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## From Carriers to Streams: Informational Aspects of the Transformation of the Music Market

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the transformation of the music market from physical carriers to streaming services from the perspective of information economics. It discusses digitization, digitalization and digital transformation as distinct processes that changed production, distribution, promotion and consumption of music. Drawing on the Poznan School of Information Economics and the concept of transformational public relations, the article interprets information, reputation and relations as key resources of economic value in the digital cultural market. Particular attention is paid to the democratization of music production and distribution, the role of aggregators, streaming platforms, algorithms, playlist curators and social media, as well as the new responsibilities of independent artists. The analysis shows that digital technologies lower barriers to market entry but also create new forms of dependency, competition and informational overload. In this environment, artists must manage visibility, audience attention and reputation while competing within algorithmically mediated ecosystems of cultural consumption.

**Keywords:** music market; information economics; digitalization; streaming; social media; algorithms; cultural industries; transformational public relations; reputation

## Introduction

The music market is an important segment of the global economy, characterized by a high level of innovation and dynamically changing operating models. The years 1999-2019 brought a rapid increase in the popularity of modern forms of music distribution, especially streaming, which gradually displaced traditional releases based on physical carriers. A market previously shaped by the trade in material goods, where access to the immaterial good of music depended on owning a carrier, has become a space in which immaterial resources are exchanged on both sides of the transaction.

In the new economic reality, material goods remain present, but they are concentrated mainly around the technological infrastructure of streaming, such as players, headphones, smartphones and other devices enabling comfortable music listening. At the same time, the internal structure of the music market is changing. It may be divided into three main branches: phonographic, concert and publishing (Woźniak, 2019, p. 28).

In this context, both phonographic corporations and independent labels are forced to implement innovative solutions that go beyond classical models of production and distribution. This also applies to communication: contemporary informational activities, in conditions of intensive technological development and dynamic relations between artist, entrepreneur and consumer, become a key element of promotional strategies in the music industry.

This approach is consistent with the perspective developed by representatives of the Poznan School of Information Economics, according to which information - understood as a resource managed in time and in relations - becomes a key component of economic value (Deszczyński, 2020; Rydzak, 2020). The transformation of the music market is therefore not only an effect of technological innovation but also a communicative transformation that fits the framework of transformational public relations (Ławniczak, 2005). Artists cease to be only senders of content and become active participants in networked dialogue with audiences, co-creating meanings and reputation.

## 1. The Concepts of Digitization and Digital Transformation

The term digitization is often used imprecisely, especially in relation to the English concepts digitization, digitalization and digital transformation. Although they appear similar, they describe different processes (Sugay, Rutyna, & Lewtak, n.d.). Distinguishing between them is essential for understanding contemporary changes in culture, communication and the economy.

Digitization is a technical process of converting data from analog to digital form, for example scanning printed documents, converting audio tapes into mp3 files or digitizing cultural heritage resources. According to the Dictionary of the Polish Language (n.d.), it means giving digital form to written and printed data stored on magnetic or other carriers. A similar definition is used by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which describes digitization as producing digital representations of original, especially material, cultural resources or transforming analog sound and image recordings into digital form (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 2009, n.d.).

Digitalization is a broader process involving the implementation of digital technologies into existing organizational, institutional and social structures. It also means the popularization of digital techniques and the development of electronic infrastructure. The Dictionary of the Polish Language (n.d.) defines it as the large-scale introduction of electronic infrastructure and the popularization of digital technology. The report Digitalization and the American Workforce quotes Gartner's definition, according to which digitalization is the use of technology and data to move toward a remote business model that generates new benefits and opportunities (Muro, Liu, Whiton, & Kulkarni, 2017, n.d.).

Digital transformation is the most complex of these concepts. It refers to comprehensive, strategic transformations of organizational, economic or social models. The implementation of new digital technologies leads to the creation of innovative business, operational and communication models. Such transformation is not limited to IT; it must involve the whole enterprise, including planning, production, marketing and customer relations. Pietruszynski (2018) argues that effective digital transformation requires building the structure and strategy of an enterprise around the opportunities offered by technology.

In the music market, this transformation is reflected not only in the technical sphere of production and distribution but also in the ways artists communicate with audiences. Rydzak (2016a, 2016b) notes that the use of digital technologies forces organizations to redefine communication models in which information is treated as a strategic resource, not only in the exchange of content but also in building relations, reputation and value.

Modern consumer practices, technological development and changing behavior of music-market actors lead to services based on new models of access to artistic creativity. At the same time, these services require a deeper understanding of audience needs and the use of new communication tools, consistent with transformational PR, in which communication is an adaptive and developmental factor (Ławniczak, 2005).

## **2. Digitization in Contemporary Culture**

Referring to the definitions above, digitization can be understood as the conversion of an analog signal into a digital one. It is a component of digitalization and of broader processes through which modern technologies are implemented in society. This understanding is justified because the transformation that enables analog data to be processed digitally can be applied far beyond the archiving of historical and cultural resources. The term is therefore appropriate when elements of reality are moved directly into the world of digital media.

Technological convergence has connected new media with many areas of social life, including art. Art, influenced by digital innovation, evolves together with the tools and technologies used in culture. Manovich (2006, p. 124) points to the two-layer structure of relations between culture and technology: the computer layer and the cultural layer interpenetrate and condition one another. The result is a new quality - computer culture - understood as an amalgam of human and machine meanings.

The influence of digitization on classical fields of artistic culture, including theater, music, painting and sculpture, has produced new forms of expression and participation. Audiences can participate in theater performances and concerts online and interact with their content through voting or commenting. Works of art become increasingly interactive and co-created by recipients. Examples include theater performances integrated with VR technologies, digital reconstructions of artworks in virtual museums and 3D objects designed for spatial printing.

In this context, the transformation of culture through digitalization corresponds to economic changes in the music industry. A broad offer of niche music, available through digital distribution channels, may generate higher revenue than focusing only on mainstream hits (Chlebowski, 2023). Digital trade eliminates logistical problems related to storing physical carriers and allows substantial reductions in operating costs (Lehmann, 2016, p. 62).

The multiplication of offers is connected with a greater diversity of tastes. Listeners no longer need to rely on the selection made by distributors and media. They can explore cultural niches independently and create personalized paths of cultural consumption (Szlendak, 2013, p. 10). As Anderson argued, the twentieth century belonged to hits, while the twenty-first century introduced the era of niches made possible by the digital

revolution. Digitalization thus brought a form of democratization of distribution: all products gained potential access to the market (Lehmann, 2016, p. 62).

From the perspective of the Poznan School of Information Economics, this process can be seen as part of a deeper informational transformation in which information, understood relationally and contextually, becomes a key element of competitive advantage (Deszczyński, 2020; Rydzak, 2020). In the econocentric approach, information is not merely a message but a carrier of economic, cultural and symbolic value.

Musical creativity, freed from institutional limitations, gained new channels of existence on the Internet. Every musical genre, regardless of its degree of commercialization, can be found and played by an interested listener. Easy searching and recommendation systems make the recipient the curator of his or her own musical experience. At the same time, many independent creators previously excluded from mass culture because they lacked financial support gained an opportunity to enter the market.

The democratization of distribution remains complex. Lehmann (2016, p. 62) notes that the mere possibility of placing a product on the market does not guarantee success; tools of promotion, visibility and reputation are also necessary. Informational activities based on reputational strategy, developed within TPR by Ławniczak (2001, 2005) and PSEI, become particularly important. This strategy assumes that reputation, built through active participation in social dialogue, becomes a key resource under conditions of content overload.

In sum, the music market, like other cultural fields, has undergone deep digital transformation. Audiences gained access to diverse forms of creativity, while creators gained the possibility of independently shaping their presence in the media space. This process, although full of challenges, provides a starting point for analyzing the role of information, technology and relations in digital culture.

### **3. From Analog Technologies to Digitization in the Music Market**

The Internet revolutionized everyday life by influencing both forms of communication and social cooperation. It also changed the way people consume content, including music. At the beginning of the 1990s the phonographic industry recorded exceptional sales results, while the global market was dominated by four major labels: Warner Music Group, EMI, Sony Music and Universal Music. Their dominance seemed stable.

At the same time, a group of German engineers had spent more than a decade working on a compressed sound format that would preserve CD quality while being easy to transmit and store on computers. In 1994 a breakthrough was achieved with the creation of MP3, which, through 12:1 compression, reduced file size without major loss of sound quality. Frequencies inaudible or irrelevant to the listener were removed. With the release of Windows 95, personal computers gained software capable of reading MP3 files, which enabled mass playback and copying (Dias dos Santos, 2016, pp. 6-10).

Social media did not yet exist, but simple websites and public chats such as '#MP3' began to function on the Internet, enabling users to share music. In response to this trend, Shawn Fanning created the peer-to-peer software Napster, which allowed users to exchange music files directly between computers and quickly gained massive popularity among Internet users.

In the following years many other P2P programs appeared, enabling the free exchange of files. The boundaries of musical preferences were no longer set by the media; individual taste determined what people listened to and when. Traditional media such as radio and television gradually ceased to meet consumer needs. They increasingly abandoned music or offered repertoires that did not correspond to audience expectations (Nożyński, 2016, n.d.).

Faced with this change, traditional media began to pursue the listener by following trends in social media and streaming services. Competition between radio and new streaming platforms became difficult, particularly because the term radio was adopted by online services, such as Internet radio, even though their functionality differed fundamentally from traditional radio.

The emergence of digital distribution opened new channels of access to music and initiated a process of deinstitutionalization of the phonographic market. Artists previously dependent on labels and radio stations gained an alternative path to audiences. This created space for new communication and relational models consistent with the transformational understanding of information as a key economic resource in the PSEI approach.

In the interpretation of the Poznan School of Information Economics, digitalization not only changes market structures but also redefines the roles of sender, receiver and distribution channels. The transition from institutional to network forms requires a new approach to information management: information is not a closed product but a dynamic process managed in time, space and relations (Rydzak, 2023). At the same time, this process fits the theory of TPR, in which the market actor - here the artist - ceases to be only a sender of content and becomes an active participant in the informational ecosystem (Ławniczak, 2009, 2005).

#### **4. Democratization of Music Production Channels**

The dissemination of files online became an important milestone for musicians, although their attitudes toward the democratization of production channels were divided at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Artists who supported file sharing saw P2P networks as an opportunity to reach wider audiences. They expected that this would later translate into higher revenues from tickets, album sales and merchandising. Opponents, following the narrative of record companies, argued that free file sharing would destroy the phonographic industry. In the end, both sides were partly right (Mulligan, 2015, pp. 177-182).

As technologies became more accessible, making music became easier and consuming recordings became less expensive. Some argued that the Internet could make artists independent of labels. Many musicians naively assumed that having their own website would be enough to reach fans and compete with major market actors (Mulligan, 2015, pp. 177-182). A significant example was Radiohead's 2007 self-release of *In Rainbows*, which could be downloaded for any amount, including for free. This gesture initiated thinking about new distribution models and new relations between artists and fans.

Artificial intelligence opens new perspectives for the music industry, especially in automation, cost reduction and accelerated production. Algorithms can generate compositions within seconds, support mastering and mixing, and adapt content communication to audiences. This raises the question of whether algorithmically generated music can attract attention as effectively as music based on human experience, emotion and cultural context (Chlebowski, 2024).

In the digital era, an artist's success is no longer defined only by the number of copies sold but also by social indicators: followers, engagement and visibility on platforms such as YouTube. For record labels, these indicators signal whether an artist can build relations with the audience and attract attention (Mulligan, 2015, pp. 177-182). Digital platforms support niche musicians who may sell out medium-sized venues even without appearing on charts (Chlebowski, 2023).

From the perspective of the Poznan School of Information Economics, this is a practical manifestation of the democratization of both production tools and communication channels, analyzed in the context of transformational PR and the informational value of

reputation (Ławniczak, 2005; Rydzak, 2011). Artists not only create but also manage their brand, social reception and relations with audiences, becoming capable of independently conducting communication campaigns.

In this new environment, independent musicians become micro-entrepreneurs. They develop business competencies, learn marketing, communication and team management. Some create structures resembling record labels, with promotion, distribution and legal-service functions. The DIY model means not only artistic independence but also communicative and financial self-reliance.

Contemporary labels increasingly expect artists to provide a complete package: recognition, a fan base and promotional experience. Their investment must have economic justification. In practice, most artists must first build an audience in the digital space before they are noticed by larger actors (Dias dos Santos, 2016, pp. 28-29).

The expansion of streaming media revolutionized music consumption. Platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music not only facilitate access but also shape listener tastes through algorithms and playlists. Ritchie (2015, pp. 5-7) emphasizes that today streaming platforms rather than radio programmers decide which songs become popular. According to Erik Ingham, Spotify controls demand through a combination of algorithmic recommendations and editorial curation (Ingham, 2018).

A new class of intermediaries therefore emerges: music curators who convert moods, emotions and lifestyles into informational structures and consumable forms (Eriksson, 2016, p. 61). This is also a transformation in the role of information as a resource: it not only informs but organizes and directs consumer behavior, which is consistent with PSEI theories.

From the audience perspective, algorithms that personalize content are not neutral; they influence choices and habits. Research indicates that Generation Y uses digital technologies and streaming more intensively than Generation X. Raised in market-economy conditions, this generation shows greater flexibility and selectiveness, which translates into non-standard purchasing and consumption behaviors (Kotler & Keller, 2012, pp. 219-222; Van den Bergh & Behrer, 2011, p. 24).

The democratization of music production and consumption also leads to the growth of cultural niches. Hipsterism, orientation toward craft products and the need to individualize musical tastes are now elements of conscious consumer strategy (Frank, 1998, p. 151). The music market ceases to be uniform and becomes, as Bartek Chacinski put it, a 'tangle of niches' in which off and alternative artists function alongside the mainstream, often deriving competitive advantage from unique identities (Chacinski, 2010, p. 7).

The development of technologies for recording, producing and distributing musical content has further blurred the boundaries between creator, sender and receiver. The personal computer has become a creative tool, a recording studio and a means of transmission. The modularity of digital media enables the combination and transformation of different types of data, including texts, images and sounds, almost immediately, globally and directly (Kluszczyński, 2010, p. 142; McQuail, 2007, p. 156).

From the PSEI perspective, the communication ecosystem has been deeply transformed. Information, reputation and relation replace physical carriers as the basic resources of economic value. This process redefines not only the distribution model but also the identity of the artist as a subject actively participating in social, cultural and economic life. Digitalization changes not only communication tools; it changes the logic of the whole market. Intangible resources such as audience attention, algorithm credibility and curator reputation become the new capital of cultural creators.

## 5. Democratization of Music Distribution Tools

Before music acquired its current form of digital distribution, the possibilities of recording and reaching listeners were significantly limited. The phonographic market was controlled by several dominant actors: Warner Music Group, EMI, Sony Music and Universal Music. The only realistic path to a wider audience was concert performance, meaning access limited by physical presence. Artists had to hope that industry representatives would attend their shows and offer a label contract. Although the largest actors still exist, their dominance has weakened considerably. The Internet opened a new chapter in the history of the music market, offering revolutionary tools to creators and listeners seeking authentic and independent music.

The barrier to market entry was significantly lowered, allowing greater creative freedom. Although positive for artists, this also intensified competition and increased audience expectations of free access to content. Music aggregators play a key role in the new ecosystem by combining digital rights, both copyright and performance rights, and transferring them to digital music stores and streaming platforms such as iTunes and Spotify. Operating in the B2B model, aggregators bridge individual artists or independent labels and global platforms (Gałuszka, 2015, p. 262).

Contracts between artists and aggregators are often exclusive, which means that an artist cannot license the same material to several intermediaries at the same time. Digital platforms, in turn, cooperate with many aggregators and choose those with the largest and most diverse catalogs. The strength of catalogs makes aggregators attractive partners for music platforms. Their activities simplify digital distribution by eliminating the need for costly and complex negotiations with hundreds of individual creators.

In the new reality musicians increasingly build their own independent business models. Thanks to access to inexpensive tools and free promotional platforms such as social media, many functions previously performed by record labels can be carried out independently at home. Cheap instruments, studio software and marketing tools give artists more control over production and promotion. To monetize creativity, however, a musician must build an active community. It is assumed that approximately 2,500 loyal fans constitute a minimum base enabling the start of music sales (Passman, 2014).

The subscription model based on streaming is currently the main vector of market development. With the growing availability of smartphones, 5G connectivity and the integration of music services with social platforms, music consumption becomes increasingly fluid and individualized. Gałuszka (2012, pp. 39-40) predicts further development of the subscription model enriched with the possibility of downloading individual songs and creating playlists. Audience behavior is evolving in the same direction: listeners increasingly do not 'own' music but obtain temporary on-demand access to it.

From the perspective of the Poznan School of Information Economics, these changes are part of a deeper transformation of market relations. Information becomes not only a resource but also a key component of the creator's economic and reputational value. In the logic of transformational public relations, the artist functions not only as a sender of messages but as an actor in an information system whose visibility, recognizability and market value depend on skilful information management in the digital environment. A musician no longer needs own infrastructure; access to an ecosystem of services is sufficient to manage the whole life cycle of a song, from production and promotion to distribution and analytics. Digitalization democratizes access and redefines market presence, now measured by plays, recommendations and shares rather than physical presence in music stores.

## **6. Social Media as an Important Channel of Communication between Musicians and Consumers**

Recent years have seen dynamic growth in the use of social media for promotional activities. They are used by both companies operating exclusively online and entities functioning in traditional business models. According to the Digital 2020 report, between January 2019 and January 2020 alone the number of social media users increased globally by 321 million, or 9.2 percent (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2020).

The search for new brands often begins in Google, but more users also use search functions directly within social media platforms such as Facebook. Purchasing decisions are then influenced by recommendations, the number of friends liking a brand fanpage and the brand's online presence and image. Similar mechanisms apply to the promotion of musical artists: consumers assess visibility, content availability and the quality of communication.

Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and TikTok allow artists not only to promote songs but also to contact fans directly, learn their opinions and needs, and continuously adapt their offer and repertoire. Such interactions increase audience loyalty and facilitate relationship maintenance. The proper selection of target groups is essential, because many promotional campaigns are based on precise targeting and audience engagement through personalized content.

Stelzner (2019, p. 7) indicates that social media users willingly check opinions about products and services, and negative comments can effectively discourage purchases. This also applies to artists. Users react to songs, podcasts, transmissions, concert announcements and promotional materials. Contemporary artist promotion therefore requires knowledge of online communication mechanisms and skilful reputation management, understood in the spirit of PSEI as an information resource shaped in relations with the social and economic environment (Ławniczak et al., 2003; Ławniczak, 2009, 2023; Rydzak, 1999, 2011).

The use of artificial intelligence in the process of creating and promoting music is a new phenomenon. Despite concerns regarding the service market (Woźniak-Jęchorek et al., 2023), tools such as ChatGPT allow artists and their teams to obtain support in editing content, planning campaigns and recommending promotional and communication tools. The AI interface based on NLP technology enables conversations and marketing decisions in real time.

The most popular channels of communication between musicians and consumers include YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Each has specific features, including subscription-like functions such as subscriptions and likes, and viral interaction: a like, comment or share by one user may transmit the message to that user's entire network.

A key element of communication effectiveness is appropriate posting frequency. Excessively frequent posts may be perceived as spam, while posts that are too rare make it impossible to build relations with recipients.

Cultural institutions, including theaters, museums and philharmonics, as well as artists, event organizers, festivals and concert agencies increasingly use social media. Chabrzyk et al. (2019, pp. 10-11) note that social media enable these entities to reach diverse audience groups and increase the effectiveness of promotional activities.

For communication strategy planning, it is important to understand the differences between channels. Instagram and Facebook are perceived by users as independent platforms, but they function as part of a common advertising ecosystem that also includes Messenger and Facebook Audience Network. This integrated system attracts millions of daily users and offers some of the most advanced targeting tools on the market.

YouTube, the third most frequently visited website in Poland (Gemius/PBI, 2019), offers artists the possibility to publish music videos, concerts, vlogs and other video materials, as

well as to cooperate with influencers and content creators. Paid-media formats are also increasingly important because they help build reach in paid campaigns.

The development of social media redefines relations between artists and the public. Communication in the era of digitalization is no longer a one-way transmission. It becomes an element of the real-time co-creation of reputation and cultural value (Adamus-Matuszyńska et al., 2023).

## **7. Streaming Services and Algorithms in the Music Industry**

Changes in the supply structure of the phonographic market cannot be omitted because they result from the dynamic development of digital technologies. Music became widely available through the Internet, which made distribution possible via modern channels. These are most often downloadable music files and, currently dominant, music offered by streaming services. Brands enabling the purchase of downloadable music include iTunes Store, Amazon, 7digital, Empik, Bandcamp and eMusic. Bandcamp is especially important for independent artists; within ten years they received 345 million dollars directly from fans through the platform (Harris, 2019).

The most popular streaming services include Spotify, Apple Music, Google Music, Tencent Music, Amazon and Deezer. Spotify and Apple Music stand out because of the number of available songs, offering between 30 and 40 million recordings that can be played at any time. These systems have applications for computers, smartphones, tablets and televisions (Woźniak, 2019, p. 31), providing users with mobility and convenience previously unavailable through traditional carriers.

The largest music corporations, the majors, do not run their own streaming platforms but enter into agreements with digital retailers such as the services listed above. Despite revenues, labels initially treated changes in the supply model with caution. Gałuszka describes this attitude as 'marketing myopia,' resulting from the lack of a broader view of the changing market (Gałuszka, 2009, pp. 210-211). They relied too long on physical carriers despite the growing popularity of streaming. In Poland, CDs and vinyl are still the most frequently purchased carriers, while digital music subscriptions rank only third. This may indicate a relatively low level of adaptation among Polish consumers.

According to the Global Music Report 2018, streaming accounted for as much as 38 percent of global music sales revenues. Statista reported that in March 2018 Apple Music had 49.5 million users and Spotify 47.7 million. Spotify uses the communication slogan 'You are what you stream.' The platform applies recommendation algorithms that assign music suggestions according to individual preferences. The listener does not need to select songs independently but receives ready-made playlists containing mood music, pop, hip-hop, electronic music, rock, workout music, indie/alternative and other categories. The service also provides an artist radio function and generates sets of songs by similar artists, although similarity remains an ambiguous notion.

Portals such as Spotify, Tidal and Deezer use algorithms to select and recommend songs by matching them to a listener profile built from the user's activity history. The recipient leaves digital traces - choices, skips and saves - that allow musical taste to be reconstructed and a personalized sound library to be prepared. Suggestions are based partly on similarities and partly on presenting new releases.

In difficult matters connected with choosing and searching through the offer, the algorithm becomes the listener's assistant. Nevertheless, as a sequence of operations based on input data, it lacks the ability to evaluate artistic quality. Music collections are created by people - specialists or curators, most often music journalists, DJs and artists - who construct playlists. They use knowledge, experience and data supplied by services such as Spotify, Apple and Google concerning audience tastes and preferences. They are supported by the PUMA tool, Playlist Usage Monitoring and Analysis, which analyzes plays, skips and saves

(Nożyński, 2018, p. 79). The quality of recommendations and accuracy of choices become objects of competition between services.

Content search engines, recommendation systems and applications for exploring music resources are now at the core of global digital culture. Spotify allows users to analyze their own preferences, and Discover Weekly is considered one of the most advanced recommendation engines. Ratliff describes it as a Spotify playlist delivered automatically to subscribers that connects one's taste with the tastes of other users assessed as related, trying to know not only what the listener likes but also what the listener seeks (Nożyński, 2018, p. 79).

Recommendations may reduce the pleasure of discovering music independently, but they also limit the risk of failed choices. Curators play the role of new gatekeepers: they filter content, order the offer and guide audiences through a world of information overload. In streaming services, curators include professionals and users. This continues social practices known before the digital era, such as recommending music to friends, now transferred to a new media environment. The curator is not a censor; the function is to indicate valuable content, not to restrict it.

Unlimited access to music does not eliminate the need for specialists. On the contrary, in the thicket of content their role as guides becomes increasingly important. Nearly 60 percent of American streaming users use playlists, and the 40 most important commercial radio programmers mainly play what appears on Spotify and Apple Music. According to Daniel Ek, founder of Spotify, more than 30 percent of music consumption on the platform results directly from algorithmic and curatorial recommendations, which gives the company the possibility of controlling the demand curve (Ingham, 2018, n.d.).

The contemporary listener creates playlists in a way resembling database organization. Selection of songs becomes more important than their order, and the album as a coherent whole loses significance. There are several reasons: abandonment of physical carriers in favor of digital distribution and the growing importance of personalized collections. The music market returns to a singles model. Artists increasingly publish new recordings online, often with music videos, contributing to the enormous popularity of YouTube's music section (Filiciak, Hofmokl, & Tarkowski, 2012, pp. 3-7).

Success in the new model depends on the ability to adapt to consumption trends. Artists release new recordings more frequently but in smaller portions. This is beneficial both for them and for audiences, who more readily choose individual songs than traditional albums. Playlists become eclectic, combining artists and genres, often created with the help of algorithms learning user preferences. Radio Garden, which enables listening to radio stations around the world, is an example.

With the explosion of available content, the role of the music journalist as a guide weakens. The boundary between expert and audience becomes blurred: the audience becomes the expert. Despite the fascinating potential of exploration, studies show that users choose what they already know. Digital transformation led to the dominance of social media, streaming platforms and crowdfunding as key promotional tools. Creators have greater chances of success if they adapt to new forms of consumption.

Not every song will find an audience. The Internet is full of undiscovered websites, blogs and music databases - so-called zero media (Szpunar, 2016). Although digital distribution does not mean the end of albums, it offers artists more democratic access to the market. Release formats are now determined by convenience and speed. Limited editions and preorders gain popularity, and some albums are not available in streaming, which may express a creator's originality.

Two aspects require separate study: formal-legal and technological issues. Streaming occupies an intermediate position between legal distribution and digital piracy. Artists receive royalties, but they must generate millions of plays to earn noticeable income. On

the other hand, the popularity of torrents is decreasing and streaming is becoming more common. Some compare streaming to fast food: music is easily available but often of low quality (Nożyński, 2017, p. 109).

The mechanisms of music recommendation, algorithmization of taste and the role of curators within digital platforms correspond to broader phenomena in digital communication. In the Poznan School of Information Economics, they are interpreted as transformations of communicative, informational and reputational functions. From this perspective, streaming platforms are not merely tools for transmitting content but selective structures that shape norms, preferences and values within the digital culture ecosystem. This allows for a critical view of algorithmic systems as mechanisms of reproducing influence and visibility for both artists and consumers.

## **8. Informational Activities of Artists under Conditions of Music Digitalization**

According to Piotr Gałuszka, artists' marketing communication can take three forms: through mass media, through distributors and retailers, and directly in relations with consumers. The most common promotional strategy is the creation of buzz, consisting in a rapid increase in the artist's publicity, the publication of articles in mass media and presence in critical discourse (Gałuszka, 2009, pp. 115-118). In the digital era, creating such buzz is much easier thanks to social media, which offer powerful possibilities for rapid and multichannel data flow.

The phonographic market remains strongly connected with classical mass media channels - radio, television and press - as well as with Internet platforms offering access to music videos, concert reports, podcasts and other audiovisual formats. One popular form of radio promotion is airplay: broadcasting songs and accompanying relations from events. Such communication is based on a symbiotic dependence between artists, producers and radio stations, all interested in maximizing the reach of broadcast songs. Listeners, becoming familiar with a repertoire, are more inclined to purchase it, while radio stations increase their audience by selecting popular songs (Gałuszka, 2009).

The second channel of media promotion consists of audiovisual transmissions, especially music videos, interviews and concert recordings broadcast on television or platforms such as YouTube. Although professional video production may be costly, potential reach and the viral effect make it an important promotional tool. Labels sometimes resign from high-budget production because of low expected profitability, but a successful music video can stimulate broad user distribution of content.

As digitalization of the music market progresses, traditional business models become destabilized, forcing both labels and artists to redefine strategies. Phonographic firms that previously dominated the market now attempt to adapt to dynamic changes in consumer behavior. Transformation concerns not only distribution channels but also communication with audiences.

In this context, social media acquire growing significance. Anderton et al. (2013, p. 110) note that they introduced a new channel of interactive communication between artists and the public. Social media were not part of the classical music industry, but today they constitute a key component of promotion and relationship building. Their immediate and personalized character enables artists to offer audiences content that goes beyond music: backstage materials, interactive videos and behind-the-scenes relations. The artist-fan relationship becomes continuous, not only cyclical and limited to album releases.

Platforms such as YouTube, the second largest search engine in the world after Google and the largest global music service, require artists, especially independent ones, to maintain constant presence and activity. For many artists, YouTube is the main channel of music distribution and a promotional space where marketing, communication and image

functions are combined. This medium requires rapid reaction, the ability to manage audience attention and the creation of authentic identity in a digital environment.

Trent Reznor emphasizes that monitoring changes in the media environment is now a basic obligation of the artist. In his opinion, independent creators should actively analyze their market environment, identify opportunities and threats, and build strategies based not only on intuition but also on data and research (Masnick, 2009, n.d.).

In the light of the Poznan School of Information Economics, artists' informational activities in digital environments can be viewed as part of broader processes of communicative and media transformation. Particular attention is paid to the transformation of sending and selection functions, previously performed by traditional media and cultural institutions and now performed by artists themselves or by platform mechanisms. In this view, artists' communication is not only an element of reputation formation and relationship management but also part of building their own value and the value of the market through active participation in the digital circulation of information.

## **Conclusion**

The digital transformation of the music market, caused by progressive digitalization and the development of information and communication technologies, led to deep changes in the consumption of musical content. Instead of sales of traditional sound carriers such as CDs, vinyl records and cassettes, the model of streaming music - immediately available, mobile and on demand - is becoming increasingly widespread. At the same time, production, distribution and promotion channels have been democratized, allowing artists, especially independent ones, to conduct informational activities without traditional labels.

These new possibilities do not mean equal access to success. Because production and promotional tools, including streaming platforms, social media and digital audio editors, are easily available, the market has expanded radically in terms of both the number of creators and the number of released works. Former entry barriers have been replaced by new challenges: oversupply of content, declining visibility of debuting artists and intensified competition.

The complexity of the digital cultural environment requires further research into revenue structures and the influence of technology on artistic practices. Despite the dominance of streaming as the main channel of music consumption, the concert market remains a key source of income for most creators, especially in the independent segment. This shows that physical presence and performativity, strengthened by technology and visual setting, still play an important role in building relations with audiences and the economic value of music. Psychosocial consequences of the DIY model, including burnout and income inequalities, also require reflection, because digitalization often does not reduce these problems and in many cases deepens them (Chlebowski, 2023).

In the reality of an overloaded music market, only a small percentage of released recordings generate measurable profits. Success depends not only on talent and artistic quality but also on the ability to plan strategically, access to resources such as time, money and relations, knowledge of the rules of the digital environment and the unpredictable element of luck. Artists' informational activities under conditions of digitalization are therefore complex and multidimensional, covering the communicative, economic, technological and symbolic spheres.

From a cognitive and critical perspective close to the Poznan School of Information Economics, it can be observed that the independence of creators does not eliminate the need for content selection and audience-attention management. In the digital information ecosystem, algorithms, platforms and curators become new intermediaries of visibility. In this arrangement, the artist not only communicates and creates but also negotiates

presence within the data stream, competing for users' attention, time and engagement - the currencies of the digital era.

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