



Universiteit Utrecht

**MUSIC BLOGS AS A MODEL OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH:
THE IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA ON MUSIC CONSUMPTION AND
SALES**

Giulia Bianchi (Student nr. 6890040)

MA Thesis Applied Musicology

Utrecht University

Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Emile G. J. Wennekes

Second Reader: Prof. Dr. Marc Ernesti

December 2020

INDEX

Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	5
1.1 The characteristics of WOM: volume, valence, and engagement.	8
1.1.1 Volume.....	8
1.1.2 Valence	9
1.1.3 Engagement.....	9
1.2 Effects of positive and negative eWOM on consumers' decisions	10
1.3 The reliability of WOM and its senders or agents.	12
1.3.1 The Receiver	12
1.3.2 The Sender	12
1.4 Blogs as an electronic Word Of Mouth example.....	17
2. The use and relationship between (eWOM) blogs and the record industry.....	18
2.1 The relationship between A&R, PR and eWOM (blogs).....	18
2.2 The impact of (eWOM) music blogs on record companies.....	19
3. The impact of music blogs (eWOM) on copyright laws and the influence on the record sales.....	22
3.1 The impact of (eWOM) music blogs on copyright laws.....	22
3.2 The influence of (eWOM) on music sales.....	24
3.2.1 IFPI 2019 Global music report	25
3.2.2 IFPI Music Listening Report 2019	26
3.2.3 The Year-End 2019 RIAA Music Revenues Report.....	27
3.2.4 IFPI Global Music Report: The Industry in 2019.....	29
4. Case study: Drfunkenberry and Prince Rogers Nelson.....	31
Conclusion.....	35
Bibliography	38

Abstract

Today, music blogs and websites are playing a substantial role in discovering new talents, promoting them, and determining the future appreciation or unappreciation of their work. However, with the development of the online marketplace, the music community is facing numerous challenges in preventing music from being made available illegally. Additionally, although it may true that many bloggers and consumers may be infringing the copyright by publishing unlicensed music on their platforms, online media might nonetheless be a useful strategy to help artists and record labels promote the music and hence profit from higher revenues. Therefore, music blogs, websites, and social media should be considered as a valuable model of eWOM, which occurs when consumers share advice and information with each other about a product or a service, ultimately influencing other customers' decision-making processes and the good's future endorsement or disapproval. With the thesis, it has been investigated the relevance of websites and blogs as a valuable eWOM tool which are being increasingly integrated into the music industry as a prominent promotional strategy, contributing to the future appreciation or unappreciation of artistic works, eventually resulting in generating higher record sales and thus revenues. Finally, with the concrete example of the relationship between blogger Dr. Funkenberry and artist Prince Rogers Nelson, which has been addressed as the case study, it was analyzed Prince's notorious ambivalence and protectiveness of his work. In conclusion, I argue that although music blogs and websites may present an easy strategy to share unlicensed music, on the other hand (and if used accurately and ethically), they may as well be a valid example of an eWOM communication tool that shall influence the music industry and audience and ultimately contributing to generating higher record sales and thus revenues.

Introduction

During the last few years, the raise of new media platforms, such as blogs, websites and social media, has brought to light the phenomenon of the electronic Word Of Mouth communication.¹ The eWOM occurs when consumers share advice with one another about products, services and brands. The new form of exchange may contain positive or negative information made by potential, actual and former customers. Thus, the eWOM may influence potential clients in their purchase decision making process.²

In respect to the relationship with music blogs, eWOM is having considerable effects on the promotion and consumption of music. Hence, these platforms may be considered as eWOM tools whose role is to interpret creative works, qualify, and disseminate them, and ultimately, contributing to the music's future appreciation or unappreciation.³

Music blogs and websites along with PRs and A&Rs are playing a fundamental role in the discovery of new talents, who eventually get signed to record companies. The indirect promotion helped the music industry to be more aware of the medium's impact and importance in discovering and promoting new music. Eventually, music blogs began taking part in music and artists' promotional strategies.⁴

Furthermore, although numerous bloggers and consumers may be infringing the copyright, these platforms might as well be a useful strategy to help artists and record labels profit from higher revenues. As a matter of fact, music blogs used as an electronic Word Of Mouth tool may result in the audience looking for the artist/s recommended and their music on streaming services. Thus, streaming music on music services, shall generate a stream of income and revenues for artists and the record labels.

On the other hand, with the evolution of the online marketplace, the music community is facing many challenges in preventing music from being made available illegally and ensuring that fans have access

¹ Cheung, Christy & Thadani, Dimple. "The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model." *Decision Support Systems*, 54, (December 2012), 462

² Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers." *Consumer Psychology Review*. Vol 3, 1, (October 2019), 35

³ Musgrave, George, "Collaborating to compete: the role of cultural intermediaries in hypercompetition", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Volume 6, n. 2, (October 2017), 45-46

⁴ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry: Collusion or Independence?", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Vol. 3 no. 2, (October 2014), 64

to a variety of licensed services. However, even with the access to ‘websites blocking’ and other legal measures, rights holders’ actions are not enough to prevent the use of unlicensed content.⁵

I shall begin this thesis with the analysis of Word Of Mouth with particular attention to the electronic Word Of Mouth communication tool, as a theoretical framework, delving into its characteristics and influence on the consumers’ decision-making behaviors. The theoretical framework shall be substantiated by empirical studies. Relevant to the analytical examination, I shall consequently discuss the relationship between music blogs as a valuable electronic Word Of Mouth tool and the music industry, with particular attention to their integration in the music and artists’ promotional strategies. Of particular interest and pertinency to the empirical studies and the relationship between eWOM and the music industry, may be the influence of music blogs (eWOM) on the record sales.

Lastly, as a case study, I selected the music blog <http://www.drfunkenberry.com/>, which will be relevant to the material discussed in chapters 1-3. The owner of the website Jeremiah Freed, was noticed, befriended and endorsed by artist Prince Rogers Nelson in the early 2000s. Eventually he became a direct intermediary between the musician and his fanbase. I selected this case study, given Prince’s protectiveness and unique relationship with online media and bloggers.

With this thesis I aim to shed light on the relevance of music blogs and websites as a valuable electronic Word Of Mouth communication tool, that is being more and more integrated and endorsed into the music industry as a promotional strategy, ultimately contributing to the generation of higher revenues and record sales. Hence, the research question entails: how can music blogs be a valuable example of electronic Word Of Mouth communication tools? How are music blogs (eWOM) influencing the music industry? How are music blogs (eWOM) contributing to generating higher revenues and record sales?

⁵ Ifpi, “Global Music Report 2019, Ifpi, 2019”, 36. Retrievable at <https://ifpi.org/recording-industry-in-numbers.php>
Last accessed 10/12/2020

1. Word Of Mouth theoretical framework and research

The debates surrounding music blogs and their impact on the record industry have been prominent in the press, music forums, websites, and the blogosphere since 2004. The medium has especially affected music promotion and consumption. Today, people receive information from mass media and through dealings with other people. In marketing the advice from other consumers about goods and services is called Word Of Mouth (WOM) ⁶. As academics Fu, Ju and Hsu argue, the WOM has been recognized as an important factor in customer's purchase behaviors and ultimately decisions. Furthermore, the practice extends to the online world. As a matter of fact, with the development of the Internet and the increasing possibilities to get access online anytime and in any place gives consumers the chance to have more connection to websites and to share positive or negative experiences with other clients or potential consumers.⁷ Blackshaw & Nazzaro also pointed out that the emergence of the Internet helped the eWOM to reach a broader number of people giving the strategy more power, potential, and breadth.⁸ This approach includes blogs that have appeared as a new publishing format and form of influence. Indeed, through sharing opinions, content, and experiences, online channels may guide and help other members of a community by offering meaningful inputs. Therefore, the eWOM has been identified as a growing opportunity as well as threat to improve or damage significantly the customer's perceptions of the value and trustworthiness of a service or good.⁹

In respect to the relationship with music blogs, eWOM has had and is still having considerable effects on the promotion and consumption of music. Musgrave, indeed, builds his theories on Bourdieu's principles and highlights the emergence of websites and social media as cultural intermediaries whose role is mainly to interpret creative works, qualify, and disseminate them. Ultimately, the mediators contribute to the music's future appreciation or unappreciation. Additionally, bloggers help to distribute, digitally, cultural goods and assist the customers in the decision-making processes. Hence, social media and blogs have become a crucial case of eWOM for consumers to interact and influence

⁶ East, Robert & Hammond, Kathy & Wright, Malcolm. "The relative incidence of positive and negative word of mouth: A multi-category study". *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24, (June 2007), 176

⁷ East Robert & Hammond Kathy & Wright Malcom. "The relative incidence of positive and negative word of mouth", 176

⁸ Blackshaw, Pete & Nazzaro, Mike. *Consumer-Generated Media (CGM) 101: Word-of-mouth in the age of the web-fortified consumer* (New York: Nielsen Buzzmetrics, 2006), 3.

⁹ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin: Examining the Impact of Social Media on Music Album Performance" *Academy of Management Proceedings*. (October 2014), 4

one another.¹⁰ As Paul Allen explains, the eWOM is one of the most effective marketing strategies in closing deals with buyers, because it aids the audience in spreading the voice about a product.¹¹

1.1 The characteristics of WOM: volume, valence, and engagement.

According to professors Thomas Frick Tsekouras, Li, three of the characteristics mostly assessed regarding WOM and consumers-decision are volume, valence, and dispersion. The volume describes the amount of generated content. Valence deals with the sentiment of the content, which can either be positive or negative. Lastly, the dispersion is related to the variance across all generated content regarding a specific product or topic.¹²

1.1.1 Volume

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of the quantity of eWOM on product sales. It has been shown that a higher volume of eWOM about an artist will most likely increase the awareness about them and their upcoming or recently released output. Moreover, the growth in the volume of eWOM is likely to raise the user's chances of coming across the musician, mainly because of the high frequency of new content generation. However, the use of the volume of user's generated content within microblogging platforms is different from other media, given the smaller efforts in creating posts. Nevertheless, the more the microblogging sites are updated, the more the volume of information will widen. Thus, a higher volume is linked to a higher buzz around the artist, which may affect sales positively.¹³ Social media allows as well to control the volume of eWOM generated by the artist. This characteristic offers an additional perspective on the volume because artists can command themselves the content generated.¹⁴ According to professors Andreas Kaplan & Michael Haenlein, there is usually a distinction between user's and artist's generated content. However, social media allows them both to occur on the same platforms pushing control from advertisers to consumers, ultimately putting artists and their audience in contact.¹⁵

Nevertheless, even though musicians can restrict the content that is allowed on their accounts, there is still the danger that other users might respond to their messages negatively. As a consequence,

¹⁰ Musgrave, George, "Collaborating to compete: the role of cultural intermediaries in hypercompetition", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Volume 6, n. 2, (October 2017), 45-46

¹¹ Allen, Paul & Hutchinson, Thomas, W & Macy, Amy, *Record Label Marketing*, (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2006), 231, 232.

¹² Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin", 3

¹³ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin", 6-7

¹⁴ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin", 9

¹⁵ Kaplan, Andreas & Haenlein, Michael. "The Britney Spears universe: Social media and viral marketing at its best." *Business Horizons*. Vol. 55, (January 2011), 30.

unfavorable information shall affect negatively the artist's image and therefore the record sales.¹⁶ Kaplan & Haenlein suggest keeping the utilization of social media to shape an active approach to ensure that a relationship between the artists and their followers can be built.¹⁷ For this reason, the content needs to be kept fresh and engage followers in interactions. Therefore, the volume of the artist-generated posts is a good indicator of social media activeness. Artists may as well influence positively their sales; for instance, by posting messages on their social media accounts.¹⁸ Ultimately, as Frick, Tsekouras, and Li explain, a higher artist broadcasting leads to more digital and physical sales of their music and albums.¹⁹

1.1.2 Valence

Another critical factor is the valence. According to Frick, Tsekouras, and Li, researchers should not underestimate the effect of negative reviews about an artist. This parameter determines whether the content created is perceived as positive or negative. Whereas volume consists of an informative effect related to product awareness, valence is mostly dealing with the quality of an output and its impact on the consumers' perception and attitude. Positive comments, reviews, and posts foster product endorsement, whereas negative attitudes prevent the adoption. Moreover, the extremity of the content has more possibilities of increasing the product ability to be influential, while neutral posts and comments are less memorable and seen as not accurate enough. Therefore, the valence is more influential on sales than the volume.²⁰

1.1.3 Engagement

According to professor van Doorn, the engagement is the alignment between the customer and firm goals, which consists of spreading the artists' positive image.²¹ In this case, popularity is a common objective, that will lead to the growth of record sales. A higher user engagement can support artists to attract new fans and keep the old ones. Engagement in social media may as well be considered as a measure of an individual's cognitive, personal, or emotional response and connection. This parameter is different from the volume of users-generated-content, firstly because the engagement

¹⁶ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin", 9

¹⁷ Kaplan, Andreas & Haenlein, Michael. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons*, Vol. 53, (February 2010), 66.

¹⁸ Chen, Hailiang & De, Prabuddha & Hu, Yu. "IT-Enabled Broadcasting in Social Media: An Empirical Study of Artists' Activities and Music Sales.", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, Vol. 26, (January 2013), 20.

¹⁹ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin", 9

²⁰ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin", 9

²¹ van Doorn, Jenny & Lemon, Katherine N. & Mittal, Vikas & Pick, Doreen & Pirner, Peter & Verhoef, Peter C., "Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions". *Journal of Service Research* Vol. 13 n. 3, 253-266, (August 2010). 256.

includes a broader range of user interactivity than the exclusive creation of posts. Secondly, the interaction covered by the measure is directly addressed to the artists, because the exchange occurs on their profiles.²²

1.2 Effects of positive and negative eWOM on consumers' decisions

Another relevant aspect of the eWOM is its negative and positive effects on the consumer's purchase decisions, given that favorable or unfavorable reviews may determine the success or the failure of a product or service. In this paragraph it is of particular interest to notice that there have been contrasting opinions on whether positive reviews or negative eWOM play a dominant role, ultimately affecting the consumer's potential endorsement or disfavor of a good or service. As Keaveney discussed, the eWOM plays a dominant role in the consumers' decision-making process.²³

The following theories and research, elaborated in the paragraph, are built on Sherif's, Muzafer's and Hoyland's Social Judgment Theory, which is a study of the human judgment. The researchers give a detailed description of how attitudes are cognitively represented, analyzing how they are expressed, judged, and modified. The theory is composed by five principles. The first asserts that people have categories of judgment with which they evaluate information. Secondly, as much as people appraise incoming data, they shall determine the level of judgment to which it belongs. Furthermore, an individual's ability to judge is determined by the degree of personal involvement, or ego-involvement. However, people may or may not have opinions regarding a communicated information. The fourth principle addresses how individuals distort the incoming information received, to fit better their categories of judgment. When an individual is presented with a persuasive message that is close to their beliefs and mindset, the information will hence fall within the person's acceptance and ultimately it shall be assimilated. However, the further the information is from the individual's beliefs and mindset, the less likely it shall have chances to be accepted. In both cases people distort the message for it to fit their beliefs and mindsets. The fifth principle asserts that optimal persuasion occurs when the discrepancies between the individual's beliefs and the information provided, are small and moderate.²⁴

²² Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin",8-9

²³ East, Robert & Hammond, Kathy & Lomax, Wendy. "Measuring the impact of positive and negative word of mouth on brand purchase probability." *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. 25, (September 2008), 215

²⁴ Sherif, Muzafer, and Carl Iver Hovland, "Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change", *Yale Studies in Attitude and Communication*, Vol. 4. New Haven, CT etc. Yale University Press, 1961.

Researcher Martin builds the theories on the Social Judgment Theory. The findings suggest that judgment and decision making are more susceptible to negative eWOM, whereby unfavorable information is considered more influential than positive. Furthermore, it has been shown that individuals pay more attention to negative reviews and comments than they do positive. In support of this theory, Herr showed that negative Word-Of-Mouth has a stronger impact than positive WOM, given that losses generally loom larger than gains.²⁵ According to Martin's theories, humans ought to show more attention to unfavorable information, which tends to be more heavily weighted in the evaluation of goods and services than do positive reviews. This phenomenon happens because individuals are generally more attentive to negative comments than positive information, given that the threat of a potential loss is typically perceived as more influential than the hope of a possible gain.

In contrast to these theories, however, other research has demonstrated that positive information is considered to be more influential than negative eWOM. It is argued that positive eWOM has greater accessibility and influence than unfavorable eWOM. In theory, favorable reviews appear to have a greater impact on consumers' product evaluations, than do negative comments. According to researchers Hammon, Lomax, Naylor & Kleiser, there is a substantial evidence that positive eWOM occurs more frequently in the marketplace than does negative eWOM. Consequently, given the influence of positive reviews, consumers tend to often be persuaded to have a positive attitude toward a certain product or service. The greater potential impact of the negative eWOM compared to positive eWOM might be more offset by consumers' preexisting favorable attitude toward a product or service. Hence, if a customer already believes an article to be of quality, negative eWOM might be less successful in changing their favorable views.²⁶

The theories elaborated on the effects of positive and negative eWOM may be conflicting. Hence a method to reconcile the findings, would be to identify the variables that determine whether negativity or positivity effects are likely to be dominant. According to Skowronski and Carlston, although negative behaviors and eWOM may be seen as more diagnostic than positive behaviors, when it comes to the interference of morality positive behaviors are considered more diagnostic than negative do. This happens because positive behaviors are representative of the most substantial portion of moral actions, and any negative behavior would likely to be considered to affect more moral actions. On the other hand, because negative behaviors are more common in tasks that require skills, a positive behavior would likely be considered more diagnostic. Additionally, in this theory, it is argued that

²⁵ Martin, W. "Positive Versus Negative Word-of-mouth: Effects on Receivers." *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal* 21, 1 2017, 1-2

²⁶ East, Robert & Hammond, Kathy & Lomax, Wendy, "Measuring the impact of positive and negative word of mouth on brand purchase probability". *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. 25, (September 2008), 215-216

another variant that determines the perceived diagnosticity of positive versus negative WOM may be the valence of the WOM itself being offered by the agent or sender.²⁷

1.3 The reliability of WOM and its senders or agents.

As stated in the precedent paragraph, one of the variants that determines the positivity or negativity of the WOM and the product's or service's endorsement or rejection, is the agent or sender of the information. Researchers Moore and Lafreniere, elaborated a theory concerning the effects of WOM, its senders and the receivers. The studies suggest that multiple players (receivers, senders, platforms, sellers, and other consumers) may be involved in the WOM process, including a sender or agent and the receiver or customer. For this paragraph I chose to focus on the relation between the sender and the consumer and the ultimate reliability of the information sent out.

1.3.1 The Receiver

The researchers firstly address the role of the consumer seeking out WOM: the receiver. In accordance with the Social Judgment Theory, the researchers explain that receiver's opinions can alter the impact of Word Of Mouth. Consumers or receivers may as well use various components of WOM to make inferences about a service or a good and the rest of the players involved. The inferences shall shape the impact of the WOM and in accordance with the Social Judgment Theory, the assumptions may depend on the consumer's or receiver's state and trait characteristics, including personality, expectations, experiences, and network size.²⁸

1.3.2 The Sender

According to the theory, the second most relevant player is the sender or the consumer who creates and shares the WOM message. As the researchers argue, there may be several sender-related variables that affect how WOM impacts receivers. Multiple components of the information itself are influential, such as the length, the content, the consistency as much as the personal characteristics of the sender and their similarity to and relationship with the receivers are.

²⁷ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers." *Consumer Psychology Review*. Vol 3, 1, (October 2019), 35

²⁸ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 38

- Length

Length is usually operationalized by word or character count. Longer reviews may increase perceived helpfulness and sales. These positive effects arise because longer reviews provide more information, enabling receivers to infer a product's outcome, make attributions about causes and ultimately predict the likelihood or satisfaction. On the other hand, it has been shown that longer reviews may be considered inconsistent occasionally, given that they might provide the receiver with useless and repetitive information. Thus, the researchers conclude that reviews or WOM of a moderate length may be the most helpful and reliable.²⁹

- Consistency

Consistency plays a crucial role in determining whether WOM and its sender should be considered reliable or not. When assessing WOM information, receivers or customers may be particularly sensitive to whether a message is consistent or inconsistent basing their judgment on the star rating content. Indeed, messages or reviews with star ratings that deviate less from the average are perceived as more helpful because consistency related to valence of WOM across reviews suggests consensus among senders.³⁰ Consistency, in fact, increases receivers' confidence and implies that the product outcome is stable. Similarly, consistency in linguistic content across reviews, may increase receivers' confidence in their own evaluations. This happens because repeating an information increases the perception of its truthfulness and trustworthiness. As a result, WOM messages that are consistent and in accordance with prior messages, send positive product signals.

In contrast, reviews with star ratings that deviate more from the average star evaluation, send negative signals, which means that receivers might infer that the inconsistency in the product outcome is due to the sender's traits. Thus, the information shall be dismissed. However, according to the researchers the consistency factor might be detrimental. Firstly, consistent messages may attract less attention and hence receive fewer ratings. On the other hand, inconsistency might have a positive impact on reviews helpfulness and purchase intentions when receivers interpret them as a positive signal of the senders' thoughtfulness, accuracy, and expertise.³¹

Furthermore, I believe that consistency might be a subjective factor when it comes to reviewing a product or a service. Indeed, although a WOM message may be believed as consistent by the majority of receivers and senders, some other individuals may not find the information consistent, given that the opinions regarding a product or a service may as well be subjective. In other words, whereas some

²⁹ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 38

³⁰ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 39

³¹ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 39

individuals may find a product and the reviews useful and of quality, some other receivers may not agree, and therefore, the consistency of the WOM message shall be subjective. Additionally, in accordance with the Social Judgment Theory, the consistency of the WOM information may as well depend on the receivers' traits, beliefs, and mindset. Therefore, as argued, the perception of the information given may be subjective.

- **Word use and Linguistic style**

The word use and the linguistic style with which a WOM message is delivered may be as well an indicator of its reliability and truthfulness. As a matter of fact, senders' use of specific words including recommendation words, product words, emotion words, informal words, humor and textual paralanguage (for instance emojis), may impact the receivers' opinion about a product, and ultimately the reliability or unreliability of the content and its sender. Additionally, it has been found explicit recommendations lead receivers to infer that the senders like the product and have a greater expertise, which increases the object's or service's evaluations and hence, the purchase intentions. Interestingly, senders who use a boastful language such as "coming from someone who knows/ coming from someone who has tried this product... etc." are perceived to have more expertise and therefore, shall be believed to be more reliable. This shall as well increase the impact, the reliability, and the trustworthiness of their reviews.³²

Furthermore, providing descriptive information about a product or a service, in the form of an adjective (good, enjoyable, tasty, fast, etc.), generally increments the impact of the WOM in terms of review helpfulness, trustworthiness and reliability. Articles or attribute descriptions may as well vary in their level of linguistic abstraction.³³ According to the researchers, greater emotionality in a review, be it positive or negative, shall reinforce its perceived value, trustworthiness, and reliability. Moreover, although the use of extreme emotional content to convey the same valence (happy vs thrilled), may increase the perception of the WOM helpfulness, reviews with higher emotional content may diminish returns. Interestingly, moderate amounts of expressed emotional content in a review shall lead receivers to derive that the sender exerted more effort in writing the assessment. In contrast, when the emotional content becomes too high, receivers may presume that the reviewer is irrational. Additionally, receivers perceive appraisals with more anxiety-related emotion words (worried) as more helpful than those with anger-related words (annoyed), as they might infer that anxious senders exercised more effort and put more thought into their reviews. Therefore, the WOM content may be perceived as more reliable.

³² Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 40

³³ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 40

Interestingly enough, the use of informal words and slang may increase the review's helpfulness and credibility, depending on the type and amount of formality. In addition, the use of informal colloquialism might increase the product evaluations, given that mainstream slang words hold broad cultural value.

Humor may as well reinforce the impact of the WOM. Specifically, humorous positive reviews make the product outcome appear less positive, whilst humorous negative comments make the product appear less negative. Interestingly, humorous negative reviews shall be perceived as entertaining and enjoyable and hence will increase consumers' positive impressions of senders. On the other hand, because humorous negative reviews minimize negativity, they as well decrease the likelihood of responding and expressing sympathy.³⁴

- **Senders' or reviewers' characteristics**

In sharing WOM senders often provide information not only about the product reviewed, but also about themselves. The process of data-sharing may as well influence how receivers assess the WOM message. Furthermore, according to other research, receivers' perceptions of senders' trustworthiness and altruism have a significant impact on whether, consumers will use the provided information in determining a course of an action. Additionally, if a sender is believed to be providing reliable advice, or to be helping genuinely to experience optimum benefits, the consumer will respond positively to the WOM provided, considering it reliable and trustworthy.

On the other hand, if receivers believe the sender to be engaging in WOM merely as an attempt to exact revenge on the offending firm, which is a particularly common form of WOM, the reviewers will be less likely to be considered as helpful, trustworthy and ultimately reliable. It has been as well suggested that consumers could be apt to believe that the senders of negative WOM may be acting vindictively or had an unfavorable encounter with the problem due to a lack of ability on their part. Consequently, the senders of negative WOM messages might be perceived to be acting out of a desire of spite directed toward the focal product. In this case, receivers may be persuaded to discount the value of the WOM, not considering it as reliable.

Considering both sides of this theory, it appears that receivers of positive WOM may believe senders to be more trustworthy, reliable, and altruistic than senders of negative WOM. In this context,

³⁴ Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers.", 41-42

trustworthiness refers to the degree of authenticity of the sender's information and altruism to the extent to which the reviewer is believed to be acting on behalf of the interests of the consumer.³⁵

Furthermore, although this hypothesis may be true, it has been shown that this bias may not hold in all instances. Boundary conditions for the hypothesized positivity bias may exist. One of these might be the type of value provided by the cited product. Research has indicated that positive WOM is perceived as more useful and more reliable than negative WOM for hedonic products, whereas the inverse is true for utilitarian products. This happens because when a consumer receives WOM regarding hedonic products, they begin to anticipate the potential positive, emotional benefits of the articles and dismiss the information that is counter to their positive perception. In contrary, negative WOM involving utilitarian products may be more diagnostic in assessing the utility of the good. This happens because, the goal of utilitarian consumption is to maximize utility and therefore, negative WOM will be weighted rather heavily when evaluating utilitarian articles. Hence, it seems that for utilitarian goods the information provided by the reviewer of positive WOM will be perceived as less reliable than the one offered by a sender of negative WOM, while the contrary may be true for hedonic products. Therefore, as I mentioned, it appears that there might be a positivity bias in senders' perceived trustworthiness, altruism and reliability, given that, as reported, not all positive WOM are considered as reliable, nor do the senders who share positive WOM information.³⁶

Moreover, although the research reported shows the characteristics a reviewer or sender should have, and how the consumers' needs should be in their best interests, none of the research addressed is exploring how the reviewer's charisma may as well impact the consumers' perception of reliability and trustworthiness. I believe that it might be interesting to analyze how this particular trait could be a rather substantial help in making the WOM information and its sender impactful, reliable, and trustworthy.³⁷

³⁵ Martin, W. "Positive Versus Negative Word-of-mouth: Effects on Receivers." *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal* 21, 1 2017, 2-3

³⁶ Martin, W. "Positive Versus Negative Word-of-mouth: Effects on Receivers.", 2-3

³⁷ Martin, W. "Positive Versus Negative Word-of-mouth: Effects on Receivers.", 3

1.4 Blogs as an electronic Word Of Mouth example

Nowadays the new online form of WOM communication is known as electronic Word Of Mouth (eWOM). EWOM has taken on substantial importance thanks to the emergence of online platforms, which have made it one of the most influential information sources on the Web.³⁸ According to Cheung and Thadani's research on the differences between traditional WOM and eWOM, the latter possesses unprecedented scalability and speed of diffusion. Additionally, in traditional WOM the dispersion of information only happens between small groups of individuals and it is exchanged in private conversations and dialogs. In contrast, eWOM communications involve multi-way exchanges of data which is not shared at the same time when all communicators are present.

Furthermore, eWOM unlike traditional WOM messages are more persistent and accessible. Most of the text-based information presented on the Internet is archived and thus, available for an indefinite amount of time. Consumers now use online devices such as blogs and social media, increasingly, as an eWOM tool, to share their opinions about products and services they consume and, to research the companies that sell them.³⁹

Moreover, the growth of online communication such as blogs, websites, social media are increasing the interest in eWOM and thus, changing, significantly, consumers' everyday lives. Indeed, blogs and websites are now a new ostensibly interactive element, designed to enhance the persuasive impact of campaigns, providing an opportunity for visitors to publicly share opinions that may or may not have an impact on other customers and their behavioral variables.⁴⁰

In light of the research reported, I would assume that blogs and websites may be considered as an influential and impactful form of eWOM used by senders and receivers to connect and communicate information and opinions with one another.

³⁸ Huete-Alcocer, Nuria, "A Literature Review of Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth: Implications for Consumer Behavior", *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, (July 2017), 2-3

³⁹ Cheung, Christy & Thadani, Dimple. "The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model." *Decision Support Systems*. 54, (December 2012), 462

⁴⁰ Thorson, Kjerstin & Rodgers, Shelly, "Relationships Between Blogs as EWOM and Interactivity, Perceived Interactivity, and Parasocial Interaction." *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 6, 2006, 34-35

2. The use and relationship between (eWOM) blogs and the record industry

Pertinent to the theoretical framework delineated and analyzed in the precedent chapter, in this section I aim to analyze the use and relationship between blogs, as an eWOM tool, and PRs, A&Rs and the record industry. Throughout this chapter I shall, firstly, give a definition of what a PR and A&R are and their main tasks. Consequently, I shall investigate the relationship and impact of blogs (eWOM) on A&R and PRs. Lastly, I shall examine the influence and integration of (eWOM) blogs within the music industry.

2.1 The relationship between A&R, PR and eWOM (blogs)

According to Beatrice Jetto, music blogs have become fundamental outlets in record labels and PR companies marketing promotional strategies.⁴¹

The A&R's Scouts are essential first points of contact between the artists and the labels. Their primary responsibility is to find and sign new artists and oversee all the aspects of the recording process that lead up to the final recording. The talent scout manages the new recording process and is involved in the development of the artist. For the A&R, it is, therefore, crucial to follow the trends that occur along the way. This process includes a lot of listening to music, attending gigs, going to clubs, watching videos of performing acts, and most importantly reading music magazines, music blogs and music-related websites.⁴² Subsequently, the A&R scout recommends rising artists to the A&R manager and A&R director.

According to Beatrice Jetto, along with A&R scouts, music blogs are playing a fundamental role in the discovery of new talents, who eventually get signed to record companies. This indirect promotion helped the music industry to be more aware of the medium's impact and importance in discovering and sponsoring new music. Eventually, music blogs began taking part in promotional strategies, given that these platforms as intermediaries, shall retain their critical independence and therefore, are considered as a trusted source.⁴³

⁴¹ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry: Collusion or Independence?", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Vol. 3 no. 2, (October 2014), 67

⁴² Storstadmo, Sondre, D., "In which ways has the digitalization changed the A&R profession. A&R in today's digital industry A valuable resource", (Masters' dissert. University of Agder, 2017), 6

⁴³ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 64

Indeed, in accordance with Musgrave's theories, argued in the previous chapter, websites, blogs, and social media are an impactful intermediary which is contributing to the artist's and music's future discovery and appreciation or unappreciation. Hence, blogs as cultural intermediaries shall play a fundamental role for the music industry in discovering new talents and promoting music. Thus, as I argued previously, for A&R scouts and PR it shall be a crucial process to include reading blogs and webzines to discover new music and talents.⁴⁴

Moreover, as shown in Johnson and Kaye's 2004 survey, given that, music blogs are considered as a credible and reliable source of information, it seems logical that public relations professionals would begin experimenting with this medium as a communication tool. Strategic communicators have as well taken a more active use of websites and in approaching authors from a media relations perspective where items (in this case, music and albums) are pitched to be placed on a particular blog of interest.⁴⁵

2.2 The impact of (eWOM) music blogs on record companies

As professor Sanjeev Dewan argues, customers tend to trust recommendations from other consumers more than any traditional form of advertising.⁴⁶ One of the most effective eWOM strategies record labels opt for is to involve the artists' fan clubs in promoting the musicians' careers.⁴⁷ However, the music industry came into the focus of the eWOM relatively late, because gathering sales and data for music releases has been somewhat burdensome. Indeed, the access to the industry benchmark for sales demands substantial financial efforts, which has led to finding alternative measures through the sales ranks of retail websites.⁴⁸

Additionally, music blogs are involved in the press release process.⁴⁹ According to the website *Heroic Academy*, press releases are ingrained in media culture, and websites authors typically get big amounts of requests to write about a particular release or event. However, there is a significant

⁴⁴ Storstadmo, Sondre, D., "In which ways has the digitalization changed the A&R profession. A&R in today's digital industry A valuable resource", 6

⁴⁵ Porter, Lance & Sweetser, Kaye & Chung, Deborah. "The blogosphere and public relations: Investigating practitioners' roles and blog use." *Journal of Communication Management*. Vol. 13 n. 3, (July 2009), 251.

⁴⁶ Dewan, Sanjeev & Ramprasad, Jui. "Chicken and Egg? Interplay between Music Blog Buzz and album Sales", *Conference: Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems*, (January 2009), 3

⁴⁷ Allen, Paul & Hutchinson, Thomas. W & Macy, Amy, *Record Label Marketing*, 234

⁴⁸ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin: Examining the Impact of Social Media on Music Album Performance" *Academy of Management Proceedings*. (October 2014), 5.

⁴⁹ Porter, Lance & Sweetser, Kaye & Chung, Deborah. "The blogosphere and public relations", 252

difference between PR agents and music blogs due to their different values.⁵⁰ As Beatrice Jetto explains, music promoters have the economic goal of selling their artists, whereas music blogs work as intermediaries ensuring that the economic objective is filtered through their tastes and perceptions of what is useful and essential. Indeed, writers are more concerned about keeping their music tastes consistent.⁵¹ This is why according to the Swedish blogger Niklas, authors will struggle with keeping up with all the messages and emails sent by PRs agencies or record labels hoping their artists, new releases or events will be featured on the medium. As a result, writers will dismiss the emails. However, bloggers still need information from PRs and record companies. To deal with this issue, PR managers and agencies have learned to be more attentive to writers' tastes. According to research addressed by Jetto, some PR agents send out only a small number of emails individually, checking out people's blogs to prevent themselves from sending content that writers would not enjoy and that, therefore, would be marked as spam.⁵²

Moreover, another crucial point for PR agents and labels is the offer of freebies such as CDs, merchandise, free tickets, and invitations to events. This sort of payola with no direct exchange of cash is quite appealing as it benefits the editors' professional status. Indeed, the website's audience might increase dramatically, if the writer attends all the shows with free tickets supplied by the PR company, or even when bloggers are offered exclusive content and prizes supplied by promoters.⁵³

Furthermore, the relationship between the music industry and music websites consists of PR firms sending to bloggers copies of new releases, promotional material, MP3s, press releases and invitations to gigs and events. The types of communication to get the writer's attention are two. The first one is a formal style of contact, which consists of contacting the websites with the announcement of new releases or upcoming events through press releases or by sending emails to mailing lists. With this approach, PRs aim to reach all members of the blogging community, as well as making sure the information reaches the most significant number of websites. However, the companies that take into consideration the authors' music tastes will deliver the information only to those websites that are believed to more likely cover the content.

The second type of communication is more informal and consists of providing bloggers with information first-hand.⁵⁴ Though, this privilege is customarily given to whichever amateur critic is

⁵⁰ Voogt, Budi, "Mastering Music PR: What Publicists Do, Radio Plugging, DJ Promo and Press Releases", *Heroic Academy*, December, 31st, 2019. Retrievable at <https://heroic.academy/mastering-music-pr-what-publicists-do-radio-plugging-dj-promo-press-releases/>. Last accessed 10/12/2020

⁵¹ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 67

⁵² Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 68

⁵³ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 69-70

⁵⁴ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 72

the most suited to covering or reviewing the material sent. Privileging one source is the best strategy for PR firms to promote their acts, in the best way that suits their interests. Therefore, it creates the illusion that bloggers are being favored legitimately, whereas it is the labels' goal of promoting their acts through the right channels. This strategy may be advantageous for PRs to win the trust of music bloggers. On the other hand, blog authors might become dependent on PR companies for exclusive access, making the relationship between the two unavoidable.⁵⁵

Furthermore, the category of unsigned and upcoming artists may sometimes approach bloggers hoping their music will be covered on the websites. Indeed, as Musgrave explains, the ferocious competition in the music business leads musicians to focus on the importance of cultural intermediaries. Upcoming artists notably show interest in the role that blogs could play in their careers, given their ability to share music and help customers in the decision-making process. This happens because blogs and websites are maintaining a position of authority as distributors and distinguishers, since the artists seldom integrate intermediaries into their collaborative production and creative practices. Hence, cultural intermediaries are essential in distinguishing artists in an era of abundant content, creative works and musicians that ferociously compete to be heard.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 73

⁵⁶ Musgrave, George, "Collaborating to compete: the role of cultural intermediaries in hypercompetition", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Volume 6, n. 2, (October 2017), 61-62

3. The impact of music blogs (eWOM) on copyright laws and the influence on the record sales

It is now essential to discuss the relationship between music websites and copyright laws as music and even music videos are generally featured on many music blogs. Furthermore, related to the subject I shall address, it may as well be of particular interest to analyze if and how (eWOM) music blogs may or may not be influencing the record sales, despite the copyright infringement issue.

3.1 The impact of (eWOM) music blogs on copyright laws

Blogs, especially Mp3 blogs, have developed into a powerful marketing and promotional tool for music. Mainly, these mediums consist of numerous posts containing hyperlinks to MP3 files that reside on the server for that site, such as iTunes, TIDAL, Spotify, Deezer, followed by a commentary written by the editor of the blog. Usually, writers post links to iTunes or other servers, and then actively encourage the visitors to purchase the music they are sponsoring. Despite this, readers can easily bootleg music and then save it into their laptops and phones. However, because bloggers generally have (or should have) a respectful approach to music and musicians, many record labels began to actively seek to incorporate them into the initial phase of the marketing plans for new artists. Therefore, the influence of these platforms has become as such that record labels of all sizes target bloggers with pre-released music, hoping it will get posted on the medium and eventually spread throughout the community and into the mainstream.⁵⁷

As Jetto argues, this is as well is an indicator of the power and impact of blogs and, their readers' passion for music. Indeed, the same industry that regularly brings copyright infringements suits against file-sharers, is also desperate to provide MP3 blogs with the music that might go to the same file-sharing community the labels are fighting against.⁵⁸

On the other hand, according to Professor Miller, record labels are finding new life for career artists and presenting them to consumers in a way that was not possible during the pre-digital era. Today, music fans discover and, most importantly, consume and share music through multiple channels which include blogs, websites, fan clubs and social media. These platforms have become a valuable

⁵⁷ Goldstone, Andrew, "Mp3 Blogs: A Silver Bullet for the Music Industry or a Smoking Gun for Copyright Infringement?", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (January 2006), 1.

⁵⁸ Jetto, Betrice, "The Evolution of Music Blogs: From a fan's passion to a promotional outlet", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Vol. 4 no. 2, (October, 2015), 67

tool for music marketing, given that they provide the first opportunity for direct, consistent, and real-time feedback between the artists and the fans.⁵⁹

Moreover, as Executive Vice President International at Sony Music Entertainment argues, social media is a key to Sony's promotional strategy, aggressively courting influencers to promote their artists' music. Though, copyright issues related to blogs and websites sharing unlicensed music are still existing.⁶⁰

Indeed, according to IFPI's 2019 Global Music Report, there is the urgency to ensure that the growth of music markets is sustainable and that it can reach its full potential. Therefore, the right public policy and legal framework must be in the right place.⁶¹

Furthermore, with the evolution of the online marketplace, the music community is facing many challenges in preventing music from being made available illegally and, ensuring that fans have access to a variety of licensed services. Music must have fair and effective laws to tackle illegal services, that seek to exploit artists and profit through copyright infringements. For instance, a growing number of countries are providing 'website blocking' procedures, where access can be forbidden to websites and social media such as Twitter and Instagram and Facebook when copyright is infringed. These measures are becoming a global norm. The report as well argues that although certain hosting providers and bloggers claim not to own the material and music they are posting, this liability privilege (also known as the safe harbor), has still to be considered as copyright infringement. However, even with access to 'websites blocking' and other legal measures, rights holders' actions are not enough to prevent the use of illegal content.⁶²

As I have examined in this paragraph, it may be true that music blogs and bloggers, as an example of eWOM, use music and music videos without having the copyright license to them. This, on the one hand, may present an infringement of the copyright law. However, on the other hand, according to the characteristics of volume and valence (see chapter 1, paragraph 1.2), having unlicensed music on blogs and websites, although illegal, might benefit artists and their status.

⁵⁹ Miller, Larry. S, "Same Heart. New Beat. How Record Labels Amplify Talent in the Modern Music Marketplace", *Musiconomics*, 2017, 9. Retrievable at <http://musonomics.org/modernlabelreport>, Last accessed 20/11/2020

⁶⁰ Miller, Barry. S, "Same Heart. New Beat", 27

⁶¹ Ifpi, "Global Music Report 2019, Ifpi, 2019", 36. Retrievable at <https://ifpi.org/recording-industry-in-numbers.php> Last accessed 20/11/2020

⁶² Ifpi "Global Music Report 2019", 37

Furthermore, although, some bloggers may tend to post unlicensed music on their platforms, music blogs (eWOM) are a new immediate tool to present the artists to the audience and share the music on social media, which is as well a strategy that may benefit the music revenues.

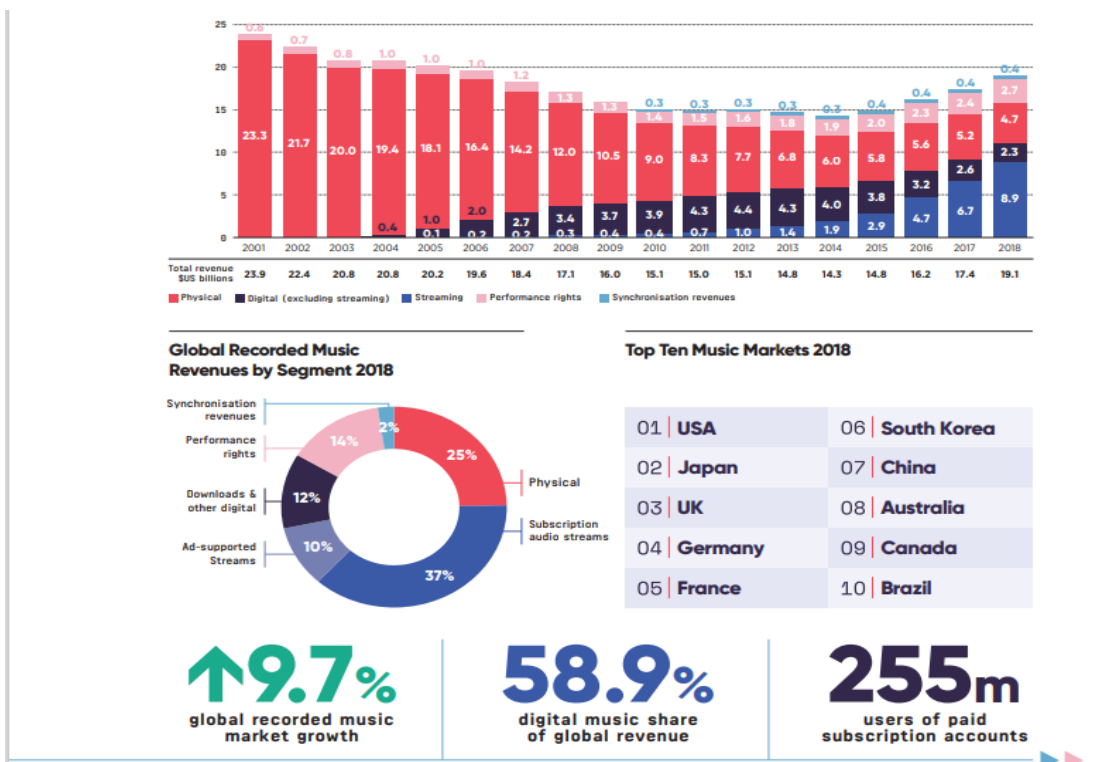
However, one of the main negative aspects of bloggers sharing unlicensed music may consist of using the liability law as a safe harbor where bloggers claim not to own the music posted. This may benefit blogs, but it shall be a disadvantage for the artists and the record labels. Indeed, when unlicensed music is posted on blogs and websites, that would enable the audience to download illegally the music, creating a loss of income for the artists and labels involved. That is one of the reasons why, as I shall address in the case study in chapter 4, Prince Rogers Nelson was extremely protective of his work, and he was rather against sharing his concerts videos and music on apps such as YouTube, Vimeo, numerous social media, and even blogs and websites. On the other hand, his team and Drfunkenberry, would advise him to have his music and videos shared on websites, music apps and social media given that they saw the inherent benefits of music being posted online. Indeed, having music online could attract a broader audience to attend the concerts and to buy the records. Hence, having videos and music on different platforms may drive concerts and albums revenues. Additionally, music made available on blogs may be an ambivalent action, as it may either enhance the marketing strategies and present an income of revenues, or it might as well present a loss of revenues for the artists and the labels.

3.2 The influence of (eWOM) on music sales

For this paragraph I selected 4 reports that show an overview of the global recording industry in 2018 and 2019, including data and the developments in the markets. The reports I selected are the IFPI 2019 Global Music Report, the IFPI 2019 Music Listening Report, the RIAA 2019 Music Revenues Report and the IFPI Global Music Report: The Industry In 2019. In light of the new data, IFPI provided, I chose to address the last report mentioned, to present a more complete overview of the developments of the industry. The study was, however, redacted prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The studies selected provide data collected by relevant and reliable websites, which shall be substantial in contextualizing and explaining the influence of music blogs, websites, and social media (eWOM) on the record sales and streaming revenues.

3.2.1 IFPI 2019 Global music report

In spite of, the significant amounts of blogs and websites still infringing the copyright, according to the 2019 IFPI's Global Music Report the global music community has never been more connected, and fans and artists are more oriented to music-sharing. As a result, 2018 was the fourth consecutive year of growth driven by the joint partnership between artists, record labels and fans (this also involves blogs' owners) that helped them achieve their creative and commercial potential. The research shows that, overall, the digital revenues grew by 21.1% in 2018, and now they are accounting the 58.9% of total recorded music revenues. The streaming revenues as well pushed growth up firmly, increasing by 34.0%. Now digital makes up more than the 50% of revenue in 38 markets.⁶³ (See figure 1)



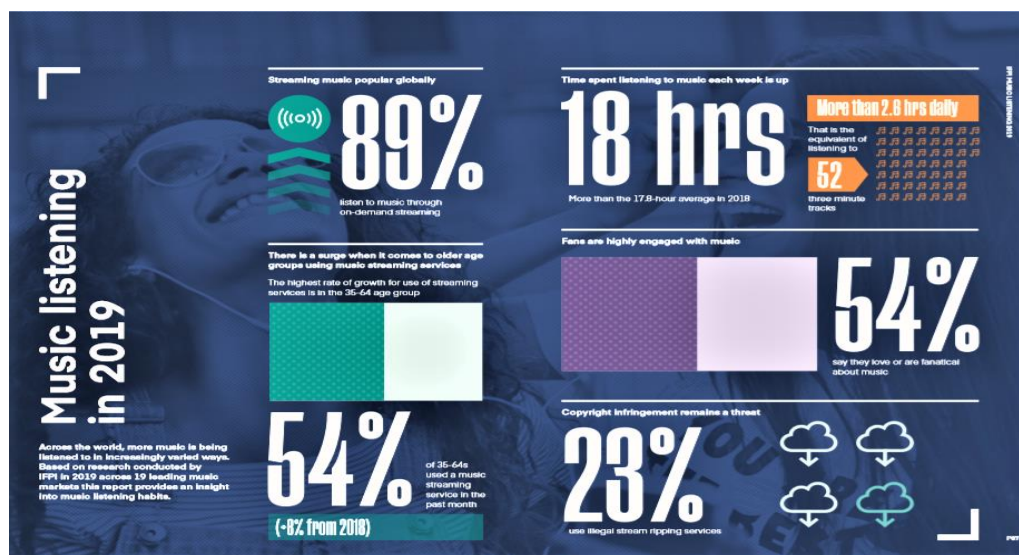
1. The Global Music Report 2019 shows an overview of the music market in 2018. The digital revenues grew by 21.1%, accounting to the 58.9% of the total music markets. The streaming revenues as well pushed growth up firmly, increasing by 34.0%. Now digital makes up more than the 50% of revenue in 38 markets

⁶³ Ifpi Global Music Report 2019, 7

3.2.2 IFPI Music Listening Report 2019

Additionally, as shown in the 2019 Music Listening Report by IFPI, in the year 2018, fans' global engagement with music has as well undergone substantial growth. Indeed, with the multiple media to share and listen to music, consumers may choose diverse platforms to do so. With this report, it has been shown that the 54% of the global population is engaged with music. This led to an increase in the time spent listening to music. In 2018 people spent an average of 18 hours per week listening to music. Ultimately, this created an increase in the popularity of music streaming, with the 89% of the global population listening to music through on-demand streaming services.⁶⁴ (Figure 3)

The study as well showed that, for instance, the 74% of the Chinese population listens to music through social media and streaming services, while the 62% of the Indian population does the same. The 56% of the Mexican population listens to music through social media and streaming services. This study suggests that these numbers are directly related to the engagement of the global population with music.⁶⁵ On the other hand, according to a recent report by IFPI, the 23% of the global population still listens to or bootlegs unlicensed music.⁶⁶ (See figure 2)



2. Retrieved from the Ifpi 2019 Music Listening Report. 54% of the global population is engaged with music. The 89% of the global population listens to music through on-demand streaming services with an average of 18h spent listening to music

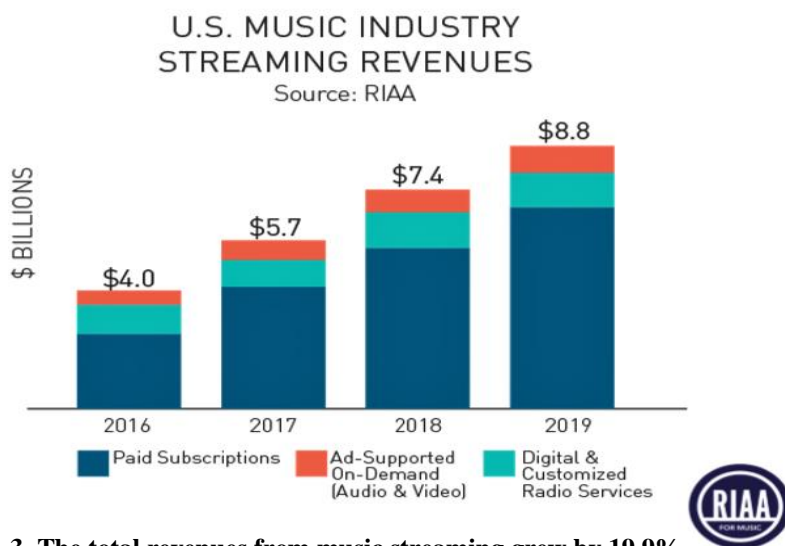
⁶⁴ Ifpi “Music Listening 2019”, a look at how recorded music is enjoyed around the world, Ifpi, 2019, 5. Retrievable at <https://ifpi.org/news/IFPI-releases-music-listening-2019> Last accessed 20/11/2020

⁶⁵ Ifpi, “Music Listening 2019”, 6. Retrievable at <https://ifpi.org/news/IFPI-releases-music-listening-2019> Last accessed 20/11/2020

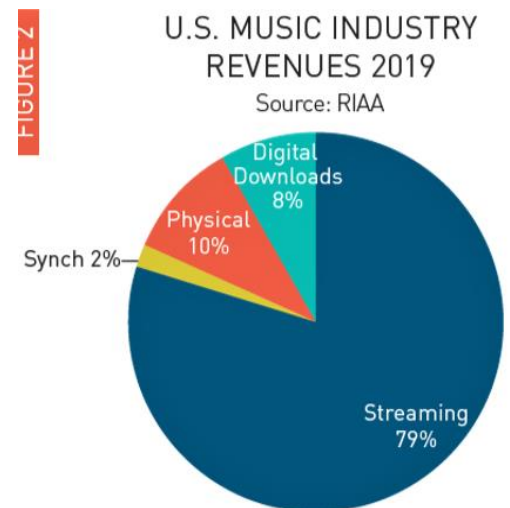
⁶⁶ Ifpi, “Music Listening 2019”, 21.

3.2.3 The Year-End 2019 RIAA Music Revenues Report

Another recent study conducted by RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America), on music in the USA, has shown that the total revenues from streaming music grew 19.9% to \$8.8 billion in 2019 (Figure 3) which accounts the 79.5% of all recorded music revenues (Figure 4). According to the report, the streaming category comprehends a variety of formats, including premium subscription services and ad-supported-on-demand services such as YouTube, Spotify, Vevo, and streaming radio services. Moreover, paid subscriptions to on-demand streaming services contributed to the largest share of revenues and the more significant portion of revenue growth for the year 2019. The total subscription revenues of \$6.8 billion were up 25% compared to the prior year and accounted for 61% of total recorded music revenues in the U.S.⁶⁷ The number of paid subscriptions to on demand streaming services grew 29% to an average of 60.4 million in 2019, compared to the 46.91 million for 2018.⁶⁸ (See figure 5)



3. The total revenues from music streaming grew by 19.9% to \$8.8 billion in 2019. Figure retrieved from RIAA official website



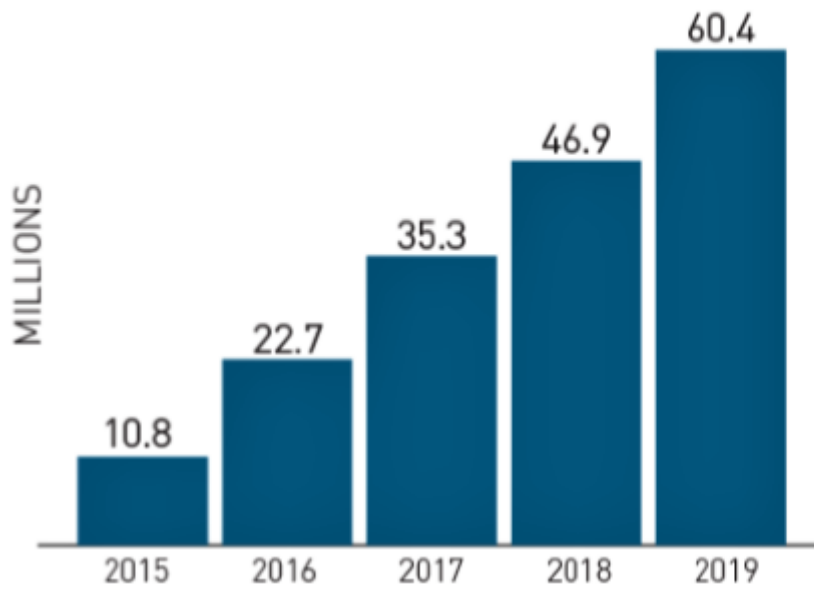
4. The total revenues from streaming services in 2019 accounts the 79.5% of all recorded music revenues. Figure retrieved from RIAA official website

⁶⁷ Friedlander, Joshua P, “Year-End 2019 RIAA Music Revenues Report”, *Research & Economics RIAA (RECORDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA)*, 2019. Retrievable at <https://www.riaa.com/reports/riaa-releases-2019-year-end-music-industry-revenue-report/> Last accessed 10/12/2020

⁶⁸ Friedlander, Joshua P, “Year-End 2019 RIAA Music Revenues Report”.

U.S. PAID MUSIC SUBSCRIPTIONS

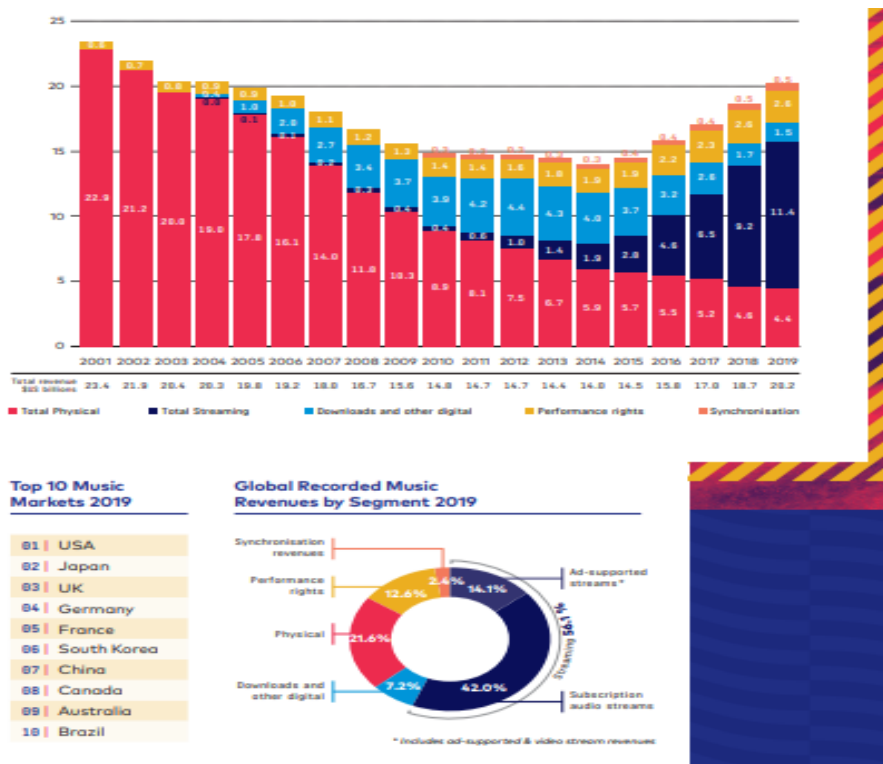
Source: RIAA



5. The number of paid subscriptions to on demand streaming services grew to an average of 60.4 million in 2019, compared to the 46.91 million of 2018. Figure retrieved from RIAA official website

3.2.4 IFPI Global Music Report: The Industry in 2019

As shown in the report, during the last year the global recorded music market has grown by 8.2% with its fifth consecutive year of growth. The growth was predominantly determined by fans' still-increasing engagement with music on paid streaming services, with the number of paid streaming accounts rising to 341 million by the end of year 2019. Interestingly, overall streaming revenues grew by 22.9% in 2019 making up more than half of global recorded music revenue for the first time in 2019. Streaming now accounts for 56,1% of the total market. This means that paid audio streaming services are a key driver for the music market. Furthermore, according to the report, the associated streaming revenues increased by 24.1% in 2019, while the growth of paid streaming subscribers grew by 33.5%. However, the physical revenues declined globally by -5.3% in 2019, although a few countries experienced growth in physical revenues, including United States (the world's biggest music market) + 3.2%, and Spain +7.2%.⁶⁹ (See figure 6)



6. Retrieved from IFPI official website. global recorded music market has grown by 8.2%. Streaming revenues grew by 22.9% in 2019 making up more than half of global recorded music revenue for the first time in 2019. Streaming now accounts for 56,1% of the total market.

⁶⁹ Ifpi, “Global Music Report: The Industry in 2019”, 13. Retrieval at <https://ifpi.org/recording-industry-in-numbers.php> Last accessed 20/11/2020. The report looks into the new data and developments in the music markets in 2019. Last accessed 10/12/2020

Nonetheless, with the data provided by the four studies reported, I would assume that the growth in subscriptions, streaming, and digital revenues is directly related to the engagement of the global population with music.

In accordance with the reports addressed, according to the website *Econsultancy*, the ability to share songs on social media has given people new methods to show their audience what they are listening to. Since 2018, social media such as Facebook and Instagram have introduced music stickers, which is a feature that allows users to add a song to their stories.⁷⁰

Moreover, as a study by website *MusicWatch* shows, the 90% of social media users take part in some music or artist related activity on social platforms. It has also been studied that the two-thirds of the users agree that they discover new artists on social media. Furthermore, the 60% of the consumers said to be visiting online streaming services and platforms to listen to music, after they see an update from the artist.⁷¹

With this data, I would assume that by sharing music on social media and websites, bloggers and editors are most likely to be contributing to the popularity of artists and their music. Therefore, writers may be impacting the increase in streaming, digital and subscription revenues and ultimately the growth of record sales.

Furthermore, although numerous blogs and websites may be infringing the copyright, they may as well be a useful tool to help artists and record labels profit from higher revenues, as shown in the IFPI Global Music Reports and by the RIAA Report. As a matter of fact, music blogs used as an electronic Word Of Mouth tool may result in the audience looking for the artist or artists recommended and their music on paid streaming services such as Spotify, TIDAL, Deezer, Apple Music and in the eventual streaming of the music. Thus, streaming music on paid services, shall generate a stream of revenues paid to the artists and the record labels. That happens because, for every stream of the music, artists and labels shall be paid a fixed fee by the streaming service. Hence, I would argue that when a blogger recommends music on their platform, and the audience looks for it on the streaming service and listens to it, that may generate revenues for the artist and the label. Therefore, in accordance with

⁷⁰ Cole, Sean, "The impact of technology and social media on the music industry", *Econsultancy*, 9th September 2019. Retrievable at <https://econsultancy.com/the-impact-of-technology-and-social-media-on-the-music-industry/> Last accessed 10/12/2020

⁷¹ Crupnick, "Russ, Music Scores A Gold Record on The Social Media Charts", *MusicWatch*, 6th August 2018. Retrievable at <https://www.musicwatchinc.com/blog/music-scores-a-gold-record-on-the-social-media-charts/> Last accessed 10/12/2020

the reports examined, the raise of record sales and revenues, happened as well thanks to blogs and websites working as a useful and impactful electronic Word Of Mouth and hence marketing tool.

4. Case study: Drfunkenberry and Prince Rogers Nelson

As a case study, I selected the following blog: <http://www.drfunkenberry.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/drfunkenberryfanpage/> (since Prince passed away, the author is more active on Facebook).

I find the case study I chose particularly relevant to the theoretical framework delineated and to the following chapters. As analyzed empirically, the eWOM has been recognized as a fundamental factor in influencing the consumer's purchase behaviors and decisions.⁷² As argued in chapter 1, the eWOM approach includes blogs, websites and social media as a new publishing format and form of influence.⁷³ Furthermore, in respect to the relationship with music, artists, record labels and the music business, blogs as an eWOM tool, are having considerable effects on music promotion and consumption. As a matter of fact, in accordance with Musgrave's theories, blogs, websites and social media have become cultural intermediaries whose role is mainly to interpret creative works, qualify and disseminate them. Ultimately mediators or bloggers shall contribute to the music's future appreciation or unappreciation.⁷⁴ Furthermore, as examined in chapter 2, blogs are now taking part in music's and artists' promotional strategies, being fundamental for the music industry in discovering talents and promoting music.

For these reasons, I believe the website I selected may be rather accordant with the material discussed above. The owner of the platform, Jeremiah Freed, was noticed, befriended, and endorsed by artist Prince Rogers Nelson in the early 2000s. Eventually he became a direct intermediary between the musician and his fanbase. I shall base this case study on Drfunkenberry's interview with the music blog Funkatopia done in May 2019 and other articles published by relevant sources such as BBC, NME and Consequence Of Sound.

⁷² East, Robert & Hammond, Kathy & Wright, Malcolm. "The relative incidence of positive and negative word of mouth: A multi-category study". *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24, (June 2007), 176

⁷³ Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin: Examining the Impact of Social Media on Music Album Performance" *Academy of Management Proceedings*. (October 2014), 4

⁷⁴ Musgrave, George, "Collaborating to compete: the role of cultural intermediaries in hypercompetition", *International Journal of Music Business Research*, Volume 6, n. 2, (October 2017), 45-46

As explained theoretically in chapter 2, bloggers are being integrated in the labels marketing strategies, becoming a fundamental element in promoting artists and their music. Generally, bloggers and writers are contacted by PRs and A&Rs for collaborations. Indeed, Jeremiah Freed had Prince's PR contacting him, given that the artist and his entourage noticed that Drfunkenberry was doing an effective job in promoting Prince and his music; managing, ultimately, to drive more audience to attend the concerts and to buy/stream the music.⁷⁵

As I argued in chapter 2, seldom PR agents and labels offer freebies such as CDs, free concerts tickets, copies of new releases, new promotional material to bloggers and writers hoping to reach the blogging community. Hence, writers eventually work as a cultural intermediary between the artists or the label and the fans, and ultimately will promote the music or the event on their platforms (eWOM).⁷⁶ The collaboration between the blogger (Jeremiah Freed) and the artist was unavoidable. Indeed, according to the interview, Prince and his PR were accustomed to send Drfunkenberry graphics, posters, and pictures of dance parties at the artist's mansion, Paisley Park. Thus, Jeremiah Freed could work as an intermediary and use his website and social media accounts (eWOM) to send out the news of the parties to the fans, so that they could get the tickets and attend the events. Additionally, in relation to freebies and new promotional material, Prince would instead invite Jeremiah Freed to meet him to check out his new bands. In some other cases, the artist would play his music for the author. Sometimes it consisted of new and unreleased music. The blogger made then the reference to some new upcoming songs such as *Extralovable* and *Live Out Loud* (released in 2014) explaining that Prince would play them for him before the release.⁷⁷ However, in this case, it is not only the artist or the label to benefit from the collaboration with bloggers, but writers as well may benefit from such relationships. Indeed, it was rather interesting to learn how the blogger (Jeremiah Freed) would have the access to valuable information, such as new music, future events, sometimes before the estate had the information, and prior to a formal press release. However, as Drfunkenberry explained, a press release was still going to take place and he would still send out the information through his platforms for the audience.⁷⁸

Moreover, as discussed chapter 3, blogs, and social media (eWOM) may be a helpful tool to spread music and news to the fans quickly and effectively. These platforms may as well help fans discover, consume and share music through their various social media accounts, which may ultimately benefit

⁷⁵Funkatopia, funk for music lovers, *Interview: Drfunkenberry*, (podcast), May 29 2019, accessed <https://funkatopia.com/interviews/interview-dr-funkenberry/>, 00: 49:00

⁷⁶ Jetto, Beatrice, "Music Blogs and the Music Industry", 73

⁷⁷ Funkatopia, *Interview: Drfunkenberry*, 00: 57: 17.

⁷⁸ Funkatopia, *Interview: Drfunkenberry*, 01: 25:30

the streaming revenues and record sales, thanks to the eWOM characteristics of valence, volume and engagement (see chapter 1).⁷⁹ However, readers may as well easily bootleg the content and then save it into their laptops and phones.⁸⁰ This would, on the other hand, have a negative impact on record sales and streaming revenues, therefore it would consist of a loss of revenues, along with the infringement of copyright laws. Pertinent to the material discussed throughout chapter 3, it was of extreme interest to learn about Prince's ambivalence with his work and music. As a matter of fact, Drfunkenberry explains the artist's contrariness on having the music on paid streaming services such as Apple Music, given that, according to Prince, iTunes would not pay the artists fairly. Furthermore, it was as well addressed the fact that the artist was not being favorable to having the videos of his concerts online on YouTube and Vimeo, given that according to Prince, that would have retained a big portion of the audience from attending his concerts, ultimately affecting negatively the concerts revenues. Hence, according to Prince, having his music on streaming services (that may underpay artists) and the concert footages on Vimeo and YouTube would not present a valuable promotion for his music and thus an effective source of revenues. On the other hand, Drfunkenberry, explained that according to his experience and point of view, having the concert footages online would present an effective and valid promotional strategy, as consumers who watch the videos on YouTube and on Vimeo may be interested in experiencing the live concert or dance party. Hence, as Drfunkenberry argued, having the music online may benefit the artist in terms of record sales and concerts revenues.⁸¹

It was particularly interesting to learn about the artist's ambivalence with promoting his work. Prince was, indeed, known for his protectiveness of his music, but on the other hand collaborated with Drfunkenberry, to promote his work and events as a cultural intermediary through blogs and social media. On the one hand it was interesting to see that the artist would not want websites, blogs and his fans to have his music posted on those platforms, given that it may have presented a loss of revenues, since people could have been able to bootleg music, and therefore not buy the physical copy of the album. As a matter of fact, the artist seldom took legal actions against the bloggers who would post his work on their platforms without his consent. According to several sources, such as BBC and Consequence Of Sound, etc., in 2014 the artist used legal measures against individuals who distributed bootlegged recordings on blogs and Facebook. According to the article, the bootlegs

⁷⁹ Miller, Larry. S, "Same Heart. New Beat. How Record Labels Amplify Talent in the Modern Music Marketplace", *Musiconomics*, 2017, 9. Retrievable at <http://musonomics.org/modernlabelreport>, Last accessed 20/11/2020

⁸⁰ Goldstone, Andrew, "Mp3 Blogs: A Silver Bullet for the Music Industry or a Smoking Gun for Copyright Infringement?", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (January, 2006), 1.

⁸¹ Funkatopia, *Interview: Drfunkenberry*, 01: 03: 20

shared on Facebook and blogs, would contain live renditions of Prince's classic tracks such as Purple Rain and Little Red Corvette, followed by a link to where the material could be downloaded.⁸²

On the other hand, as Drfunkenberry argued, it is of particular importance to mention that, although, music blogs, websites and social media could provide the readers with unlicensed music, these platforms might as well benefit the artists and the record labels involved. Indeed, from a promotional standpoint, having concert footages and music on blogs, websites, and apps such as YouTube and Vimeo, may as well present a valid and valuable promotional strategy for the artist and the music. In fact, as already mentioned YouTube videos may attract more people to attend the events and would result in the generation of concert revenues. Similarly, having the music on paid streaming services, may as well be beneficial in terms of music streaming and, hence, streaming revenues. Likewise, as seen in the IFPI 2019 Global Music reports and in the RIAA report, although nowadays most of the world population does not buy the physical copies of the albums, having the music on music apps, blogs and websites, may attract the audience to purchase the copy of the CD or vinyl, which would generate a raise in record sales and hence higher revenues.

However, in accordance with Prince's point of view, people and the audience, would still bootleg and download illegally the music when posted on websites and made available without the artist's or (in this case, given that the artist has deceased) the estate's authorization, which would result in the audience not buying or streaming the music and ultimately the loss of revenues. Therefore, I would argue that the artist's protectiveness of his work, would be justified.

⁸² Dave Lee "Prince fans' shock at \$22m piracy action", *BBC News*, January, 28, 2014./ Chris Coplan, "Prince is suing 22 bootleggers for \$22 million", *Consequence Of Sound*, January, 24, 2014. / Dann Stubbs "Prince files \$22 million lawsuit against bootleggers", *NME*, January 24th, 2014 last accessed 10/12/2020

Conclusion

With this thesis I aimed to address how music blogs and websites have been integrated by record labels as an effective marketing and promotional tool, ultimately affecting the record sales and the music revenues.

I began with analyzing the concept of electronic Word Of Mouth as the central theoretical framework, which has been recognized as a crucial factor in customers' purchase behaviors and decisions, enabling them to share positive or negative experiences with other customers or potential consumers.⁸³ It was then addressed the main characteristics of the eWOM communication tool such as volume, valence and engagement which have been shown to be valid indicators of the appreciation or unappreciation of the product or service. Furthermore, the effects of positive and negative and the reliability of electronic Word Of Mouth have been of particular interest during the analysis of the empirical studies.

In chapter 2, through the analysis of the blogs' impact on the music business, it has been shown that the medium has affected music promotion and consumption positively. Indeed, the record industry uses blogs as a crucial marketing strategy where consumers interact and influence one another.

In the third chapter, I discussed the relationship between music, websites, and copyright laws as music and even music videos are generally featured on numerous music blogs. Given the central research question entailed in the thesis, I have put particular interest in how music blogs may have affected the record sales and streaming revenues.

Lastly, as a case study, I selected the following blog: <http://www.drfunkenberry.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/drfunkenberryfanpage/> . I found the study particularly relevant to the theoretical framework and to the following chapters I delineated and analyzed. The study was in my opinion rather pertinent, given Prince's ambivalence and notorious protectiveness of his work.

In light of the findings analyzed in the thesis, I may argue that it may be true that music blogs (eWOM) and music bloggers publish unlicensed music on their platform, thus infringing the copyright laws. Bloggers who are going against the copyright law and, the artists' and labels' will, may be influencing the record sales and revenues negatively as many consumers' would be able to download the music illegally from the platforms. Thus, the audience would not purchase the music or stream it on music services. However, on the other hand, in accordance with the eWOM characteristics of volume and

⁸³ East, Robert & Hammond, Kathy & Wright, Malcolm. "The relative incidence of positive and negative word of mouth: A multi-category study". *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24, (June 2007), 176

valence and engagement (see chapter 1, paragraph 1.2), the more a specific content is shared on blogs and social media, the more the audience and fans might see, or discover it. Thus, having unlicensed music on blogs, websites, and social media, might benefit the artists' notoriety, fame, and status. Furthermore, although, some bloggers may tend to post unlicensed music on their platforms, music websites may as well present a new and immediate tool to introduce new artists and music to the audience, which may as well be a strategy to benefit record sales and music revenues.

However, one of the main negative aspects of illegal music-sharing on websites, blogs, and social media, may consist of using the liability law as a safe harbor, where bloggers could claim not to own the music published. This illegal use of the contents shall benefit blogs and bloggers, but on the other hand it is a consistent disadvantage for artists and record labels. Indeed, when unlicensed music is shared on blogs and websites, a portion of the audience might feel enabled to download the files illegally from the platforms, then creating a loss of income for the artists and the labels involved.

Furthermore, what I argued, makes rather understandable and pertinent, Prince's ambivalence with his music and his work in general. Indeed, it was of particular interest to learn that the artist would not want websites and blogs to publish his music and videos without his consent, to the point that, as reported in chapter 4, he would as well sue those bloggers and fans who would trespass his work. As analyzed in chapter 3 and 4, Prince was aware of the fact that having his music and videos posted on social media, blogs, websites, YouTube and Vimeo, would present a rather consistent loss of revenues, record sales and concerts tickets revenues, given that most of the so-called fans would not purchase the music, nor would they buy the concerts tickets.

On the other hand, from a promotional standpoint, and as argued in chapter 4, although it is true that several music blogs, websites and social media may provide their readers with unlicensed music, these platforms might as well present a benefit for the artists and their revenues. Indeed, as Drfunkenberry argued, having concerts footages and music on blogs and apps such as YouTube and Vimeo may as well attract more people to attend the events and would result in higher concert revenues. Similarly, although as Prince claimed, music apps do not pay artists what they deserve, having the music on streaming services may, however, contribute to generating higher streaming revenues. Moreover, as seen in the IFPI and RIAA music reports (see chapter 3), although most of the world population does not purchase the physical copies of the albums, having the music on streaming services, shall attract the audience to purchase the copy of the CD or vinyl, which shall generate a raise in record sales and therefore, higher revenues.

However, in accordance with Princes' point of view, people and the audience would still bootleg and download music illegally, when posted on websites and made available without the artist's or label's

authorization, which would result in the audience not buying or streaming the music, and ultimately it would generate a loss of revenues and record sales. Hence why, as argued in chapter 3, music should have fair and effective laws to tackle illegal services, that seek to exploit artists and profit through copyright infringements. Additionally, although a growing number of countries are providing website blocking procedures, where access may be forbidden to social media and websites when the copyright is trespassed, as the global music report examined, there is still a consistent number of users and bloggers publishing content without owning it or without the creator's authorization. Moreover, even with the access to websites blocking and other legal tools, rights holders' actions are not enough to prevent the use of illegal content. Hence, more severe and effective blocking measures should be taken against those who infringe the copyright.

Lastly, of particular interest, was the relationship between music blogs and copyright infringement, and how the medium has impacted these laws. However, the issue has not been thoroughly discussed yet. Therefore, the subject might still be interesting for further research, mainly because the music market is still undergoing some significant changes. Secondly, another reason why the topic would benefit from further research is that every year the results of global music reports and global listening reports tend to vary along with the changes in the music markets. Therefore, it could be refreshing to have up to date research and academic papers concerning how the changes in the music markets are influencing copyright laws or vice versa.

Bibliography

Allen, Paul & Hutchinson, Thomas, W & Macy, Amy. *Record Label Marketing*. Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2006.

Blackshaw, Pete. *Consumer-Generated Media (CGM) 101: Word-of-mouth in the age of the web-fortified consumer*. New York: Nielsen Buzzmetrics, 2006.

Chen, Hailiang & De, Prabuddha & Hu, Yu. "IT-Enabled Broadcasting in Social Media: An Empirical Study of Artists' Activities and Music Sales." *SSRN Electronic Journal* Vol. 26 (January, 2013): 1-47. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2201430>

Cheung, Christy & Thadani, Dimple. "The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model." *Decision Support Systems*, 54, (December 2012): 461-470

Chris Coplan, "Prince is suing 22 bootleggers for \$22 million", *Consequence Of Sound*, January 24, 2014. <https://consequenceofsound.net/2014/01/prince-is-suing-22-bootleggers-for-22-million/>

Cole, Sean, "The impact of technology and social media on the music industry." *Econsultancy*, 9th September, 2019. <https://econsultancy.com/the-impact-of-technology-and-social-media-on-the-music-industry/>

Crupnick, "Russ, Music Scores A Gold Record on The Social Media Charts." *Music Watch*, 6th August, 2018. <https://www.musicwatchinc.com/blog/music-scores-a-gold-record-on-the-social-media-charts/>

Dann Stubbs "Prince files \$22 million lawsuit against bootleggers", *NME*, January 24th2014. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/prince-181-1245415>

Dave Lee "Prince fans' shock at \$22m piracy action", *BBC News*, January 28, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-25927363>

Dewan, Sanjeev & Ramprasad, Jui. "Chicken and Egg? Interplay between Music Blog Buzz and album Sales." *Conference: Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems*, (January 2009): 1-13. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5956/bc657ca165781c96eb88d16cb293f12c3a53.pdf>

East, Robert & Hammond, Kathy & Wright, Malcolm. "The relative incidence of positive and negative word of mouth: A multi-category study". *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24, (June 2007): 175-184. [10.1016/j.ijresmar.2006.12.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2006.12.004)

Frick, T. & Tsekouras, D. & Li, T. "The Times They Are A-Changin: Examining the Impact of Social Media on Music Album Performance." *Academy of Management Proceedings*. (October 2014): 1-31. [10.5465/AMBPP.2014.16984abstract](https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2014.16984abstract).

Friedlander, Joshua P. "Year-End 2019 RIAA Music Revenues Report." Research & Economics RIAA (RECORDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA), 2019. <https://www.riaa.com/reports/riaa-releases-2019-year-end-music-industry-revenue-report/>

Goldstone, Andrew. "Mp3 Blogs: A Silver Bullet for the Music Industry or a Smoking Gun for Copyright Infringement?" *SSRN Electronic Journal* (January, 2006): 1-36. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=930270>

Huete-Alcocer, Nuria, "A Literature Review of Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth: Implications for Consumer Behavior", *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, (July 2017), 1-4. [10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01256](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01256)

Ifpi, "Global Music Report 2019, Ifpi, 2019." <https://ifpi.org/recording-industry-in-numbers.php>

Ifpi "Music Listening 2019." Ifpi, 2019. <https://ifpi.org/news/IFPI-releases-music-listening-2019>

Ifpi "Annual Global Music Report: The Industry in 2019". Ifpi May 4th, 2020.

https://www.ifpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Global_Music_Report-the_Industry_in_2019-en.pdf

Jetto, Beatrice. "Music Blogs and the Music Industry: Collusion or Independence?" *International Journal of Music Business Research* Vol. 3 no. 2 October, 2014: 61-80. https://www.academia.edu/6761920/Jetto_B._2013_Music_Blogs_and_the_Music_Industry_Collusion_or_Independence

Kaplan, Andreas & Haenlein, Michael. "The Britney Spears universe: Social media and viral marketing at its best." *Business Horizons* Vol. 55, (January 2011): 27-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.08.009>

Kaplan, Andreas & Haenlein, Michael. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons* Vol. 53, (February 2010): 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>

Martin, W. "Positive Versus Negative Word-of-mouth: Effects on Receivers." *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal* 21, 1 2017: 1-10

Miller, Barry. S, "Same Heart. New Beat. How Record Labels Amplify Talent in the Modern Music Marketplace." *Musiconomics*, 2017. <http://musonomics.org/modernlabelreport>

Musgrave, George. "Collaborating to compete: the role of cultural intermediaries in hypercompetition." *International Journal of Music Business Research* Volume 6, n. 2, (October 2017): 41-68. <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

Moore, Sarah & Lafreniere, Katherine, "How online word-of-mouth impacts receivers." *Consumer Psychology Review*. Vol 3, 1, (October 2019): 34-59. <https://doi.org/10.1002/arcp.1055>

Porter, Lance & Sweetser, Kaye & Chung, Deborah. "The blogosphere and public relations: Investigating practitioners' roles and blog use." *Journal of Communication Management*. Vol. 13 n. 3, (July, 2009): 250-267. [10.1108/13632540910976699](https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540910976699).

Sherif, Muzafer, and Carl Iver Hovland, "Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change", *Yale Studies in Attitude and Communication, Vol. 4. New Haven, CT etc. Yale University Press, 1961*.

Storstadmo, Sondre, D. "In which ways has the digitalization changed the A&R profession. A&R in today's digital industry A valuable resource." Masters' dissert. University of Agder, 2017

Thorson, Kjerstin & Rodgers, Shelly, "Relationships Between Blogs as EWOM and Interactivity, Perceived Interactivity, and Parasocial Interaction." *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 6, (March 2006): 34-44-

van Doorn, Jenny & Lemon, Katherine N. & Mittal, Vikas & Pick, Doreen & Pirner, Peter & Verhoef, Peter C. "Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions". *Journal of Service Research* Vol. 13 n. 3, (August 2010): 253-266. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2340164>

Voogt, Budi, "Mastering Music PR: What Publicists Do, Radio Plugging, DJ Promo and Press Releases", *Heroic Academy*, December 31st, 2019. Retrievable at <https://heroic.academy/mastering-music-pr-what-publicists-do-radio-plugging-dj-promo-press-releases/>.

Podcast

Funkatopia, funk for music lovers, *Interview: Dr Funkenberry*, (podcast), May 29 2019, accessed <https://funkatopia.com/interviews/interview-dr-funkenberry/>