necessarily reflect an artist's talent. This finding relates to the concept of network effects in the social media theory, which indicates that increased visibility on social media will lead to higher music consumption (Qiu et al., 2015). However, talent is still an essential part of music consumption. As high-quality music is essential for recommendations and engagement by the music listeners.

Besides network effects, social influence is also a critical aspect of social media theory. According to the theory, the visibility of interactions between listeners and artists can increase artists' perceived credibility and attract even more engagement from others (Stamkou et al., 2018). This was agreed upon by the listeners in this study, who shared that the probability of looking into a new artist increases depending on who is interacting with this artist. For instance, if peers with similar tastes in music interact or engage with an artist, other peers are more likely to do so as well.

As peers influence music consumption and discovery, so does social media on the promotion of music and music consumption. For music promotion to be effective most of the mainstream social media channels should be approached within their nature. Those differ from only music audio to photos, videos, and playlists that can improve engagement (Maitkainen 2018). The interviews showed some mixed feelings towards the use of social media in music promotion. Some artists have struggled with using unique content across the different social media platforms while others have developed detailed social media strategies. Nevertheless, an essential part of the social media strategy of artists should be creating a sense of connection with their audience. Listeners emphasized that the feeling of connectedness was one of the main reasons for following artists, this relates to the self-determination theory, which emphasizes the need for relatedness and connection (Ryan & Deci, 2017). So, how music promotion on social media is received, depends on the creation, and maintenance of connections between artists and their audiences.

Parasocial relationships, where there is a one-sided illusion of a personal relationship that audiences have with a media personality, were often mentioned positively by music listeners. The listeners mentioned to occasionally feel a strong connection to artists that they follow on social media. The artists appreciated the connection that listeners had with them, however, did not always have the sentiment to the same extent regarding the depth of the relationship.

5.1.2 Reputation Perception

For both artists and music listeners it became apparent that most reputations of artists are formed based on the content, authenticity, and overall presentation of the profile. Artists strategically plan their online presence and make a distinction between promotional content and authentic, audience-engaging content, creating an identity that complies with their audience. Since their social media profile is often viewed by music listeners as a reflection of who they are in real life. While the literature is mostly focused on the aspects within a profile, such as profile picture and personality traits in content, the music listeners are more likely to focus on the overall appearance.

Authenticity and credibility are crucial for maintaining a positive reputation. Artists are continuously trying to present themselves as authentic on social media. The music listeners stated that genuine content is most important for an artist, content should not be staged and should show a reflection of the artist as a person. However, trying to be authentic on social media can also be counterproductive, since if it does not feel authentic it can feel fake, which negatively impacts the reputation of the artists. This is in line with the findings by Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016), which showed that authenticity found favorable aspects of following artists on social media and other favorable outcomes such as word-of-mouth and purchase likelihood.

Active engagement from artists with their audiences impacts the reputation of the artists. In the study of Turri et al., (2013), it was found that the emotional relationships between fans and artists is strengthened by personal, self-revealing interactions. During the interviews, it was confirmed that artists who actively engage with their audiences, for instance through personal comments, online Q&As, or Instagram Stories, create a stronger bond with their fans and strengthen their reputations.

Collaborations can influence an artist's reputation, literature showed both positive and negative effects of collaborations which mostly depend on the collaborating partner (Lo & Peng, 2021). Both artists and music listeners shared this feeling and therefore, had a neutral sentiment about artists collaborating with

others. Nevertheless, the importance of online connections has been agreed upon between the artists and listeners to be important. Thus, according to the participants especially for upcoming artists collaborations can help to enlarge their reach.

5.1.3 Music Consumption

Social media plays a key role in music discovery. The music listeners expressed that they mostly discover new music through means of social media, followed by peer recommendations, and Spotify algorithm discoveries. The influence of peers on music discovery was already examined by the study of Garg et al., (2011), which found that peers have an immersive influence on music discovery. Social media enhances the impact of peer recommendations since artists use their networks to increase visibility and engagements which can lead to more music discovery.

Fan engagement is also a factor that can increase music consumption in certain cases, but the effectiveness varies among listeners. Only a few of the music listeners were interested in active music communities. This contrasts with Sandi and Triastuti's (2020) findings that active fan engagement can enhance community connection and personal identity. However, active engagement within music communities is only effective, for those listeners who are genuinely interested, otherwise it can lead to frustrations and work counterproductive. Artists have created such communities to share more personal information and updates regarding music creation to connect with active fans. However, still struggle with how to use it to be most effective for their audiences.

5.2 Implications

This study highlights the effect of the usage of social media on audience perceptions of independent artists' reputations and the music consumption behaviors of listeners. These effects are relevant for multiple groups including independent artists, record labels, and music consumers.

The findings of this study are relevant for independent artists. If the artists understand the influence that social media has on audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors, they can strategically use these

platforms to strengthen their reputation and grow their audience and reach. In addition, within their social media strategy artists can prioritize authenticity and engagement to create and maintain meaningful connections with their audience. By doing this they are creating fan loyalty and encouraging music consumption.

Currently, this study was mainly focused on independent artists however, the results are also interesting for record labels. Record labels can also adapt their marketing strategy and increase the authenticity and engagement within their strategies to strengthen the reputation of the artists and encourage music consumption by the listeners. When providing the right support and guidance for these artists on social media platforms, they contribute to their success within the music industry.

The last group of interest is music consumers. Music consumers gain insights into how the music industry works and the impact of social media on their consumption behaviors. Including behaviors regarding their perceptions of artists, and more such as music discovery and how these are influenced by their online presence. This awareness can let consumers make more conscious decisions regarding the music they consume and the artists they support.

Besides the relevance of this research for independent artists, record labels, and music consumers, this study also expands on previous findings and thus contributes to the theory. It provides an understanding of how social media influences the reputation of independent artists and the music consumption behaviors of listeners. The theoretical framework has shown previous research surrounding reputation and social media, as well as music consumption and social media, but this combination has not been researched before in the context of the music industry and therefore contributes to the current theory. The insights gained can be applied to broader discussions on the impact of digital platforms in various situations relating to reputation management and music consumption. Highlighting the crucial role of authenticity and engagement in building and sustaining reputations and consumer relationships.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations

Within the study, certain limitations must be addressed. These limitations can influence the outcomes and the different conclusions that have been drawn. The first limitation relates to the inter-coder reliability testing of the codebooks. While the inter-coder reliability has been tested for both codebooks and Cohen's Kappa was sufficient for the overall codebook, but not for all concepts, certain changes in descriptions were made to improve the codebooks. However, the improved codebooks were not tested again for inter-coder reliability. This results in that for the new codebooks the reliability of the results cannot be guaranteed. A recommendation for future research is to check inter-coder reliability again after changing the original codebook.

Another limitation of the study is the sampling of the music listeners. The music listeners in this study were sampled through means of convenience. While the listeners were from different nationalities and different ages, they were still all university students from within Europe. So, it could appear that the level of education and nationality had an impact on audience perceptions of artists and music consumption behaviors that were not related to social media. Therefore, for future research it is recommended to aim for a more diverse sample and avoid convenience sampling.

Additionally, the duration of the interviews was on average a bit shorter than normal for qualitative research. For the Artists the average interview was around 28 minutes while for the listeners this was around 25 minutes. In normal qualitative research, the average interview lasts around 45 minutes. This could have led to less detailed information, which could lead to a more superficial understanding of the topic, some insights could have been missed due to this. Future research could increase the questions in the interview guideline to gain more insights in participants' feelings and experiences regarding the subject.

Lastly, this study focused on the effect of all social media platforms on audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors. However, there is a great difference between the different platforms, including the specific features, and user demographics. It is a limitation of the study to combine all the social media

platforms because the effect of the different platforms could highly differ. For future research, should explore the impact of a single platform to provide a deeper understanding of the influences.

5.4 Directions for Future Research

This research provided new findings into the effects of social media on audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors. Nevertheless, further research is needed to deepen the understanding of all the effects of social media on the music industry.

First, based on the sample used in this study, future studies should conduct validation on different demographic groups. Since the use of social media might differ within different cultures. Artists reach people from all over the world online, therefore is it important to know the effect of social media on different demographic groups. This would enhance the validity of the findings and offer a better understanding of the effects found within this study.

Another direction for future research is to measure the effects of different social media platforms on audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors. This study focused on social media in general and its usage. However, every social media platform offers different features, engagement mechanisms, and user behaviors. Focusing on a specific platform, such as Instagram or TikTok, could enhance insights about the different features and can provide a more detailed insight into how the platforms influence audience perceptions of artists and music consumption behaviors.

Finally, in order to gain a clear overview of the impacts of social media, it might be recommended to study the influence of algorithms on social media platforms. How algorithms influence music discovery and artists visibility can provide insight into how social media is influencing audience engagement and music consumption. After a deeper understanding independent artists can change their social media strategies to optimize both audience perceptions as well as the music consumption behaviors of listeners.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this research was to understand the impact of social media on the reputation of artists and the music consumption behaviors of listeners. The findings have shown the essential role of social media in shaping audience perceptions and reputations of artists and influencing music consumption behaviors. Where authenticity, audience engagement, and a representative online presence emerge as reoccurring concepts. The right balance between promotional content and audience-engaging content has to be found to establish a positive reputation, create and maintain audience connections, and to positively influence music consumption behaviors. The qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews with both artists, as well as music listeners, provided a deeper understanding of the effects of social media. There was a detailed exploration of personal perspectives and personal experiences. These offered insights into the role of social media in the music industry, from the perspective of both artists and music listeners. However, future research is still needed to discover the effect of the different social media platforms on audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors, as well as understand how the algorithms within the platforms work and what role they play in forming audience perceptions and music consumption.

This study has identified the specific way in which social media can be used by independent artists to shape audience perceptions and positively influence music consumption behaviors. The study shows artists the importance of a social media strategy with an emphasis on connections with their audiences, and high-quality content to strategically influence audience perceptions and music consumption behaviors.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Guideline Artists

Opening:

- Informed consent
 - o Include the informed consent form and make the participant aware of their rights.
- Explain the purpose of the research
 - o The research aims to provide insights into the impact of social media on the reputation of independent artists and the music consumption habits of listeners. The research will investigate how the artists' social media usage influences their reputation and how social media interactions shape fans' choices in what music they listen to.
- Introduction of interviewer
- Introduction interviewee
 - o What do they feel like sharing?

Background Information:

- What has your artistic journey been like so far?
 - o Have you been making music for a long time?
 - What about releasing music or making your own music?
 - Have you had many performances?
 - o Have you signed with a record label or are you an independent artist?
 - If not would be interested in signing with them?
 - If yes, do you notice a difference?

Social Media:

- Are you using social media actively for your music career?
- What does your social media strategy look like?
- Which platforms are you using mostly?
 - o Do you have different goals for different platforms?
- Mostly use it for promotion or connecting?
 - o How do you put both into work in your social media?
- How often do you post on social media and what type of content?
- Have you seen a change in usage patterns over time?
 - o If so, was there a reason behind it?

Audience Engagement:

- How do you engage with your audience?
 - o Do you interact with your audience besides posting?
 - o Are you actively using chats?
- Have you had any notable interactions or feedback?
- Have you ever encountered negative feedback or criticism on social media?
 - o If so, how did you handle it?

- How do you measure the success of your social media efforts in terms of audience engagement (likes, shares, comments, etc.)?
 - o Does it influence your emotional state?

Reputation:

- How has social media influenced your reputation as an artist in your opinion?
- Do you believe social media influence your brand identity, and how?
- Did you experience any challenges/ opportunities related to maintaining a consistent brand image across different platforms?

Networking and Collaboration:

- Have you used social media as a tool for networking with other artists or industry professionals?
 - o If yes, can you share any experiences or outcomes from these interactions?
- Have you ever collaborated with other artists or record labels as a result of connections made through social media?
 - o How did these collaborations go?

Impact on Career Growth:

- To what extent do you believe that social media has contributed to your career growth or success as an artist?
- Can you identify any specific instances where social media played an important role in advancing your career goals or reaching new opportunities?

Future:

- How do you foresee the role of social media evolving in the music industry in the future?
- Are there any changes or trends in social media usage that you anticipate will have a significant impact on independent artists and record labels?

Ending:

- What is your big dream as an artist?
 - o Do you have a great example that you look up to?
- How do you feel about social media being part of your career as an artist?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with social media and its influence on your reputation or career?

Appendix B: Interview Guideline Music Listeners

Opening:

- Informed consent
 - o Include the informed consent form and make the participant aware of their rights.
- Explain the purpose of the research
 - o The research aims to provide insights into the impact of social media on the reputation of independent artists and the music consumption habits of listeners. The research will investigate how the artists' social media usage influences their reputation and how social media interactions shape fans' choices in what music they listen to.
- Introduction of interviewer
- Introduction interviewee
 - o What do they feel like sharing?
 - Type of Music
 - Top Artists
 - How often do they listen to music?
 - Music Platforms

Background Information:

- Which social media platforms do you use?
 - o Do you have a preference for social media platforms?
- Do you follow many artists on social media?
 - o Do you have examples of who you follow?
- Do you see music-related content coming by often
- Do you often look at the amount of likes and followers an artist has online?

Music Discovery and Social Media:

- How do you typically discover new music?
- Can you recall a specific instance where social media played a significant role in introducing you to new music or artists?
- Which social media platforms do you use most frequently for music-related activities?
- Have you ever followed an artist on social media based on their online presence rather than their music alone?
 - o If so, what factors influenced your decision?
- Can you describe your typical engagement with artists or music content on social media?
- Do you actively seek out music-related content on social media, or do you primarily encounter it through your feed?

Influence of Social Media on Music Consumption:

- How do you feel social media influences your music listening habits?

- Have you ever formed opinions about an artist's reputation based on their social media presence?
 - o If so, can you provide an example?
- Do you believe that an artist's social media presence affects their credibility or authenticity?
- Do you pay attention to how a profile looks?
- How do you distinguish between genuine fan engagement and promotional content on an artist's social media profiles?
- Do you believe social media metrics (likes, shares, followers) accurately represent an artist's popularity or talent?
- How do you think social media algorithms influence the music you discover and engage with online?

Interaction with Artists on Social Media

- Do you follow any independent artists or bands on social media?
 - o If so, why?
- Do you think social media has changed the way artists interact with their fans?
 - o If yes, in what ways?
- How important is an artist's online presence (e.g., social media activity, website) to you when deciding to listen to their music?
- Are there any specific ways in which you prefer artists to interact with their fans?

Music Consumption and Social Media Recommendations:

- How do you navigate through the amount of music available on social media and streaming platforms?
- Have you ever been influenced by social media recommendations or endorsements when deciding what music to listen to?
- Have you discovered any niche or underground artists solely through social media?

Perceptions of Social Media's Impact on Music Industry:

- Do you perceive any differences between discovering music through social media and more traditional methods (e.g., radio, word of mouth)?
- How do you think social media has impacted the music industry as a whole?

General Music Listening Habits:

- Do you participate in any music-related communities or discussions on social media?
 - o If yes, what do you typically discuss or engage with?
- Have you noticed any changes in your music consumption habits since you started using social media more frequently?

Reputation:

- How do you perceive an artist's reputation based on their activity on social media platforms?

- Profile?
- Active engagement?
- Have you ever changed your opinion about an artist's reputation after seeing their interactions or content on social media?
- Do you believe that an artist's social media presence contributes to their overall reputation within the music industry?
- Are there any specific behaviors or actions on social media that you believe could harm an artist's reputation?
- Do you think an artist's reputation influences your decision to listen to their music or attend their concerts?
- How much do you rely on an artist's reputation when exploring new music or deciding what to listen to next?
- How do you feel about artists collaborations?

Ending:

- Are there any changes or developments you'd like to see in how music is shared, discovered, and consumed in the future?
- How do you think the relationship between artists and their audience will continue to evolve in the digital age?
- Do you think artists have to be active on social media to be successful in the current music landscape?
 - Why or why not?
- How do you think that social media influenced the quality of music?

Appendix C: Literature Search Log

Source	Search Date	Search Query	Hits	Remarks
Scopus	13-03	“Social media” AND “music” AND “release”	27	General information about the field.
Scopus	13-03	“Social media” AND “Theory” AND “musicians”	20	Too specific for Scopus
Google Scholar	14-03	“Social media” AND “music release”	286	Google scholar had better results than Scopus
Google scholar	14-03	“social media theory”	1,560	To find theories for use of social media
Google Scholar	18-03	“Network effects” AND “social media”	32,100	
Google Scholar	18-03	“Social influence” AND “social media”	195,000	
Google Scholar	19-03	“marketing” AND “music” AND “release” AND “social media”	159,000	
Google Scholar	19-03	“social media” AND “platforms” AND “musicians”	32,400	
Google Scholar	19-03	“self-determination theory” AND “artists” AND “social media”	1,660	
Scopus	19-03	“audience engagement” AND “artists” AND “social media”	3	Too specific for Scopus
Google Scholar	21-03	“Fan engagement” AND “Parasocial” AND “artist”	176	
Google Scholar	21-03	“parasocial relationships” AND “definition”	5,100	
Google Scholar	26-03	“Reputation” AND “definition”	2,920,000	
Scopus	26-03	“Reputation” AND “Brand image”	387	Scopus useful for more detailed information.
Google Scholar	26-03	“Reputation” AND “social media” AND “artists”	49,300	
Google Scholar	27-03	“reputation” AND “formation” AND “online”	729,000	
Google Scholar	27-03	“engagement” AND “reputation” AND “social media” AND “artists”	33,400	

Google Scholar	02-04	“social media” AND “reputation” AND “influences”	184,000	
Google Scholar	02-04	“authenticity” AND “credibility” AND “social media” AND “reputation”	34,300	
Google Scholar	09-04	“reputation” AND “collaboration” AND “musicians”	65,700	
Google Scholar	09-04	“Reputation” AND “public perception”	87,100	
Google Scholar	11-04	“music consumption” AND “social media”	5,590	
Scopus	11-04	“Public perception” AND “definition”		
Google Scholar	16-04	“music discovery” AND “social media” AND “artists”	1,030	
Google Scholar	17-04	“peer-recommendation” AND “music discovery”	11	Even though low amount of hits, good results.
Google Scholar	17-04	“Algorithm” AND “music discovery” AND “social media”	613	
Google Scholar	17-04	“music discovery” AND “collaborations” AND “artists” AND “social media”	422	
Google Scholar	18-04	“fan engagement” AND “music consumption” AND “social media”	196	
Google Scholar	18-04	“Music communities” AND “social media” AND “Music Consumption”	315	
Google Scholar	19-04	“informed” AND “consent”	3,710,000	
Google Scholar	19-04	“semi-structured” AND “interviews”	1,260,000	To find conditions of semi-structured interviews
Google Scholar	06-05	“thematic” AND “analysis”	3,160,000	
Google Scholar	06-05	“in-depth” AND “interviews”	2,350,000	
Google Scholar	14-05	“Cohen’s” AND “Kappa”	70,500	To find rules of Cohen’s kappa.
Google Scholar	14-05	“Intercoder” AND “reliability”	62,500	