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Influence of platforms in a digitalized world: a focus on the music industry.

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Introduction

The contemporary music industry is an ever-changing environment.

In recent times, due to the entrance in the music industry of several new issues – first of all, the digitalization of the cultural good – has granted the industry new prosperity, driven by the presence of music streaming platforms such as Spotify.

With the presence of these extremely strong players who are monopolizing more and more the distribution and the fruition of music, the entire industry has seen a revolution.

It can't be said, on the other hand, that this revolution has happened overnight: instead, it was a smooth and gradual shifting process that is still going and that will go on as long as the players intervene and create new tools and user experience fruition methods.

In this thesis, the attempt is to analyze the influence that these key platforms have had on the industry in general: from the point of view of the users, going through the point of view of insiders and music industry workers, arriving at the analysis on the influence they had had on creatives and artists.

Following the framework of Wendy Griswold's "Cultural Diamond" and Bakhshi & Throsby's "Value chain model for cultural institutions", the relationships between the different actors in the ever-changing contemporary music industry is explored.

Due to the digitalization and the functioning of the platforms, changes are happening in multiple aspects of the music industry.

The review starts with chapter one taking into account the new perception of music: the importance of the platform and its functionalities, focusing on the importance of playlists as a main tool for music fruition.

Moving forward, the role of the new gatekeepers who shape the market together with the issues of artists' royalties payment from streaming platforms is explored.

Then, in chapter two, visibility, virality, and the innovation in communication that artists need to embrace in their strategies are taken into account.

Finally, the impacts that the issues aforementioned have had on the creative process of artists are explored.

Furthermore, regarding the analysis contribution of chapter 3, an ISTAT review of consumption habits in digital media is taken into account and, given the insights on the Italian population collected from this source, a qualitative questionnaire and analysis on a smaller sample by focusing on the aforementioned issues are performed.

Finally, qualitative interviews of a focus group of users, insiders, and creatives of the music industry, is executed within the insights framework and the sample sizes returned by the ISTAT review and the questionnaire research.

Finally, the three sources are cross analyzed to find hidden patterns, interesting insights, mainstream and extremes opinions, reaching to the conclusions on the matter of research.

Chapter 1

1.1 Theoretical frameworks

As mentioned in the introduction, in the first chapter I will be discussing the main framework in which my research has been shaped, the starting point from where I was able to investigate how interrelated are the observations from empirical evidence and literature review.

The first framework taken into account by my research is the "*cultural diamond*" introduced by Wendy Griswold in her book "Culture and Societies in a Changing World" (1994).

In her work, she introduces the idea of the cultural object, defined in her previous work, as "shared significance embodied in form"; later on, she argues again about the definition of the cultural object as "a socially meaningful expression that is audible, tangible or that can be articulated" (Griswold, 1994). Finally, in her work, she analyses the cultural object as some sort of tangible or intangible artifact that tells a story, which "may be sung, told, set in stone, enacted, or painted on the body" (Griswold, 1994).

As she introduces the framework of the "cultural diamond", she starts from the definition of the cultural object and says that they all have creators, which may be "the people who first articulate and communicate an idea, the artists who fashion a form, or the inventors of a new game or new lingo". (Griswold, 1994).

Furthermore, Griswold argues that the cultural visible object becomes one when it becomes public, by entering the circuit of human discourse made by receivers. It also has to be intended as "far from being a passive audience, cultural receivers are active meaning makers" (Griswold, 1994).

Finally, she introduces the concept that the cultural object, the receivers, and the creators are not dissociated from a specific context in which they are found - they do indeed need to be taken into account "within the economic, political,

social and cultural world patterns and exigencies" (Griswold, 1994) in which they're operating every time. This environment is summarized by Griswold as the social world.

The final step of setting up the cultural diamond, according to Griswold, is to lay down the four factors aforementioned (the cultural object, the creator, the receiver, and the social world) at the corners of an imaginary two-dimensional diamond and then connect these four corners with linking lines which are to be intended as "relationship" between factors.

Indeed, Griswold stresses that the link between two points is not causal, it does not say what the relationship is, but it only underlines that there's a relationship and that it should be further investigated. And, finally, she argues that a complete understanding of a cultural object needs to take into account the understanding of all of the lines and the corners of the cultural diamond. Figure 1 below is a representation of Griswold's cultural diamond.
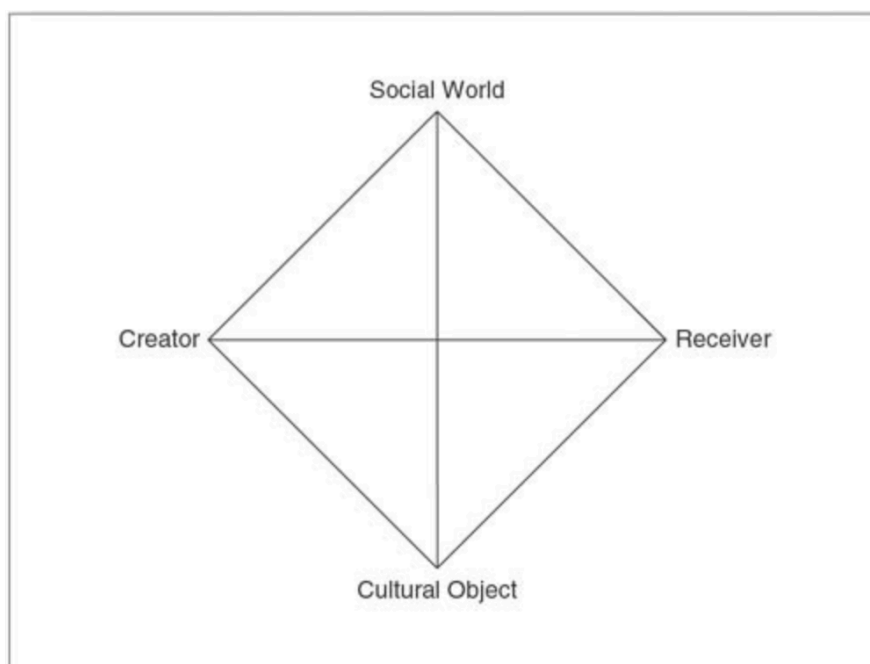
Figure 1 – The cultural diamond by Wendy Griswold.

In this sense, the cultural diamond will be useful in my research progress as it will allow the research to get deeper into connections between the mutating world in which digitalization is changing the behavior of creators, of receivers,

while the social world has different and ever-changing needs to be satisfied by the cultural object.

Griswold's work was a milestone in sociological and cultural studies, but it lacks a focus on the managerial and entrepreneurial point of view. To integrate this point, thanks to the work of Bakhshi & Throsby (2010) which do introduce the framework of the "value chain for cultural institutions" they try to expose the "responses to disruption in the value chain that represents the production and distribution processes" of cultural institutions. The value chain for cultural institutions is shown below in figure 2.
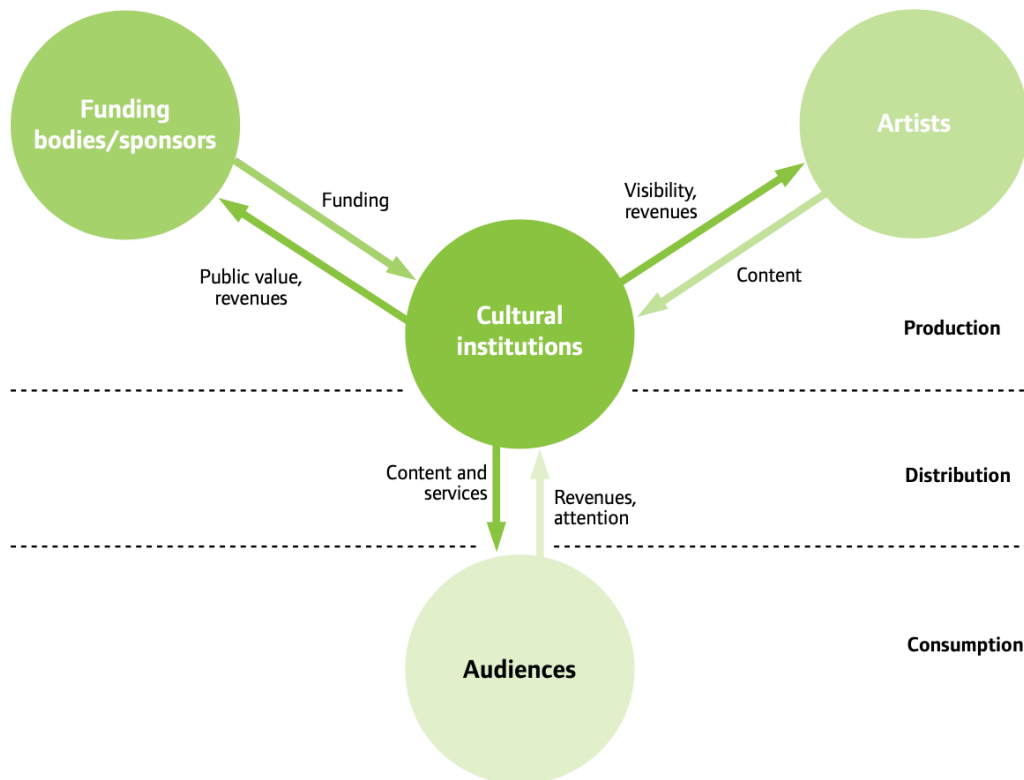
Figure 2 – Value Chain for cultural institutions by Bakhshi and Throsby (2010).

The value chain, as stressed by the authors of this framework, is fundamental at underlying which are the various trade-offs that are faced by the cultural institutions as disruption in their field while they're trying to reach their missions (Bakhshi & Throsby, 2010).

Furthermore, Bakhshi & Throsby (2010) do include in their analysis an overview of the innovative strategies brought forward by the players and institutions in

the cultural environment by focusing on four different types of innovation, following different types of disruption.

In specific, they argue that innovation in the cultural institutions might be in audience reach, both in a traditional and in a technologically innovative way, the innovation in art development, the innovation in value creation to guarantee their funding & their policymakers' relationship, the innovation in business management and governance, in general, to respond to an all-times changing funding environment.

1.2 Who are the actors and how they move? Griswold readapted

Thanks to the cultural diamond framework by Wendy Griswold, the analysis of the relationships between the four imaginary corners of the digital diamond was performed after scrutinizing the music industry environment both in literature review and in other articles, online blogs, and forums.

The general framework was created by focusing on the contemporary music industry, keeping in mind as a spotlight mainly the Italian music industry, is based on Griswold's work and can be found in Figure 3, on the next page of this chapter.

During the literature review issues risen by authors and experts have been allocated within the relationship framework of Griswold. After the first review of cases and phenomena, the main keywords were able to be deduced together with the elements of analysis for each relationship line between elements of the cultural diamond, which are represented in Figure 3. The main setting used to frame the information is Griswold's cultural diamond, but each relationship will be appropriately framed within Bakhshi & Throsby's (2010)

value chain for cultural institutions to avoid dropping the managerial issues of interest, as discussed previously in this chapter.
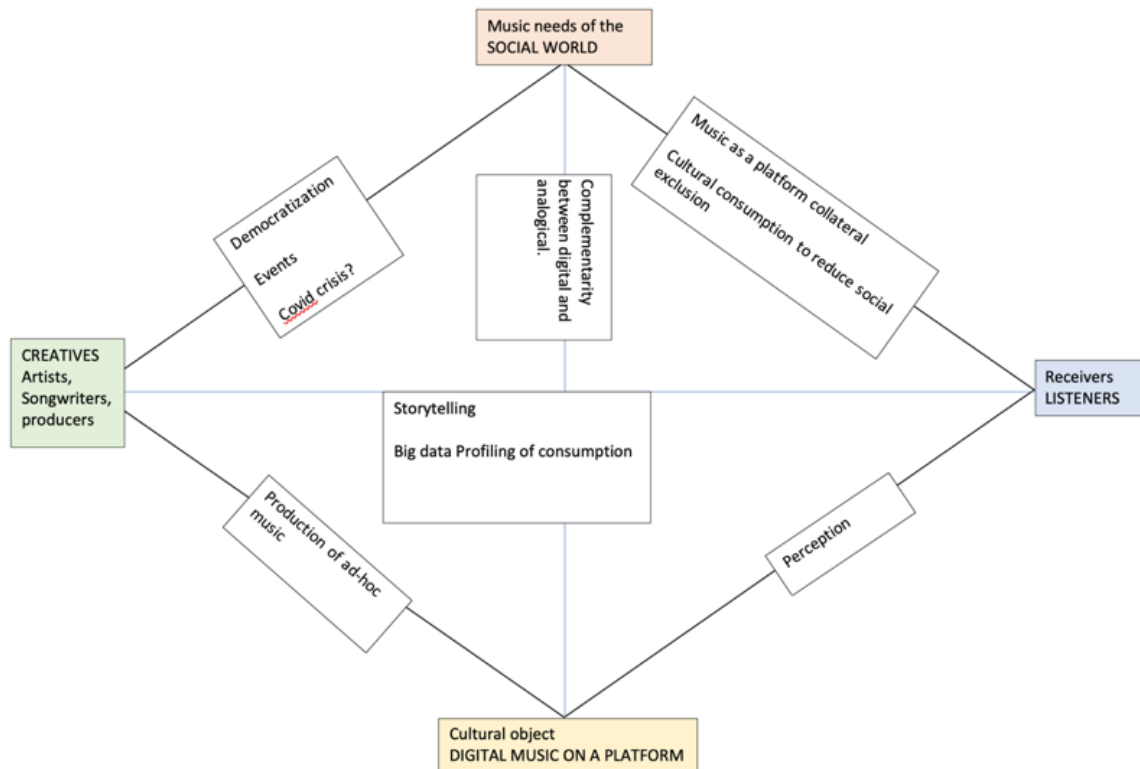
Figure 3 – Griswold readapted for the specific case of this research

The first relationship that was dig into in this research is the relationship between the cultural object, which is the digital music on a platform, and receivers, which are the public and consumers of the musical product.

1.3 Cultural Object & Receivers – Perception

The keyword to understand this relationship, during my literature review, is perception. The contemporary cultural object has had an overwhelming shift from its previous configuration, going from physical to digital.

The digital revolution of the music environment starts with the creation of Napster, a pirate music sharing service, in 1998: in just two years, the software

which allowed all users to download for free the music that was present on other peers' computers, reached 50 million users worldwide.

Napster leveraged the peer to peer technology to create its service. Peer-to-peer is clearly defined by Schollmeier(2001) in his work: "A distributed network architecture can be called a Peer-to-Peer (P-to-P, P2P) network, if the participants share a part of their hardware resources (e.g. storage capacity = songs). These shared resources are necessary to provide the service offered by the network (e.g. music sharing). They are accessible by other peers directly, without passing intermediary entities. The participants of such a network thus resource providers as well as resource requestors."

The consequent developments of the "*peer to peer*" services, passing from eMule, BitTorrent and other p2p-based services, challenged the mainstream acknowledgment of copyright, put in discussion the concept of the "cost of music" on which the traditional business model of the recording industry was based on (Bonelli, 2020).

This is why I want to keep the perception keyword in mind as I analyze this link of the cultural diamond shown in Figure 3.

Whether we like it or not, as stressed by Bonelli in his work of 2020, the contemporary perception of the musical product, is that it's free: through several years of file sharing and subscription-based model platforms, consumers do not feel like they need to pay to enjoy the musical product, the cultural object. Bonelli stresses that music is not "owned" by listeners when they pay for a subscription-based service: the ownership of the cultural object is a pivotal factor in understanding the behavior of consumers as it derails the perception of the cost of the good – and, indeed, when a consumer stops paying the once-a-month fee to the subscription-based streaming service, the cultural object is not accessible anymore to them.

The perception of the musical object has been challenged more recently, as explained above, by the diffusion of the legal streaming services, with huge consequences on the whole industry and also on the creatives' strategies to make a living out of their music, which I will analyze further on.

Given that I have been mentioning the subscription-based models for platform services, I will be further explaining and framing this issue, to keep on analyzing the "perception" linkage between the cultural object and the receivers having clear in mind the business model of the distribution of content in a digital and platformized environment.

Platformization has been a huge phenomenon becoming the latest development of the value-creation process in all economic fields.

It is defined by Niemborg & Poell (2018) as the "penetration of economic, governmental and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems", which eventually started to involve the creative cultural industries and extensively affected its operations, their functioning, and most of all the mode of delivery of content to consumers.

The fruition of creative and cultural content has been shifting to a platform-based system of enjoyment in the past decade as a consequence of the constant digitalization, the development and spread of digital tools for consumers with always-at-hand devices.

It had a fundamental impact on revenues and on the cost structure of the industry in general, therefore challenging the players and gatekeepers in protecting their role (Waldfogel, 2017) such as book publishers, record labels, movie studios, and television networks.

Therefore, the topics within the value chain model for cultural institutions by Bakhshi & Throsby of this paragraph need to be framed between the field of distribution, as to how content and services are provided by institutions to audiences; at the same time, it's important to discuss the production field, as

this paragraph touches the visibility and revenues methods between artists and platforms.

But what are the main features that define a so-called "platform" in the music industry and how can they relate to the new perception of digital music, as mentioned above? To have a clearer identification of the features, I will be bringing forward the empirical examples of the features of Spotify, the most used platform worldwide.

- *A wide and extensive library of contents*:

  Thanks to the agreements with many international labels, *in primis* Warner, Universal, and Sony, most of the platform services can offer almost the whole musical landscape (Bonelli, 2020), including most artists in the platform and allowing anybody to access their music through it. At the same time, smaller and independent labels can easily gain access for their artists on the platforms. This is one of the motivations for the "*perception*" keyword: having millions of songs available to consumers anytime, anywhere, definitely contributed to the denaturation of the perception of the specific song's value. Some artists, instead, have decided to opt-out of platform services as a protest to the stream-based profit of these platforms. It will be further discussed afterward in this chapter when I will be analyzing how contemporary creatives do make a living in the platformized musical environment;

- *Freemium and subscription-based service*:

  in general, the music platforms do include a freemium service, which means that the basic listening features are available for free, while the advertisement is included in the platform in multiple ways: it can be shown as a visual banner and as a musical ad interlude in between songs. These advertisements are generally given to some external brands and companies, which do advertise their product and are used

by the platform as well to advertise their subscription-based service, in an attempt to upsell to customers and gain new subscribers. The main features that are included in the subscription-based service within a musical platform are a higher music quality, the possibility to listen to a specific song, and to download songs to be able to listen to them offline, the removal of all the advertisements.

To give an idea of a comparison between the *"freemium"* and the subscription-based service, let's take Spotify Italy as an example.

This summarized table 1 lists all the differences between the freemium service and the "premium" service.

	Spotify Free	Spotify Premium
Monthly fee	Free	€ 9,99
Library	> than 40 million songs	> than 40 million songs
Device Availability	PC, smartphone, smart TVs, consoles, car systems	PC, smartphone, smart TVs, consoles, car systems
Specifics	Regular listening to the advertisement; without the possibility to download and listen offline; max of 20 skips an hour.	Listening: Without advertisements; Download offline; Unlimited "skips" of songs;
Audio quality	Up to 160 kbps	Up to 320 kbps

Table 1 – Freemium and subscription-based services on Spotify.

The fact that music is now mostly experienced via freemium or subscription-based services has shifted the consumers' *perception* to what Bonelli (2020) was describing: the turn to the conception that the musical object has a very little cost or none.

- *A data-driven user library*:

  As a platform, the musical streaming services collect information about the consumers' listening habits and propose new music to a new broad audience of listeners. Thanks to the customers' big data profiling, the platforms' algorithms can propose them new music and to discover it – by analyzing the musical taste of a consumer, they can reach them in a more efficient way to retain them and keep them on the platform as long as possible.

1.3.1 Playlist is the new album

As defined by Prey (2018), playlists are "a repackaging of music in a form native to streaming platforms" The new format of aggregation of music, which is described in specific below, is the most common activity for listeners on platforms: according to Bonini (2019) which reports a study by Nielsen Music, nearly 60% of US music streamers do start using a platform through a playlist. The words of Daniel Ek, Spotify's CEO and founder are emblematic: he claims that "over 30% of consumption on Spotify is now a direct result of recommendations made by the platform's algorithms and curation teams – something that puts Spotify in control of the demand curve" (Ingham, 2018) Taking once again the example of Spotify, it's important to underline the critical importance of playlists, for the functioning of the platform itself. Spotify allows three different typologies of playlists:

- o *1. 3. 1. 1 User-generated content playlists*

  Created by listeners, by consumers, by selecting the songs they like and by adding them on their personal playlist. These can be shared and listened by other members and therefore do have the potential of becoming viral. Some entities such as newspapers, music experts, who

are outside Spotify's organization, do create these playlists and by sharing them via social media, earn listeners and followers.

o *1. 3. 1. 2. Algorithmic playlists*

These are "personalized" playlists – they are created by the algorithm who profiles your listening habits and therefore can give a thread of which songs might be in your interest. The most popular example of these playlists is the "Discover Weekly" playlist, where all users can find new songs after the elaboration of the algorithm that takes into account the percentage of affinity with artists he's already listening to. It does work like a "ranking page" in the search engine results page: each time a user listens to a song on "Discover Weekly" and consequently adds it to his personal library, the song gets a higher rank and the algorithm will reconfigure the playlist to align with the new discovered taste and interest in songs.

o *1. 3. 1. 3. Algotorial playlists*

These playlists are created by a team of curators, who do represent the new gatekeepers in the digitalized music industry. Around 150 people are working in this field in multiple platform organizations and they create new playlists every day while adjusting and correcting old and popular playlists.

These playlists, always keeping in mind Spotify as an example, are company-created and, at the same time, the most followed by users in the platform. Each playlist is based on the hypothesis of the taste of the audience, following their possible musical taste, and through the KPI analysis of the behavior of listeners, they can decide to move, adjust the order, or delete songs from the playlist.

The main KPIs that are used by these curators are the skip rate, which is how many times the song has been skipped while listening to the

playlist, and the listening time – the number of seconds that a song keeps playing. There's then the explanation of the name of this playlist category: *algo-torial*, meaning that it's *editorial* but adjusted *algorithmically*. This term was coined by Bonini *et. al* (2019) in an enlightening research paper which I will also report later on when discussing the new gatekeepers of the digitalized music industry in Chapter 2.

To conclude the discourse on perception, an important factor to keep in mind is that the so-called musical platforms, which I have described in specific in the previous paragraph of this chapter, are shifting from a music-specific platform to an "omnichannel" platform that does include music. This can't be said yet about Spotify, which is by far the most popular music platform worldwide, but it can be said about other key players of the industry: Google (& YouTube) Music, Apple Music, and Amazon Music are all platforms created by the biggest tech players in the world and that are trying, by creating musical streaming services, to retain their customers within their "omnichannel bubble". Therefore, the perception on customers changes once again: they're not buying a music-oriented service anymore, but they're moving within their bubble and they could start to perceive music as a collateral tool to other cultural objects (be it movies, tv shows, TikTok mini-videos) or just another service by a broader subscription. This topic will also be further discussed later on when I will be analyzing the relationship between receivers and the needs of the social world.

1.4 Creatives & the needs of the social world

On the opposite side of the Griswold cultural diamond lays the relationship between the creatives, the artists, and the social world in which they're operating, they are influenced, they have to make a living out of their creative

production, they have to be able to express their creative inspiration following their audience but without forgetting artists' needs. The topics in this paragraph are to be framed within the value chain model for cultural institutions by Bakhshi & Throsby (2010) in the field of production, regarding the content that artists create for the public in general, but the platform and institution in specific; and at the same time, the visibility and revenue issues that the shape of the platform is "imposing" on artists and creatives. Finally, this paragraph is also touching the relationship between institutions and the audiences, in the distribution and consumption field.

The main keywords in this relationship between the creatives and the needs of the social world that I found relevant are the following:

1. Democratization of Reachability
2. Revenue flow issues with artists
3. Innovation in live event management.

1. 4. 1. Democratization of reachability

The first change in the relationship between the creatives and the social world, with the introduction of the platforms for the music industry, can be defined as the democratization of reachability. In theory, more than two million artists and creatives can be reached through YouTube, Spotify, or Apple Music anytime, anywhere in the world, with the device they prefer the most.

All the artists, through their label or independently, as already mentioned, can appear on musical platforms in a structured and professional way. This will be investigated thoroughly in Chapter 2 as this is the starting point for a musician's communication strategy.

All the artists can potentially end up in user-generated playlists, in algorithmically generated playlists, in editorial and *algotorial* playlists created by the platform, as specified in the previous paragraph, and reach new fans

which can discover their music. All the creatives, supposedly, have the same possibility to spread the word, get more streams, and increase their success.

The possibilities given to artists and creatives by platforms to reach a vast public and the entire world in surprisingly short times is an unprecedented opportunity.

On the other hand, paradoxically, this new awareness has made the relationship between artists and the world they operate into very different and complicated than it used to be, due to the enormous "background noise" (Bonelli, 2020) due to the presence of more than two million artist on the same platform, with the same possibilities and the same opportunities of all the others.

Musicians and artists now need to find "increasingly novel ways to grab the public's attention" (Arditi, 2019) and this can be found in communicative expedients such as in a secret release of an album, an exclusive release of a specific single to a specific number of people (e.g. through Patreon, as described further on in this chapter), creating public feuds by drawing attention to other issues different than the music (as Kanye West and Taylor Swift). The noise matters more than the music (Arditi, 2019). Once again, the concept of noise is taken into account, but with a different meaning: first, when speaking about the background noise, Bonelli (2020) was intending that musicians need a bigger effort to emerge from the noise, while Arditi (2019) meant that a louder noise by an artist allows them to be heard clearer by possible new audiences.

Another issue to discuss in the reachability discourse, according to Waldfogel (2017) is that digitalization has "brought substantial reductions in the costs of production, distribution, and promotion of new products in music", therefore the gatekeeping role of media companies can be said that it has been

democratized: in theory, all media companies can support an artist as the costs for the media company (the platform) in the distribution process are lower.

1. 4. 2. Revenue flow issues with artists

For many years now, artists have felt like they do not feel fairly paid following the platforms' rules of stream-based payment and have been protesting how Spotify, but also most other platform-based music streaming services, treat the artists and creatives in supporting their creative process. In specific, Spotify and most platforms pay artists according to the number of streams that this artist gets: the higher the streams, the higher the royalty that an artist receives. This is defined as a *pro-rata* system, or a *service-based* system, or *per-stream-based* royalty – these terms are introduced by different authors and experts, but their meanings are equivalent in the next paragraphs and its essence.

For simplification purposes, in the next paragraph, by saying "a platform *pays* artists" it will be omitted that, generally, a platform pays the label and the management of an artist and then, given the contract stipulated between the two parts, the artists will receive compensation and royalties derived from the streaming services.

The stream value in the *pro-rata* system is an overall calculation: Spotify adds up all the streams worldwide, and the royalty money is split equally by the number of streams of the single artist (Spotify website, 2020). It has been calculated that thanks to the *pro-rata* system that Spotify adopts, 77% of all the income destined to musicians is earned by 11% of the 2 million artists on the platform (Bonelli, 2020). According to Dimont (2017), "digital music streaming services have made an error in how they distribute royalties": according to this royalties' expert, the platform services pay "rights to holders per-stream, while collecting the majority of the revenue – thanks to the artists' content – by subscription".

Always according to Dimont (2017), the payment rate of a per-stream-based royalty was calculated to be between 0,0084$ and 0,006$: a striking comparison brought forward by the author is that an artist would need at least 166000 streams a month to earn the federal minimum wage in the United States. This royalties fund transfer underlined by Dimont (2017) might make sense as it is because it resounds how royalties were distributed in the analogic era: the more a song is streamed, the more royalties will be received by its authors – such as CDs sales and radio plays royalties have always worked in the past. The big difference, according to Dimont, that justifies the debate on whether this royalties' system is fair to artists and creatives, is that platform-based streaming companies "do not sell music: they do sell *access* to music".

Dimont (2017) underlines a simple but effective small case study: the one of cellist Zoë Keating, analyzed by Drege (2013). She claims that, on average, she has made in 2013 0,0044$ per stream. As Spotify does not provide information about the unique users who did listen to Keating's work, the author of the research has theorized given the number of streams and that an album is composed in general by ten songs, that she received around 40000 "album plays", totalizing an amount of 1764$ of royalties revenue.

On the other hand, she claims that thanks to her album sales she has earned 8710$ in the same year on the sale of 1325 albums online. Comparing the album plays with the album sales, we can see that she earned much more with physical sales with much less success.

Some experts are bringing forward a new way in which artists could be paid more fairly: the so-called "User-Centric Licensing" method.

User-Centric Licensing could be considered as a different approach to reward the fair royalties to the rightful owner that can apply to streaming services.

There have been first steps in this direction, with some platforms recognizing that the royalties awarding methodologies must change, and Deezer has been leading the run by expressing what a fair treatment of royalties could be.

Deezer, since late 2019, has been applying UCPS (User Centric Payment System) to the distribution of royalties to the artists, by trying to keep the user at the center of the calculation.

It stems from this assumption: each user's subscription quota should go to the artists he listens to during his subscription period – streams should be calculated on a user-centered basis, not on an overall basis.

A graphical simplified summary in Figure 4 shows the pro-rata-based system, and it is useful to understand inequality in the redistribution of royalties: Amber and Sasha represent the whole users of Deezer.

Figure 4 – from https://www.deezer.com/ucps
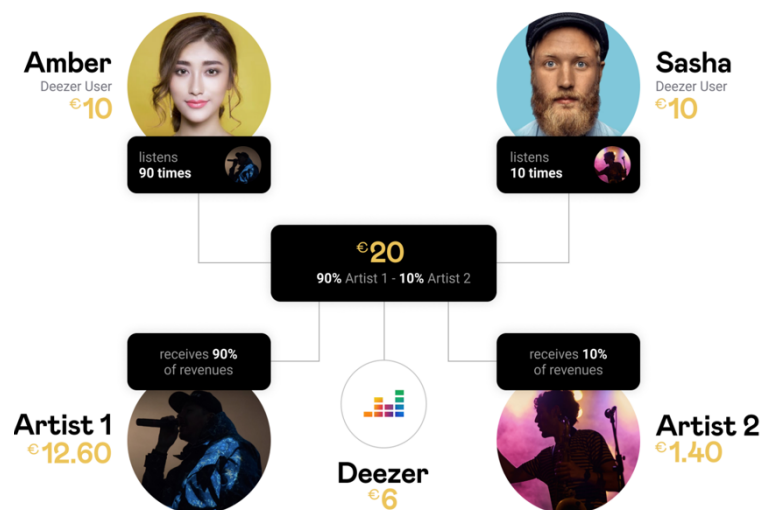
In the pro-rata-based royalties' scheme, they would pool their subscription monies to a total platform income. This total, minus the operational income deducted by Deezer, would be split between Artist 1 and Artist 2 based on the number of streams they received. 90% of overall streams are awarded to Artist 1, which are also generated by Amber alone, and Artist 1 receives 12,60€. Artist 2, instead, has generated only 10% of the overall number of streams, even if all of his streams were listened by Sasha. Therefore, Artist 2 receives only 1,40€, 10% of the pooled total of the subscription monies.
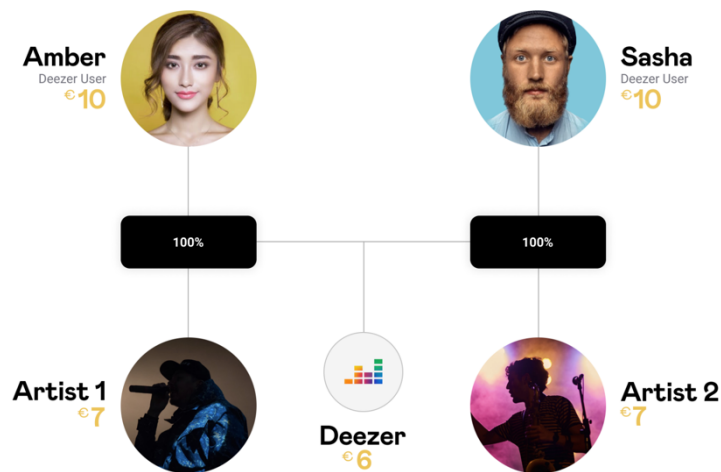
Figure 5 – from deezer.com/ucps

On the other hand, thanks to the User-Centered Payment System, Deezer wants to bring forward a fairer way in which the payment of royalties to artists is done. Once again, from their website, a simplified graph in Figure 5 shows the subscription monies movement and how the new system would work. Both users are passionate about the artist they support: Amber only listens to Artist 1, and Sasha only listens to Artist 2. If Amber listens to Artist 1 more than how Sasha listens to Artist 2, it doesn't matter for royalties calculation: 100% of the royalties quota paid-in by Amber will go to Artist 1, while 100% of the royalties quota paid-in by Sasha will go to Artist 2.

This is a very simple, but more efficient system to achieve the target to reward small artists who have a small passionate audience, but with the small overall stream numbers cannot get anywhere with the royalties' monies.

Deezer has taken a firm stance on user-centric licensing. His Chief Content & Strategy Officer, Alexander Holland, said that "A user-centric approach is the next logical step in streaming as the main innovation driver in the music industry – and it would mean that fans directly support the acts they love" (Cooke, 2019).

The main reasons which are listed and justified by Deezer to the adoption of the new royalties' regulator system are the following:

1. To reduce unfair revenue gaps that do belong to old ways of thinking music: as mentioned above when citing the work of Dimont (2017), the per-stream based model was based on the same reasoning that dictated the royalties awarding scheme of CD sales and radio plays. It's also another strategy to enhance the value of those demographics who generate the most of royalties. Deezer cites (deezer.com/ucps) that 18-25-year olds do represent 19% of all Deezer subscribers but do generate 24% of total royalties – in this way, UCPS gets rid of the imbalance between streams and subscription income.

2. Supporting local creators and niche genres: an indie artist would receive all the royalties generated from his few fans, instead of a stream-based royalties' system. A consumer is also prouder and happier to support economically by listening to the niche market they're fans of. According to Chris Cooke (website), "it does seem likely that user-centric royalty distribution would see top-level artists earn slightly less and lower-level artists earn slightly more", benefitting the diversification and the cultural exploration of new niches of the market. Music streaming could no longer be considered as a "necessary evil" (Jolly, 2019). Every stream will make a real difference, according to Deezer by "promoting a diverse and vibrant music landscape", which can be less touched and influenced by the royalties' problematics in the creative process. I will be further analyzing the problematics of the creative process in the next chapter.

3. Fighting fraud: in the service-centric licensing system, there were some attempts to fraud the royalties awarding.
   As reported by Jonze on The Guardian (2014), an American band called Vulfpeck released an album called "Sleepify" which contained ten silent

tracks of slightly more than 30 seconds and asked their fans to stream it overnight – as it did not contain any music.

As reported by Dimont (2017), if 100 fans would listen at least 30 seconds (the minimum time of listening required to record a "stream") of each song for the entire night, Vulfpeck would be able to generate 600$ in royalties a night. The band claimed this album was added to the platform to fund their next tour, promising to their fans that they would hold concerts in the places where the silent album, "Sleepify", would be listened to more (Vulfpeck, 2014) Spotify soon deleted this album claiming it violated its terms and conditions of service (Brown, 2014).

This (and other) attempts to trick the stream-based royalties' system would cease to exist in a user-centric licensing system, as the subscription money of a single user would be split between the artists he listens to.

Unfortunately, Deezer doesn't have a great market share worldwide to be able to make a critical difference in the industry – the French company in 2019 only reached 3% of the worldwide music subscribers by service, according to Midia Research (2019) - so it will be a while until the user-centric licensing method will be applied to other services as well.

These issues about how royalties are currently awarded are pivotal to discuss in the ever-changing relationship between the needs of the social world and the creatives: streaming royalties are never enough to sustain the economic development of an artist's project and therefore they need to find alternative solutions, some of which will be discussed in the next chapters.

An interesting and exhaustive checklist of the activities that an artist should keep an eye on to make his music career economically sustainable was proposed by Emily White in her work of 2020.

Some of the main entries in this checklist are listed below:

- Streaming audio on platforms (Spotify, Apple Music, etc.) – was discussed thoroughly in the previous paragraphs;
- Royalties from video streams (YouTube);
- Copyright and secondary rights for purposes different than streaming and video royalties;
- Proceeds from live performances;
- Sales of physical media (CDs and vinyl);
- Merchandising sale;
- Crowdfunding.

1. 4. 3. Patreon

Independent artists, while adapting to the market rules and trying to stay afloat when relating with the social world, have been recurring more and more to alternative ways to increase their revenue, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. One of these methods that combined with digitalization is specifically interesting to analyze are subscription-based platforms specifically created to support artists and their work: the main example of this issue is Patreon, a crowdfunding website specifically introduced to sustain creatives economically in a collective way.

Since 2013, Patreon is giving a digital environment to those artists who would like to be patronized by some of their closest fans – by providing them limited and exclusive creative content in exchange for a monthly subscription-based fee. The company defines itself as a "sustainable" platform in which patrons, the fans of a creative artist, are supportive and establish a direct and reliable revenue flow to sustain the work of the patronized artist.

Patreon is also a multifaceted platform in which many of the revenue streams checklist elements by White (2020) mentioned in the previous paragraph can be met. According to their website, Patreon is the best place for an artist to

crowdfund, by creating exclusive content for patrons; at the same time, though, it's the best place to sell merchandise, CDs, albums, perform digitally live for the fans and followers who are entitled to receive special content from their patronized artist.

Specifically, the last element is very interesting to analyze as the digitalization has transformed musical events concerning the social world and the way the artists need to move.

1. 4. 4. Innovation in live events management

Live events are changing dramatically in recent years and months because of the global challenges that our social world is facing. Artists are taking steps forward and adapting to challenges such as the climate change crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic – while also championing to raise awareness and fight for the aforementioned causes.

The first example I want to write about in this paragraph is related to climate issues and takes into account the actions by Coldplay in late 2019.

Touring and gigs are very polluting: some figures (Julie's Bycicle.com, 2019) show that the carbon footprint of live performances in the UK every year nearly reaches 405000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. As their new album was about to be released, Chris Martin, lead singer of Coldplay, interviewed by the BBC, claimed that they would not be touring for Everyday Life (2019), their newest album: an unprecedented move by such a big gig-oriented band. Martin also claimed in the same interview that they would be spending the next years figuring out how to have a world tour and, at the same time, be "carbon-neutral, be actively beneficial and have a positive impact on the environment". On the other hand, Coldplay performed to promote their new album on November 22nd in Jordan – without a present audience – and streamed the two gigs to a global internet audience on YouTube.

Martin also claimed, in the same interview as already mentioned, that they "were trying to lead by example as they had a responsibility in the face of the climate and natural crisis".

As of March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic first shook our society, the first measures taken by governments worldwide were to ban gatherings of any kind – specifically, one of the most hit industries was live music events.

All concerts worldwide which were already scheduled had been canceled all of a sudden. Artists were no longer able to receive financial compensation for their work - and in specific, in Italy, the creative and cultural workers were also those who were the last to be helped by the government and to receive COVID funds, as they were introduced in the Law Decree of 17th May 2020.

On the other hand, with artists stuck in lockdown and the whole country on the verge of an emotional breakdown, new ways to communicate were experimented by creatives for and with their fans to cheer them up and to give them some content to be less frustrated during the period at home.

There was a general increase in Instagram Live shows, in which several artists were performing to their followers and more; the most famous example in Italy was the concert by pop-singer and rapper Fedez from his balcony in Milan on 15th March.

On that day, via @fedez Instagram Live, more than 1,2 million people connected to the artist and enjoyed the live show. Furthermore, other two well-known Italian artists, Elisa Toffoli and Tommaso Paradiso, decided to collaborate with their fans and managed to write a song on a series of Instagram Live performances which was then later released with the title of "Andrà Tutto Bene" – the Italian slogan and most recurred hashtag on social media during the pandemic lockdown. All of these "emergency" related innovations in the creative process and the live performance scope might lead

shortly to concrete ways in which artists can think about communicating with their public.

The lockdown period has also completely stopped the operations and the income flow of venues, together with artists who were playing in those venues: an opportunity to have a "live" experience during a pandemic is the experiment brought forward by this Italian project from Brescia, named "deLIVEry", according to them "achieving a new cultural experience through delivery".

Reading on their website, they claim that the set-up of their business model was inspired by the disposition of artists to continue their activity to engage with fans through streaming performances – as aforementioned.

DeLIVEry also denotes some critical issues that artists were facing as they were live streaming during the lockdown:

- The saturation of the presence of live streaming on social media platforms[1];
- The lack of a quality checks on the offered content;
- The missed recognition of artists' copyrights and royalties, keeping out all the economic value of their live-streamed performance.

Therefore, deLIVEry elaborated a new concept of digital exhibition that can be interesting in difficult times for the live performance industry, in a format which includes the artists' live performance, through higher quality, copyrights-oriented, streaming platform; a live club, or cultural space, which guarantees the curation and the organization of the space where the performance is set; and finally, the public who purchases a delivery box to their home, including

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[1] not a problem as of August 2020, since we've been out of lockdown for a while, the number of live streams on social media has reduced

food, drinks, and a one-time-key password to access the performance to enjoy the high-quality event.

It is not clear on their website, which was published on April 30th 2020, whether the project has had a practical outcome and a live event ever took place with these modalities, but the main framework it is interesting as a possible future opportunity for live performance – in case of another lockdown, or in general.

As a conclusion of the first chapter, I'd like to go over what's been covered in the Bakhshi & Throsby (2010) value chain for cultural institutions model:

- The relationship between the platforms and the artists, through their functions, through the visibility and the revenue models, in the field of production. Also, at a smaller degree, the content created by artists in the production field was confronted but it will be further developed in the next chapter;

- The relationship between the platforms and the audiences, by describing how the platforms set up their content and services in the field of distribution;

- The relationship between audiences and the platforms, by describing how audiences provide revenues to the platforms in the distribution field.

Chapter 2

2.1 The process of co-creation, of selection and fruition of music

In this chapter, the exploration of the Griswold cultural diamonds' relationships that were introduced to readers in Chapter 1 will continue, and specifically, they will focus on the process of co-creation, selection, and fruition of the cultural object which remains the digital music on platforms.

First of all, the relationship between creatives and receivers will be investigated, so the direct relationship between artists and their audience, their fans, and how to increase them or enhance the possibilities of reach – how this issue has changed in the digitalized and platformized industry – ending up writing about some of the most innovative and recent communication strategies for artists.

Then the relationship between the receivers and the social world will be taken into account, by exploring deeply the shift of the audience toward new trends and new platforms, abandoning old ones.

Finally, the relationship between the receivers and creatives will be explored, but focusing instead on the intermediate role of the contemporary gatekeepers in the platformized musical industry when and the consequent influence on the cultural object – with an overview on the behavior profiling of customers and receivers, and the consequent production of ad-hoc playlists and, in general, the influence that the platformized industry has had on the creative process of artists.

At the end of this chapter, the relationship between the cultural object and the social world will be analyzed by speaking about the complementarity between digital and analogical in music and the case of vinyl selling.

2.2 Communication strategies – creatives trying to be seen by receivers

As mentioned already in Chapter 1, the democratization of reachability has granted most artists the same chances of reaching their audiences through the streaming platforms – all artists can, with minimum effort, have a structured reference page in the platform and be able to direct their audience and their listeners to that said page on Spotify, for example.

Once again, though, artists are facing the problem of the so-called "background noise": creatives, through their art and their musical work, need to emerge and be different, express their artistic and creative side, but at the same time find their audience and reach the "niche" of fans who are surrounded by the largest offer of artists a consumer ever had, just a few taps away on a phone's touchscreen (Bonelli, 2020).

Communication is one of the most important strategies that need to be taken into account by artists in the contemporary world to emerge from the black hole of being unknown and to leverage the possible relationships with yet unmet fans and consumers. The attention of the public is indeed the new metric to analyze the success of an artist, instead of the sales of his music.

It mustn't be forgotten that the music should be the thing that matters the most to fans; nonetheless, the communication strategy of a musical project should include a "gathering of creative ideas and actions that can intrigue, amuse, surprise and, most of all, grab the attention of the potential audience that is hammered by musical projects of all sorts and, therefore, is very distracted" (Bonelli, 2020).

The key to having success taking into account an Italian audience, according to Bonelli (2020), is to "build an authentic and direct relationship between the audience and the artist. To be a healthy carrier of values and visions that would

transform the occasional listener to passionate fans". Furthermore, the author suggests that the "web hyper-activity" opens infinite solutions and doors to artists with new and old sharing experiences, in an ever-changing environment that needs experimenting.

This is what Bonelli (2020) refers to this process as the "mediatization" of music: adapting the message vehiculated by music to potentially any form of media communication. According to Darker (2014), to obtain any form of success in the music industry, "the mediatization is more important than the musical expression itself, but the former cannot exist without the latter".

The concept of tribal marketing is key to understand the sense of belonging and then, afterward, to funnel the most powerful strategy of communication, that is still valid in a digitalized industry: the word of mouth (Bonelli, 2020).

The outcome, according to the author, is to create a virtuous circle with your audience that will allow them to be the first champions of the artist's work and his music in the long run – as a fandom, through social media, it can show extreme appreciation or criticism for the artists' work, message and private opinions. Bonelli (2020) argues that contemporary artists know and must be aware that they're exposed to their audience's scrutiny at all times through social media platforms.

By speaking about the issue of the "word of mouth", Bonelli (2020) is not talking specifically about the traditional offline word of mouth concept: he means, indeed, that the communication strategies brought forward by the artist should become viral (on social media) within your audience and therefore meet other fans who are potentially looking for a message like one of the artists from which they receive the communication.

These communication strategies that will be explored in this paragraph are framed in the Bakhshi & Throsby (2010) value chain model for a cultural institution in the distribution field, regarding the content and services delivery

to audiences by the institution. Furthermore, these communication content is also produced by artists, who are sending to the platform or institution their communicative materials (in the field of production) who is then shifting it to audiences on their behalf, or indeed skipping directly the intermediate position of the streaming platform by talking directly to audiences.

Next, a series of communication possibilities are listed – many more, as mentioned above, can be explored by artists as the possibilities are so many more.

Storytelling and day-to-day communication with your loyal audience:

The audience needs to get in emotional contact with the narrative of the artist, to get closer to each other as well, create a fandom and therefore, as already mentioned before, become champions of an artist's message and value. The community that is created around the shared values and mission of an artist can be the most powerful tool in the hands of an artist to increase his reputation. A contemporary artist's role is to connect human beings around a shared story – keeping in mind that experiences are more important than the single "product" or cultural object (Bonelli, 2020).

In an ideal storytelling strategy of an artist, he defines first of all his identity, putting it out in the public by sharing his personality, his vision, and his values through a communication plan.

Storytelling, according to Bonelli (2020), is the true and deep story of an artist. A sincere and credible narrative that allows the public to empathize with the emotional side of the artist, who is ready to show the human and vulnerable side – as a way to create a special bond between the artist and his fans, that goes beyond the mere music promotion.

Bonelli cites the example of Lodo Guenzi, the headliner of the Italian band Lo Stato Sociale, as he had built a credible narrative mainly through his Instagram account (@influguenzer) focusing on self-irony, emotions, iconic referrals, and

very harsh at times ideal/political convictions. A narrative that is fundamentally diverse, coherent, and most of all engaging.
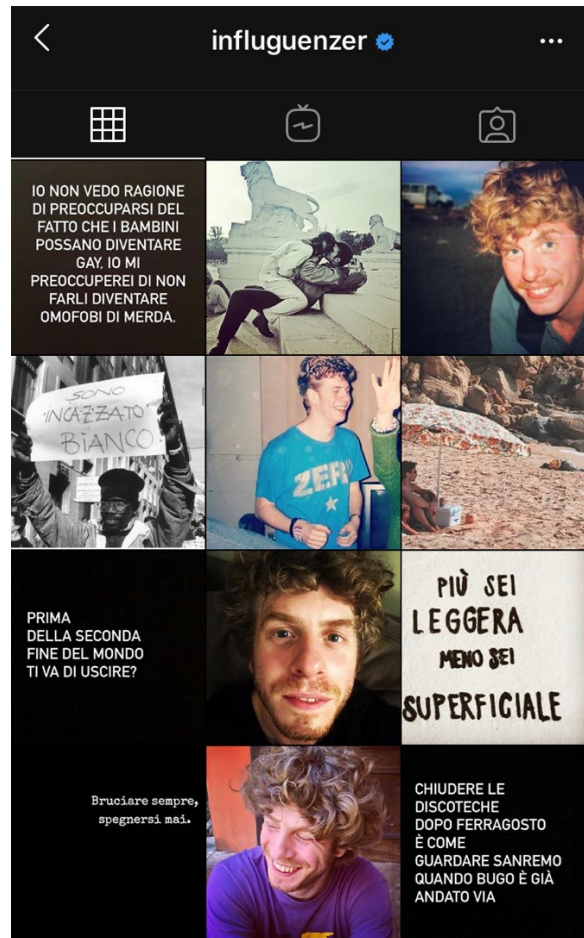
Figure 6 – the Instagram feed of Lodo Guenzi - a mix of political activism & opening up about his true self

The self-promotion of music in the storytelling of Lodo Guenzi is present but it's not the most striking factor: on the other hand, the fact that the music career is just a framed background of his life and personality, it values his artist-self more. According to Bonelli's analysis (2020), an artist who has the strength and the ability to show his or her real self to the public, even the dark corners of his personality, will be able to establish a much deeper connection and conversation with them through sincerity and commitment.

Video storytelling is one of the most effective media to achieve the bond with your fans, for example through Instagram stories and live streams.

Challenging and out-of-the-box graphical artwork: as the song "cover" that reflects the social world in which receivers live – therefore, they would feel more engaged. An emotional connection to the atmosphere of the song can help a lot in sending out the message and vision of the artist, together with the consistent graphics for social media, streaming platforms, and the accordingly a lyric video and a proper music video.

An example cited by Bonelli (2020) is the Italian singer Esposito with his song "solo quando sei ubriaca". The song tells the story of a girl who calls the artist only when she's drunk, as a makeshift solution to his sentimental life.
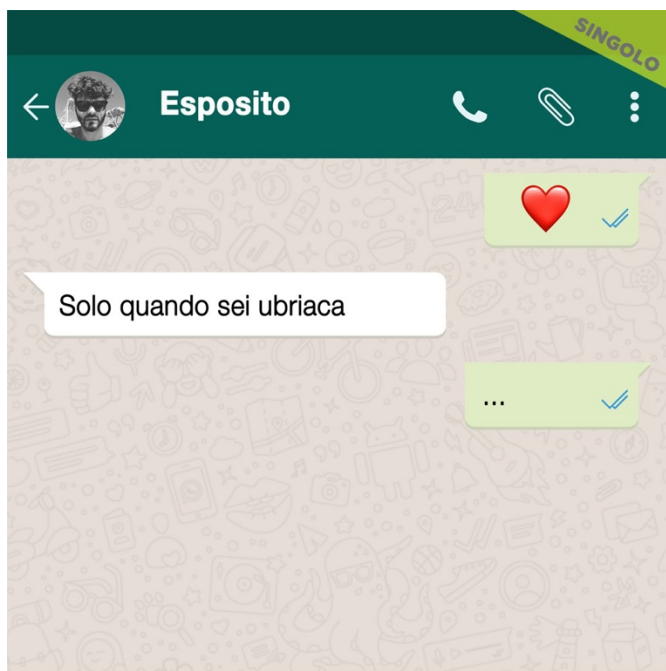
Figure 7 – "Solo Quando Sei Ubriaca" album cover

The chosen cover for this song was a WhatsApp chat, with a conversation exchanged between the two. Nothing glamourous, but something that most of the public can recognize and identify oneself.

Another interesting communication strategy related to graphic design was a challenge that Frah Quintale, another Italian musician and rapper, took for the release of his first album "Regardez-Moi". Being a wall writer and graphic designer himself, he painted 500 alternative album covers in a limited edition of the physical album's release. All the drawing process and inspiration were documented in an Instagram profile (@rgdz.moi, now not available anymore, as the art-oriented Instagram handle of the artist changed to

@franci.bumaye) where fans were giving him suggestions for more album covers after listening to the album digitally.

Figure 8 – Frah Quintale as he's drawing some of the limited edition "Regardez-moi" artwork; some of those produced and then sold limited editions which are inspired by fans.

The involvement of fans and the production of an artistic series is important and can instill curiosity (Cannizzaro, 2017), interest in wider audiences, and your hardcore fans will have memorabilia that they will share on social media and create virality – because they feel the reasoning and appreciate the experimentation behind the artistic ensemble.

Featuring with other artists: sharing communities, fans and the sense of togetherness is a key for success and to give a helping hand to the world of artists around you or receive one.

Contamination is always a good idea: according to Giordano (2019), the phenomenon of "featuring" in the rap environment has cleared the way for any artist to duet without losing credibility or disorienting the public". The Italian industry is receiving well the featuring and duets who are out in the market: the

fan bases are now more "tolerant of contamination because of the less and less marked divisions within music genres".

A contemporary example of the Italian scene is Dardust, a pianist, producer, and composer of great versatility – he has been leveraging his talent and collaborating, featuring artists such as Marco Mengoni, Thegiornalisti, Francesca Michielin, and ultimately Mahmood.

With Mahmood, he produced the single "Soldi" who won the Festival di Sanremo in 2019, and that later represented Italy at the Eurovision Song Contest of 2019. Dardust has been able to explore different ways, spaces, and dimensions of his talent and he contaminated positively all of the artists he's been collaborating with.

Spotify-specific communication strategy: all the platforms do have their specific functioning methods, but in general they're all very similar to each other. It's fundamental to speak about Spotify, the first platform that introduced these innovations, and indeed denotes what is necessary, and what are the further steps that an artist should take in their communication strategy to make it work on Spotify.

According to Bonelli (2020), the most important parameter to start caring about, on the Spotify platform, is the number of followers of an artist. What does a follower bring as an added value for your visibility purposes? When a fan is following an artist's work on Spotify, he receives directly in his email inbox as direct emailing a notification for each new release of music; the same thing happens when the artist he's following plans a live concert around the residence area of the user.

The point of access for an artist to edit and manage his profile on the platform is through a tool called "Spotify For Artists": through this management tool, an artist can add graphical content, profile pictures, edit his bio and add his social media handles.

An important functionality of platforms is "pre-save". When an artist is releasing a new song or a new album, he usually releases a teaser, through a hype-oriented communication strategy on social media. It can be of many sorts: a frame of the music video hints on Instagram stories, a screenshot of a part of the text on the song.

A new song teaser can be very conceptual: an example, on August 31st, 2020, is the teaser released by Mecna, an Italian rapper who is very focused on graphic design being one himself.

To tease and instill curiosity in his 165K followers on Instagram, he releases just a plain purple picture on his page – no other clues on what the release will be.
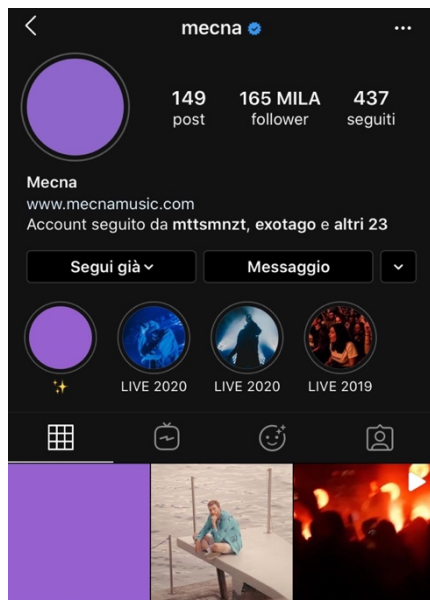
As a fan, I can kind of presume that his new release will be either focused on the purple color, maybe in the name of the song, or as the purple color resounds gloom and melancholy in my perception, maybe the song is going to resound the very same feelings.

Figure 9 - a screenshot of Mecna's feed on Instagram as of 31st August 2020. He set his profile picture, on the top left, a Story Highlight, in the center-left, and a new post, in the bottom left, in the same purple color. Very hype-oriented communication from Instagram.com/mecna.

A way to measure the success of the teaser and to convert the hype into streams when the song will be officially released is the technique of pre-save: an artist shares a link to a song through his social media platforms which, if clicked by a user, will be automatically added to the personal playlist of the user in advance and will become available automatically on the release day of the song. Pre-saving is a way in which your fans are sure to be ready to welcome your new release – and it's a strategy that starts before the automatic direct email marketing campaigns by Spotify. Also, since pre-saving links are often

shared through social media, they can drive new social media followers and convert them into Spotify followers too.

Another pivotal function introduced by Spotify is the so-called *artists' pick* area: an artist can choose the most important songs within his work and target users as these songs become the first thing users view and most of the time listen when they visit the artist's personal page.

Also, Spotify assigns a graphical element that works similarly to a QR code to each song, playlist, and artist. If scanned, it links directly to the Spotify page they're referring to: an artist can use this graphical element and add it in leaflets, albums, any physical support, such as stickers.

Figure 10 – an example of Spotify Codes linking to my personal profile on the platform

Spotify Codes, how the project is called, is captivating, has been graphically designed to resound music waves, and can be customized by the artist in any way they wish.

Spotify has recently introduced Spotify Canvas: a "short looping visual" as defined by the platform itself that can be added as a background in the reproduction ("Now Playing") interface. "It's album artwork, for the streaming age", according to the Spotify Canvas payoff.

A high-quality Canvas related to a newly released single can be a good added value, which can drive a lift in visits of an artist's profile and streams.

Canvas is ready-made for quickly sharing on social media: fans can share on their pages their favorite Canvas which will always present a "Play on Spotify" call to action, who drives streams and visits to the song thanks to the captivating and interesting graphic design loop.

Figure 11 – Three screenshots of the Canvas interface on Spotify. The graphic moves behind the play/pause command, and if you tap once on the screen, you will be able to see the artwork at its fullest. The 3rd screenshot on the right side shows an Instagram Stories share of the Spotify Canvas aforementioned.

This is another strategy in which short videos – similar in timing and shape to a TikTok content, which will be described in the next paragraph – which can become the new gold standard of album artwork and will be able to effectively replace it.

Spotify has also been planning for a way to integrate more and more services within the platform, such as some of the features which now are available at crowdfunding platforms such as Patreon, which were discussed earlier, in an attempt to become even more omnichannel and comprehensive for further services such as live streaming, merchandising sale, and other implementations by acquisition.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the music industry, Spotify is planning to introduce a live music virtual events feature, through the sale of tickets within its platform. At present, as claimed by Perez & Lunden in an article on TechCrunch of 2020, Spotify is already working with ticketing partners such

as Ticketmaster, Eventbrite, and many others, who have embraced virtual events as a consequence of the industry halt in live performances. Virtual Events would be present within the "Concerts" page which is suggested to each user, as indicated by Jane Wong on Twitter, An interesting development to include different music-oriented services within the platform.
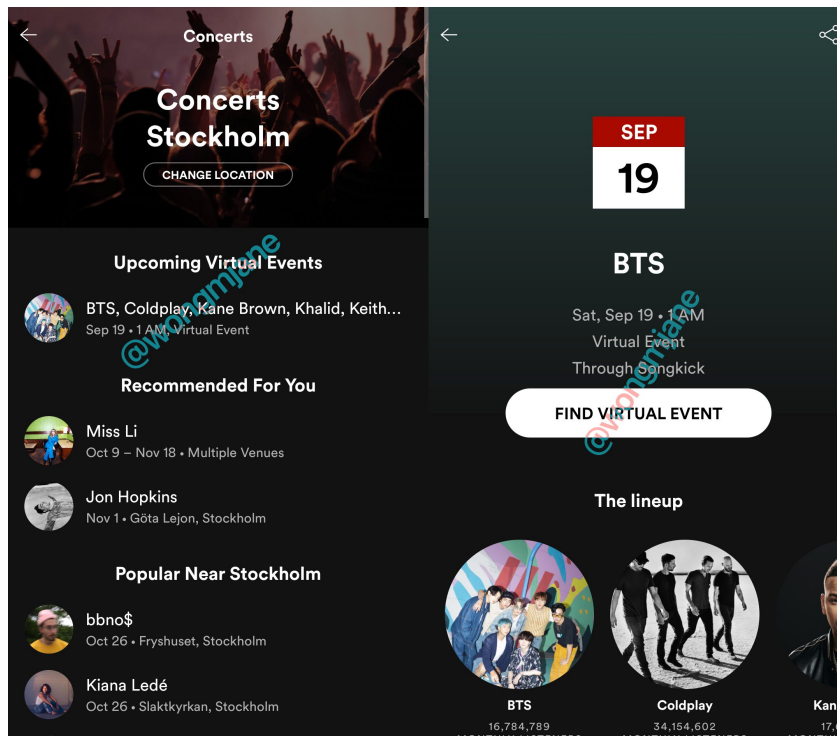
Figure 12 – screenshots of a possible Virtual Event on Spotify

2.3 Music as a platform collateral tool – receivers & the social world

In a way, music has always been used as a collateral tool for other outcomes dictated by the social world's stance. The top-of-mind example for this issue is about the usage of music in advertisements on the radio, on tv, on many touchpoints in which music is captivating, and at the same time, it is leveraged for purposes other than the ones of pure cultural enjoyment.

The issues to be discussed in this paragraph can't really be framed within the Bakhshi & Throsby (2010) value chain model, but we can hypothesize a relationship between the artists, the audiences, and an external organization that usually provides visibility to the music.

Regarding the shift to a platform-based digitalized world, it's mandatory to write about the two social media platforms which started to leverage music through a direct connection to Spotify: Instagram and TikTok.

The former, since the introduction of Instagram Stories, added a feature in which a song can be shared from Spotify and added to the picture or mini video that can be posted by users and that has a duration of 24 hours – as shown in the previous paragraph when writing about Spotify Canvas.

It is very critical to note that whoever views this content on Instagram will have the possibility to hear the sound, see the title of the song, the artwork, and with just a tap, visit Spotify and listen to the entire song.

This is exactly what Bonelli (2020) meant by digital word of mouth, which I have mentioned in the previous paragraph: the more your artwork, your music, your creative and communicative message is shared, the more chances an artist has to become known to yet unmet audiences.

On the other hand, another interesting example to be added to this topic and that has had a big impact on the creative point of view, as well, is the influence that TikTok had.

TikTok is a Chinese social media platform, formerly known as Musically, in which users and consumers share mini-videos that are playing on repeat a specific song, or jingle, and that developed the "*TikTok format*": a 15-seconds dance choreography which is often repeated by hundreds of users and becomes viral. In this way, musical strategists started to include TikTok choreographies in their strategy for pop songs.

TikTok's influence can be seen when songs and hits who are viral on TikTok do reach high positions in the Billboard Hot 100 chart, the most popular weekly ranking of the music industry in the United States

The most emblematic example is the country-trap single "Old Town Road" by Lil Nas X (Billboard): thanks to its exposition on TikTok, the virality of the choreography and the various remixes and collaborations (notably, in 2020, the remake by Jason Derulo who kept the main tune of "Old Town Road", again an international success) it remained number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for 19 weeks in a row in 2019 (Billboard).

Weeks at No. 1, Title, Artist, Date Reached No. 1
19, *"Old Town Road," Lil Nas X feat. Billy Ray Cyrus, April 13, 2019*
16, "Despacito," Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee feat. Justin Bieber, May 27, 2017
16, "One Sweet Day," Mariah Carey & Boyz II Men, Dec. 2, 1995
14, "Uptown Funk!," Mark Ronson feat. Bruno Mars, Jan. 17, 2015
14, "I Gotta Feeling," The Black Eyed Peas, July 11, 2009

This immense success made Lil Nas X overtake in the chart of "most weeks at number 1 in Billboard Hot 100" other notable successes such as "Despacito", by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, and "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars, as highlighted in the table above.

According to Billboard (2019), "TikTok shook the music industry in 2019 following the breakout success of Lil Nas X" and also, by looking up at their top

10 songs of their Hot 100 chart of April 13th 2020, "the chart is now full of [so-called] TikTok songs", which is defined by them as a track that "found viral footing on the app, becoming part of a meme format or a dance challenge or simply racking up video views on the up". While the industry of pop music has become more and more focused on singles, Billboard claims that TikTok is going to become shortly the hottest promotional channel for this industry sector.

That can be seen in Italy as well: by a quick overview of the summer hits of 2020 within the Italian chart, the hottest songs all have been released with a dance or choreography challenge to engage fans and listeners, with a clearer preference for the Generation Z demographic.

There are many examples in the Italian pop hottest chart which were conceived and released together with the communicative tool of a TikTok challenge: "Karaoke" by Alessandra Amoroso and Boombadash (still number 1 song in Italy as of the end of August 2020), Festival di Sanremo winner Mahmood with his latest single "Dorado", "Non Mi Basta Più" by Baby K which featured the influencer and worldwide star Chiara Ferragni (at present, she has 3,2 million fans on TikTok), the remake of "I'm Blue" by Eiffel 65 – in 2020 interpreted by Shiva with a new name "Auto Blu" which followed the same creative reasoning of Jason Derulo with "Old Town Road", mentioned before in this paragraph.

The Italian pop industry, therefore, has successfully tried to emulate what has been happening in other countries worldwide, which is also claimed by the author of the biggest TikTok related success yet, "Old Town Road" by Lil Nas X: he told Time Magazine in March that "I promoted the song as a meme for months until it caught on to TikTok, and it became way bigger". Until which point the "meme" culture has dramatically changed the pop industry and tried to influence the creativity of artists? Can TikTok choreographies be considered an added artistical value, or are they a mere communication strategy to foster

TikTok's platforms' virality? We're right in the middle of this changing process and it should be a matter of further research in the next months ahead of us. What can be observed, as of today, is that other platforms which are external to those "dedicated" to the music industry are leading in setting trends and determining the latest success in the top music charts even if music, in platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, is just a collateral tool to generate more interactions, more virality in content – therefore, with a completely different focus from the one from which the cultural object was first intended and meant by the creators.

2.4 The contemporary gatekeepers and customers profiling – cultural object, receivers and creatives

At this point in the analysis of the cultural diamond, it's mandatory to discuss the gatekeepers' role in the contemporary music industry, their role, and how it has changed due to the presence of platforms. The gatekeepers' role is framed in the distribution field of the Bakhshi and Throsby (2010) value chain framework, as content or service distributed to audiences; at the same time, though, their role influences the production field of the framework: it does influence the visibility and the revenues provided by the institution which the gatekeepers are representing, and at the same time the content that artists will submit to the institution will be influenced by going towards what the gatekeepers need.

As it was already discussed previously in the first chapter of this thesis, the unprecedented importance of playlists, in general, and algorithmic and algotorial playlists in specific has shaped how receivers enjoy and discover new music.

According to Bonini et. al (2019), platforms "allow consumers to access a large database of content regulated by top-down assessments of bottom-up user practices".

Music curation, therefore, has been shaped enormously by the presence of performance algorithms (discussed later on) and this process in specific has contributed to the creation of what Bonini et al (2019) define as "algotorial" playlists, a selection of songs in which the music curation is following a "partly editorial, partly algorithmic logic whereby human agency blends with the automated functioning of algorithmic infrastructures". Furthermore, this new gatekeeping and curation methodology has the ability, according to Bonini et. al (2019), to "set the listening agendas of global music consumers".

The presence of these playlists are a key point of strength for the platform: oftentimes, a customer chooses between Spotify, Apple Music, and other services, which generally do offer the same kind of extremely wide database of songs, depending on the "algotorial" curation of playlists which are included on one platform or another (Bonini et al, 2019). The same issue is also underlined by Fleischer (2017) who argues that "curation represents the distinctive service (the commodity) that music streaming platforms offer to their user-base".

As the importance of the work of the playlist gatekeepers has increased and given them the power to give meaning and value to music and artists while mediating mood, lifestyle, and taste (Bonini et al, 2019), their work is also influenced greatly by recommendation algorithms, described as "infomediaries" by Morris (2015) that is at work to achieve purposes such as data mining, taste curation, and audience manufacturing, in an attempt to understand consumers' listening habits and through big data profiling, meet the playlists' needs of the receivers in the cultural diamond.

Shoemaker, Vos and Reese (2008) define gatekeeping as "the process of selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news" – this concept has been further developed to fit the media industry broadly, and therefore music curation as well within the field of media broadcast.

In specific, Bonini et al. (2019) define "platform gatekeepers" as some employed personnel within the music streaming platforms who are "able to decide, filter and select what to expose listeners to and which songs to direct their attention to".

Furthermore, they claim that this personality and job description didn't exist in the platforms' organization until recently: Eriksson et al. (2019) argue that most platforms had a curatorial turn several years after their company was founded – and most of these workers are employed by Spotify (around 150 professionals worldwide), according to Shah (2017), while a few more dozen curators and freelancers are employed at other platforms (such as Apple Music, Google Music, Tidal, and Deezer).

Therefore, considering the total number of professionals in this field, Bonini et al. (2019) argue that these responsible positions within platforms have become a "global elite of music specialists" with the powers to "oversee and ultimately decide on the inclusion and exclusion of music tracks and artists on successful playlists" and that "with their decisions, they influence the fate of artists and music tracks".

Ultimately, the role of algotorial playlists in platforms as analyzed by Bonini et al. (2019) is pivotal: in comparing the social media platforms influence on the news industry – which have been proven by Wohn and Bowe (2014, 2016) to be "micro-agenda setters" – to the music industry, Bonini et al. (2019) argue that "music streaming platforms may not be directly successful in telling people what music to like [through their playlists' mechanism and consumer profiling]

but nevertheless have become stunningly successful in telling its users what is worth listening to".

Indeed, as affirmed by Bucher (2018), the gatekeepers through their curation and the algorithm's influence, by deciding whether a song should be e.g. in the playlist "Hip-Hop hits", contributes at creating the "threat of invisibility" for artists and, finally, "decide and discipline the visibility of an artist within the platform" (Bonini et al., 2019).

In specific, Shah (2017) denotes the example of Tuma Basa, the global head of hip-hop at Spotify (at the time) that "with an average 8.3 million followers on the playlists he controls and supervises, he is able to set the agenda for hip-hop as the New York radio station Hot 97 once did [in analogical times]" (Bonini et al., 2019).

How do the algorithms influence how these professionals are working, according to Bonini et al. (2019)?

The first week of work on a playlist is editorial, where the professional studies the music, experiments the new trends, and works in a way not so different from the one of analogical gatekeepers.

The second week of the playlist curation, though, it's already algorithmic: gatekeepers are presented with KPIs such as:

- The "skip rate": how many times a song has been skipped before the "stream limit" – the number of seconds needed to register a "stream" for royalty and statistic purposes, which is currently at 31 seconds for Spotify and other platforms;
- The "time of listening": how many seconds of retention does a song arise in keeping the listeners from skipping.

Those kinds of KPIs are fundamental in the gatekeepers' work as they are nudged to move upwards or downwards songs within the playlist, to delete them, or to add new songs that are proposed by the algorithm.

This is the power of the gatekeepers: they are the human controllers of algorithms – and their actions have a broader implication for the platformization of culture (Bonini et al., 2019).

Artists do recognize the power of the platform gatekeepers - and try to grab their attention, as it has been noted by Bonini et al. (2019): they found evidence of artists writing to gatekeepers on Twitter and "begging them to listen to their music".

According to what informants responded in the semi-structured qualitative research by Bonini et al. (2019), they argue that musicians "have started to change the way they write songs: they are putting choruses at the beginning of songs now, more so than after a verse. Because the first five seconds, if the listeners hear a chorus, then they're more likely to carry on listening".

This is fundamentally a strategy by musicians to endure their presence in playlists: the least a song is skipped – because it's more catchy in its first seconds – the better their performance regarding the skip metrics and the listening average time will be, the better the algorithm opinion will be on the song, the more visibility will be given to the song and the artist accordingly.

As reported by the responses given to Bonini et al. (2019) by some of their informants in their study, "music has already been altered to complement the platform in which it's going to get listened to the most on".

Consequently, this trend arises a series of cultural-related issues that have already been observed by fans and music geeks and that will be more evident in the next years: what impact on cultural production and society at large does the gatekeepers' exercise of power have?

Some online communities in Italy have been calling for Spotify to clarify their position in the creation of algotorial playlists and the positioning of new artists.

An example is the semi-serious campaign "#ehispotify" by the online Italian community "Hipster Democratici", a community following politics and indie music, in specific the wave of "Indie Italia", later also called "It Pop".

The playlist "Indie Italia" on Spotify, with more than 350000 followers as of August 2020, is one of the most influential throughout the past decade of algotorial playlists in Italy and that opened the music industry to a wide ream of new artists.

From i Cani and Calcutta, from Thegiornalisti and Coez, all born in the early 2010s in the underground roman scene, to a new flock of artists who are inspired by their sounds and their music, the wave has been dominating the past 10 years of Italian music.

According to Milan-based Carosello Records' CEO, Mr. Dario Giovannini, as stated in an interview with Rockol in July 2019, he claims that "the *Italian indie* segment today lives in an extremely particular condition – which had never happened before in the Italian market. Thanks to the streaming platforms and the diffusion of the new technologies, the indie artists, from being a niche, have become the driving force of the Italian music market, and are now able to set agendas and trends".

The importance of the streaming service and the presence of the playlist "Indie Italia" has set the trend and disclosed to a mainstream audience the work of indie Italian artists.

Going back to the #ehispotify campaign by Hipster Democratici, it made me curious to understand more about the mechanisms in which platform gatekeepers decide who deserves to be in the algotorial playlist "Indie Italia" on Spotify and who doesn't.

Hipster Democratici pedantically began to ask in late 2018 using the hashtag #ehispotify which are the access criteria to the playlist "Indie Italia", even if their campaign was defined by them as "a battle against the windmills" (Manifesto

HD, 2017) because they could see the limits of their class action in confronting a multinational company but as a community based on the birth and growth of that wave of music, they felt naturally involved in the process of giving visibility through a "transparent operation to distinguish artists who are created by music labels by default to those artists who are touring Italy without funds and that do not get the appropriate recognition of their work due to the lack of visibility that the platform doesn't give them".

The campaign #ehispotify ended without results and without an answer by Spotify Italy, the targeted platform, but it raised awareness on the issues and grew interest in the topic for further research.

Spotify and other music platforms are usually not disclosing this kind of information, as it can be seen by the study of Bonini et al. (2019) where some informants, being all of them platform gatekeepers, were not allowed to answer most of the questions in the semi-structured questionnaire because of non-disclosure policies by their own companies.

Also, all the informants asked to be anonymized as they were answering Bonini et al.'s answers in fears of possible repercussions at their workplace.

Finally, to conclude this topic, more and more doubts arise on an ethical point of view as many "pitching companies" were born in recent years, which are intended to pitch independent artists' music to platform gatekeepers in a way "what only major record labels were able to do in the past – offer massive exposure for artists through direct relationships with curators of many of the major playlists featured on Spotify" (Lucerne, 2017).

The presence of these pitching companies is more worrying about this perspective as Bonini et al. (2019) underly that a sketchy thread of relationship is lying beneath the surface and platforms are probably not willing to disclose the functioning of some of their playlist creation methods.

It mustn't be forgotten that Spotify itself, through his platform "Spotify for Artists", has included the possibility for an artist who is about to release in the next seven days a new single or album to pitch this piece of music to editors for algotorial playlists. Pitching a song to the editors does not mean that it will be picked by the editors for an algotorial playlist, but it will stay on the editors' radar for possible inclusion, according to Spotify.

2.5 Complementarity between digital & analogical – social world & cultural object

To conclude the second chapter on fruition and the analysis of the relationships within Griswold's cultural diamond, it's interesting to analyze the relationship between the social world and the cultural object – its transformations and the latest best practices. This issue can be framed again in the distribution field of the Bakhshi and Throsby (2010) value chain model, as to how content is distributed to audiences.

As already mentioned before, digitalization and platformization have modified the way money is made in the music industry, by halving the income of the industry as a whole first with illegal streaming, with the diminishing of the sales of physical support.

By some, streaming and digitalization have been considered as supporters of a "substitution effect", in which music piracy and legal streaming are perfect substitutes of physical support sales affecting the income of the overall industry.

On the other hand, as studied by Dejean et al. (2014), it has been observed in their research that the enormous increase in digital consumption of music has influenced positively the sales of physical support – but it's not a substitute

product and the cultural object has instead diversified and created a complementary market and industry.

As noted by Dejean et al. in their study of 2014, the complementarity of recorded music to streaming is proven: "streaming, such as radio and TV, can be positively associated with sales of recorded music". A "sampling effect" applied to the music industry, as defined by Nelson (1970), is "when a digital copy of a song allows the consumer to discover it before purchase and thus reduces the risk of mismatch between the consumers' taste and the song – therefore, the musical product is an experience good which utility can only be assessed after consumption".

The sampling effect can improve lawful consumption on physical music support, following some trial in other shapes or forms, such as illegal or legal streaming.

According to Dejean et al. (2014), the sampling effect is fundamental in consumers' decision-making process as it's a way in which the musical needs are matched with the purchase and, therefore, the "cultural capital" level is improved.

To further underline and sustain the complementarity of the two markets, the digital and the analogical one, it is useful to take into account that the conception of the cultural object is different between consumers' mindset and affect their decisions: according to Rifkin (2001) consumers have different conceptions on the possession of the cultural object: they either want to simply "access" music, as it is with streaming platforms, or "own" the music, as it is with paid digital download and analogical CDs and, especially, vinyl.

Interesting research by Lee et al. (2020) focused on the relationship between the digital consumption and the physical consumption, the researchers have noted that artists "can increase their incomes by selling more physical albums as a complement to the predominant digital formats, when the digital

consumption turns to be access-based". This more recent study confirms the one by Dejean et al. (2014) that digital music consumption affects positively the sales of physical albums. According to Lee et al. (2020), many of their respondents' habits is to listen to the digital version of an artists' music, and based on their digital experience they decide to buy the CD or vinyl for a fuller experience and to further support their favorite artists' work.

Also, Lee et al. (2020) have noted that the online charts "do influence the relationship between digital content and physical goods – being on the top 10 list in digital music platforms is important for CD album sales". It is, once again as mentioned in the previous paragraph, a matter of exposure and visibility: the most affectionate fans will then buy the CD of artists they enjoy more.

Speaking about vinyl sales, as it's an interesting field to discuss after the discourse about complementarity, it has been noted that the "vinyl revival" is here to stay: the phenomenon of revamping of the vinyl iconic disk also with contemporary and independent artists have made the vinyl sales comprise 13% of all the sales of physical albums in the United States in 2018, according to Nielsen Music. This figure is not including all the second-hand market, which is very profitable for vinyl indeed.

In an article on Rolling Stone USA from the issue of June 2018, the author Jack White wrote that "the next decade is going to be streaming plus vinyl. Streaming in the car and kitchen, vinyl in the living room": it underlines the public's interest to have physical support as an iconic and timeless cultural object to cling on in a complementary way as the digital innovation breaks into every corner of our daily life.

Palm (2019) has tried to analyze the vinyl sales trend as "an example of post-digital commercial culture" by moving further away from the binary distinction between analogical and digital with the purpose to focus advocacy on the "possibilities for independent culture in a post-digital age".

He also claims that nearly "all independent record labels offer their catalogs in digital as well as physical formats" and that digital sales "have been a boon for merchants small as well as big" in all the formats that they have.

Indeed, digital media exposure and streaming platforms according to Palm (2019) do represent an additional communication platform for sales and promotion, which is afterward reflected in sales of the physical formats as well. To conclude, Palm (2019) sees the future of the vinyl happening as a niche sector "rather than outside or [more importantly] beneath, within a music industry dominated by streaming".

To conclude this chapter, I would like once again to review which relationships and fields have been touched by the analysis of these issues within the Bakhshi and Throsby (2010) value chain model for cultural institutions.

First, the communication strategies analysis is framed in the distribution field, regarding the content and services delivery to audiences by the institution. Furthermore, this communication content is also produced by artists – but can be directed either to the cultural institution, for an intermediate check, or directly to audiences. Second, I have taken on the issue of music as a collateral tool, which couldn't be framed within the model. Third, I have discussed the gatekeepers' role in the streaming industry, which it is framed in the distribution field, as content or service distributed to audiences; their role influences the production field of the framework as well as it does influence the visibility and the revenues provided by the institution to the artists, modifying consequently the content produced by them for the institution. Finally, the paragraph about the complementarity between analogical and digital support of music is indeed framed within the distribution and consumption fields, specifically in how content is provided to audiences by the cultural institutions.

Chapter 3

3.1 The three sources of information

In this third and last chapter, the main goal is to analyze data information concerning the phenomena I have been mentioning in the first two chapters, and it was decided that the most effective way to do that was through a combination of a three-step research method.

The three steps are present in this research to represent, among other factors, a combination of primary and secondary data. Some of the steps of this research do include qualitative data, others instead are focusing on quantitative data.

Finally, here's a short description of which are the three sources:

1. The first source of data is an extensive research performed by ISTAT, the Italian Statistic Institute, called "Indagine Statistica su Musica e Video nelle Abitudini dei Cittadini" [Statistic inquiry on Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens].

   This wide research, which will be described in specific later, was produced as a request of the MIBACT (the Italian Ministry of Cultural Goods) to support the decisions in the determination of tariffs on fair compensation for private copy of cultural goods (in music and video streaming services) in a decree regulating that field of 8th January 2015. The survey was designed by ISTAT with the overall purpose to fill the knowledge gaps in this field, through organizational models and advanced methodological solutions.

   It provides some of the general insights that were needed to start my research, such as the overall usage of streaming platforms for music, and this source was picked for because of its large sample (around 7600

respondents). Therefore, the research by ISTAT can provide a clearer picture of the situation of the Italian industry in the past years.

This study, though published in April 2018, refers to data collected in the year 2017.

2. The second source of data is a structured questionnaire that focused mainly on habits, perceptions, and motivation during the streaming music activity of consumers and users.

    The questionnaire was ideated to fill the specific needs and the gaps in the ISTAT research, that did not include any information on how consumers use streaming platforms, no information on their behavior on the platform, what are the most frequently-performed activities: this questionnaire tries to answer these overall objectives.

    Furthermore, the questionnaire mainly focused on finding empirical evidence within the surveyed sample regarding the phenomena that were discussed, analyzed, and found in literature in the first two chapters of this work.

3. The third and final source of data is a semi-structured series of interviews that were performed to a selected focus group of interviewees.

    The main objective of this insight collection is to find the "extremes" in a design-thinking research way in juxtaposition to the "mainstream" opinion that was returned from the questionnaire and the ISTAT research mentioned in this paragraph.

    Another goal of the third source is to find out the "unmet needs" of respondents concerning the possible futures of the platform industry in music and the further developments that can happen in the aforementioned field.

In the next paragraphs, the overall objective of the research will be analyzed, keeping in mind the three sources methodology that was shortly described just

above. Afterward, every single source will be specified, with its features, its sample size, the modalities in which information is collected, analyzed and how the insights are extracted, its limitations, and the opportunities that each source can provide in terms of added value to the research process.

3.2 Objective of the research

The research framework that was decided to be implemented for this work is a three sources-based analysis, which was described above.

The main objective of the research, overall, focuses on finding out the general sentiment on music streaming platforms in the opinions of a sample that can potentially represent the Italian population and shed some light on the needs and wants of users and, potentially, creatives.

Through the three different sources, the research will be able to contextualize the results as it takes firstly a nation-wide report which is representative of the Italian population and citizens.

Therefore, the objective of the first source should be the one to contextualize the results received from the other sources within the bigger picture of the Italian usage and perception.

Secondly, the questionnaire, which is the second resource, has its limits in representing a correctly estimated sample of the Italian population in the same way as the ISTAT report, due to the demographics of respondents as it will be analyzed afterward.

On the other hand, since the questionnaire was ideated and built just for the needs of this research work in specific, it provides direct and helpful insights in surveying the sample's sentiment on the specific topics discussed in chapters 1 and 2, such as live streaming and possible future developments of the music streaming platforms, algorithms and discovery of new music, activities on the platform by users, purchasing consequences, awareness on the royalties revenues for artists.

c All of these topics are analyzed by specific questions as a goal: it will be described question-by-question in the analysis part, and the analysis will focus on whether observed phenomena were either an expected result or if there are any interesting unexpected patterns and information that spring out of the data collection.

Finally, the last part of the research will focus on a design-thinking type of interview. Thanks to the answers of five different personalities, selected in an arbitrary way between the respondents of the questionnaire and taking into account the different backgrounds both as users of platforms and as industry insiders, to provide insights on the diversity of the interviewed subjects, the research will be able to go beyond the mainstream perception obtained by the questionnaire's results.

It will focus on the hidden necessities and propositions by the interviewees, which are thought to represent possible "extremes" of the sample of the questionnaire.

Following the reasoning and methodology by IDEO's Design Toolkit (2020) the research will try to understand whether these extremes are satisfied, if they're not, whether they have some hidden needs and wants from the platform, how it affects their behavior.

By talking to an extreme, according to IDEO, creativity can be sparked, and new solutions can be found which are working for everyone, not just for the mainstream public (surveyed in the questionnaire).

The outcome, therefore, is to dig deeper and try to find the reasoning behind the phenomena described in the first chapters of this work and whether the influence and perception are present in the surveyed sample, together with finding new uncharted paths to follow in the development of technology on the way to an economically, ethically and morally sustainable way in which the music industry is run in the era of platforms.

3.3 Sources

3. 3. 1. Source 1 – ISTAT & MIBACT report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens"

The first source of documents for this research chapter, as mentioned in the summary in the first paragraph, is the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" commissioned by the MIBACT, the Italian Ministery of Cultural Goods, Activities and Tourism, and produced by ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics.

The statistical survey was realized by ISTAT thanks to a specific agreement signed between the two public bodies.

ISTAT embraced the commitment, within its scientific autonomy, of conducting directly all phases and activities of the statistical survey; the questionnaire was indeed realized by ISTAT according to the knowledge gaps fulfillment needs of MIBACT.

The statistical survey by ISTAT had as a main general cognitive objective the fruition modalities of audiovisual content of citizens, considering specifically the phenomenon of private copy, intended as an act of duplication of said content on devices for personal use.

The sample size, which reached about 7600 respondents, according to ISTAT has reached the average level of significance of other national surveys by the same body, meaning that estimates were in line to represent the national sentiment on the matter.

The sample of individuals for the survey was selected between the families who were part of the yearly survey by ISTAT "Aspetti della Vita Quotidiana – AVQ" [Everyday Life Aspects] conducted in 2014 and 2015.

Therefore, the estimates on the overall population refer to the ones of 2014 and 2015, even though the answers were collected in 2017.

The reasoning of this choice, according to ISTAT, is that for these families the institute already had all the information from the previous research, which was used in the phases of sampling and of estimate production.

Overall, the sample on the two years of AVQ research is composed of 93000 individuals, of which 70000 individuals in the electable age range between 14 and 74 years.

Finally, selected individuals were surveyed through two different methods:

1. The first sample of 10771 individuals was assigned to the information collection technique called CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews) and through this technique, which involved operators calling and interviewing by phone the respondents, ISTAT was able to collect 3612 complete answers.

2. The second sample of 20392 individuals was assigned instead to the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviews) technique, requesting self-compilation of information on an online questionnaire, thanks to which ISTAT was able to collect 4039 complete answers within the sub-sample.

Therefore, ISTAT created identical questionnaires in shape but with two different modalities of question-posing.

The report that has been analyzed for the matter of this research offers a synthetic summary of ISTAT's results and highlights the main behavioral aspects of the Italian population in regards to the fruition of music and sets a solid conceptual base on further research, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, which was integrated with the questionnaire described in the next paragraph.

In specific, the sections of interest for this research are the following:

1. Section 2.1: "Music Listening and Movie Watching in the habits of citizens". This section explores the general habits in music listening, regarding the times of listening and the devices where music is listened

to in the surveyed panel. These results can be found in the report on pages 2 and 3.

2. Section 2.2.2: "Music and Video Streaming". This section explores the surveyed panel's habits towards streaming in music, touching topics such as the main devices used. Furthermore, it reports the incremental usage of streaming platforms, and it also denotes the increments in reasons for music streaming within the panel of respondents. Finally, the report underlines some interesting insights regarding the habits of the fruition of free content, in comparison to the habits of the fruition of paid streaming content.

3. 3. 2. Source 2 – Questionnaire

This research is focused on analyzing opinions in users (and more) of platforms with three different sources of information because – as the main goals were set and described in the previous paragraph – there wasn't a single information source that would be able to provide comprehensive information needed to confirm or refute the observations that were considered interesting in literature review of the first two chapters.

A comprehensive report on those key macro-areas was not produced yet on any reference populations anywhere, at the beginning of this research, so it was decided to investigate the current challenges of the industry of music due to the presence of streaming platforms and the possible future developments within the field of music in the perception of consumers with primary collected data through an insightful questionnaire.

Following the lead from the analysis of the ISTAT Report, the questionnaire tries to fill the gaps that the ISTAT research didn't cover.

First of all, the ISTAT research is not up-to-date: since data collected in the ISTAT research is collected in 2017, and keeping in mind the "interesting" times that the year 2020 has been struggling with, it's curious to understand

whether some of the parameters detected by ISTAT have changed about the usage of streaming platforms in music.

Second, another pivotal factor to underline is the questionnaire's goal to investigate the contemporary usage of brand-new phenomena, all observed in the literature review in the first chapters. At the times of collection of ISTAT data, some of those processes were not even present in the platform environment yet – as four years, for this kind of industry, can bring around substantial changes and fundamental shifts in user experience, platform design, and functioning.

The questionnaire tries to address these limits of the ISTAT research: it would be useful to have some information that confirms or contradicts the literature, to understand the overall mainstream sentiment in a small focus group of my peers and connections.

Finally, it's also interesting that through the use of this questionnaire it will be possible to see any unexplored pathways and patterns that are affecting the music industry.

The responses to the questionnaire did unveil some phenomena that had not been analyzed before because of the new challenges of the music industry in Italy due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The questionnaire was ideated in Italian, translated in English but finalized and posed to respondents, ultimately, in Italian.

This reasoning followed a consideration: because the questionnaire would never have the same sample size and population estimates of the one of the ISTAT research described in the previous paragraph, the only thing was to try to preclude respondents from other countries to answer to the questionnaire. This was a consistent move to align my work with the one of ISTAT and to make a comparison, always keeping in mind the differences in sample size and the representation of the overall Italian population.

The delivery method of the questionnaire was through digital support: because of its simplicity to reach a wider audience and because the COVID-19 emergency does require to adapt to social distancing measures, therefore it was necessary to avoid physical contact and paper distribution of the form.

The questionnaire was delivered through Google Forms, a form tool implemented by Google. Through the tool, Forms provides a simple and easy-to-use system to collect and provide insights data collected. At the same time, the user is allowed to download the findings to perform a personal analysis through the desired tools, such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets.

The questionnaire underwent a preliminary test in the span of three days, between 10th and 12th September 2020, intending to diagnose any readability issues, misleading phrasing, distortion due to the used terminology, identify any bias of the questionnaire's author.

The form was then modified and edited throughout 3 days following the trial findings and finally distributed to collect responses starting from 16th September 2020.

The questionnaire was open to collect answers until 24th September 2020 and analysis of data insights was performed just after that.

The distribution of the link from which to access the questionnaire was shared through Facebook Posts and Stories, Instagram Stories, WhatsApp groups, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

The link was not distributed directly but instead, it was preferred to create a user-friendly link shortener: rather of a Google Forms link, a "bit.ly" link was created and then distributed. Thanks to bit.ly's insight system some interesting information can be deduced regarding the virality of the link, from the "origin" of the link click to the time evolution of clicking. Finally, it also can show the effectiveness of the form retention process. The information about the origin of the clicks can be found in the infographic at the figure 13.

In specific, the total number of clicks on the link was 341, meaning that the effectiveness in respondents' retention was successful: about 75% of the clicks on the link brought to a new submission to the questionnaire. Most clicks to the bit.ly link were reached through WhatsApp and other direct messaging applications; on the other hand, Instagram and Facebook sharing reached around 25% of the audience each.
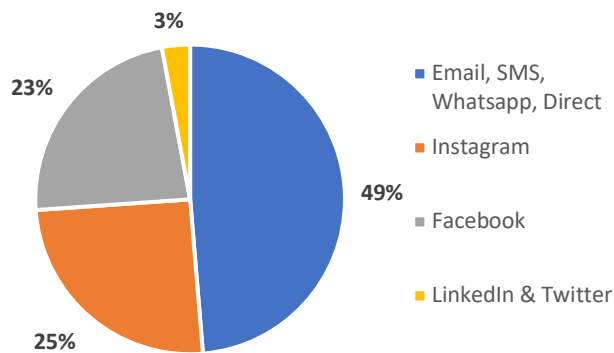
Figure 13 – Pie chart - the origin of questionnaire clicks - readapted from Bitly.com

The questionnaire reach aimed to grasp a mainstream consumer panel, while at the same time target more the users of the platforms: that's why it was also shared on social media to some communities who are focused on music listening, sharing, and discovery. One of those, which was also mentioned in the previous chapters of this thesis, is the Facebook Community "Hipster Democratici": many respondents felt interested in the topic and answered because of their direct involvement and the subjects who are coincident to one of the topics often discussed in the community.

The questionnaire was conceived to be the most appealing as possible, with a very easy-to-use interface, and to achieve that, it was built keeping in mind the short concentration times of potential audience. It takes no longer than five minutes to fill up all the questions.

Overall, the questionnaire is composed of seventeen questions, divided into six sections. Here's a short description of these sections:

1. The first section is introduced by an extensive explanation of the overall questionnaire's purposes, set out in a captivating and eye-catching way.

All the privacy information about the processing of personal data is also set out in this part of the questionnaire. After the introduction, two questions are aiming to find out the type of user who is responding, by investigating how much music they listen to and how do they discover new music. The two queries in this section are multiple-choice questions.

2. The second section only has one question and aims to divide the audience into two groups: streaming users and non-users. This section is also introduced by an extensive terminology explanation: as respondents may not be familiar with the industry's terminology, it was important to make sure that the audience understood that "streaming platform", "platform" and "music streaming platform" [translated in Italian] are equivalent words and with a single definition, which is a free or paid digital fruition service of music. Also, a non-exclusive list of examples was given to help them understand what to concentrate on during the questionnaire. The query in this section is a yes-or-no question.

3. The third section investigates the perception and behavior of users of a streaming platform: the eight questions that compose this section of the questionnaire do aim at understanding the mainstream perception and usage with multiple methods, going from a Likert scale preference disclosure to multiple-choice questions, from yes-or-no question to a long open question. These questions are asked only to the audience who was identified as "users" of any streaming platform.

4. The fourth section is composed of a yes-or-no question, posed to the entire audience, to identify the audience group who is paying a subscription for their music streaming platform.

5. The fifth section is focused on finding out the reasons that drive the respondents to pay a subscription for their music streaming platform service. It is only posed to those who have been identified in the previous section of the questionnaire as "subscribers" and it is only composed by a multiple-choice question.

6. The sixth section focuses on demographics: age, gender, and the province of residence are asked in this section. Finally, the respondents in this section can leave their email to be contacted for further research: the interviews, which is the next step of analysis for this thesis's research. The demographic insight is quite useful to underline the limits of the sample of respondents of the questionnaire: underlining certain results of age and location, in specific, will show these limits on the sample and the differences between the results that were collected by ISTAT and the results of an "oriented" questionnaire like the one created *ad hoc* for this thesis.

3. 3. 3. Source 3 – Interviews

The last source of information used for the research of this chapter is the semi-structured interviews of a selected focus group of interviewees.

The interviews were crucial to go deeper and analyze the behavior, the perception, the ideas of a little cluster of diverse users. This methodology, taken from the design-driven innovation process, was considered because of the need to fill the gaps left behind from the ISTAT report and the questionnaire, the first two sources of this research.

Furthermore, this interview methodology was meant to focus the research on finding hidden patterns of needs brought forward both by users and by workers of the industry.

Interviewees were chosen within the questionnaire sample by taking into account some factors, such as their working background and the information the interviewees put in the open question in the questionnaire, which was investigating a specific need that could enhance the user experience on music platforms.
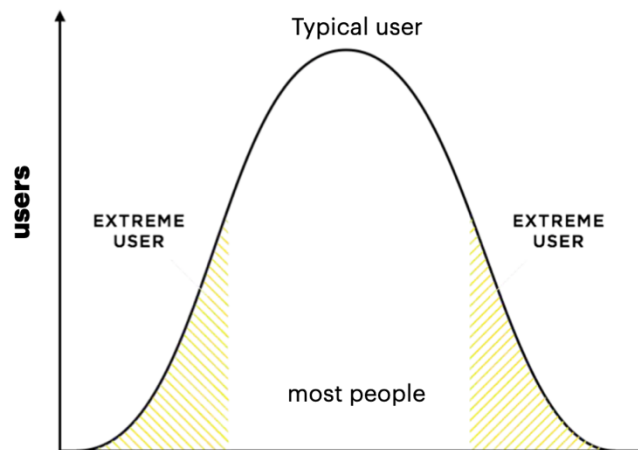
Figure 14 – chart from IDEO.com

Another important factor in the picking of the interviewees was the user typology: it was attempted to target extreme users on each side of the gaussian user curve, while at the same time trying to interview a couple of typical and semi-typical users.

The interviews were conducted in Italian, as both interviewer and all interviewees were Italian speakers.

It was performed in a single Zoom session: given the times in which this research has been performed, it wasn't possible to schedule interviews in presence.

On one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the observation, engagement, and immersion phases within the life and the environment of the interviewees, and in doing so the research can be affected as these factors are limited to what can be seen and discovered through the screen of a Zoom call.

All the interviews were scheduled via Zoom, recorded through the Zoom platform, and finally transcribed thanks to an online tool called oTranscribe, in a manual way.

Transcripts of all interviews are reported in the appendix of this work and are kept in Italian to maintain the "interview arc" and to capture all the observations that are limited due to the Zoom environment in which interviews have taken place.
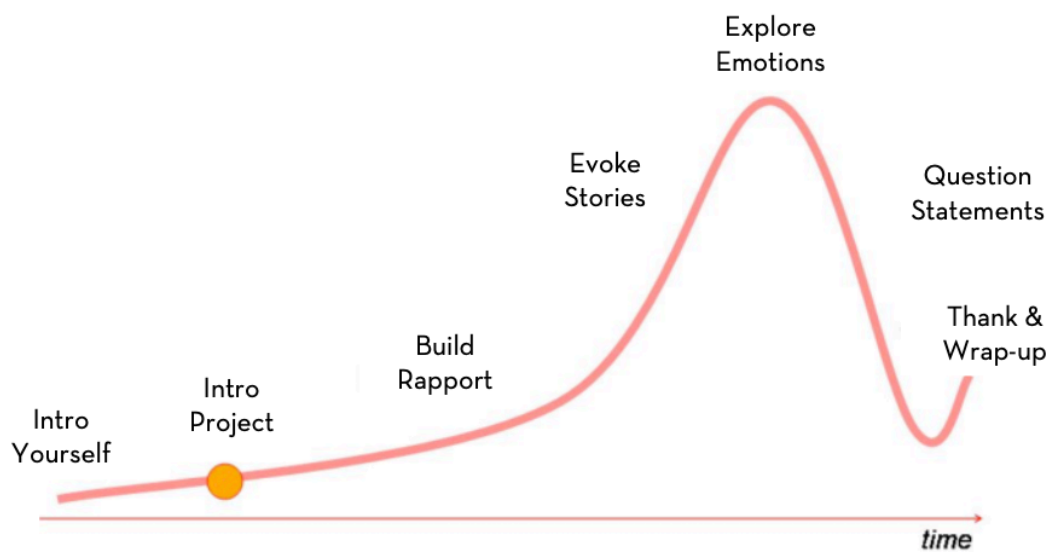
Figure 15 – chart from IDEO.com

The interviews structure was ideated as indicated in the "interview arc" (ideated and implemented by IDEO): after a short introduction of the research and the objectives of the interview, the questions were set out to build a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee; secondly, the interviewed were asked to evoke stories, encouraging the expression of how interviewed subjects are viewing the music world and the platforms' influence in their conception.

Thirdly, they were asked to explore their emotions to seek feelings with open-ended questions and conversations.

Finally, they were also asked to question "generally acknowledged" statements to discover the founding reasons for their opinions and hidden patterns.

The structure of the questionnaire was prepared by keeping in mind two of the three foundations of human-centered design: by observation, therefore viewing users within their context, and by engagement, thus by interacting with users and interviewees.

Firstly, a question brainstorming took place: these questions were set out in a great quantity, added, moved, mixed, matched within each of them.

Secondly, the questions were ordered according to previously identified themes and research interests so that it should aid the flow of the interview conversation.

All questions were refined to delete any redundancy and to make sure that the main objective of the interviews was to find feelings and needs.

The interviews, five in total, took place between 17th September 2020 and 22nd September 2020.

Some of the interviewees asked to be anonymized and that's the reason why each subject is named progressively with an alphabet letter, which was assigned chronologically.

In the short table 2 in the next page, there's a summary of the five interviewed subjects and the macro themes which were meant to be the beginning of the discourse in the interview, the starting point from which to build the interview framework.

Subjects	Type of user	Occupation/ subcategory	Macro themes
Subject **A**	User	Mainstream	Questionnaire's open question – user experience interests
Subject **B**	Insider (& user)	Talent management & booker	Live events and streaming events – passive listening and music fruition possibilities
Subject **C**	Insider (& user)	Promoter and playlist editor	Ethical issues on playlist editing, the algorithm's functioning & its influence on today's fruition methods
Subject **D**	User	Music community member	Added-value of community membership – what's different to the mainstream user?
Subject **E**	Insider (& user)	Lead singer in an independent band and extreme user	Payments and royalties – ethical issues, visibility and standing out of the platform noise

Table 2 – interviewees information

A few last words about the methodology on interviews' analysis: on each transcript and within the words, their actions, and their unspoken behaviors some patterns about needs, desires, interests were outspoken or unarticulated.

Each interview lives on its own: these common factors were all joint in the same discourse, trying to diverge to engage with bigger questions, analyzing the bigger picture, and then afterward a few threads and hidden patterns were discovered in converging the different ideas and interpretation keys that were part of the design-thinking oriented process.

This diverge-converge process was put into practice in a design-thinking process method with post-its hanging on a wide wall, moving them, cross-examining them, trying to find the hidden patterns between all of those factors, feelings, interests, and needs.

3.4 Analysis

3. 4. 1 ISTAT Report Insights

The most insightful information to be taken into account within the ISTAT report to frame the rest of the research methodologies is about the fruition of music, of the streaming methods, of the devices used by the Italian population. The results included in the ISTAT report are referring to a population between 14 and 74 years of age resident in Italy (which coincides with about 44,9 million people).

First of all, it's interesting to underline the habits in music listening in the referring population. According to ISTAT, listening to music is largely widespread within the population.

In specific, as reported by the adapted table 3 below, more than 90% of respondents have been listening to music once in the past 12 months before the survey. Also, 53,9% of respondents listen to music daily.

Listening to music in the past 12 months	% (calculated on the total population between 14-74 years)
YES	**93,3**
Everyday	53,9
A few times a week	27,4
A few times a month	7,5
Less than once a month	4,5
NO, never	**6,7**

Table 3 – Translated from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 4

This data is interesting to cross-examine the information collected on the more recent questionnaire produced specifically for this research thesis and to

understand the recent questionnaire's limits in representing the same Italian population, as this report is correctly doing.

Regarding the usage of devices to listen to music, ISTAT also disclosed that 80% of the reference population uses the radio, which at the time of the research is still the most popular device where music is enjoyed.

In specific, in the table [2] below, the percentage usage in respondents of the ISTAT research underlines how radio and tv are still very big components of the music fruition process, while at the same time smartphones and computers are following with their technological developments in music fruition – be it streaming services, music download and piracy, and much more.

Devices	% of population who uses said devices calculated on the total population between 14-74 years
Radio / car-radio	**80,3**
TV / Smart TV	**59,5**
Smartphones	**54,3**
Computer	**50,7**
Tablet	25,8
Stereo Systems	46,0
Music readers	21,2
CD players	1,0

Table 4 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 5

As noted in the table 4 above, in the years in which the data was collected, a higher percentage of users were mainly listening to music through the television and radio. Three years later, as it will be cross analyzed later with the data from the questionnaire taking into account the limits regarding the small sample size and the oriented age/location demographics, the devices have changed, and it has shifted the research on platforms instead.

The ISTAT report, later on in the research, focuses an entire section of the report on the habits of citizens regarding the streaming of music and films/video. This is section 2.2.2 of the ISTAT report.

First of all, ISTAT highlights the overall percentages of Italian citizens who declare that they have enjoyed music content via streaming platforms in the past 12 months.

As an interesting comparison, the percentage of the combined users of music and film/video streaming will be reported, together with the singular video streaming services use.

In the last 12 months (so 2016-2017):	% calculated on the total population between 14 and 74 years
I have streamed either music or film/video – I am a "streaming user"	42,8
I have streamed music	34,7
I have streamed video/films	27,8

Table 5 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 14

These percentages indicate that 57,2% of the Italian population in 2017 never streamed any content, either video or music. This is an expected value, but it's very different from the usage values that were collected in the questionnaire – because of its limits and the fact that it reached many people in specific demographics, which will be described later on.

ISTAT also denotes in the report, through the analysis of the same questionnaire answers but by dividing the answers within age groups, that younger generations are generally more prone to streaming video and music. For the matter of this research, the music streaming part of the summary table of ISTAT will be reported.

The table 6 on the next page summarizes the aforementioned information.

In the last 12 months	Population by age groups (% calculated on the population total in the respective age groups)						
Age groups	14-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	Total
I have streamed music (in %)	73,8	57,7	36,6	27,8	15,3	6,4	34,7

Table 6 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 14

This information is more consistent with the one collected by the questionnaire, which focuses on a high young-generation demographics response with extremely high consequent usage percentages of streaming platforms in the mentioned age group. The data infographics will be shown in the appropriate section in the next paragraph and the cross-analysis will be performed to show limits and consistencies between the two models.

Deepening the research and focusing on profiling the streaming users, ISTAT describes the said topic concerning the flowing of time.

In specific, ISTAT defines that the streaming usage in the Italian population can be profiled in three different clusters:

1. The "recent streamers", meaning those population clusters who have been streaming in the past three months.

2. The "non-recent streamers", meaning those who have been streaming in a period between three months and a year before;

3. The "former streaming users", meaning the cluster of the population who had been streaming users more than a year before the research but has not been streaming music for more than a year.

Table 7 below summarizes the profiling of the three types of users, together with the "non-users".

Declare who have been streaming music (% values on the overall 14-74 age group of the Italian population)	Music streaming
In the past 12 months	34,7
Of which, in the past 3 months	28,7
Of which, between a year and three months ago	6,0
More than a year ago	4,6
Never	54,0

Table 7 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 17

These percentages are very useful, once again, to show the limits of the questionnaire's panel of users, as 54% of all interviewees estimated on the overall Italian population, back in 2017, never had been streaming music in their life.

Following up on this clusterization of the users, ISTAT performs an interesting analysis of the incremental frequency of listening in users. This section of the research aims to obtain insights on whether "recent streamers" and "non-recent streamers" have changed their frequency behavior in the past 12 months. Focusing on the music part of the research, the table 8 below highlights the increments or decrements of frequency.

In the last 12 months did you stream music with a lower, similar, or higher frequency compared to the previous year?	Recent streamers % calculated on total of "recent streamers"	Non-recent streamers % calculated on total of "non-recent streamers"
Lower frequency	14,2	37,0
Similar frequency	56,3	50,9
Higher frequency	**29,6**	**12,1**

Table 8 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 18

The vast majority of profiled users in both clusters, according to ISTAT, have been noted that they have been streaming at a similar frequency in comparison to the year before; on the other hand, though, it's interesting to note that between the cluster of "recent streamers", around a third of users declare that they've been streaming with a higher frequency in comparison to the year before. On the other hand, "non-recent streamers" high percentages of lower frequency are expected.

ISTAT also underlines which are the main reasons why "higher frequency streamers" (identified in the previous table, as those who have a higher frequency of listening to music and also are recent listeners) have been streaming more in the past 12 months: they are underlined in the table 9 below.

Which are the reasons why you've been streaming more music than the year before?	% calculated on the total cluster of recent users with a higher streaming frequency in the past 12 months
I can listen to music anywhere anytime	**52,9**
I can listen to music anywhere I have a device with an internet connection	**46,2**
There's a wider library of content	**39,2**
More website/services offer music streaming	33,8
It's cheaper	26,9
Sound quality has become better	16,5
More places have free Wi-Fi to enjoy streaming services	13,6

Table 9 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 19

These motivations of a higher frequency of streaming in users in a cluster of "recent streamers with a higher frequency of streaming in comparison to the

previous year" refers to a cluster of the overall Italian population and, by ranking them, it will be interesting to compare the importance of these reasons. First of all, the top three reasons for people to stream more identified by ISTAT are: "I can listen to music, anywhere, anytime", "I can listen to music anywhere I have a device with an internet connection" and "there's a wider library of content". The main thread is clear behind the choice of those top three reasons, which are sustained minimum by 40% of the respondents: the availability of music, in the shapes of library availability, and the possibility to listen to music in each situation respondents wish.

Finally, the last insight that is interesting to capture from the ISTAT report regards the streaming fruition of content in the forms of free or paid platforms. Respondents are preferring the free versions of streaming platforms, according to the data collected by ISTAT. It's useful to take into account the data with percentages calculated both on the cluster of those users who have been using streaming services in the past 12 months, and also the percentages on the total of the Italian population between 14 and 17 years. The table below shows this insightful information.

Free or paid?	% on total of population between 14 and 74	% on cluster of streamers in the past 12 months
Free only	26,9	77,8
Paid only	1,3	18,6
Both free and paid	6,4	18,6
Total	34,7 (= total cluster of the last 12 months users)	

Table 10 – Translated and readapted from the report on "Music and Video in the Habits of Citizens" by ISTAT & MIBACT, 2018. Page 19

This information is interesting as it can contextualize the results of the questionnaires on paid streaming services questions and give an idea of what

the actual data on the overall Italian population is, specifically regarding the percentages in the first column of the table 10.

3. 4. 2. Questionnaire Insights

The questionnaire, within its limits, has been producing interesting insights that focused specifically on every single phenomenon described in the literature review. The questionnaire's structure was built to ask the demographics information at the end of the questionnaire, namely in section six. To understand the limits of representation of the sample as an estimate of the Italian population, and to understand the differences from the data of the ISTAT report which was described thoroughly in the previous paragraph, the demographics of the sample will be described hereafter.

o *3. 4. 2. 1. Section 6 – Demographics*

The first infographic to show is Q14, and the question was:

14. *What is your age?*

Respondents were asked to reply mandatorily with their age number. This choice was taken because age groups were going to be identified later on in the data analysis part to show the limits of the questionnaire. Indeed, the results were very similar to what was expected before getting any replies: an extremely high level of respondents between 18 and 30 years of age. The questionnaire returned the insight that about 93,8% of the respondents were positioned within this specific age group. Digging deeper and analyzing in a wider perspective the age groups of the sample, four main age groups were identified. The table 11 in the next page summarizes the findings and percentages, as does the pie chart.

Identified age groups	Percentages by age group	
18-22	12,5%	
23-26	67,6%	93,8%
27-30	13,7%	
More than 30	6,3%	6,3%

Table 11 – Questionnaire's insights - age group distribution, readapting data collected from Q14
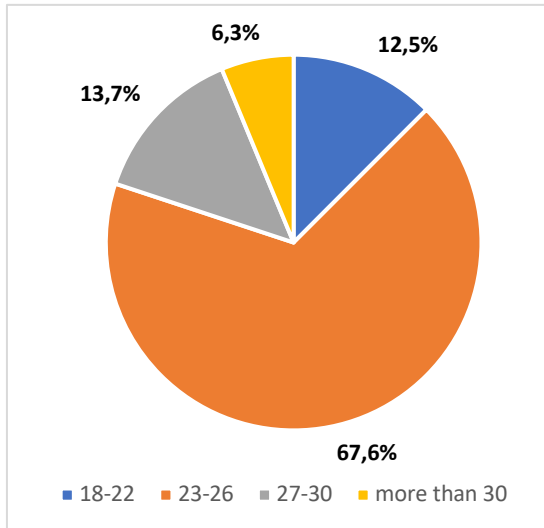
Figure 16 Questionnaire's insights - age group distribution, readapting data collected from Q14

As the questionnaire was mainly shared online and the panel of respondents was attracted through social media link sharing, it was expected that most of the sample would coincide with the audience of the sender's social media channels. That's why 67,6% of respondents, the vast majority, lays in the age group between 23 and 26 years old. Furthermore, the figure of 93,8% coinciding with the age group between 18 and 30-year-olds, follows two reasonings: firstly, it is the closest age group to the demographics of the social media sharing audience; secondly, it coincides with the most technologically savvy demographic in the Italian population and therefore with the most prone to be reached and to fill up the questionnaire.

This is a big limitation in the representation of this questionnaire's sample in comparison to the ISTAT sample: the age groups percentages for an Italian population are completely different, as expected.

The second infographic to show on the demographics is about the regional distribution within Italy regarding the sample size. All the respondents were asked to mandatory reply to this question Q15:

15. *Which is your province of residence?*

All data was then aggregated in regions to show the regional differences in the collection of data. A high peak of respondents in regions such as Lombardia, Veneto, Liguria, and Piemonte was expected as those regions are the ones who coincide more with the social media sharing audience of the senders of the questionnaire, the same situation as Q14.

Table 12 presents the regional distribution, and it is also reflected in the infographic in figure 17.

Regions	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Lombardia	106	41,4%
Veneto	54	21,1%
Piemonte	18	7,0%
Liguria	15	5,9%
Puglia	13	5,1%
Emilia-Romagna	12	4,7%
Lazio	10	3,9%
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	5	2,0%
Sicilia	5	2,0%
Toscana	4	1,6%
Marche	3	1,2%
Trentino-Alto Adige	3	1,2%
Calabria	3	1,2%
Umbria	2	0,8%
Abruzzo	1	0,4%
Campania	1	0,4%
Sardegna	1	0,4%
Totals	256	

Table 12 – Questionnaire's insights - regional distribution, readapting data collected from Q15
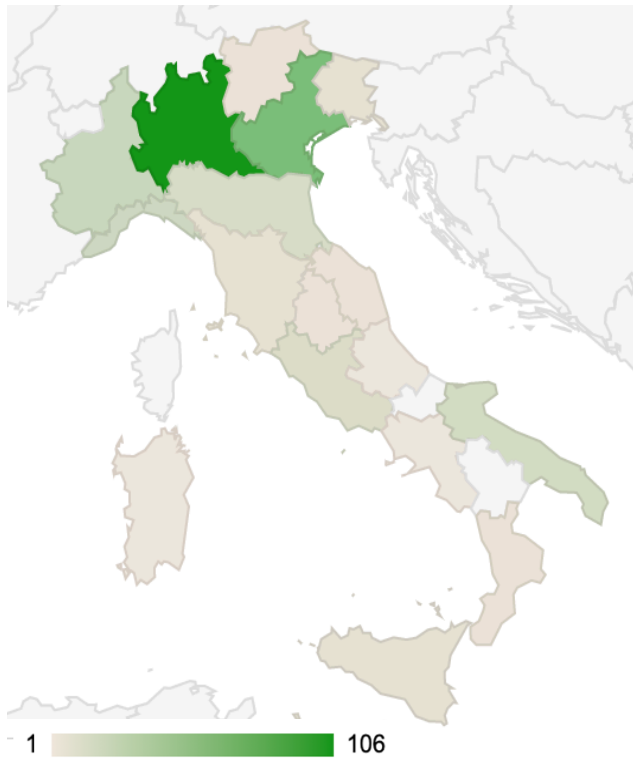
Figure 17-- Questionnaire's insights - regional distribution shown in a heatmap, readapting data collected from Q14

As highlighted by the chart and the heatmap, most of the sample is a resident of the expected aforementioned regions.

In specific, 75,4% of the surveyed sample is residents of the top four regions in the table 12, namely Lombardia, Veneto, Liguria, and Piemonte.

This factor shows an imbalance of representation of the opinion of regions that were not reached thoroughly by the questionnaire, because of the link senders' audience composition on social media. On the other hand, though, it's interesting to note that given the small sample size (to reiterate, 256 total respondents) the only regions without any representation in the sample size are Basilicata, Molise, and Valle d'Aosta.

16. *What is your gender?*

The third and last demographic information collected in section 6, regards the gender of respondents. This is not fundamental in the insight's findings, in the same way as the regional distribution in Q15 is, but it's interesting to keep in mind as a limit to the representation of the reality of the Italian population described in the ISTAT report. In the infographic in figure 18, the distribution by gender of the respondents shows a wider majority of female respondents in comparison to males, with an almost
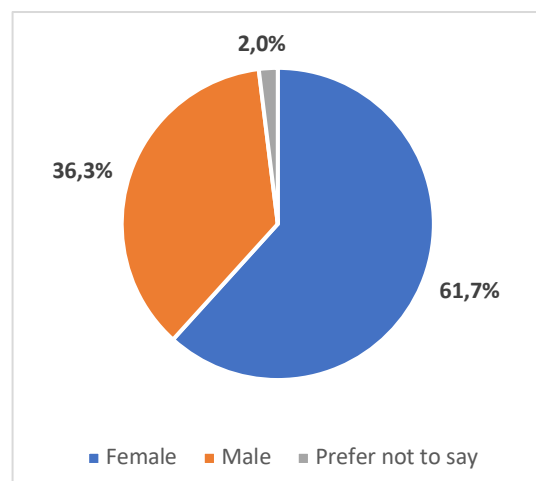
Figure 18 – Questionnaire's insights - gender distribution, readapting data collected from Q16

double percentage of female respondents. Another factor that underlines how limited this sample can be and to keep in mind while analyzing and making considerations and assumptions in the further sections described in this paragraph.

o *3. 4. 2. 2. Section 1 – Music general behavior*

The first section of the questionnaire, as described in the previous paragraphs, aimed at understanding the average user behavior in regard to the use times and also regarding the discovery of new music.

The first section is introduced by an extensive explanation of the overall questionnaire's purposes, set out in a captivating and eye-catching way. All the privacy information about the processing of personal data is also set out in this part of the questionnaire. After the introduction, two questions are aiming to find out the type of user who is responding, by investigating how much music they listen to and how do they discover new music. The two queries in this section are multiple-choice questions.

1. *How many hours of music do you listen to a day? Choose one.*

The table 13 below and infographic at figure 19 on the next page show the insights collected with the first mandatory question of the section. Q1 aimed to identify the typology of users who were going to fill up the questionnaire, and it was expected that most of the respondents would be music-oriented and music-involved respondents. This was able to be measured, in general, thanks to the information regarding the hours of music listening in general.

Answers	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
More than 5 hours	17	6,6%
Between 5 and 2 hours	67	26,2%
Between 2 and 1 hours	106	41,4%
Less than an hour	66	25,8%

Table 13 – Questionnaire's insights - hours of usage, readapting data collected from Q1

The insights collected from this question return that 74,2% of the respondents are active listeners of music for at least an hour a day, as hoped profiling a sample with a tendency to be a music-oriented respondent sample to collect reliable information about the streaming usage, which would be sustained also by Q3 in section 2.
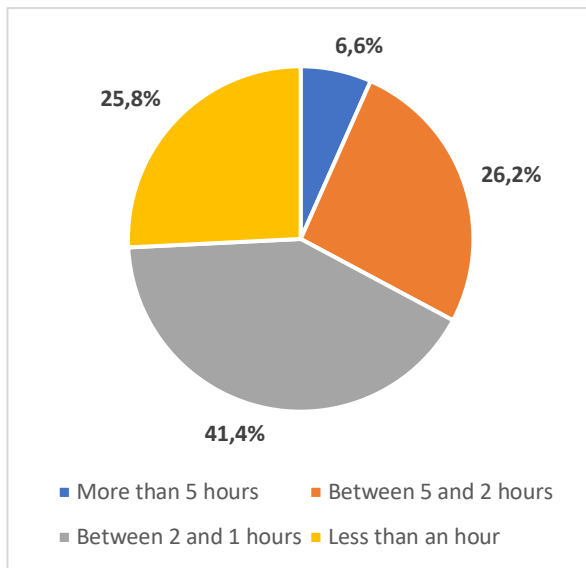
Figure 19 – Questionnaire's insights - hours of usage, readapting data collected from Q1

2. *How do you currently discover new music? Choose three top-of-mind answers.*

Do not tick anything if no option is applicable to your experience.

This question was added to the first section as it wanted to explore the motivations of music listeners, which are the greatest majority of respondents, but also investigate the music discovery patterns of those who are not streaming music. The infographic below at figure 20 measures the frequency of the answers to Q2, keeping in mind that users were asked to not tick any box of the questionnaire if no option applied to their experience. Therefore, the total number of respondents in Q2 is 254.
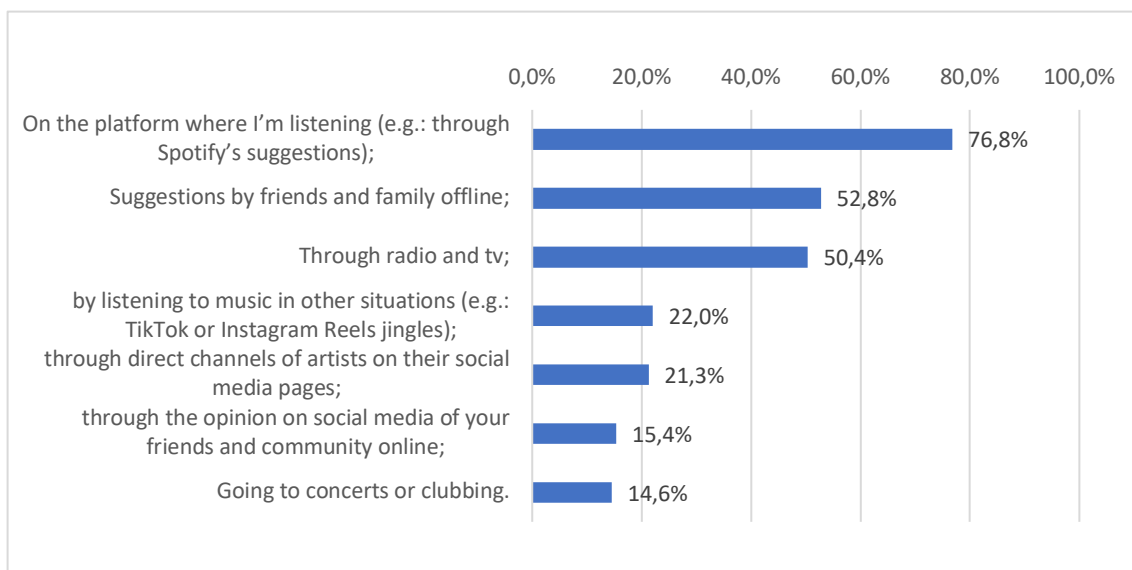
Figure 20 – Questionnaire's insights - hours of usage, readapting data collected from Q2

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In general, the results of Q2 are as expected. When asked to indicate the top three discovery methodologies for music, most respondents picked the platform's suggestions, family and friends' word of mouth, and finally radio and tv. The questions were not ordered in the way it is shown in the plot in figure 20, but they were ranked afterward based on frequency.

The first tool, the "platform's suggestions" with 76,8% of respondents feeling like it's within their top-three ways of discovering music, underlines the importance of streaming platforms for the respondents. This insight is important because all the other sections will mainly focus on phenomena and experiences which happen on streaming platforms: therefore, having a sample that knows and uses platforms is a guarantee that they'll understand what they have been asked.

The second and third tools described ("through radio & tv"; "suggestions by family and friends offline") are more traditional, which was expected with a high frequency but not at the top positions of this ranking.

These insights return can pose an interesting consideration: traditional media for music fruition are still relevant within the respondents, and also analogical word-of-mouth drives a high percentage of the discovery patterns of respondents. An unexpected result in this framework is the fact that 22% of respondents experienced discovering music through TikTok or Instagram Reels jingles. As described in chapter 2, the literature reports that TikTok is now considered to be a trend-setter in the music industry. Most of the songs who make it on a "trend" on TikTok (with viral personalities and users creating a choreography that is reprised by millions) are the same songs which are climbing the Billboard Top 100 Hits – de facto influencing the music sale and streaming industry through a "jingle", where music is just a 15-seconds background of a choreography.

It was very interesting and completely unexpected to learn that so many of the respondents of the questionnaire (56 respondents) have been discovering music through TikTok trends as their top-three discovery methods. This was also confirmed in the interview parts – see the interview analysis paragraph and transcript.

- o *3. 4. 2. 3. Section 2 – Streamers or non-streamers?*

The second section of the questionnaire aims to divide the respondents into two clusters, one made of streaming users, and one of streaming non-users. The result was expected to be a higher percentage of users than non-users.

3. *Did you ever listen to music on a streaming platform in the past year?*
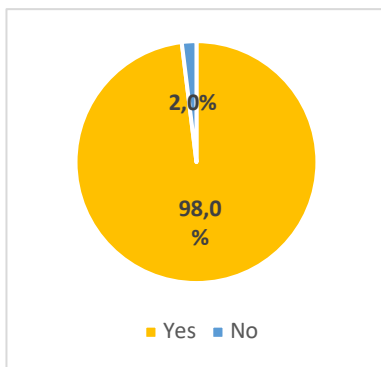
Figure 21 – Questionnaire's insights - streaming users vs non-users, readapting data collected from Q3

According to the respondents, who mandatorily had to answer these questions, therefore having 256 answers, only 5 of them never have had listened to music on a streaming platform in the past year. This is another factor that sustains the hypothesis that the sample is composed of the vast majority of streaming users. In figure 21, a pie chart shows this insight.

- o *3. 4. 2. 4. Section 3 – Streaming Users*

This section has been subject to answers of the cluster of streaming users, identified in Q3. The first questions were mandatory to answer, posed as a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

4. *Since you started using a streaming platform, did your approach to music change?*
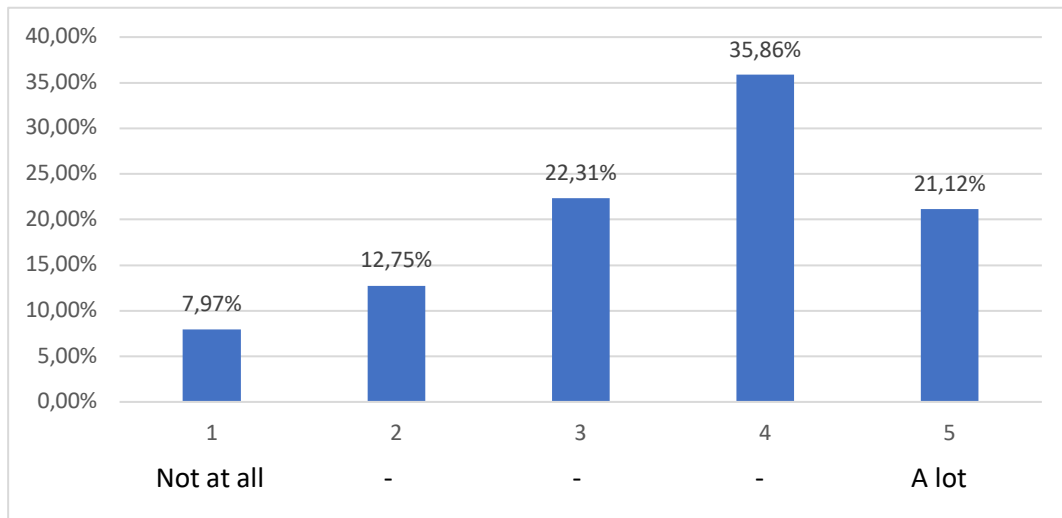
Figure 22 – Questionnaire's insights -readapting data collected from Q4

Taking into account Q4's answers, shown in figure 22 above, it can be noted that most of the respondents (about 57%) have chosen points 4 and 5 on the Likert scale, towards the "a lot" end. It can be assumed therefore that there's a big awareness in the fact that the habits and the approach of users since platforms for music have been introduced had changed in respondents. The aim was specifically so: understanding whether the respondents could see and be aware of the breakthrough change in the music industry and system.

5. *Do you feel like your music horizon (considering your tastes and the discovery of artists different from your taste) has been extended or reduced since streaming platforms have entered the music industry?*
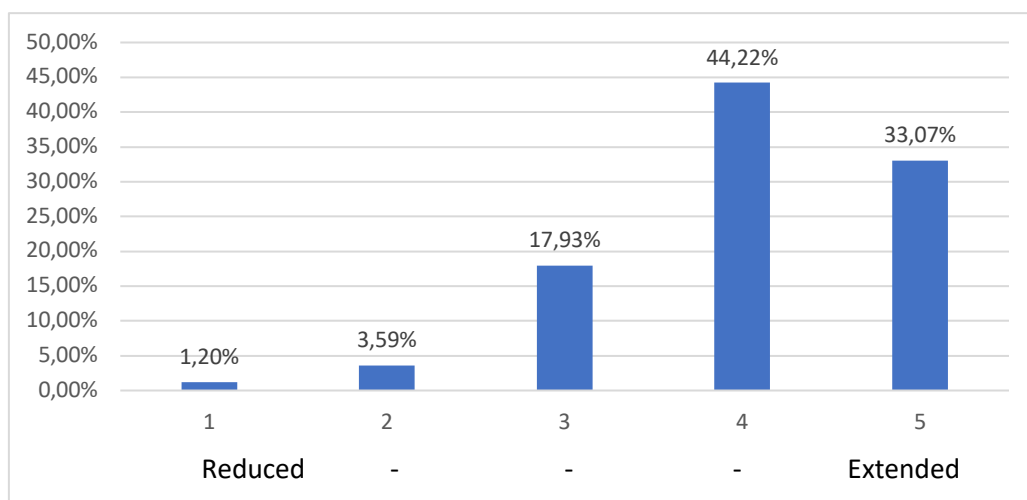
Figure 23 – Questionnaire's insights -readapting data collected from Q5

By taking into account the information collected in Q5 (showing in figure 23), instead, we can see that even more respondents than in Q4 have concentrated on points 4 and 5 of the Likert scale: 77,29% of respondents feel like their music horizon – as intended and described in the questionnaire's text, see Q5 – has been extended since the introduction of streaming platforms.

Respondents feel like they have a bigger availability of songs, they have more chances to discover new music, they have an extended horizon in general.

Both the results of Q4 and Q5 were expected to lean on the 4s and 5s sides, but specifically for Q5 the polarization of the opinion is very decisive and gives a good idea of the mainstream conception in the sample of streaming users, with a big awareness of their possibilities and that they've been able to exploit those possibilities in the past during their experience as users of a music streaming platform.

The following three questions of this section are multiple-choice sentences, which were not mandatory to be answered. All of these sentences are focusing on discovering either awareness, influence, or interest in a specific phenomenon discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

6. *Do you agree with the following sentences? Choose all applicable. Do not tick anything if no option is applicable to your experience.*

The sentences are shown in the infographic in the next page, in figure 24, together with the frequency of respondents' tick. The total number of respondents to this question in specific was 241 respondents.
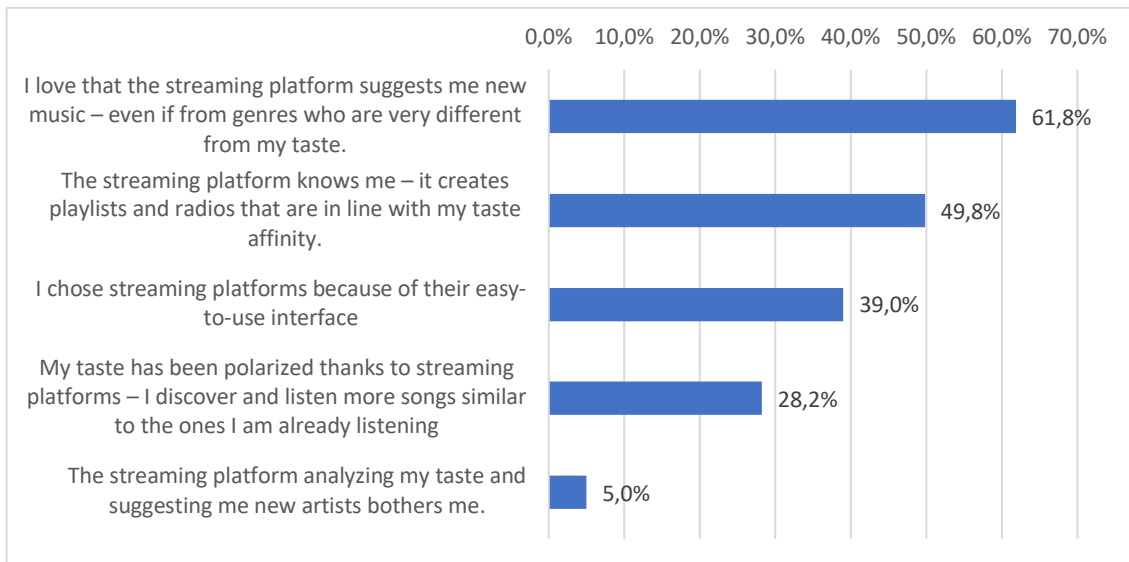
Figure 24 – Questionnaire's insights -readapting data collected from Q6

The sentences have been ranked, once again, based on the frequency of selection. This time there was no ticking limit – all respondents were potentially able to tick all sentences. This is also how all the other questions within this section and the next section have been formulated within the Google Forms platform and that's why all questions have a different number of answers, which constitutes of those respondents who felt like their experience did not apply to any of the options listed. Later on, this kind of surveyed subjects will be named "non-respondents".

The case of Q6, for instance, is that 10 of the respondents felt like no option listed was coinciding with their empirical journey. Specifically, the first two sentences allow iterating that respondents are very convinced of the possibilities of taking advantages of the streaming platforms' functioning: around 62% of them feel like the algorithm's suggestions bring them to the discovery of music from different genres, while at the same time, around 50% of respondents feel like the algorithm works to help them discover more music which coincides with their taste affinity. This is another confirmation of the insights in Q4, mentioned just above. On the other hand, it was quite unexpected that only 5% of respondents (12 of them) felt bothered by the presence of the taste profiling algorithm: this means that most of the

94

respondents do know that platforms profile their musical taste to create playlists for them, but are not concerned by either ethical issues or have doubts in the "good faith" of what the streaming platforms do with the data they collect. This insight was also confirmed in the interview parts of this analysis – see the interview analysis paragraph and transcript. Finally, the other two takeaways from Q6 is that the user interface of the streaming platform of their choice is a key factor in deciding whether to pick it or not (39% of respondents) and that some respondents felt like their discoveries have been polarized and, therefore, their taste flattened (about 28%) – the same insights which are corroborated by some information shared by interviewees in the last part of this analysis.

7. *Did you do any of these activities on the streaming platform in the past month? Choose all applicable. Do not tick anything if no option is applicable to your experience.*
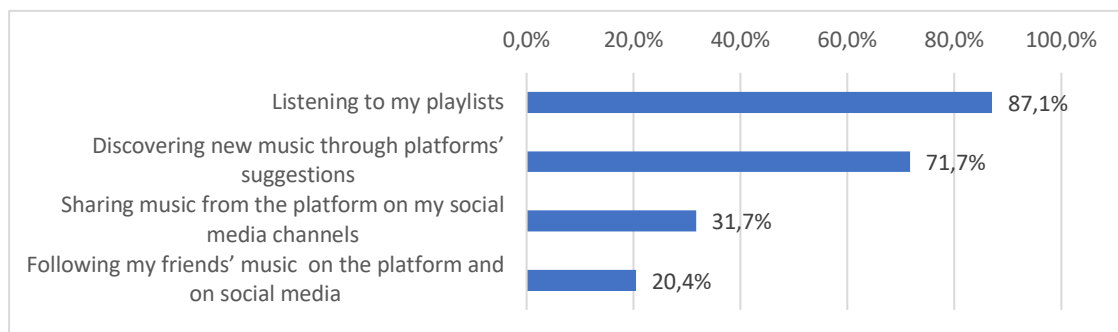
Figure 25 – Questionnaire's insights - readapting data collected from Q7

Figure 25 above has reported the information collected thanks to question 7, which aimed to explore the current activity of respondents within the music streaming platform of their choice. As expected, most of the activity regards playlist activity: both listening to saved and/or user-generated playlists (87%), and the activity of discovering new music through algorithmic suggestions or algorithmic playlists (72%) are recurrent with large size of the surveyed sample, which for Q7 corresponded to a total of 240 respondents (and therefore, 11 "non-respondents"). On the other hand, social interaction is less valued than expected by the respondents, in both the declinations of this activity. Indeed,

sharing music on other platforms (31%) and following friends on music platforms (20%) are still part of the behavior of a consistent part of the sample, but not as pivotal as the playlist activity and the single person's choices regarding their listening.

Moving forward, Q8 wanted to investigate whether music streaming on a platform had ever driven the purchase of other goods or services within the music industry with respondents.

8. *Have you ever purchased another product or service from an artist that you discovered on the platform? Choose all applicable. Do not tick anything if no option is applicable to your experience.*

As in Q7 and Q6, the question was not mandatory to answer to denote the "non-respondents" which were – unexpectedly – a lot: on 251 possible respondents, only 116 of them answered, about 46% of the cluster of "streamers". Therefore, keeping in mind this first insight, it can be assumed that more than half of the respondents didn't purchase anything after discovering an artist on a platform, or felt like they're only purchasing without the influence of the music streaming platform.

Analyzing the respondents' opinion, instead, Q8 returns us some clear insights which can be found in the plot in figure 26 below:
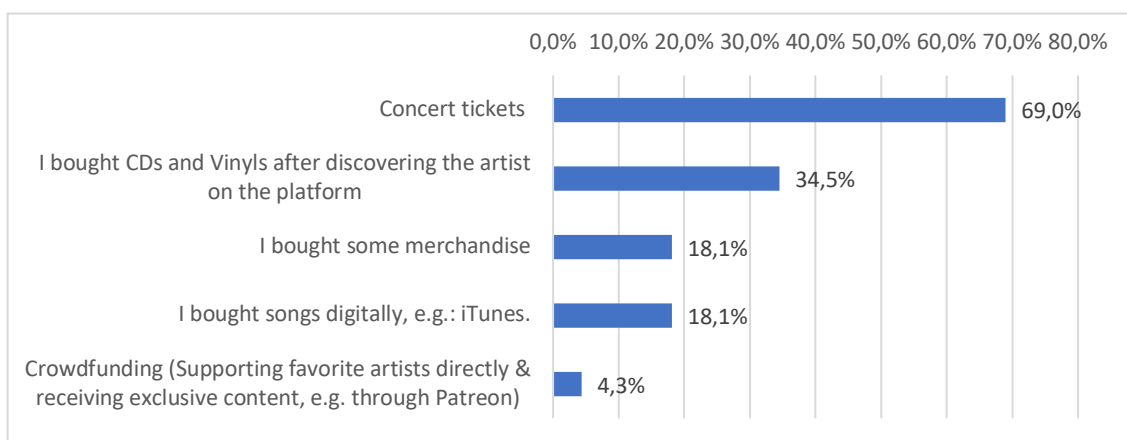
Figure 26 – Questionnaire's insights - readapting data collected from Q8

Keeping in mind the smaller number of answers (116 in total), it's interesting that nearly 70% of respondents felt like they've been influenced by the streaming platforms they discover music on to buy concert tickets to see live performances of their artists: this is a very good way of contributing to artists' revenue and business model while supporting venues, organizers, bookers and other figures who are part of the concerts industry.

Two assumptions can be made based on this insight: most respondents value the importance of a live performance as a fruition method of the cultural object and want to keep exploring their discovery by getting in touch in the "closest" way they can get to newly discovered artists, which is by going to their concerts and by watching them perform live.

Moving forward, the second insight to be taken from Q8 is that about 35% of respondents purchased CDs and vinyl after discovering the artist on the platform, therefore purchasing the physical object which represents the work of the artist at its fullest – as the artifact, composed by artworks, booklet and lyrics can be fully appreciated when physically in the hands of a fan.

At the same time, this higher percentage is probably due to the vinyl revival of the past decades, as discussed in chapter 2 as a phenomenon: the need for a physical artifact to embrace and get attached to is here for a part of consumers, and it is not going away.

Overall, it can be argued (with Q8's limits) that music streaming platforms do create the possibility for other fields in the same music industry to sell, and it is not a substitute product, confirming what has been described in chapter 2.

This assumption can be confirmed also by the fact that a considerable part of the respondents of Q8 contemplated the idea of purchasing merchandising (18%), to purchase songs digitally (18%), and to pay for a crowdfunding support system in exchange for exclusive content by their patronized artists (5%).

Generally, the total number of respondents was less than the average answer to the rest of the questions, because any of these possibilities required a monetary transaction which can be assumed as something that "really involved" respondents do. This is also something that can be seen in Q11 when respondents were asked whether they had ever paid a subscription for their favorite streaming platform. It will be analyzed in the next section's paragraph. Finally, to conclude section 3, the last two questions focused on the phenomenon of live streaming concerts which had a huge increase during the lockdown period, in Italy, due to the COVID-19 sanitary crisis.

9. *During the lockdown, did you enjoy watching live streams of your favorite artists on their social media pages?*

10. *Would you pay a 5€ ticket to watch a live stream concert in non-pandemic times? The figure of € 5 is to be understood as 10% of the price of a concert, in the medium-high range, where for example the "in attendance" ticket at the venue is € 50.*

The aim of these two questions, Q9 and Q10, was to first investigate what the feeling about live streaming in a situation of emergency and crisis was when all of the respondents were forced to stay at home following the national regulation.

Secondly, with Q10, the aim was to understand whether a streaming fruition method – for live music – would be a feasible possibility in the future of the industry.

In the infographic in figure 27 are shown the results of the mandatory yes-no question to Q9, while in figure 28, with the same modality, the results of Q10.

Figure 27 – Questionnaire's insights - readapting data collected from Q9

Figure 28 – Questionnaire's insights - readapting data collected from Q10
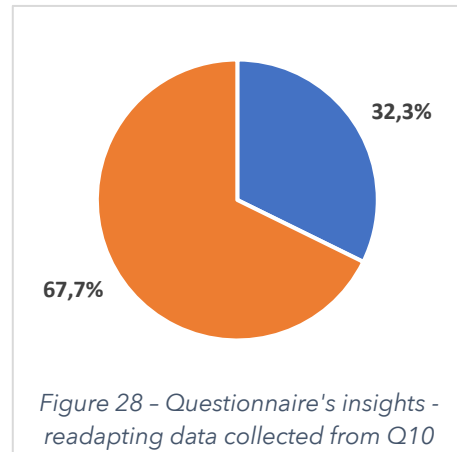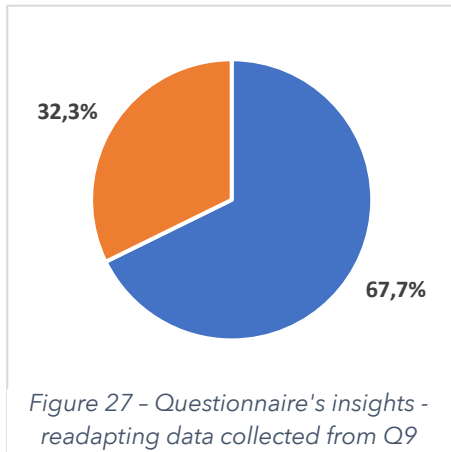
Q9 returned the insight that around 68% of respondents enjoyed streaming performances - during the lockdown - of their favorite artists (since these were mandatory questions, in both cases the responses for these questions were 251 in absolute value). On the other hand, in Q10 about 68% of respondents when asked whether they would pay a small fee to watch a live streaming concert when the COVID-19 restrictions are over, answered no.

It was a pure coincidence that these two questions received the same answers of yes and no in an "opposite" way: in absolute value, 170 respondents answered "yes" to Q9 while other 170 respondents answered "no" to Q10.

On the other hand, though, it is interesting to investigate if there is any tendency to a correlation between the two answers of this cluster of respondents: by cross-analyzing through concatenation of the single respondent's answers of Q9 and Q10, it was possible to compute the correlation value of the two questions. The summary of the computation of the correlation index can be found at the table 14 below. The calculation of the index of connection φ determines a mild positive connection between answers: therefore, it can be argued that there is a mild connection between those who enjoyed live streams in lockdown and those who would pay for a live stream event in the future. On the other hand, those unsatisfied during the

lockdown are not likely going to pay a ticket for a live stream performance in the future, when restrictions are withheld.

| | Q9 | | Totals |
Q10	Yes	No	Totals
Yes	(a) 67	(b) 14	81
No	(c) 103	(d) 67	170
Totals	170	81	251

Table 14 – determination and count of the combined absolute frequency of Q9 and Q10

The index to be calculated is the index **φ**, a specific index that determines a connection between dichotomic variables, such as those who are emerging from the results and answers of Q9 and Q10. It's not a "correlation" per se: that insight could only be calculated if it would have been between two quantitative variables. In the table are the frequencies at which it has been observed contemporarily the two modalities of answer to the questions: 67 people answered yes to Q9 and yes to Q10, and so on.

The index is calculated with this formula:

$$\varphi = \frac{ad - bc}{\sqrt{(a+b)(c+d)(a+c)(b+d)}}$$

$$-1 \leq \varphi \leq +1$$

Computing the index **φ**, the result obtained is a quite mild value: **0,22.**

Taking into account that the value **φ** shifts between -1 and +1, a value of +0,22 means that there is a positive connection between an answer of Q9 and an answer of Q10. This means that a "yes" answer in Q9 tends to associate with a "yes" answer in Q10, and that a "no" answer in Q9 tends to associate with a "no" answer in Q10.

Given the quite high N value, and considering the $\chi 2$ values, it can be argued that the results of the index calculation are significant.

11. *What do you think is missing from the streaming platform you're using and that you think it might be interesting to add?*

Q11 was designed as an open question to give the chance to respondents to give their personal opinion about the music streaming platform environment, to have space to "complain". Respondents felt like exposing their opinion in an extensive and laid out way: 56 of them gave a written answer to this non-mandatory question.

Another aim of Q11 was to identify some interesting personalities to interview in the next phase of the research, which was indeed successful. The two "users" in the interview's research process were selected between the respondents of this question, and the discourse and conversation with them during the interview started from the insight they brought up when answering Q11.

By reviewing the insights provided by respondents and after defining a series of unique values that multiple open answers could be assimilated with, the analysis returned a series of insights and its frequency in the responses. The table 15 shows insight and its frequency, and some comments will follow.

The first insight to denote in this absolute frequency table is the fact that 15 respondents, without any hesitation, indicated lyrics as a fundamental key factor for streaming platforms and something that should be added right away – this is an insight that was recurrent in the interviews conversations, as well. This

Unique Values	Count
Lyrics	15
Social Interaction	6
Video	5
Algorithm issues	4
Editorial knowledge	4
Shazam	3
Wider library	3
Live music	3
Platform issues	3
Free	2
Merchandising	2
Support small artists	1
Acoustic Sessions	1
Playlist issues	1
Searching a song within a playlist	1
Create music	1

Table 15 – Questionnaire's insights - Readapting answers to Q11

is probably the first thing that the respondents see missing from the platform environment in general, and therefore wish to understand more about the music they're listening to. The first way in which they can discover more and investigate the creative process of an artist is, supposedly, through lyrics and, for some, translation.

With a slightly lower frequency, "social interaction" and enhancing the possibilities to share and listen with friends, peers and engaging with artists directly on the platform is something that a few respondents found interesting to explore and a need that they would want to be satisfied in the streaming music platform. This insight was also explored during the interview sessions and will be further discussed in the modalities and information in the next paragraph.

On the other hand, there are a few insights written by respondents which can be all tied down to getting deeper knowledge and knowing better the artist they are listening to. It can be said both for the need for music videos to be present (on some platforms, of course, as e.g. YouTube streams mainly music videos) and the need of an enhanced editorial knowledge on the artists, such as a "behind the scenes", or an editorial and informational explication. Specifically, the latter element of the discussion was the start of a very interesting conversation with some of the interviewees in the next paragraph of this research, regarding the comprehension of the creative process behind a certain kind of cultural musical object. Some respondents see this limit on platforms and wish that this further information can be implemented in the future. Finally, still within the same thread of reasoning, the need for a wider library – specifically of old works – and more live music performances is probably a necessity for respondents to have a bigger picture of the artist as a whole during the fruition process.

The text of the qualitative answers is present in this work's appendix and some of these answers will be utilized when contextualizing what has been discussed in the interviews.

- o *3. 4. 2. 5. Section 4 – Subscribers or non-subscribers?*

This section is composed of a single yes-no question, Q12, which aims to divide all respondents (256) into two clusters of "subscribers" and "non-subscribers".

12. *Do you pay a subscription to a music streaming platform service?*
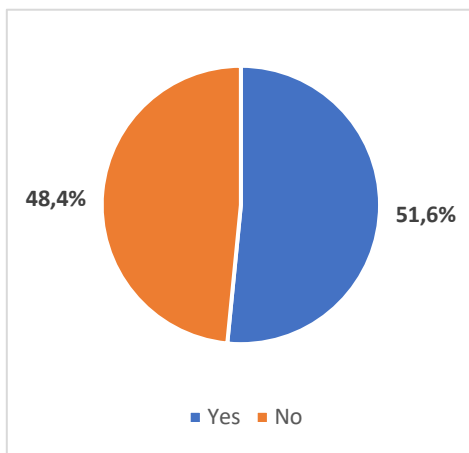
Figure 29 – Questionnaire's insights - data from Q12

In the infographic in figure 29, the results of this question are shown. The audience was split in half: 132 individuals claimed they are paying a subscription for their music streaming service, about 51,6% of respondents. Those 132 individuals were those surveyed in section 5, introduced hereafter, which wanted to understand some information regarding behavior and perception on subscription payers.

- o *3. 4. 2. 6. Section 5 – Subscribers*

The last section described in this paragraph is section 5, which only involved one multiple-choice question which is listed below in the infographic at figure 30:

13. *Tick if you agree with the following sentences about subscriptions and streaming platforms. Do not tick anything if no option is applicable to your experience.*
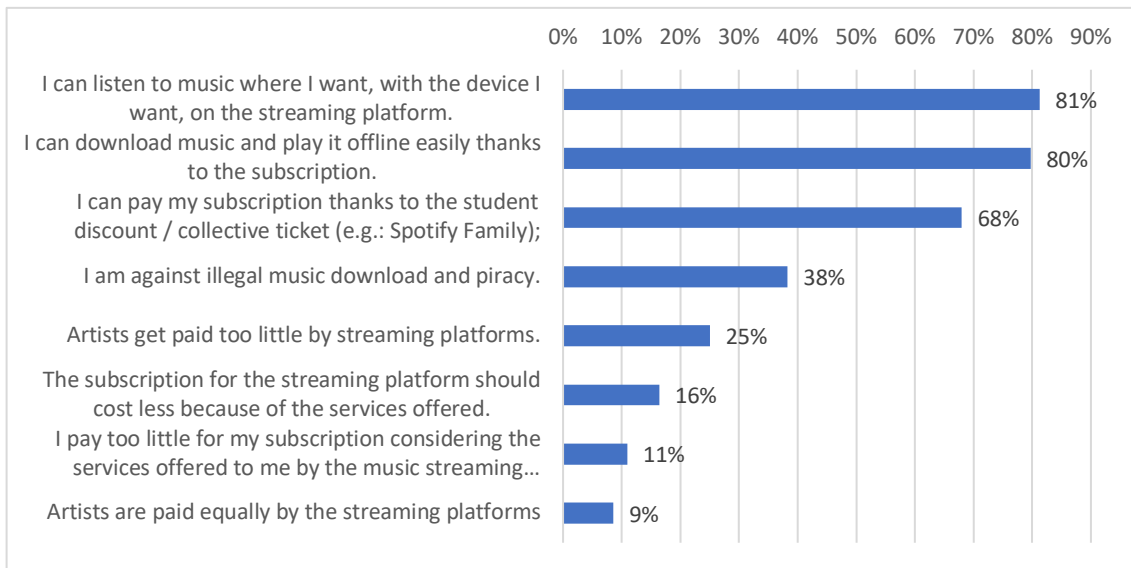
Figure 30 – Questionnaire's insights – readapting information retrieved from Q13

The answers were ranked, once again, based on the relative frequency with which they were picked by the 132 respondents or subscribers. On the other hand, this question had 4 non-respondents, therefore the relative frequency is calculated considering a total number of 128 answers.

The takeaway insights from this last question in the questionnaire are that more than 80% of the respondents are paying a subscription because of the easy-to-use user interface of the streaming platform of their choice, and its functionalities. This is a key element in understanding the success of the streaming platforms in attracting users within their ecosystem. Nearly 70% of the users, though, agree with the fact that they are paying a subscription because they can take advantage of a discount given their student status or with a collective subscription (as a family subscription, for example). Finally, for a few respondents, there's an ethical reason behind the payment of a monthly subscription: they pay also because they're against piracy and illegal download of cultural content and music.

Another insight collected through this question is that 25% of respondents recognize the problematics in the music industry regarding royalties and payments to artists via streaming platforms: investigating awareness of the royalties issues was the aim of this sentence in specific and it is interesting to

note that many respondents have been reading articles, discussing with friends, heard and are aware of the artists' initiatives concerning this issue widely explored in the previous chapters of this work. This is very far from the cross-sentence, which highlighted that only 9% of respondents believe that the platforms are paying artists equally. Therefore, there is a big awareness of inequality in the industry.

Finally, the last insight from this very dense question, it should be taken into account that within the panel of respondents there are more people (16%) who believe that the subscription should cost less of what they're paying now by taking into account the services offered. On the other hand, though, 11% of respondents do not agree: according to them, they should be paying more, and the services included in the monthly subscription are more than enough.

3. 4. 3. Interviews Insights

As mentioned in the methodology and overall strategy paragraphs, the interviews were intended as a way through which the hidden needs, feelings, and opinions would come to the surface of the discourse and, therefore, help the discovery of interesting insights within interviewees' opinions.

Some of the interviewees, as mentioned before, were picked among the respondents of the questionnaire, and thanks to their extensive answer to Q11 they indicated their interest in the matter, their willingness to discuss more, and a critical understanding of the overall issues.

Mainly, those who were identified through this process are the "users" of the platform. On the other hand, some personalities from the music industry were reached and asked to fill up the questionnaire.

Through the answers of Q11, their main interests and needs were analyzed as the first starting point of the conversation – and potentially reveal how they would be extreme users (as presented in the previous paragraphs).

Hereafter, the five subjects who were identified, picked, and interviewed will be described to understand the general framework of the selection process.

ID of interviewee	Subject Typology
Subject A	Mainstream user
Subject B	Insider and talent booker – extreme user
Subject C	Insider as promoter and playlist creator
Subject D	Community involved user
Subject E	Insider as lead singer and artist – extreme user

Table 16 – Interviews subject typology

Once the interviews were taken, they were transcribed, processed, and finally, through a design-thinking methodology, the insights - revealed through the interviews' experiences - were laid out on a wall using post-its.

The next step of the analysis of the insights was the one of brainstorming and of connecting in a summary way, which was followed by the process of divergence to explore new concepts and ideas which might sprout by reading and brainstorming the insights of the interviewees.

Finally, after having diverged and some further factors or insights were added to the process, the final step was the one to converge into the final framework from which the understanding of hidden threads, paths, joint insights were attempted to be mined and found.

In the figure in the next page, the general post-its layout of different insights from the interviews in the last step of the process just described is shown.
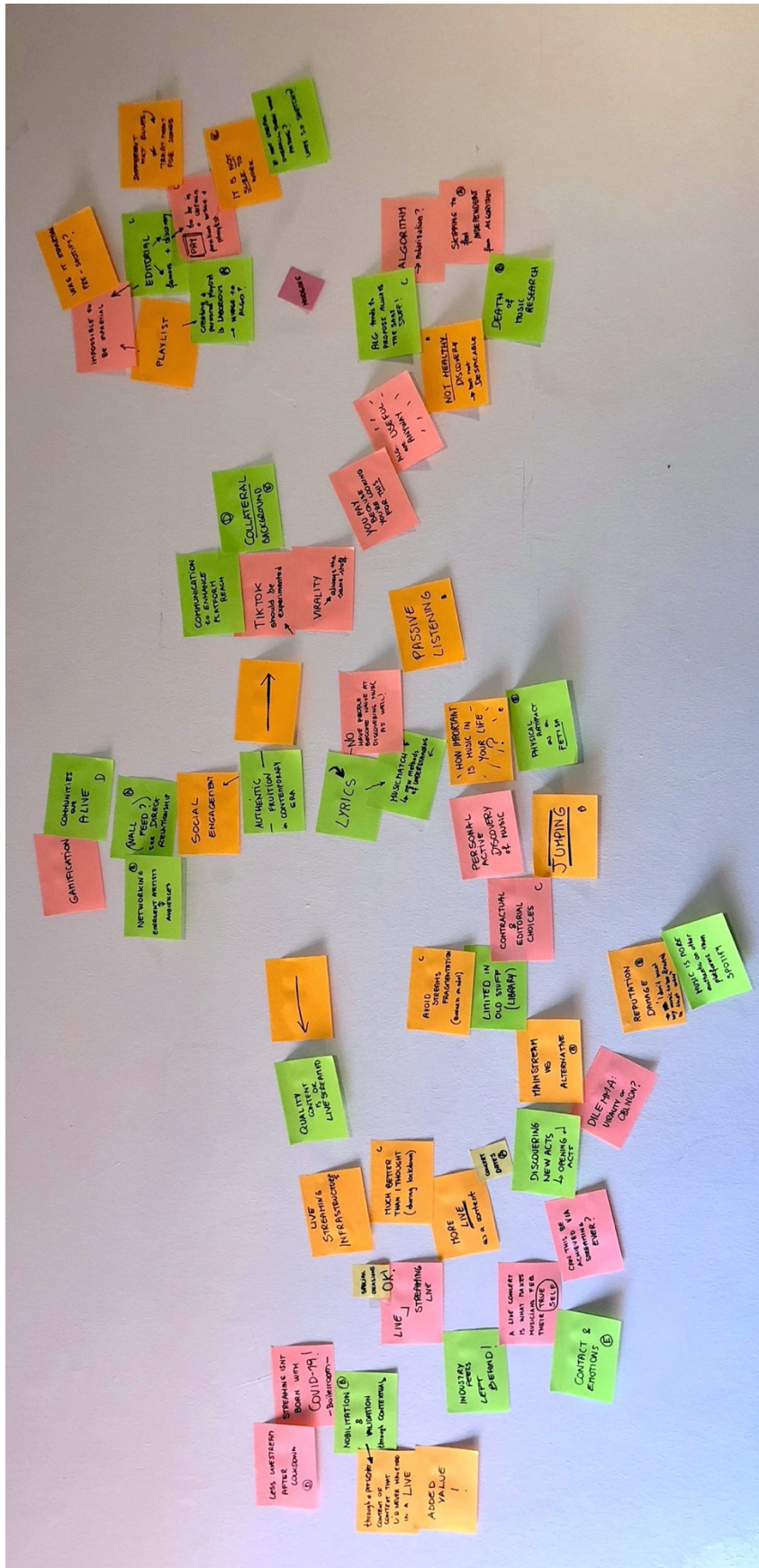
The general map of post-its points to the main starting point which ideally can be assumed as this discourse: the conception of the "authentic" fruition of the music cultural object in the contemporary era.

From this starting point, the main elements connected that have been identified are the following, each shaping a macro-area of discussion that will be further analyzed and discussed later are:

1. Social Engagement

2. Lyrics

3. Virality

4. Live Streaming

o *3. 4. 3. 1. Social Engagement*

This element was brought up and analyzed by most of the interviewees as both something that is missing, a hidden need, and as a possible future direction that can be achieved by the industry of streaming platforms. Indeed, social engagement is already present, in part, and that users adapt to while using streaming platforms.

In which way? Oftentimes, sharing with other friends and peers the music discoveries and one's music activity needs to rely on external platforms than the ones of music streaming, in specific with Spotify. For example, sharing a song with someone else can't be done via Spotify, instead, it needs to be done through Facebook, Instagram, or direct messaging apps. One of the hidden needs of the interviewees when speaking about usage and fruition coincided with this element, and this is also a need that emerged from the questionnaire in Q11 (with 6 people raising "social interaction" issues). This issue is important to be tackled as it's a pivotal way in which respondents of the questionnaire discover new music: the interaction with friends and peers. More than 50% of respondents of Q2 answered that one of their main methods of discovery of new music is through suggestions friends, peers, and family.

In specific, some interviewees lamented the need for communication internal to the platform with other users, by trying to put the user at the center of the process in general.

Specifically, here are some of the translated insights from the interviews:

> **Subject A**: I love to see what my friends are listening to on the platform and often I see that they're listening to a song that I do not know and then I get to listen to it and discover it. If I were Spotify, I would give users the possibility to suggest a song to others and that it can end up on a specific screen, which if I want to, I visit. If I don't want to, it shouldn't affect my Spotify usage. I wish I could see: "friend 1 suggested this song today" "friend 2 suggested this other song today" "listen to this playlist" "your friends' choices". Something like a bulletin board where you can share information and opinions.

> **Subject D**: I would see social engagement on the platform more as a sort of bulletin board, not as a chat, without losing the focus from music. Otherwise, it would be homologated to other social media, in my opinion. Adding a place to post music. A piece of "official" advice, not a listening record like "now playing". A sort of Twitter, possibly also in chronological and not algorithmic order. However, the diversion of the conversation from the music should be limited, because otherwise, it becomes like any other platform, as Instagram has moved from a photography social network to an entire all-encompassing ecosystem.

The main feeling of the interviewees was that an independent environment in which users can suggest their picks to other users can be a good achievement by platforms. This factor comes from those users who were more involved in platform usage, the users of the interviewees' group, and was quite expected. In specific, subject **D** also suggested the insight that communities are still alive and doing well: a social involvement and engagement structure inside the platform can foster the users' tendency to be in a music community to share thoughts, feelings, needs, and music picks.

Another insight introduced by subject **A**, for instance, is the element of gamification as a way to engage more the users through their statistics and by providing well-made insights to them, as it is already done by some platforms such as Spotify with a yearly recap. Here's the excerpt from the interview:

> *Subject A: Once on Spotify you could see the overall listening position of a single artist. They could bring these statistics back to do some gamification, even on the statistics of the single user, since they already track their habits.*

On the other hand, another issue connected with the social engagement is brought up by subject **B**, which underlines her personal experience in the past as founder of a "Music Appreciation Society" at her university. This was a safe space for music insiders, both users and performers, emergent artists, and interested audience. This networking safe space can be fostered by platforms to push in this direction internally, while also giving space for physical and "real life" opportunities. Here's the excerpt from the interview:

> *Subject B: I was the founder of the Goldsmiths Music Appreciation Society: a year-long project to help university students and musicians find space where they can play, network with other students, film screenings, and events (such as the quiz night) themed music. We had a community on Facebook where we kept in touch regarding concerts, events, sent newsletters with information, etc.*

Social engagement is a key player in the music fruition of the contemporary era but should be fostered in a way in which the fruition and discovery are focused mainly on an "authentic and healthy discovery process" according to the interviewees' opinions. This need for authenticity was also taken into account in other macro-areas and it is interesting how this topic is quite recurrent in different areas of the industry and this research, in specific.

o *3. 4. 3. 2. Lyrics*

Starting again from the main point of contact of the fruition of the cultural object in a contemporary era in an "authentic" way, it can be argued that the presence of lyrics can be thought as one of the first steps in understanding the reasons behind the cultural object production, one of the main impulses of users when they're trying to go deeper in the listening of the music they're discovering and want to find out more. Lyrics were the most mentioned issue in Q11 of the questionnaire – therefore, something that is at the heart of the mainstream user base and that is a big need in the streaming platform actual configuration and functioning. Lyrics are seen by most respondents of the

questionnaire as a fundamental starting point in their fruition and discernment of an artist's true self and his/her message.

The interviewees have stressed the importance of this topic also as "extreme users": for example, subject **E** stresses the fact that thanks to the visual impact of the lyric, the words can be "printed better inside you".

> **Subject E**: *as a music lover and primarily a lyricist, in my opinion when you listen to a song if you see the text, it has a stronger visual impact. Words print better inside you. This feature, on Spotify linked with MusicMatch, could give this additional contribution.*

On the other hand, following the lead of subject **E**, he stresses that the fruition process should go through a big pivotal question in understanding the music needs and wants of a single person. This question should be: "How important is music in your life?".

This can be argued to be a driver in the discovery process and that can determine whether deep research and analysis of songs and artists will be performed by the user.

This question can be considered as an insight that splits the audience's needs into two different clusters: a cluster of passive listeners and another one of active listeners.

The first cluster, made of passive listeners, is determined by their attitude at listening without really being involved in the discovery process; instead, they rather go with the flow, are more likely to base their interests and their taste on the choices of an algorithm on the streaming platforms.

The second cluster, instead, is identified by those who are trying to step away from the platforms' functioning and actively research meanings within songs, artists, and playlists, that realize the limits of the streaming platforms and try to avoid being influenced by them. Nonetheless, they oftentimes identify themselves as "extremes" of the mainstream audience.

An example is subject **E**, who claims to have a "fetish" for a physical artifact when listening and discovering the cultural object of an artist, and also subject **B** which recognizes the limits in her music field of interest (electronic and experimental music) and underlines how she needs to jump from a platform to another to completely appreciate the whole of an artist she's discovering.

o *3. 4. 3. 3. Virality*

Following the lead on the aforementioned cluster of "passive listeners" but going back to the main concept of fruition of the contemporary era, "virality" is another interesting topic that was part of the analysis and is deeply connected with these two elements.

The virality of a song is what platforms are pointing to, in the contemporary world: that's due to their business model which is in general a stream-centered business model.

How streaming (and social media) platforms function at present is a driver of multiple factors that can enhance the songs' streams.

Which are those factors according to the interviewees' insights?

- Algorithms.
- Playlists.
- Music as a background element.
- Communication → mainstream vs alternative.

Algorithms came up pretty often in the discourse with the interviewees, with a different attitude and contrasting opinions within the single subject, as well. For example, subject **B** claimed that algorithms in passive listening are not a healthy way of discovering music, due to the process of polarization of musical taste (stressed by subject **A** and **C** as well, in the shape that algorithms also) and also that algorithms eventually have contributed – in a quite dramatic way – to the death of personal music research, according to subject **B**.

> *Subject B: Algorithm and suggestions are not a properly sound way in which critical music research can be conducted, in my opinion. Actually, I was the first to get to know artists that I still admire very much, and without the algorithm, I might not have discovered them. It is us [the experimental music environment] who still have to adapt to this way of enjoying music.*
>
> *The platform is also more linked to generations [such as generation Z] born with this music discovery process and therefore maybe they don't even know how the music listening and discovery process works by listening to a record bought or searched for in a store.*
>
> *Again about the discourse of passive listening, it is the death of musical research.*
>
> *Subject A: On the one hand, the algorithm is good because you actually feed it, so the more you use it, the better it knows you. On the other hand, it is also a bit too cumbersome: the moment it starts to get to know you it doesn't take you out of your comfort zone and brings you to polarize your taste.*

Subject **A**, as a mainstream user, when speaking in about algorithms and in specific the algorithms which are performed in deciding the playlists, highlights how polarized his discovery process and listening experience is becoming.

> *Subject A: The playlists prepared by Spotify, like "dinner with friends", like the "good morning coffee", the ones that are more listened to [which are editorial playlists - NDR]. One thing I've noticed about these playlists is that they're a hodgepodge of songs of the moment. If you listen to "Hot 50 Italia", "Caffè del Buongiorno" or "dinner with friends", they include the same songs put in a different order, and therefore there is no discovery of new songs. These playlists should be a bit more variable in my opinion.*

He also underlines his way to "get rid" of the algorithm's influence on his discovery decision process and his listening experience: through skipping songs. It is a way to feel more "freed" from the algorithms functioning – it's important to note that this tool is fully available in the "premium" version of the service, where users are paying a subscription and therefore should be "freer" to enjoy music as they want.

> *Subject A: The algorithm can suggest a song to me, but since I have Spotify Premium if I don't like it then I can decide to skip it. Maybe with the free version [with a limited number of song skips] he always puts the songs he wants.*

Moving on to the discourse of playlists, which is strictly interconnected with the topic of the algorithms, interviewees shed some light on their conjoint opinions. In specific, subject **B** underlines that even if she dramatically claimed that algorithms are the "death of the music research" on the other hand by citing her working experience she felt blessed by the presence of a band she's working with – 72 hours post-fight – in a very famous playlist through algorithm processing.

Here's her quote:

> ***Subject B***: *As for the artist, it depends: 72hour post-fight, the band I work with, have been included in the major worldwide reference playlist for Jazz, which is "State of Jazz". It led them to have a lot of ratings and exposure internationally, for example, they were contacted by an American label, it led them to receive requests for concerts or collaborations in the US, several good things. As for the artist it can be something positive, especially on Spotify, as far as exposure is concerned. For the listener, I remain of the idea that I do not see much positive in it because it refers to the idea of passive listening. Even when I listen to the radio I am subjected to passive listening which sometimes leads to the discovery of good artists, I would not like to condemn it 100% but it does not agree with my concept of listening. As for the 72-hour strategy, we were thinking of bringing them to America in 2021.*

Therefore, she recognizes the importance that algorithms and playlist can give to the visibility and the virality of the creative work of an artist, so she does not feel like condemning at 100% the playlist functioning.

Regarding subject **C**, who is a playlist promoter, he brought some interesting insights such as the fact that a playlist editor can never be impartial in present times. He underlines sketchy patterns behind the decisions and the algorithmic production of these playlists.

When asked about whether he thinks he does have an impact on the listeners of the playlists he creates, he claims that first of all, for a playlist editor, it's impossible to be impartial. Second of all, he also claims that users pay for a service (or use a free streaming service) and the suggestions and algorithms do come with the full package: it the users who are looking for suggestions on the platform.

> *Subject C: it is impossible to have an impartial choice in the playlists: it is also impossible for a user to always choose for himself. Ultimately, one of the reasons users pay for platforms like Spotify is to get discoveries proposed without making an effort. You pay for the service so you don't have to force yourself to do anything. We have reached the point wherein some sectors we have developed so much to end up "skimming" our actions, removing the superfluous, and making us lazy. There is a tendency to remove the intermediate steps by using platforms, as in this example.*

He also claims that there are some sketchy processes when playlists are created.

> *Subject C: some songs are there [in some editorial or algorithmic] because they "have to" be there. If there is an emerging artist in a playlist with a lot of followers, it's not because of their merit that it should be there! Essentially, they pay and get fit into interesting playlists. Obviously not in "Top 40 Italy" because it would stand out too much, but in other playlists, it happens.*

What is claimed by subject **C** is also confirmed by subject **E** but he questions the usefulness of some of these processes at the independent level he's at and that his environment and knowledge are at.

> *Subject E: In my small way, I've dealt with independent editors, not Spotify employees, those who have their private playlists and followers. The trend that I have observed is that in Italy payments are required (about 85% of people I came into contact with) to appear in playlists, while instead in a market like Mexico (where my band is most followed, incredibly) I'm more likely to be offered by them and contacted by them to be included in their playlists. They do a more "editorial" search in the true sense of the word: if they like your music, they give you a chance.*

> *In Italy then I am offered to be inserted only for a short period of time, for example for a month, asking for costs that are not justified by the exposure. I've seen people from La Spezia (his city) pay to be added to certain playlists, reach good ratings and stream levels, and the following month immediately return to previous ratings of the monetary investment compared to an Italian audience.*

Also, subject **E** claims that sometimes success, because you've appeared in a Spotify-created editorial playlist, is not all gold and needs to be framed within a specific objective-related question: what do you want to achieve by being an artist? Do you want to keep and increase audience retention? Here's a discussion with subject **E**'s experience:

> *Subject E*: *Let's talk about a group we both know as an example. They ended up on Indie Italia, though I don't know through which connections, it is also difficult to keep the interest of the listeners. For example, the song by *that group* that ended up on Indie Italia has 300,000 streams, while the other songs have 1000. Surely, it's important to end up in them for publicity and virality, because it reaches many more ears, but that doesn't mean that you automatically get an audience. The proof is given by the difference between the numbers. The generated new audience did not stay. Rather than having these disparities, I prefer to have homogeneous plays on the different songs, as far as we are concerned.*

Nonetheless, an insight that was reported by subject **A** and that it's really important in the analysis of the virality is the fact that personal playlist creation is not the most user-friendly experience on the platforms. When speaking about creating playlists for himself, subject **A** claims a difficulty in doing so:

> *Subject A*: *Creating a playlist is an absurd mess. I wish I could open the playlist and write the name of the song I want! I have to look for the song; touch with the menu; add to the playlist; select playlists and it's a boring process. Conversely, if you're inside a playlist, Spotify tells you the suggested song to add - is it nudging? Creating playlists of my own taste is cumbersome.*

This could be an interesting insight explaining the nudging process that platforms, such as Spotify, put in place intending to convince users to stay with the algorithmic playlists and with editorial playlists, where they can be further profiled.

Finally, another issue that was raised concerning virality is the new role of music as a background element of other cultural objects, if these new tools such as TikTok videos or social media content can be defined as cultural objects.

Specifically, subject **A** indicated TikTok as one of the sources from which he discovers new music. Following the trends of TikTok content – such as choreographies on pop music – allows users to discover music and it can be argued that it can be one of the new methods of fruition of the music cultural object. Subject **D** also takes TikTok into account because he says that through TikTok he directly gets to Spotify to listen to an entire song. He was very surprised by this phenomenon as he is of a determined age-group that doesn't

coincide with the targeted age-group where TikTok is extremely popular in contemporary times.

Still speaking about TikTok, when asked whether the music cultural object is "desecrated" according to him, he replies:

> **Subject D:** *Conceptually, yes. I listen to the music of all kinds, especially the ones that will never end up on TikTok as it is not pop or trap music. Let's say that I have my musical bases on a cultural object created 20 years ago, but I like to enjoy ultra-contemporary cultural objects such as the TikTok jingle. TikTok and its virality is a very succulent prey for trappers and pop music, for their ability to make the choreography go viral. I don't see many other genres that could be used on these platforms. Instead, these genres can be considered as "collateral" on other platforms. TikTok is acceptable as a further step in the creative process for a specific genre of music, in its habilitation as a cultural object regarding the music.*

Speaking about virality, the stream-focused and reach/enhancement model that platforms do push artists to oftentimes is not agreed to be the best fruition method of an artist's work. As stressed by subject **B**, some artists mainly in the field of experimental music decide to use determined streaming platforms instead of others (in general, avoiding mainstream platforms such as Spotify) because the presence of their work on certain platforms can undermine their reputation and image. Sometimes, artists make a statement by behaving like this, according to subject B.

> **Subject B:** *as for the artists present on the platforms, you can find the full work of more mainstream artists than independent ones, especially in my field of experimental and electronic music: there is no completeness of the musical landscape and I often have to jump from one platform to another to be able to do my research, even if of recent years' work.*
>
> *It's not Spotify's fault, per se: some artists decide not to create the Spotify page as they see it as a limitation or damage to their reputation or image.*
>
> *I have heard from some artists I work with that they don't want to create the Spotify page because "I don't want my music to be enjoyed this way, I prefer Bandcamp or YouTube, where there are no economic dynamics".*
>
> *They see it so much as damage to communication too. The association with Spotify is to deliver itself to the mainstream and commercial market.*

Moreover, Spotify in my opinion (and the artists I'm mentioning before, too) promotes a type of passive listening: they would never want their music to be linked to this type of listening.

The platform is often associated with a pseudo-damage of image and communication. It is as if their music becomes more authentic on other platforms than mainstream platforms.

They do not want to have links with the dynamics of a different conception of music listening. The conceptual aspect of this choice is a statement that some artists make.

Finally, to wrap up the virality paragraph, it was argued by interviewees that how platforms work can be shaping the creativity and the production of the cultural object with the artists and, even more, the labels.

In specific, this is an insight brought up by subject **E**: he reckons that he was pushed towards a certain artistic genre when composing his music when he was collaborating with its first "independent label".

The label visualized a better marketization on platforms of his music with a slight shift of the cultural production to an "it-pop" or "Italian indie" vibe – something that was actually out of touch with the real creative needs and feelings of the artists, namely the band of subject **E**.

The marketing, virality, and visibility aims of a label can be, for example, the case of Italian indie music, to be included in the editorial playlist Indie Italia, followed by 4 million users on Spotify.

__Subject E__: Do you want to be included in Indie Italy? If you don't produce a certain type of music that conforms to the mainstream common thread, you can never get there. I think that everyone is free to do what they want, and I would be the first one who would be happy to end up in a playlist followed by thousands of people. But in my opinion, subjectively I prefer to get there with my creative research process, not by making mainstream music because my label told me so. I'm not one who makes experimental music or anything else, obviously I do indie-rock too, but at the level of lyrics and production, it must certainly be agreeing with my creative process.

The bottom line is the freedom of the individual: In my opinion, platforms allow freedom and there is a way that, if a user concentrates, he can enjoy music in the way he prefers.

Leaning on somebody as a musical project for communication is important, especially to someone who is an insider with communication strategies and musical promotion. Often also making compromises in artistic production is necessary: creating content that does not satisfy the artist 100% but that the label pushes because it knows it will be able to sell more. In my opinion, if one is "satisfied" with smaller numbers with constancy and perseverance, he can achieve some success even without relying on someone with "hands in the pie", even if there is the risk of always remaining in a niche, doing the truly independent artist, so to speak.

o *3. 4. 3. 4. Live Streaming*

The last paragraph of this analysis will take into account the insights collected while conversating with interviewees regarding the live performances' fruition methods in contemporary times, specifically referring to live streaming and therefore taking into account the COVID-19 restrictions which have had given a halt to the intended idea of live performance.

Mostly all of the interviewees agree on the fact that live streaming can never achieve the level of emotional involvement in comparison of the real live performance, both on the point of view of users and audience and from the point of view of the artists.

Interestingly, interviewees agree on the fact that it's a good thing to experience this kind of fruition. For example, subject **C** says that he enjoyed those experiences much more than he would have expected, as he defines himself as a "live performances addict". He also underlines the fact that many improvements in the infrastructure of live streaming need to be implemented: according to him, the only way in which the industry and audiences can accept paying a ticket for a live streaming performance is through new technologies (such as virtual augmented reality) and the added value lays within these prerogatives.

Also, subject **D** says that after the lockdown period ended in May, there have been less and less live streaming performances available to audiences.

Instead, subject **E** stands by the fact that he feels like his true self on a stage, with the audience in front of him, and he can send out his feelings and the completeness of his art only through close contact with the audience.

> **Subject E**: I listen to new music, but mostly I listen to "played" music. This thing about live streaming, I hope it only lasts during this period of crisis because the first thing that goes down is the quality of the music. There is be a reason why there has always been live music: when you go to a concert, there are certain physical vibrations that a live-streamed event, even if enjoyed through the best technologies or the best band in the world, can never reach.
>
> My subjective opinion is that surely it can be used to explore in the future for new opportunities, even considering for example what Coldplay did for the launch of their latest album: but I believe that Coldplay's worst live concert is better than their best concert in streaming. Live music is something else.
>
> I am also of the idea that an artist knows which is the mode of use that most allow him to transmit his work and his emotions: as far as I'm concerned, I will never manage to transmit the same emotions in streaming as how I do during the lives.

The virtuous example of Coldplay, as already described in chapter 2, was also mentioned by subject **A** as an example where he would pay for a ticketed concert: when there's a special occasion or something hard to experience in real live performances, then the live streaming becomes necessary and sometimes justified.

On the other hand, though, by speaking about the fruition method in general, it needs to be noted that music live streaming wasn't born with the COVID-19 crisis. Subject **B** claims that live streaming has been a way in which to vehiculate a specific type of music to the masses – such as with the experience of Boilerroom since 2010 bringing emergent electronic artists to perform live online and allowing people to follow and discover their music from anywhere in the world.

> **Subject B:** Taken from a certain point of view, for my music industry it is interesting for the conveyance of a certain type of music to the masses to increase the fanbase and make it known more. Just think of the work that Boilerroom did with underground artists: surely half of those promoted artists would never have reached the levels of knowledge they reached through the 10 years of live streaming organized by Boilerroom.

They became famous and achieved a certain kind of fame and level through streaming concerts, which happened well before COVID.

Subject **B** deeps her thoughts into what she thinks should be necessary to give value and appreciation to a live streaming product. First of all, she does assume that the fact of paying a ticket validates the work of an artist, even if it's through the internet. Then, she also cites the necessity of a process of "ennobling and valorization" which can bring with it an added value of live streaming, something that is not usually provided in physical live performances.

> **Subject B:** *Live streaming could be a valid alternative only if a process of enhancement of the streaming platforms and the way of use is implemented: if a cost is introduced, it makes you think more about the value of a performance. If you don't ask for a ticket, the listener doesn't realize they're consuming a valuable product with years and years of research behind it! A shift in value perception of the streaming product.*
>
> *When the request for € 5 comes, this process is highlighted. Furthermore, these funds should be used to improve the infrastructure for the use of streaming. The live broadcasts are bad, they are not clear, they buffer: it is a new service that should be improved and implemented.*
>
> *There is also no separate "ennobling" and "enhancement" process: beyond the mere concert, what would be needed is a presenter, an expert, a Carlo Pastore "of the situation" [for years presenter on Rai Radio 2 of the Babylon program and organizer and curator of the "Club2Club" festival in northern Italy], which contextualizes what you are seeing. Surely it could be even more interesting to make you less of a visual spectator and give you additional content that you wouldn't have had if you had been live! It could be an added value of streaming events that is not present in live shows, for example. That's why so far streaming is a bit disdained and these are some steps to continue in this direction.*

According to her, a new reputation of live streaming per se can be pursued through the presence of an added value in this fruition method: the fact that through live streaming, the music cultural production can be better understood thanks to an explanation. A presenter, a charismatic figure, can explain the artistic process before seeing it put in practice, or after. This is something that can't happen in physical live performances: instead, there can be a market for this need in the contemporary music industry and it can also

drive audiences to a more aware and responsible fruition process of discovery of music and the meanings of artists.

In general, it can be argued following the opinion and insights of the interviewees that live streaming performances can be an innovative way to enhance the discovery of new artists, the fruition of special content and within its current limits, the discernment of artistic production, and the hidden meaning of the cultural good.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this work will contemplate three main fields, to sum up, all the information and insights analyzed from the literature review, first, and from the analysis of the information collected through the ISTAT report, the questionnaire, and the interviews. These are:

1. Study limitations;
2. Managerial implications;
3. Further research questions.

Study limitations

Before drawing to conclusions, it's important once again to reiterate the limitations that this study, specifically in the questionnaire and interviews part, has had.

The top-of-mind limitation is the one regarding the sample composition: as indicated in chapter three, the questionnaire is not representing correctly the Italian population age-wise, location-wise and it also attracted many more streaming users than non-users.

This is pivotal to keep in mind: the questionnaire refers to an audience of fairly young respondents, mainly residents of northern Italy, who are streaming and/or are attracted to streaming platforms.

Furthermore, the interviews had some other limitations regarding the possibility to obtain access to influent insiders.

On one hand, the insiders which have agreed to be interviewed have provided extremely fascinating insights and valuable opinions; on the other hand, though, getting access to key players within the platforms' employees would have been much more insightful and would have given a different meaning to all the inquiries brought forward with this work.

Another limitation regarding this point is that considering that most of the audience (of the questionnaire and the interviews) were users and "mild" insiders of the industry, the work lacks profound managerial information and insights collected in the streaming platform and about the business-model of the aforementioned industry key players.

This face of the medal is not very represented in the insights collection process. Finally, taking into account the user insights of the questionnaire and the interviews, most of the questions posed to respondents were driven by a need to confirm or refute a piece of literature information collected through the review – that's why the content surveyed can be considered limited.

Managerial implications

This work, given the insights and opinions collected, can try to give management of key players some indications, as the implications analyzed in this work shed a light on some possibilities to reach a degree of the overall well-being of the music industry.

It has been stressed thoroughly in paragraph 1. 4. 2., when speaking about revenue issues on royalties for artists, that currently, music streaming platforms do not apply a fair system of rewarding royalties.

By shifting from the actual service-centered business model to a possible user-centric business model of paying royalties, those key players can change the monetary possibilities of smaller and independent artists.

This issue regards the sustainable growth of the entire social and creative fiber of the music industry. By taking actions like the one aforementioned, and some platforms such as Deezer have already done so, they can foster and harvest sustainably the creative activity of the artists which must rely on their services to get their cultural object fruited by the audience.

Also, it would be a great public relations move: as per the questionnaire insights, quite a fair share of respondents are aware that the situation in the

music industry is not sustainable for the smaller creatives, and would enjoy seeing platforms taking actions towards this issues, as it was denoted in interviews as well both by insiders and by users.

Also, by changing the business model in this sense, most of the issues discussed in the literature review and the analysis would have less importance: no more need for a stream-maximization promotion and communication, as an example, because the actual business model is the direct determinator of the ideation of these issues.

Finally, this shift would also be a great step for the music industry at getting closer to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 which cites "to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".

Another implication that management of the key players such as music streaming platforms should face, considering the insights of this work, is related to the user experience on their platforms.

Implementing new tools of the fruition of the cultural object, music, should take into account what has been working in the past, together with technological and content innovation.

Specifically, regarding fruition tools, the interviews and the questionnaire have reported different insights mentioned hereafter:

- **Live streaming performances well-done**: as sustained in the literature review and through the insights of respondents, live streaming performances should be valorized and ennobled thanks to a fruition added value to distinguish it from "real-life live performances", which could have the power to attract traditional and skeptical users, together with new users and "platform only" users. An example is providing curatorial explanations by experts and insiders at a live streaming performance, as suggested by many opinions in this research;

- **Social interaction well-done**: creating a user experience system within the platform which can resemble the "real life" experience. Many respondents felt like this need was not met with the actual user experience in social interaction and integration. The questionnaire reported the insight that the most favorite way in which users discover new music is through suggestions by family and friends, directly followed by the platform algorithm's success: this indicator shows that with new tools of social interaction online, platforms can leverage the needs of users for fruition in a smart and user-centered way;

- **Lyrics and traditional tools leveraged**: the evident need of physical artifacts in users, lyrics being the most requested one, and the implementations of these tools in technologically-advanced reasoning, can help older generations feel more comfortable with the platforms' usage, while at the same time opening up the world of "traditional" music fruition to new digital generations. Lyrics are the first element that users get attached to when they are fruiting the cultural object: as an example, they should be fully implemented on each song, giving the possibility to small artists to add artworks, digital canvas, lyrics in full, descriptions, resembling a text booklet of the CD and vinyl era. At the same time, given the presence of a need for physical artifacts, technological innovation in fields such as augmented reality can fulfill in part this need.

In concluding this paragraph, it can be argued that music streaming platforms have reached an oligopoly in the industry and, in some ways, it can be said that they "have won"; on the other hand, though, music streaming platforms should realize the importance and the power they have in regulating the industry in which they're key players, embrace this fact, and act responsibly to avoid the

compromise of the creative and social fabric that has allowed them to become so fundamental in their field.

Further research questions

This thesis' topics are far from omni comprehensive, as sustained in the paragraph of the work's limitations.

Given this fact, during the analysis of phenomena and insights from the research chapter, some further research questions came up as something that this work cannot answer, but further research can.

First of all, when investigating live streaming performances, many interviewees claimed that they could never put streaming at the same level as a real-life live performance. In specific, an interviewee, as an artist, argued that he doesn't think he can ever convey the same passion, his true self as a creative, his involvement, and his intensity during the live streaming.

Can this level of "authenticity" ever be achieved? Through which tools, possibly innovative ones? Secondly, the other two issues risen when researching editorial playlist creation. Speaking with interviewees, it was observed that it is not possible to be impartial when creating an editorial playlist on a streaming platform. Therefore: what can be done to reach a higher level of impartiality when deciding about the virality or oblivion of an artist and his creative work? Was music curation ever impartial in non-playlist and non-digital times?

The final question, still about playlist promotion, is regarding the fact that some interviewees observed that the promotion of a playlist – through sketchy arrangements which might involve monetary corruption – is not useful because the retention of those fans is even harder for an artist. Then why paying at all? Shouldn't artists, industry players, communication and promotion bodies in the music industry, and ultimately labels and promoters, think about sustainable and tangible growth in fame and audience of their artists and creatives?

These questions remain open to further discussion and research.

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APPENDIX A. Questionnaire in Italian

Questionario sulle piattaforme di streaming musicale

Il seguente questionario è parte della mia ricerca sulla piattaformizzazione delle industrie culturali e creative presso l'Università Ca'Foscari di Venezia.

Sto analizzando le attuali sfide dell'industria musicale dovute alla presenza delle piattaforme di streaming e ai possibili sviluppi futuri nel campo della musica.
Le domande sono poste solamente in lingua italiana. Il questionario non richiederà più di 5 minuti del vostro tempo 🥰

Tutti i dati registrati sono anonimi e verranno utilizzati esclusivamente per la ricerca.
In fondo al questionario troverete un campo per inserire la vostra email per essere ricontattati per ulteriori scopi di ricerca. Lasciare la mail non è obbligatorio :)
*Campo obbligatorio

1. Quante ore di musica ascolti al giorno? *

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   - ⃝ Più di 5 ore
   - ⃝ Tra 5 e 2 ore
   - ⃝ Tra 2 e 1 ore
   - ⃝ Meno di 1 ora

2. Come scopri nuova musica? Scegli al massimo tre risposte rilevanti. Non barrare nulla se nessuna opzione coincide con la tua esperienza.

   Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

   - ☐ Suggerimenti di amici e familiari offline
   - ☐ Tramite radio e tv
   - ☐ Sulla piattaforma su cui sto ascoltando (es.: tramite i suggerimenti di Spotify)
   - ☐ Tramite canali diretti di artisti sulle loro pagine social media
   - ☐ Attraverso il parere sui social media dei tuoi amici e della tua community online
   - ☐ Ascoltando la musica in altre situazioni online (es .: TikTok o Instagram Reels jingle)
   - ☐ Andando ai concerti (es: ascoltando i gruppi di apertura) o in discoteca

Piattaforma di streaming musicale - definizione	Per "piattaforma", "piattaforma streaming" e "piattaforma di streaming musicale", in questo questionario, si intende un servizio digitale di fruizione della musica, gratis o a pagamento. Una lista non esaustiva di esempi: - Spotify - YouTube - Apple Music - Soundcloud - Deezer - Tidal - Amazon Music - Google Play Music

3. Hai mai ascoltato musica su una piattaforma streaming nell'ultimo anno? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Si   *Passa alla domanda 4.*

◯ No   *Passa alla domanda 12.*

Utilizzatori dello streaming

4. Da quando hai iniziato a utilizzare la piattaforma di streaming per ascoltare la musica, il tuo approccio alla musica è cambiato? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Per niente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Molto

5. Ti sembra che i tuoi orizzonti musicali (considerando i tuoi gusti e la scoperta di artisti diversi dal tuo gusto) siano stati ampliati o ridotti da quando le piattaforme streaming sono entrate nell'industria musicale? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Ridotti	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Ampliati

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6. Sei d'accordo con le seguenti frasi? Barra le risposte rilevanti. Non barrare nulla se nessuna opzione coincide con la tua esperienza.

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

☐ Mi piace che la piattaforma streaming mi suggerisca nuova musica, a volte anche di generi molto diversi dai miei gusti

☐ Ho scelto le piattaforme streaming per la loro interfaccia facile da usare

☐ La piattaforma streaming mi conosce: crea playlist e radio che sono in linea i miei gusti.

☐ Mi da fastidio che la piattaforma streaming analizzi i miei gusti e suggerisca nuovi artisti.

☐ Il mio gusto musicale si è polarizzato grazie alle piattaforme streaming: scopro e ascolto prevalentemente più brani simili a quelli che sto già ascoltando.

7. Hai svolto una di queste attività sulla piattaforma di streaming nell'ultimo mese? Barra le risposte rilevanti. Non barrare nulla se nessuna opzione coincide con la tua esperienza.

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

☐ Ascolto le mie playlist

☐ Scopro nuova musica con i suggerimenti della piattaforma streaming

☐ Condivido musica dalla piattaforma streaming sui miei canali social media

☐ Seguo (e ascolto) la musica che ascoltano i miei amici sulla piattaforma streaming e sui social media

8. Hai mai acquistato un altro prodotto o servizio da un artista che hai scoperto sulla piattaforma streaming? Barra le risposte rilevanti. Non barrare nulla se nessuna opzione coincide con la tua esperienza.

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

☐ Biglietti per i concerti

☐ Crowdfunding (Es: supporto direttamente il mio artista preferito e ricevo contenuti esclusivi, ad esempio su Patreon)

☐ Ho comprato CD e Vinili dopo aver scoperto l'artista sulla piattaforma

☐ Ho comprato del merchandising;

☐ Ho acquistato digitalmente dei brani (per esempio, su iTunes).

9. **Durante il lockdown, ti ha fatto piacere guardare i live streaming dei tuoi artisti preferiti sulle loro pagine dei social media?** *

   Per "live streaming", si intendono ad esempio le Instagram Live dove gli artisti si sono esibiti durante il lockdown.

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ Si

   ◯ No

10. **Assisteresti ad un concerto in live streaming pagando un biglietto di 5€, anche se non ci fossero le restrizioni sugli assembramenti?** *

    La cifra di 5€ è da intendersi come il 10% del prezzo di un concerto, di fascia medio-alta, dove per esempio il biglietto "in presenza" al venue è di 50€.

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ◯ Si

    ◯ No

11. **Cosa ti piacerebbe avere come servizio all'interno della piattaforma streaming che stai utilizzando e che al momento non c'è?**

    Questa domanda cerca di sondare i bisogni non soddisfatti degli utilizzatori delle piattaforme streaming per ulteriori scopi di ricerca.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Abbonamento

12. **Paghi un abbonamento a un servizio di piattaforma streaming musicale?** *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ◯ Sì   *Passa alla domanda 13.*

    ◯ No   *Passa alla domanda 14.*

Abbonati

13. Spunta se sei d'accordo con le seguenti frasi. Non barrare nulla se nessuna
opzione coincide con la tua esperienza.

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

☐ Pago troppo poco il mio abbonamento considerati i servizi che mi vengono offerti dalla
piattaforma streaming musicale.

☐ L'abbonamento alla piattaforma di streaming dovrebbe costare meno in base ai servizi
offerti.

☐ Posso scaricare musica e riprodurla offline facilmente grazie al mio abbonamento.

☐ Sono contrario al download illegale di musica e alla pirateria.

☐ Gli artisti vengono pagati equamente dalle piattaforme streaming.

☐ Posso ascoltare la musica dove voglio, con il dispositivo che voglio, sulla piattaforma
streaming.

☐ Posso pagare il mio abbonamento grazie allo sconto studenti / biglietto collettivo (es .:
Spotify Family);

☐ Gli artisti vengono pagati troppo poco dalle piattaforme streaming, per quanto ne so.

Dati demografici

14. La tua età *

_____

15. Il tuo genere *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Femmina

◯ Maschio

◯ Preferisco non specificarlo

◯ Altro: _____

16. La tua provincia di residenza *

17. Il tuo indirizzo email per contattarti in caso di necessità per ulteriori scopi di
ricerca

_____

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APPENDIX B. Transcript of Q11 open answers

The table below shows each answer to Q11 and the insights that were retrieved from Q11 of the questionnaire.

Answer to Q11	Insights	
Video musicale e testo canzoni	Lyrics	Video
Vorrei che Spotify mobile mettesse meno limitazioni nella sua versione free	Free	
Una funzione come Shazam	Shazam	
Vorrei che si ampliasse la proposta musicale perché per molti generi (rap, chill music e musica classica ad esempio) l'archivio è più carente	Wider library	
Vorrei che mi proponesse più brani "lontani" da quelli che ascolto abitualmente	Algorithm issues	
I would like to streaming platforms to promote less-known artists too because usually music labels pay for their popular artists to put their artists song on big popular playlists (on Spotify, Apple Music etc.). So I think streaming platforms can also put small artists on their big playlists so those artist could get more recognition and reach.	Support small artists	
Scegliere da che minuto far partire una canzone		
Probabilmente un miglioramento delle funzioni sociali, migliorerei l'interazione con altri utenti	Social Interaction	
Poter vedere Anche i video delle canzoni	Video	
Ci sono pochissime sessione acustiche.	Acoustic Sessions	
Cancellare la musica che non ascolto più		
Vorrei che fosse inserita la possibilità di leggere i testi delle canzoni che si ascoltano	Lyrics	
Video musicali delle canzoni	Video	
Un opzione che mostri il testo della canzone e una maggiore precisione dei logaritmi che calcolano i consigliati	Lyrics	Algorithm issues
Possibilità di interazione tra gli utenti (chat e condivisione di musica all'interno della stessa piattaforma)	Social Interaction	

Informazioni sulla canzone/artista, mi immagino un collegamento diretto tra piattaforma streaming e giornali online	Editorial knowledge	
Nulla, nel caso di Spotify o YouTube mi piace così come sono fatte!		
Aggiornamento più costante delle playlist proposte dalla piattaforma	Playlist issues	
Spotify: possibilità di ricerca del titolo di un brano musicale all'interno delle mie playlists (in una playlist di 500 + canzoni direi che è utile)	Searching a song within a playlist	
Avatar mio e dei contanti (es. Travis Scott)	Social Interaction	
Uso solo spotify e per l'uso che ne faccio lo trovo completo		
L'assenza di pubblicità	Free	
Interagire direttamente con l'artista o avere delle news del nuovo brano uscito (ad esempio il dietro alle quinte, una specie di documentario)	Editorial Knowledge	
Che la musica continuasse a riprodursi una volta uscita dall'app di YouTube	Platform issues	
Breve biografia dell'artista/gruppo;	Editorial Knowledge	
Testo e approfondimenti su brani e artisti	Lyrics	Editorial Knowledge
Testo di qualsiasi brano	Lyrics	
- Dovrebbe aiutarmi maggiormente nella scoperta di musica nuova, al momento l'algoritmo non è preciso, inoltre anche le playlist suggerite (Es:cena con amici etc) risultano sempre le stesse con gli stessi artisti, quando sarebbe interessante avere delle varianti. - Integrare maggiormente la funzione sui concerti live degli artisti - Inserire un sistema di lyrics. - Inserendo la funzione "shuffle" in modalità casuale va a pescare le solite canzoni. - Spesso non è automatico il passaggio dopo aver	SUBJECT A INTERVIEWS	

ascoltato una canzone ad una radio consigliata basata su quell'ascolto. - Maggior semplicità nella creazione delle playlist personali - Inserire la possibilitò di visionare cosa ascoltano gli amici anche da mobile, è una funzione molto interessante che spesso mi fa scoprire nuovi artisti interessanti, ma disponibile solo da desktop - Sarebbe interessante sapere quanto i miei ascolti possono incidere sulle performance di un artista (sia a livello di classifica che monetario)		
Video e musica dal vivo	Video	Live music
Su Spotify, testo della canzone annesso. Su YouTube, link diretto all'acquisto dei cd/vinili dell'artista.	Lyrics	Merchand ising
Vorrei un livello di privacy intermedio (Spotify) così da poter rendere visibile la mia attività solo a persone da me selezionate.	Platform issues	
Le lyrics dei testi	Lyrics	
Alcuni album molto vecchi di alcune discografie. Lyrics complete. Livemixes.	Lyrics	Wider Library
Leggere le lyrics, indicare in modo più netto i gusti musicali per favorire il suggerimento di brani più vicini ai propri gusti ed escludere quelli meno pertinenti	Lyrics	Algorithm Issues
Ricerca per "ascolto" tipo Shazam	Shazam	
Copie fisiche a prezzo ridotto	Merchandising	
Un'interfaccia che permetta di visualizzare le playlist preferite dai miei amici o create da loro e che permetta anche l'interazione diretta tra utenti	Social Interaction	
Su Spotify Campo "data Ultimo ascolto" tipo iTunes ai tempi	Platform issues	
Uno spazio dedicato per creare musica	Create music	
Nulla		

Poter leggere tutto il testo mentre ascolto la canzone in questione	Lyrics	
più artisti (anche quelli meno conosciuti) e più dischi soprattutto quelli di vecchia data	Wider Library	
Un calendario con tutti i concerti	Live music	
Possibilità di avere registro canzoni ascoltate precedentemente		
Avere i lyrics di tutte le canzoni	Lyrics	
Non saprei		
Testi e traduzioni dei brani (tipo karaoke)	Lyrics	
Su YouTube non mi piace il fatto che riproponga di continuo sempre gli stessi video o tipologie di video, non profilando al meglio i miei gusti musicali	Algorithm Issues	
Date e tappe concerti	Live music	
Sarebbe incredibile se fossero presenti tutti i testi di ogni singolo brano, funzione presente parzialmente su Apple Music.	Lyrics	
Incontrare persone con gusti simili, per ricevere suggerimenti veri e perché no trovare anime affini	Social Interaction	
Ha Spotify sul telefono quello che stanno ascoltando i miei amici nel momento (solo si può vedere nel computer)	Social Interaction	
La presenza dei testi	Lyrics	
Una funzione stile "Shazam"	Shazam	

APPENDIX C. Interviews Transcripts

C. 1. Subject A –Mainstream User

I: qual è il tuo rapporto con le piattaforme streaming:

A: Non voglio definirmi: utilizzo Spotify un'oretta-due al giorno e solitamente lo faccio mentre lavoro, mentre faccio spostamenti o mentre faccio qualcosa a casa come accompagnamento

I: mi piacerebbe partire da quello che è scritto nel questionario perché hai scritto un sacco di cose molto interessanti. Io leggo: "dovrebbe aiutare maggiormente nella scoperta di nuovo musica nuova al momento l'algoritmo non è preciso inoltre le playlist suggerite risultano sempre le stesse cose stessi artisti quando sarebbe interessante avere delle varianti" in che senso?

A: ordine diverso, non c'è una scoperta di qualcosa di nuovo.
Le playlist quelle già preparate di Spotify, tipo cena con gli amici, tipo il caffè del Buongiorno quelle un più ascoltate [che sono delle playlist editoriali – NDR]. Una cosa che ho notato di queste playlist è che sono un miscuglio di canzoni del momento. Se ascolti Hot 50 Italia, caffè del Buongiorno o cena con amici sono le stesse canzoni messe in ordine diverso e quindi non c'è un una scoperta di canzoni nuove. Queste playlist dovrebbero essere un più un po' più variabili.

I: Tu scrivi: "Integrare maggiormente la funzione sui concerti live degli artisti". Intendi più livestreaming o più possibilità di ascoltare concerti live registrati e presenti sulla piattaforma?

A: compaiono le date dei concerti solo a quelli importanti.
Parlando di dischi live, per alcuni artisti ci sono, per altri no, ma penso che dipenda dalla produzione discografica del singolo artista.
Una cosa che per alcuni artisti a volte compaiono le date dei concerti che ci saranno prossimamente nei paraggi per quanto riguarda gli artisti più importanti. Invece, ci sono un <u>sacco di artisti minori</u> come ad esempio "Eugenio in Via di Gioia" che <u>sarebbe interessante sapere se partecipano a</u>

<u>qualche Festival nei paraggi</u>. Infatti, ad esempio i "Tre Allegri Ragazzi Morti" sono un gruppo che io ascolto su Spotify però non seguo i loro canali social quindi non posso sapere che cosa fanno e l'altro giorno hanno tenuto un concerto a soli 10 € praticamente a 20 minuti da casa mia e non lo sapevo. Averlo saputo tramite Spotify, sicuramente sarei andato.

I: Inserire un sistema di lyrics fatto bene? Cosa intendi?

A: non voglio vedere il behind the lyrics per forza. MUSICMATCH[2]
Se voglio vedere il behind the lyrics lo clicco e me lo guardo - non è che me lo metti senza che io lo voglia leggere; per carità, a volte è interessante, però ripeto secondo me lo voglio guardare me lo guardo se no.
So che Spotify ha già stretto una partnership con MusicMatch per poter risolvere questo bisogno dei suoi utenti per quanto riguarda le lyrics. <u>Issues di User Experience.</u>

I: Cosa ne pensi della presenza dell'algoritmo che potrebbe influenzare un po' i tuoi ascolti? Non ti da fastidio?

A: L'algoritmo è da una parte buono perché effettivamente col gli si da da mangiare, quindi più lo utilizzi più ti conosce meglio. D'altro canto, è anche un po' troppo macchinoso: nel momento in cui inizia a conoscerti <u>non ti fa uscire dalla tua zona di comfort</u> [Polarizzazione?].

I: Per quanto riguarda invece le questioni etiche e sulla legittimità del "nudging"?

A: L'algoritmo mi può suggerire un brano, ma dato che ho Spotify Premium se non mi piace poi sono io che posso decidere di skipparla. Magari con la versione free [con un numero limitato di skip delle canzoni] ti mette sempre canzoni che vuole lui.

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[2] https://www.open.online/2020/07/11/musicxmatch-streaming-canzoni-spotify/

I: Scrivi: "c'è bisogno di maggior semplicità nella creazione delle playlist personali" Cosa intendi?

A: Esperienza di utilizzo troppo macchinosa - è una cosa noiosa - ti dice le canzoni suggerite.
Per creare una playlist è un casino assurdo. Magari potessi aprire la playlist e scrivere il nome della canzone che voglio! Devo cercare la canzone; tastino con i tre puntini; aggiungere a playlist; seleziona playlist ed è una cosa noiosissima. Al contrario, se sei dentro una playlist, Spotify ti indica la canzone suggerita da aggiungere – è un nudging? Creare playlist di mio gusto personale è macchinoso.

I: Potrebbe essere una strategia di Spotify per fare in modo che vengano usate prevalentemente playlist algoritmiche o editoriali?

A: Sicuramente sì.

I: "Inserire la possibilità di visionare cosa ascoltano gli amici anche da mobile, è una funzione molto interessante che spesso mi fa scoprire nuovi artisti interessanti, ma disponibile solo da desktop." Cosa intendi?

A: Mi piace un sacco vedere che cosa ascoltano gli amici e spesso vedo o sto ascoltando magari questa canzone che non conosco di questo gruppo io poi la vado ad ascoltare.

I: Ti senti anche meno coinvolto con la tua comunità quando sei per esempio su Spotify da telefono?

A: Sì. C'è da dire che anche un tipo di utilizzo diverso perché quando uso Spotify dal telefono e mi sto spostando, ho il telefono in tasca quindi questa funzione andrebbe persa; per esempio invece, quando sono sul pullman potrei vedere a cosa ascoltano tizio e caio e quindi scoprire nuovi brani.

I: Se potessi proporre qualcosa a Spotify per migliorare il rapporto e l'interazione con le persone che segui (sia che siano gli artisti che siano proprio gli utenti, cioè i tuoi amici o comunque quelli che sono collegati con te su Spotify) cosa ti piacerebbe che ci fosse?

A: Dare la possibilità agli utenti di suggerire una canzone e che finisca in una determinata schermata, che se voglio io vado a vedere. In caso contrario, non dovrebbe influenzare il mio utilizzo di Spotify. Vorrei poter vedere: "amico 1 ha suggerito questa canzone oggi" "amico 2 ha suggerito quest'altra canzone oggi" "ascolta questa playlist" "le scelte dei tuoi amici".
Una bacheca dove condividere informazioni e opinioni.

I: "Sarebbe interessante sapere quanto i miei ascolti possono incidere sulle performance di un artista (sia a livello di classifica che monetario)" Che cosa intendi?

A: Questa settimana hai ascoltato - engagement-based statistiche, gamification.
Una volta su Spotify potevi vedere la posizione dell'ascolto in generale di un singolo artista. Potrebbero riportare indietro queste statistiche per fare un po' di gamification, anche sugli ascolti del singolo.
Anche sapere quanti soldi del mio abbonamento vanno agli artisti → anche se in realtà è zero. Da un lato sarebbe interessante sapere tutte queste informazioni per chiarezza sostenibile, ma magari poi stufa dopo un po'.

I: Che cosa ne pensi dei concerti in live streaming? Andresti oppure no?

A: Onestamente sono un grande fan dei concerti live per l'atmosfera del live. Non utilizzerei il concerto in live streaming se non in una situazione in cui non puoi fare altrimenti. In un futuro, se potessi scegliere, pagherei solamente ci fosse la necessità fisica dovuta da regolamenti.

I: Se ci fosse un concerto once-in-a-lifetime dall'altra parte del mondo, pagheresti un biglietto di 2€ considerato che sei impossibilitato a raggiungere l'altra parte del mondo?

A: è un evento particolare, unico, non è un tour: allora a questo punto, sì.

I: Hai mai usato altre piattaforme? Perché usi spotify?

A: Sì, ho provate moltissime piattaforme. Spotify è sempre stata quella che ho usata per prima, quindi mi sono _affezionato_ e ho sempre continuato ad usare la stessa. Non ho trovato le altre piattaforme migliori o peggiori. Mi ricordo però che le playlist editoriali di Amazon Music erano peggio di quelle di Spotify!

C. 2. Subject B – Insider and talent booker – extreme user

I: Chi sei e che cosa fai?

B: Ho studiato storia dell'arte a Londra alla Goldsmiths University, ora vivo a Milano e mi occupo di arte e di musica. Attualmente collaboro con l'artista Rebecca Salvadori e l'assisto nella stesura dei bandi, dei progetti, in comunicazione, dato che lavora nella movie industry anche nel cercare opportunità per la distribuzione. Inoltre, lavoro come freelance per un'agenzia che si occupa di _booking_. Aiuto gli artisti a ottenere concerti e a contrattare le performance. Più molte altre cose!

I: Hai creato anche una società di musica quando eri alla Goldsmiths, giusto? Quali erano gli obiettivi? Parte del tuo background e della tua formazione parte da lì giusto?

B: La Goldsmiths Music Appreciation Society: un progetto di un annetto con l'obiettivo di aiutare studenti e musicisti dell'università a trovare uno spazio dove poter far suonare, _fare networking con gli altri studenti_, proiezioni di film ed eventi (come la quiz night) a tema musica. Avevamo _una community su Facebook dove ci tenevamo in contatto_ per quanto riguardava concerti, eventi, mandavamo le newsletter con le informazioni ecc.

I: Scrivi nel questionario "più artisti (anche quelli meno conosciuti) e più dischi soprattutto quelli di vecchia data". Pensi che non siano presenti sufficientemente ora? Secondo te per quale motivo? Viene perso qualcosa nella fruizione di questi artisti?

B: Rispetto ai dischi di vecchia data, ciò è abbastanza scontato: Spotify include quelli più recenti e che interessano di più.

Le release di vecchia data esistono e si possono reperire nel web.

Il fatto che non ci siano su Spotify non va a danneggiare l'artista ma mi rendo conto che quando apro la pagina di un artista e voglio scoprire cosa ha fatto negli ultimi 10 anni, molto spesso rimango bloccata perché è quasi impossibile scoprire cosa ha fatto prima degli ultimi 10 anni.

Rispetto ad artisti che sono in giro da almeno 20 anni, l'ascoltatore ha una panoramica limitata e parziale secondo me tramite le piattaforme streaming.

Su YouTube o su iTunes la cosa non succede: la catalogazione è più totale o per lo meno più ampia.

Invece per quanto riguarda gli artisti presenti sulle piattaforme, si possono trovare maggiormente gli artisti mainstream rispetto che quelli indipendenti, soprattutto nel mio ambito della musica sperimentale ed elettronica: non c'è una completezza del panorama musicale e spesso devo saltare da una piattaforma all'altra per poter fare le mie ricerche, anche se di lavori di anni recenti.

Non è proprio colpa di Spotify, in sé: alcuni artisti decidono di non creare la pagina di Spotify in quanto lo vedono come un limite o un danno alla propria reputazione o immagine.

Ho sentito dire da alcuni artisti con cui lavoro che non vogliono creare la pagina Spotify perché "non voglio che la mia musica venga fruita in questo modo, preferisco Bandcamp o YouTube, dove non ci sono dinamiche economiche".

Lo vedono tanto anche come un danno alla comunicazione. L'associazione con Spotify è consegnarsi al mercato mainstream e commerciale.

Oltretutto, Spotify secondo me e loro promuove una tipologia di **ascolto passivo**: non vorrebbero mai che la loro musica sia legata a questa tipologia di ascolto.

I: Ascolto passivo in che senso?

B: Legato a come una persona scopre l'esistenza di un artista. Spesso su Spotify appaiono consigli e suggerimenti, ti fai influenzare e non c'è un lavoro di ricerca attiva da parte dell'ascoltatore.

Lo scopri per un algoritmo, una coincidenza, un processo che non coinvolge pienamente l'ascoltatore.

Comunque, negli anni ho scoperto tanti artisti interessanti tramite algoritmi, ma è uno dei lati che vengono contestati a Spotify dai musicisti nel mio ambiente.

Ti parlo sempre del mercato sperimentale, elettronica, underground.

La piattaforma spesso viene associata ad uno pseudo-danno di immagine e di comunicazione. È come se la loro musica diventasse più autentica su altre piattaforme rispetto alle piattaforme mainstream.

Non vogliono avere legami con le dinamiche di una concezione diversa dell'ascolto musicale. L'aspetto concettuale di questa scelta è uno statement che alcuni artisti fanno.

I: Pensi che le piattaforme aumentino o diminuiscano la possibilità di conoscere nuova musica? Questa scoperta, quindi, viene effettuata in una maniera più o meno sana?

B: Se non tu avessi precisato "in maniera sana", ti avrei detto di sì. L'algoritmo e i suggerimenti non sono una maniera propriamente sana in cui si può condurre una ricerca critica musicale. Io per prima, in realtà, ho conosciuto artisti che tutt'ora stimo tantissimo e senza l'algoritmo magari non li avrei scoperti. Siamo noi [il suo ambito, ndr] che ci dobbiamo ancora adattare a questa maniera di fruire musica.

La piattaforma è più legata anche a generazioni [come la generazione Z] nate con questo processo di scoperta della musica e quindi magari non sanno nemmeno come funziona il processo di ascolto e scoperta della musica ascoltando un disco comprato o cercato in un negozio.

I: Lo shock nel mondo dei live e dell'organizzazione eventi con la crisi COVID - cosa succede alla categoria di lavoratori come la tua? Agli artisti che segui cosa è successo? che possibili soluzioni hanno pensato di implementare?

B: Non abbiamo avuto nessun tipo di supporto monetario da parte del governo italiano fino a qualche settimana fa. Abbiamo finalmente ricevuto, dopo 6 mesi, la cassa integrazione COVID per i lavoratori dell'ambito della musica e spettacolo - anche se questo supporto non è nulla di che.

Paesi come Germania e UK hanno dato molti più fondi: es, in Germania, hanno dato 5000€ a ogni personalità all'interno di tutta la supply chain della musica. Questo è un indice di come ciascun paese vede e supporta un'industria culturale. → they feel left behind.

L'industria musicale italiana non riceverebbe mai dei fondi di questo tipo nemmeno in tempi normali! Siamo veramente un settore poco supportato e

poco considerato in Italia. Sempre sono mancati i finanziamenti e i patrocini, considerando ogni tipo di tutele. <u>Nel momento di crisi, per le istituzioni non valiamo nulla purtroppo.</u>

I: Gli eventi live sono anche la maggior fonte di guadagno per gli artisti, tra l'altro.

B: Esatto. Con il crollo delle vendite, per forza....

I: Cosa ne pensi del possibile risvolto di eventi in streaming nati in un momento di crisi che possono entrare nella quotidianità? Che cosa ne pensa la realtà dove lavori? Anche dal punto di vista sperimentale può essere interessante. In realtà, alla fine, ci sono pareri contrastanti per quanto riguarda l'adattamento di un live allo streaming. che ne pensi?

B: Preso da un certo punto di vista, per la mia industria musicale è interessante per la <u>veicolazione di un certo tipo di musica ai più → aumentare la fanbase e far conoscere di più</u>. Basta pensare al lavoro di <u>Boilerroom</u> che ha fatto con gli artisti underground: sicuramente la metà di quegli artisti promossi non avrebbero mai raggiunto i livelli di conoscenza che hanno raggiunto tramite i <u>10 anni di livestreaming</u> organizzati da Boilerroom.
Loro sono diventati famosi e hanno raggiunto un certo tipo di fama e di livello tramite concerti in streaming, che succedevano ben prima del COVID.
È chiaro che nel momento in cui si possono fare i concerti live, chiunque, dai promoter che agli artisti che ai producer che agli ascoltatori, <u>tutti preferiscono quelli.</u> → everybody loves the lives anyway.
Nel momento in cui devono essere obbligatori per motivi o cause di forza maggiore, potrebbero essere una valida alternativa solo se viene attuato <u>un processo di valorizzazione</u> <u>delle piattaforme streaming e del modo di fruizione</u>: se venisse introdotto un costo, un po' ti fa ricredere sul valore di una performance. Se non richiedi un biglietto, l'ascoltatore non si rende conto che sta consumando prodotto di valore con anni e anni di ricerca dietro! → <u>Shift in value perception of the streaming product.</u>
Nel momento in cui arriva la richiesta di 5€, si mette in evidenza questo processo. Oltretutto, questi fondi dovrebbero essere utilizzati per <u>migliorare le infrastrutture per la fruizione dello streaming</u>. Le dirette vanno male, non sono

chiare, si interrompono: è un <u>servizio nuovo che dovrebbe essere migliorato ed implementato</u>.

<u>Manca anche un processo di "nobilitazione" e "valorizzazione"</u> a parte: al di là del mero concerto, quel che servirebbe è un <u>presentatore, un Carlo Pastore della situazione</u> [per anni presentatore su Rai Radio 2 del programma Babylon ed organizzatore e curatore del festival "Club2Club" nel nord-Italia], che <u>contestualizza quello che stai vedendo.</u> Sicuramente potrebbe essere ancora più interessante per renderti meno spettatore visivo e ti dia <u>un contenuto aggiuntivo che non avresti avuto se fossi stato dal vivo!</u> Potrebbe essere un valore aggiunto degli eventi in streaming che non è presente nei live, per esempio. Ecco perché finora gli streaming sono un po' disdegnati e questi sono alcuni step per continuare in questa direzione.

I: L'ultima canzone/artista che hai scoperto tramite le piattaforme?

B: SD LAIKA - elettronica techno

I: La viralità e l'oblio degli artisti. Cosa ne pensi dell'influenza dei playlist gatekeepers nelle piattaforme? Limitano la visibilità?

B: Per l'ascoltatore, assolutamente sì. Sempre per il discorso dell'ascolto passivo, è **la morte della ricerca musicale**.
Per quanto riguarda l'artista, dipende: i <u>72hour post fight</u>, la band con i quali lavoro, sono stati inseriti nella maggior playlist di riferimento a livello mondiale per il Jazz, che è "State of Jazz".
Li ha portati ad avere un sacco di ascolti ed esposizione a livello internazionale, per esempio sono stati contattati da una label americana, li ha portati a ricevere richieste di concerti o collaborazione in US, una serie di belle cose.
Per quanto riguarda l'artista può costituire qualcosa di positivo, soprattutto su Spotify, per quanto riguarda l'esposizione. Per l'ascoltatore, rimango dell'idea che non ci vedo molto di positivo perché si richiama all'idea di ascolto passivo.
Anche quando ascolto la radio sono sottoposta ad un ascolto passivo che a volte porta alla scoperta di buoni artisti, non vorrei condannarla al 100% però non va d'accordo con la mia concezione di ascolto.
Per quanto riguarda la strategia dei 72-hour, pensavamo proprio di portarli in America nel 2021: dalla Provincia di Varese al Madison Square Garden 😂

C. 3. Subject C –Insider, promoter and playlist marketer on Spotify

I: Qual è il tuo background e come sei finito a fare questo lavoro?

C: Definirlo "lavoro" è strano. Non sono una figura "tradizionale". Ho scelto questo lavoro per arrotondare, tramite conoscenti nell'ambito della musica. Ho visto una grossa possibilità con un datore di lavoro che mi ha fornito informazioni utili per poter lavorare autonomamente - lavoro ancora con lui, infatti. Ho iniziato a lavorare durante il lockdown.
Faccio promoting sulle playlist Spotify, insieme a quelle su Soundcloud. Su soundcloud funzionano meglio le promozioni, hanno un costo inferiore soprattutto per le etichette.

I: Sei sempre stato nell'ambito dei concerti e festival, vero?

C: essendo già in contatto con quel mondo, era una figura che potevo ricoprire in quell'industria.

I: Nel questionario scrivi: "da utilizzatore, mi mancano gli album e i dischi di vecchia data". Spiega meglio.

C: La maggior parte dei casi, è una questione di etichette e di scelte editoriali e contrattuali. Tanti indipendenti non sanno come monetizzare, e quindi non sanno perché dovrebbero inserire album di più di 10 anni fa sulle piattaforme. Da contratto, ora che ci penso, ci sono molti casi in cui ti avvisano le etichette di rimuovere i vecchi brani per una questione di frammentazione degli stream cioé che le entrate non sono bilanciate allo stesso modo. Le etichette spingono per avere gli stream sui brani prodotti mentre sono sotto contratto con loro stessi. Moltissimi casi, come In The Panchine (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d865SRSuRoQ) del TruceKlan non può essere pubblicato perché un mixtape non ha una razionalizzazione dei diritti. Non eri nella posizione per registrare determinate canzoni. Ecco perché questi vincoli ci sono su Spotify, per esempio, e non su Youtube.
Una persona l'anno scorso aveva fatto i remaster delle canzone del mixtape In The Panchine --> aveva fatto moltissimi ascolti con un remaster. Fossi negli artisti cercherei di trovare una soluzione.

I: Come le piattaforme aumentano o diminuiscono le possibilità di conoscere nuova musica? È una maniera sana o non sana?

C: Io tendo a basarmi su consigli di amici e colleghi. Sicuramente gli algoritmi sono importanti per la proposta che ti viene fatta, e mi trovo bene pure con quelli. Chiaramente, dopo un po' di tempo di stream, iniziano ad essere proposte le stesse cose. Mi piace molto che sulle piattaforme si può trovare qualsiasi cosa, che è molto importante per la scoperta di cose nuove. Per esempio, ogni volta che apro una radio [di Spotify], troverò sicuramente qualcosa di nuovo. Non per forza, in realtà, una radio è solamente algoritmica: infatti si possono trovare anche altre canzoni, come i featuring, i correlati dell'etichetta, non è tutto algoritmo insomma.

I: Parliamo dei livestreaming. Cosa ne pensi? Dove può portarci questa nuova modalità di fruizione? Ci sono dei limiti o opportunità da cogliere?

C: MI sono trovato sicuramente meglio del previsto, più a mio agio di quello che potessi pensar. Non sono sicuro di essere pronto a spendere dei soldi per lo streaming. Sicuramente se ci fossero le due possibilità, andrei ad uno spettacolo live anche se costasse molto di più. é la mia passione. Per quanto riguarda le opportunità, sicuramente in questo caso ci sono nuove piattaforme di realtà virtuale che si stanno sviluppando, quindi interessantissimo quello che si potrebbe creare. Non trovo lo streaming limitante, in realtà, anzi trovo stimolante anche rimanere a casa ed esplorare in maniera diversa gli streaming. Per LiveNation sicuramente è limitante!! [LiveNation è più grande organizzatore di concerti al mondo].

I: Hai qualche informazione in più su queste start-up di realtà aumentata?

C: Sono miei amici laureati in comunicazione musicale, si sono messi insieme e hanno iniziato a lavorare ad un prodotto 3D. Sono solamente degli spunti, vorrebbero mettere telecamere diverse agli eventi live, con diverse tipologie di biglietti in base alla visuale.

I: Cosa intendi per Livemixes?

C: Come la radio. C'è un mix, a una certa ora, curato da un presentatore, live su Spotify. Dovrebbero essercene di più. Potrebbe aumentare di tanto la mole di gente che frequenta la piattaforma.

I: which data you rely on while compiling new playlists, which data you look for, which data are relevant for your editorial choice?

C: Mi sento abbastanza indipendente. Di solito è tutto legato al mio gusto, non c'è una scelta riguardante i numeri, puoi immaginarli e molte volte devi inserire dei brani abbastanza già famosi di modo che la playlist diventi un po' virale, quindi così attirano ascoltatori alla playlist. Di seguito, si aggiungono brani che sono concordi al mood della playlist. Se invece dovessi inserire canzoni per esempio nella playlist "Top 40 Italia", per esempio, devo scegliere le canzoni con più ascolti. Infine, ci sono canzoni che sono lì perché devono essere lì. Se c'è un'emergente, in una playlist come quella appena citata, non è perché dovrebbe starci! Essenzialmente pagano e rientrano in playlist interessanti. Ovviamente non in "Top 40 Italia" perché salterebbe troppo all'occhio, ma in altre playlist, sì.

I: Do you believe your choices have an impact on choices of music consumption made by the listener?

C: Penso di sì. è impossibile avere una scelta imparziale nelle playlist: è impossibile che un utilizzatore possa scegliere sempre per sè stesso. Alla fine, uno dei motivi per cui gli utilizzatori pagano le piattaforme come Spotify è quello di farsi proporre le nuove scoperte senza sforzarsi. Tu paghi il servizio per non doverti sforzare di far niente.
Siamo arrivati al punto in cui in alcuni settori siamo sviluppati così tanto per finire a "scremare" le nostre azioni, togliendo il superfluo e rendendoci pigri. Si tende a togliere i passaggi intermedi usando le piattaforme, come in questo esempio.

I: What kind of pression music industry, promoters, marketers and music labels exercise on you? Do they suggest, email, write, call you to promote their products? Do they invite you at music events or presentations?

C:	Se lavorassi direttamente per Spotify, la risposta sarebbe sì. Sono invitato agli eventi ma non ho pressioni di alcun genere, al momento. Non ho nemmeno linee guida e direzioni artistiche da seguire. Fossi stato dipendente di Spotify, sicuramente conosco persone che lo sono, sia dalla piattaforma che dalle pressioni esterne.

C. 4. Subject D – Community involved user

I:	Qual è il tuo rapporto con le piattaforme streaming?

D:	La mia esperienza si concentra su Spotify. Ci sto costantemente: tra pc e smartphone, lo uso ovunque, anche quando gioco alla Playstation. Creo ed ascolto principalmente le mie playlist personali, ho una playlist per qualsiasi ogni genere di musica che ascolto.

I:	Quindi sei un utilizzatore seriale. Nel questionario scrivi: "vorrei più possibilità di interazione tra gli utenti (chat e condivisione di musica all'interno della stessa piattaforma)". Spiegati meglio ed elabora.

D:	La condivisione viene principalmente fatta uscendo da Spotify. Vorrei poterlo inviare internamente alla piattaforma, con un canale di contatto diretto con altri utenti. Condividere brani, playlist, scoperte.

I:	Tu senti limitate le possibilità di condivisione?

D:	No, però potrebbe evolversi in questa direzione la piattaforma. Lo vedrei più come una sorta di bacheca, non come una chat, per non perdere il focus dalla musica. Si andrebbe altrimenti ad omologare agli altri social media, nella mia opinione. Aggiungere un luogo in cui postare. Un consiglio "ufficiale", non un ascolto come il "now playing". Una sorta di Twitter, possibilmente anche in ordine cronologico e non algoritmico. Bisogna però limitare le possibilità di distogliere il discorso dalla musica, perché sennò si scade in qualsiasi altra piattaforma, come Instagram si è spostato da un social network di fotografia a un intero ecosistema omnicomprensivo.

I:	Ho scelto te anche in quanto membro di community musicali. Tu fai parte della community Hipster Democratici, un luogo dove oltre che a parlare

di musica si sollevano anche questioni etiche riguardanti l'algoritmo di Spotify e le playlist editoriali. Far parte di questa community ti ha mai dato un valore aggiunto?

D: Le community sono vive e vegete anche nel mondo contemporaneo. I link sul gruppo Facebook sono sempre utilissimi, soprattutto per artisti che già conosco dei quali mi incuriosiscono nuovi brani consigliati da altri utenti sui social media. Le community continuano ad esistere come mezzo di interazione e "they are thriving".

I: Fai parte di altre community musicali?

D: Faccio parte di una community su SoundCloud, non è un canale o gruppo che seguo moltissimo come HipDem ma tempo fa mi sono iscritto a questo gruppo di artisti emergenti elettronici. Segui i discorsi, clicchi i link e ascolti. È come se venissi esposto a tante nuove possibilità, direttamente dagli artisti o dai loro fan/sostenitori.
Anche sullo stesso Instagram: quando uno posta tramite Spotify, se è un artista che ho una vaga idea di chi sia, allora lo ascolto. Un chiaro esempio di questo mi è successo con la scoperta di Massimo Pericolo, anche in seguito ai featuring che ha fatto con artisti famosi.

I: Cosa ne pensi delle playlist editoriali o semi-editoriali? Cosa ne pensi del ruolo del gatekeeper nel garantire visibilità od oblio di un brano? La tua opinione sull'etica di questo?

D: Non ho moltissime opinioni perché non conosco bene il funzionamento e il ruolo di queste personalità all'interno delle piattaforme.
Secondo me hanno anche la necessità di analizzare l'ambiente circostante all'artista: considerando l'aspetto social media, l'aspetto della sua viralità.
Ci vuole un minimo di presenza di comunicazione, per essere un po' sopra alla massa degli altri artisti all'interno della piattaforma. È difficile farlo da indipendenti, bisogna appoggiarsi ad un'etichetta secondo me.

I: Questioni etiche e legittimità del "nudging". Che ne pensi?

D: Personalmente, una buona parte delle mie playlist personali è composta da musica consigliata da Spotify. Io uso sempre Release Radar e da lì aggiungo canzoni alle mie playlist personali. Quindi non so se sia legittimo, ma è utile per scoprire canzoni nuove.

I: Cosa ne pensi dei concerti in live streaming? Opportunità e limiti di questa nuova modalità di fruizione dei contenuti?

D: C'è stato un calo di ascolti dopo il lockdown. In post quarantena, come offerta invece, ritengo che ci sia stata molto meno offerta di concerti in streaming: di quelli che mi interessavano, ne ho visti solo uno o due mentre invece durante il lockdown ne ho visti una decina. Ritengo però che sia difficile invece per un cantante, invece che per esempio un dj o un musicista elettronico, fare uno streaming, per il fatto che sia più legato alla presenza scenica e fisica.

I: Pensi che le piattaforme che aumentano la possibilità di conoscenza musicale, è una maniera sana per conoscere queste possibilità? In confronto anche alle modalità di fruizione pre-piattaforme.
D: Nel mio caso, una piattaforma come Spotify può guidarti nel conoscere nuovi artisti. Poi sta al singolo di approfondire l'artista. La piattaforma da degli spunti e può essere un incentivo a guardare più i contenuti fisici e i supporti fisici.
Per esempio, io ho scoperto gli Alt-J fondamentalmente tramite YouTube, ora ho acquistato dei loro prodotti fisici.

D: Volevo invece parlarti di TikTok, da quella piattaforma solitamente mi ricollego a Spotify. Sono apertissimo ai social: anche se TikTok è un social network che va per la maggiore per i più giovani di noi, mi è capitato almeno una decina di volte di aprire la traccia da TikTok e riportarmi a Spotify. Succede con tutti i social, ma mi ha sorpreso che TikTok abbia avuto anche questo risvolto nel farmi scoprire la musica.

I: Non vedi la musica "dissacrata" da TikTok?

D: Concettualmente sì. Io ascolto musica di tutti i tipi, soprattutto quella che non finirà mai su TikTok non essendo musica pop o trap. Diciamo che ho delle

mie basi musicali su un oggetto culturale ideato 20 anni fa, ma fruisco volentieri oggetti culturali ultra-contemporanei come il jingle di TikTok.

TikTok e la sua viralità è una preda molto succulenta per i trapper e la musica pop, per la loro possibilità di avere le coreografie che diventano virali. Non vedo molti altri generi che potrebbero essere utilizzati su queste piattaforme. Possono essere invece considerati, questi generi, come "accompagnamento" su altre piattaforme.

I: Ritieni sia un'evoluzione? È un nuovo oggetto culturale, TIkTok?

D: Ritengo di sì. C'è stata un'evoluzione in questo senso ed è dovuto al funzionamento della piattaforma TikTok. È accettabile come uno step ulteriore nel processo creativo per uno specifico genere di musica.

I: L'ultimo artista che hai scoperto su Spotify?

D: The Rifles!

C. 5. Subject E – Insider as lead singer and artist – extreme user

E: sono andato a vedere quanto ho maturato sulle piattaforme apposta per questa intervista! Anche se ovviamente, tutti i nostri pochi guadagni vengono poi subito reinvestiti nella promozione social, per esempio...

I: Prima di iniziare: What is your background and how you ended up with music?

E: Canto e suono nei Pixel, un gruppo Indie-rock di La Spezia, nato nel 2013 e quindi attivo da 6 anni, con un album e 2 EP all'attivo, pubblicati per La Clinica Dischi, un'etichetta di Spezia, con un album al lavoro per l'etichetta Phonarchia Dischi, di Torino.

Credo uscirà nel 2021 perché rimandiamo per il virus e le possibilità di fare tour e concerti.

Sono un grande appassionato di musica ed utilizzatore, ascoltatore e fruitore.

I: Scrivi nel questionario "su Spotify, testo della canzone annesso." Ci sono dei limiti nella fruizione musicale senza testi? Qual è il valore aggiunto? Il salto di qualità?

E: sì, perché (in quanto amante della musica e in primis scrittore di testi, secondo me quando ascolti una canzone il testo ti può prendere come ti può non prendere. Se mentre ascolti la canzone il testo lo vedi scritto ,ha un impatto più forte a livello visivo. Le parole ti si stampano meglio dentro. Questa funzione, su Spotify collegato con MusicMatch, potrebbe dare questo apporto aggiuntivo.

E: in quanto ascoltatore, scarico tutta la musica che ascolto (scaricandola illegalmente da Youtube e Spotify). Ma non mi ritengo un pirata: ho una collezione di 200 CD e quindi l'80% della musica che ascolto ce l'ho in copia fisica. La scarico e poi mi compro il CD perché ho un "feticcio" mio.

I: Sei l'unico intervistato che scarica e compra come principale metodo di fruizione! Hai una necessità di avere la "proprietà" dell'oggetto culturale, non semplicemente il cosiddetto "accesso" all'oggetto culturale?

E: Sono d'accordo con il fatto che preferisco avere la proprietà. Molti artisti, anche più di nicchia, non sono presenti per motivi di diversa natura, nei loro prodotti musicali più datati sulle piattaforme. Ti basta pensare all'album "LOVELESS - my Bloody Valentine" uno dei gruppi più famosi della wave "showgaze" che tuttora non sono presenti su Spotify per una scelta loro. È un esempio abbastanza importante e dei quali è necessario, per esempio, avere la copia fisica per fruirlo in maniera completa. È un disco del 1991, quindi potrebbero esserci anche altre dinamiche che vanno a decidere se un disco è incluso o meno.

I: Le etichette, ultimamente, sembra che siano capaci a far attirare l'attenzione delle playlist editoriali su specifici loro artisti. Hai qualche insight da darmi?

E: Parliamo come esempio un gruppo che conosciamo entrambi . Sono finiti su Indie Italia, tramite non so quali collegamenti e/o casualità, però è anche difficile mantenere l'interesse degli ascoltatori. Per esempio, la canzone

di *quel gruppo* che è finita su Indie Italia ha 300mila ascolti, mentre invece le altre canzoni ne hanno 1000. Sicuramente è importante finirci, perché arrivi a molte più orecchie, però ciò non significa che automaticamente ottieni un pubblico fedele. La dimostrazione è data dalla differenza dei numeri. Il pubblico creato non è rimasto. Anzi che avere queste disparità, preferisco avere ascolti omogenei sulle diverse canzoni, per quanto riguarda noi.

Per campare con la musica, intanto, l'unica cosa da fare è fare tanti concerti e live.

Se un domani le cose dovessero cambiare, ok: noi siamo degli appassionati che portano avanti con professionalità la propria passione, ovvero quella della musica.

I: Parlando appunto dei live, volevo chiederti la tua opinione riguardo questo: Lo shock nel mondo dei live e dell'organizzazione eventi - cosa succede alla categoria di artisti come la tua? Hai fatto live streaming?

E: Ho fatto un live streaming in collaborazione con un locale di Torino, CAP 10100, mi sono proposto tramite la nostra etichetta ed ho fatto un live di mezz'ora dalla nostra sala prove. Ovviamente non pagato, ma anche per "passare il tempo".

I: Il live streaming infatti esiste da anni, però ora come artisti diversi da (per esempio la musica sperimentale ed elettronica) si sono approcciati a questo strumento? Vedi possibili evoluzioni per il tuo ambito?

E: A me è piaciuto fare il live streaming, divertente, però sono vecchia scuola. Ascolto musica nuova, ma ascolto soprattutto musica suonata. Questa cosa dei live in streaming, spero che duri solamente durante questo periodo in crisi perché la prima cosa che va a diminuire è la qualità della musica. Ci sarà un motivo se c'è sempre stata la musica live: quando vai ad un concerto, ci sono certe vibrazioni fisiche che una diretta, anche se fruita tramite le tecnologie migliori o della band migliore del mondo, non potrà mai raggiungere.

La mia opinione soggettiva è che sicuramente si potrà usare per esplorare in futuro per nuove opportunità, anche considerando per esempio ciò che hanno fatto i Coldplay per il lancio del loro ultimo album: ma sono dell'idea che il

peggior concerto live dei Coldplay sia meglio del loro miglior concerto in streaming.

La musica live è un'altra cosa.

Mi è piaciuto molto il concerto di Alberto Ferrari dei Verdena, il mio gruppo preferito italiano.

I: quindi non spenderesti mai soldi per un concerto di altri in streaming?

E: Se si parla di una cifra bassa per un evento veramente importante, magari li spenderei anche. Ma secondo me non ne vale la pena, anche perché verrebbe diffuso in maniera pirata in breve tempo. Bisogna sottolineare che la pirateria è fondamentale per la nostra industria: gli Oasis non hanno mai avuto questi problemi. Dobbiamo affrontare un mondo completamente diverso e il punto di non ritorno si è superato con la pirateria.

Io sono un amante dei live su Youtube dei miei artisti preferiti, però: da artista, cerco anche di lasciarmi ispirare e ciò, sicuramente, si può fare anche dal digitale. L'idea che uno però si metta a fare un concerto dalla cameretta, è una possibile soluzione temporanea al problema degli assembramenti: ma io spero che finisca presto e che si torni a stare tra la gente.

Sono anche dell'idea che un'artista sa qual è la modalità di fruizione che più gli permette di trasmettere il suo lavoro e le sue emozioni: per quanto mi riguarda, personalmente, io non arriverò mai a trasmettere le stesse emozioni in streaming di come faccio durante i live.

I: Tornando sulle piattaforme, scrivi nel questionario: "Su YouTube, link diretto all'acquisto dei cd/vinili dell'artista." Per quale motivo?

E: Perché su Spotify ci sono già. Tramite Merchbar, puoi accedere a questo servizio e mettere i tuoi merch in vendita su Spotify, solamente però se hai numero di ascolti un po' importante. È una necessità mia quella di acquistare il CD: se mi piace la musica di un artista, l'unica maniera che io soggettivamente concepisco è quella di acquistare il "pacchetto completo" del CD, con le ricerche artistiche della copertina, il libretto testi. È dovuto dalla passione che ho ovviamente, il link è una call to action diretta per convertire in vendita.

La cosa fondamentale da musicista è che avere la musica a portata, il catalogo mondiale in tasca, è una cosa buona: posso ascoltare quello che voglio quando voglio.

Non mi sento di generalizzare, ma non si riesce veramente ad entrare dentro ad un'opera. Un CD è come un film, per me. Quando un musicista pubblica un album, lo intende per farlo ascoltare dall'inizio alla fine, incluso tutta la parte fisica del libretto testi. L'album non viene fruito come gli artisti vorrebbero che fosse fruito, in streaming.

I: Mi hai anticipato la domanda: volevo chiederti se Le piattaforme aumentano il panorama musicale a disposizione della scoperta di nuova musica. Lo fanno in una maniera sana?

E: Dipende dall'ascoltatore, è molto soggettiva la cosa. Io uso Spotify in un certo modo, ma altri non lo fanno sicuramente. La musica è anche diventata più un sottofondo per esempio nel viaggio da un luogo ad un altro, più che un attività da fare concentrandosi sull' ascoltare. Lo stesso si può dire quando si mette musica ad una festa, per esempio.

I: Concentrandosi sull'algoritmo? Va ad influenzare le modalità di fruizione? È una scoperta sana di musica?

E: Io sono a favore di questo. Ognuno è libero di usare la piattaforma come vuole. Se uno vuole farsi guidare dall'algoritmo, è libero di farlo. uno può scegliere di ascoltare una propria ricerca diversa.

I: Immaginati un ragazzo che ha solamente conosciuto la modalità di fruizione musicale tramite lo streaming. Che cosa si perde, nella tua visione soggettiva?

E: Generalizzando ti dico di no, ma ci sarà sempre qualcuno che vuole approfondire il rapporto profondo utilizzatore-artista comprando i CD e andando ai concerti. Ci sarà sempre un ascolto prevalentemente passivo, perché così è intesa la piattaforma, però ci saranno gli estremi.

I: Il potere degli editori delle playlist sulle piattaforme? Hai mai avuto rapporti con alcuni di questi?

E: Nel mio piccolo, ho avuto a che fare con editori indipendenti, non dipendenti Spotify, per intenderci, che hanno le loro playlist private e il loro seguito. La tendenza che ho osservato è che in Italia vengono richiesti pagamenti (circa l'85% di persone con cui sono entrato in contatto) per apparire nelle playlist, mentre invece in un mercato come il Messico (dove la mia band è più seguita, incredibilmente) è più probabile che mi venga offerto da loro e che venga contattato da loro per poter essere inserito all'interno delle loro playlist. Fanno una ricerca più "editoriale" nel vero senso della parola: se gli piace la tua musica, ti danno una possibilità.

In italia poi mi viene proposto di essere inserito solamente per un breve periodo di tempo, per esempio per un mese, chiedendo dei costi non giustificati dall'esposizione. Ho visto gente di Spezia pagare per essere aggiunti in certe playlist, raggiungere buoni ascolti, e il mese successivo ritornare subito agli ascolti precedenti dell'investimento monetario rispetto ad un pubblico italiano.

Invece, in Messico la nostra musica viene apprezzata, ricercata e richiesta di più in base a ciò che il mercato musicale sta cercando: sono certamente più proni al genere post-punk e indie-rock. Paradossalmente, se facessimo un tour in messico, avremmo più pubblico interessato che in Italia. Allo stesso tempo, questi ascoltatori messicani non capiscono una parola dei miei testi, però sono interessati a scoprire nuove cose in questo ambito.

Nel mio piccolo, sono riuscito a stabilire un rapporto di amicizia virtuale con questi piccoli editori di playlist condividendoci anche su community. Sono quindi stato aggiunto ed esposto a molti più ascoltatori, gratuitamente, in base al merito della mia musica, in Messico che quello che ho fatto a pagamento in Italia.

I: Il mercato di interesse potrebbe tante volte non coincidere con il luogo di provenienza di un artista.

E: Certo, un esempio sono i Soviet Soviet, che sono dello stesso genere nostro, e che hanno fatto un tour molto seguito in Messico. Curioso!

I: Hai citato le community musicali. Pensi che esistano ancora? Sono a thing of the past oppure un aspetto contemporaneo della scoperta musicale?

E: Secondo me sì, sono contemporanee ma cambia la modalità con cui la musica passa di parola. Manca sicuramente l'autorità delle riviste musicali, nella contemporaneità. Secondo me, non generalizzando, c'è un appiattimento dell'ascoltatore. Si tende ad ascoltare sempre la stessa cosa, di conseguenza gli artisti si appiattiscono sempre di più, andando ad influenzare il processo creativo per cercare di arrivare alle grandi masse.

Vuoi essere inserito in Indie Italia? Se non fai un determinato tipo di musica che si conforma alla linea comune mainstream, non ci potrai mai finire in questi ambiti. Sono dell'idea che ognuno è libero di fare quello che vuole, e sarei il primo che sarei felice di finire in una playlist seguita da migliaia di persone. Però secondo me, soggettivamente preferisco arrivarci con il mio personale processo di ricerca creativa, non facendo musica mainstream. Ovviamente io non sono uno che fa musica sperimentale od altro, ovviamente faccio indie-rock anche io, però a livello di testi e di produzione dev'essere sicuramente proficuo.

Il termine di fondo è la libertà dell'individuo. Le piattaforme, secondo me, lo permettono e c'è una maniera che, se un utilizzatore si concentra, può fruire di musica nella maniera che preferisce.

E: Io prendo come punto fermo della mia ricerca musicale l'esperienza dell'artista, cosa ha portato alla sua produzione artistica in questa maniera.

I: Cosa deve fare un'artista, deve appoggiarsi su qualcuno che si relazioni con la promozione streaming per potere farcela?

E: Appoggiarsi è importante, soprattutto a qualcuno che ha le mani in pasta. Spesso anche scendere a compromessi nella produzione artistica: creare contenuti che non soddisfano al 100% l'artista ma che l'etichetta spinge perché sa che riuscirà a vendere di più. Secondo me, se uno si "accontenta" di numeri più piccoli con costanza e perseveranza può arrivare ad un discreto successo anche senza affidarsi a qualcuno con le "mani in pasta", anche se c'è il rischio di rimanere sempre in una nicchia, facendo il vero artista indipendente, per intenderci.

I: Pagamenti e royalties. Idee, opinioni, come si potrebbe migliorare?

E: Sono molto bassi. Non c'è molto da dire. In un anno abbiamo raccolto poco meno di 50€, con circa 6000 ascolti mensili. Rinvestiamo tutti questi soldi, solitamente, in sponsorizzazioni sui social media.

I: L'ultima canzone/artista che hai scoperto tramite le piattaforme?

E: FOUNTAINES DC- anche se non tramite direttamente l'algoritmo - l'ho visto da una storia di alcuni cantanti, tramite appunto i social. però poi li ho cercati su Spotify. Sinceramente, io sono dell'idea che non uso gli algoritmi per scoprire musica, perosnalmente. Non c'è un meglio e un peggio, secondo me: dipende tutto dall'importanza che uno da alla musica nella propria vita e quindi in base a quello adatto le mie modalità di fruizione, tutto qui.