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Social Media's Effectiveness for Malaysia's Independent Artists

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Abstract

Social media has played a crucial role for artists to market and promote their artwork. They have increasingly used Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. This study focuses on three elements which are to investigate which platform of social media that been used the most for the artists to market their products and service, to study impacts of the social media on their marketing strategies, and to find out how the artistes manage their social media and identifying on how the artistes maintain their fan interest towards their works.

Keywords: social media, technology, internet, social networks

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1.0 Introduction

Technological advancement in the twenty-first century has introduced new and exciting ways for artists to self-promote their artwork while conventional methods remain attainable. An artist must understand and implement various marketing strategies to compete in the art market. Besides that, an artist can create a successful career through technology in multiple ways and create a roadmap that can be used to shorten their route to market the artist's talent.

Social media marketing is a way to market a company or new talented artists' products and services through social media websites and social networks. Social media marketing allows companies to reach new customers and engage with existing customers. This marketing type aims to produce content that users will share with their social network to help a company or new talented artist increase their product exposure and broaden people's reach.

Instead of artist marketing, Cohn (204) looked at the evolution of business models in the music industry, from conventional to new legitimate digital business mod. They recommended that record companies have a more service marketing and customer relationship orientation. The increasing usage of social media and artists is an extension strategy for promotion, marketing, and customer relations. The research by Elberse (2010) depicted how revenue as digital downloading becomes more prevalent and showed the impacts of bundling and unbundling of inter-engaging less inter best exciting:

As cited by Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2011) in *The Bitney Spears Universe: Universe Media and Viral Marketing at Its Best*,

"Britney Spears is one of the most successful female recording artists in contemporary music worldwide. Here, we analyze how Britney Spears and her team employ social media applications to communicate with this pop icon and create and maintain her celebrity brand image. Specifically, we look at the use of social media during the launch of her single 'H Me' and the associated album *Felaunch me Fatale* in early 2011. The interplay of postings on

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Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook combined with comments on her webpage, BritneySpears.com can be seen as a prime example of social media usage support new product introductions".

Yuna offered her music on her MySpace page for the local artist, which received over one million places. The indie-pop label/ Management Company's online success tips to her music and signed with The Verve Music in early 2011. Yuna made her first debut in 2008, a self-titled EP, which received five Malaysian music awards and nominations (The Malaysian equivalent of the Grammy Award). She took home trophies, including best artistes and song (For the breakout hit "Dan Sebenarnya"). The second successful local Malaysian artist from social media is Najwa Latiff. She started uploading the cover song to YouTube in September 2010. After her cover of Justin Bieber's "Baby" in Mach 2011, she was signed to NAR Record. Her first official single, "Cinta Muka Buku," was released in June 2011, uploaded to YouTube, created 6 million viewers in just over six months, and became Malaysia's most viewed music video.

Although social media marketing was considered one of the accessible marketing media to learn, not every artist can quickly get a good and steady result. Therefore, every artist must choose the best and use the correct medium to build a good marketing strategy.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Indie Artiste

An article titled "If It's Cool, Creative, and Different, It's Indie" (Andrews, 2006) spoke volumes about pre-conceived notions of indie culture. Incidentally, the same virtue can be said of any artistic work, not just indie. So, where does indie culture stand in all of it? The term "indie" stands for 'independent'; i.e., artistic works created independent of mainstream influence and mega-budget resources. These indie works range from art, music, films, documentaries, and literature – and anything that falls under the broad category of culture. Indie culture then is a form of a subculture that branches off from the mainstream culture and gives a voice to the minority culture. The nature of self-publication in indie culture has allowed it to flourish from mainstream media through the underground community of listeners and like-minded practitioners. In this sense, it is somewhat inflammatory and has an edge of forbidden quality. This reaction is not new as it has been founded in earlier practices of an alternative culture from the experimental and avant-garde era of the 1970s. We will see how understanding subculture has brought many connotations to other forms of artistic endeavor, particularly music.

2.2 Defining Social Media

Social media is the collective of online communications channels committed to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration. Social media marketing can be viewed as a new field and business practice involving marketing goods, services, information, and ideas via online social media. However, there is also confusion between social and media marketing disciplines. Numerous references on the internet have mislabeled social media marketing as only social marketing.

Boyd (2007) mentioned that 'social media as with social media, there's a literal definition concerning the media people create and share online. But there's also the notion that social media is about the technology that facilitates individuals and groups of people to connect and interact, create, and share. Unlike other software that works fine with a single user, social media applications and websites work better the more people use them. Any website can be classified as social media if there is space for the customer to discuss their material and views and motivates connections and group development. Some popular social media websites are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. Other than that, Friendster, Myspace, Scribd, and Flickr are social media users.

As cited by Khatriza A.Saffian, Khairunnisa D, and Yeoh P.A (2016), "What's Up Indie? The Malaysia Context" The internet facilities are the most important factor that changed the local music industry's face. It plays a prominent role for new local acts to be exposed to a broader audience, including international listeners. MySpace and file-sharing platforms allow music to be shared digitally. At the same time, songs and albums were sold in digital format on iTunes. Due to international exposure, there were demands on local acts to perform overseas. Indie artists like Bunkface, Hujan, Pop Shuvit, and Liyana Fizi have had gigs and road tours across the UK, Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, and the Philippines, to name a few. Thanks to YouTube, some luckier artistes even scored overseas recording deals, namely Yuna and Zee Avi".

Research state that new social media tools and applications are continually being developed and marketed like any evolving technology. As the new devices are launched, they will extend social media reach to new audiences while increasing the functionalities available to social media users.

Social media tools and applications typically fall into one of several categories:

- Blogs
- Podcasts/Vidcasts
- Social Networks
- Wikis
- Social Bookmarking

Some other famous examples of social media tools and applications include:

- Social network update sites such as Twitter (sometimes called a micro-blogging site)
- Video sharing sites such as YouTube
- Photo sharing sites such as Flickr
 - Music sharing sites such as Last.fm
 - Location-based applications such as Foursquare, Yelp, and Urban spoon

The Top Social Media Sites That Matter to Marketers (Dara, 2016), mentioned that there are currently a core group of platforms that are key to consider for the social media strategy as there's a hot new social media network launched every day. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Snapchat have been narrowed down as the top social media sites and platforms that matter to social media marketers.

3.0 Methodology

The qualitative study is on six Malaysian independent artists that use social media as one of their marketing tools and have at least the fundamental or advanced knowledge of social media marketing to promote themselves in the music industry. The data collection being used is interviewing the respondent by using a semi-structured and semiformal way to collect data. It has ten questions, and more questions will be added during the interview depending on the respondent. The data will be collected using a voice recorder and also by email.

4.0 Findings

4.1 The Platform

From all the respondents' answers, it can be summarized that Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook are the top social media accounts they used as a marketing tool. This fact can be supported by the article (Priit Kallas, 2017), that Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. Below is the graph that shows the top 15 most popular social networking.



Figure 4.1: Most popular social networking sites

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have different crowds. Based on respondent A thinks that usually, Facebook is for people who want to know about his and his band's development; in other words, it is for true fans. Twitter is for interacting with the fans, while Instagram is for viewing pleasure. They can do that by replying to comments, favorites, likes, reposts, or shares.

Besides that, they can get connected quickly by using these three social media accounts. People who cannot make it to the show can watch it 'Live' on these media. The artists, followers, or fans can have fun having a chit-chat or any music-related activities through social media accounts. It is proven that social media is one of the best super-fast alternatives to spread news and updates because, with just one retweet, the followers of other followers can get the information too.

For someone who loves to write and share also can be an excellent reason for the artists to use social media as marketing tools. With these marketing tools, they can just write as much as they want without any little words. Unlike traditional marketing, they must pay for marketing for only a limited time and space.

4.2 The Impacts

Most respondents answered that social media marketing positively impacts the artists' self-marketing. In contrast, a minority of the respondents think that social media marketing offers the same implications as artists' marketing. This is because they need to use less cost, less complicated, and more satisfying than conventional marketing. As respondent D said, using this marketing tool, the artists can be known in the industry by getting viral, like Justin Bieber, the international artiste, or Sufian Suhaimi and Najwa Latif local artists.

Using their strategies, they can see loyal fans who truly support them. Examples of strategies that the respondents use like posts as many as they want to post the band's life, being themselves, posting the most informative and exciting item with the straightest forward caption, building a fan base, and many more strategies. As respondent C mentioned, "these generations also spend almost 22 hours per day interacting in social media. So, with this time, the followers tend to check on their favorite artiste and also will keep update on them."

The feedback on social media can indicate whether people like it or not and tell whether it is a valuable marketing tool. They should study whether work has progressed to define whether the strategy is working. Suppose there is any negative feedback from the followers. In that case, the artists should make fast moves by studying mistakes and creating the correct ones.

Since internet usage is increasing, which can be supported by Figure 4.2 of the number of social network users in Malaysia from 2014 to 2022 (in millions), we can see that people of many ages use these social media accounts. This fact also can be supported by Figure 4.3 of the statistics of the Age distribution of active social media users worldwide as of the 3rd quarter of 2014. As Respondent C said, "Young generations love Twitter and Instagram. The older usually use Facebook." Through the graph, we can see that most teenagers use Instagram and Twitter. In contrast, the majority of older one use Facebook.

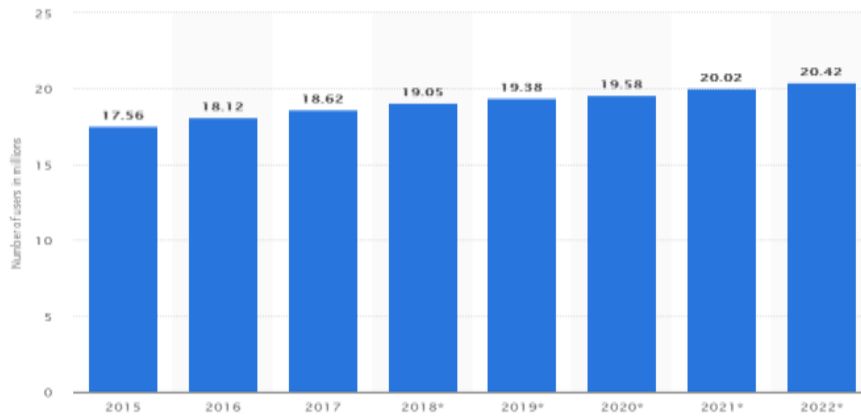


Figure 4.2: Number of social network users in Malaysia from 2014 to 2022

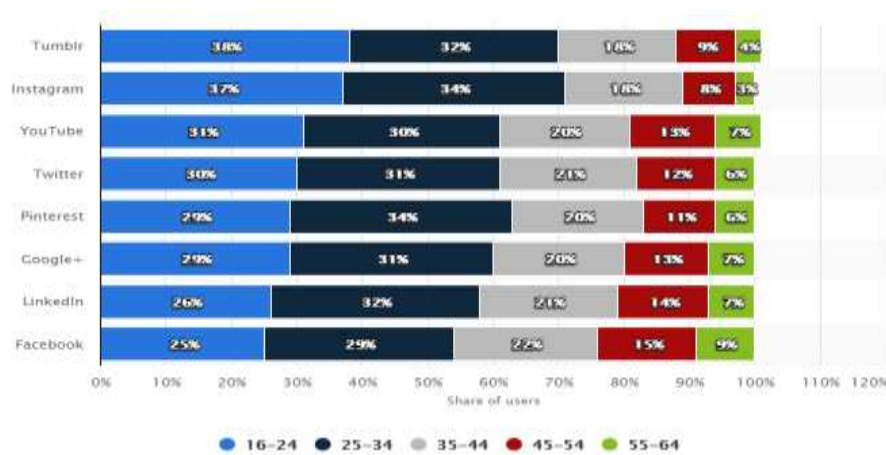


Figure 4.3: Statistics of the Age distribution of active social media users worldwide as of the 3rd quarter of 2014

However, from the respondents' answers, they also agree that traditional marketing has advantages. But for this research respondent, they have disadvantages from the first impression. As respondent B said, "nowadays, people are getting so fast in anything that they do and decide, but there will be circumstances in this case because traditional marketing makes social media as in without the traditional one, the fastest route of social media doesn't exist." Besides, they have disadvantages in engaging with the fans using traditional marketing because marketing is extensive. Where they do not know who their fans are. Compared to social media, they can engage with the fans by replying to their comments and others.

4.3 Managing Social Media

Each respondent has answered their own social media account management and their strategy to maintain the fan's interest in their works. All of them manage their account themselves if the band's account, and each member and their management have access to post on the band's social media account.

Social media is used to post anything that makes sense, like time to show venue, the band practice or the selfies, the latest activities, and ensure the work is on point, especially on what the artists have been doing. For the band's social media account, each bandmate can post anything based on all bandmates' agreement. To ensure the followers or fans keep updated, each artiste must plan on their marketing. It is about the time to post, which account should have been used, or what kind of things must be posted. Respondent B usually dispatches pictures and videos after a photoshoot or shooting on set, so the fans will enjoy knowing her latest updates before releasing the product as in the new album. Respondent D stated that posting posts' frequency depends on the event but did not miss even a single event from the day they started. Followers usually want to know what kind of event they join, the life during the show, and the show's feedback. Through these three posts, the followers that cannot make it to the show will know all the concerts are happening.

All the respondents said that they are satisfied with their marketing strategies, and it also has a plan. Respondent A stated, "For 2020, we plan for the market outside Malaysia. We want to try the south-east region of Asia, and then in mid-year, we will try for Europe. This will be a new challenge like the language barrier, but using social media marketing, will be an advantage for us." Respondent D stated that he defines peak time as the time when teenagers typically spend and interact on social media mostly. This can be proved by the statistics of Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide from 2012 to 2017 (in minutes), which shows the average daily usage of social media worldwide.

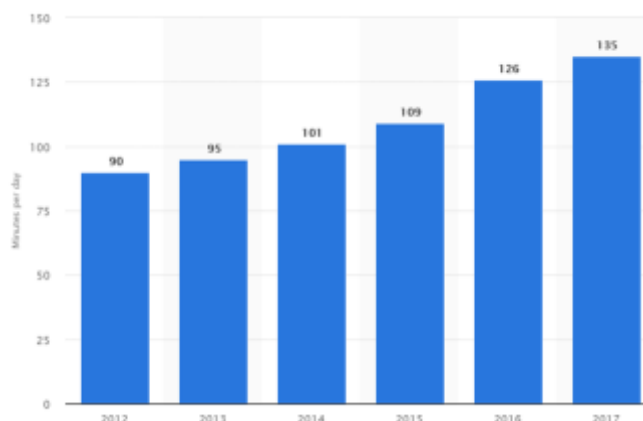


Figure 4.3: Statistics of Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide from 2012 to 2017 (in minutes)

However, each artist needs to study all the positive or negative feedback to achieve fan satisfaction. Because every fan is essential, they must keep their followers for the future.

5.0 Conclusion

The respondents agree that Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook are the top social media accounts that respondents use to market their products and services. It can be concluded that the type of social media artists use is essential and helps improve their marketing skills and abilities.

Most of the respondents agree that social media marketing is effective marketing. They use social media as a marketing tool by posting as many as they want. Post the band's life by being themselves, publishes the most informative and exciting item with the straightest forward caption, and build a fan base. Besides, social media is not only for teenagers, but the older generation also uses this type of marketing. It can be concluded that social media is an effective marketing tool that helps market the artists' products and services. It is a reliable marketing tool that artists can trust and use. Most of the respondents manage their accounts themselves. Each of them has its strategy of marketing which can attract more fans. When the artists planning to market outside Malaysia, they will keep posting new great things ahead so that people can benefit from it and increase posting something that can help both sides, including giveaway prizes or planning on any exciting moments for both sides. They will promote the social media account during an event such as meeting up with fans and reposting any content that relates to them. They appreciate their fans by posting with hashtags and mentioning them, and finally, by always being pleasant and truthful. With that, the artists must think more thoughtfully about the strategy to get more support from their fans.

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