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Special Section

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Marketing and Music in an Age of Digital Reproduction

Marketing and music: Context and change

The papers contained in this section highlight several key issues for marketing and music that go beyond the well-known applications of digital reproduction in the industry. Consequently, in this introduction we aim to develop and discuss some of the themes that are most important for advancing our understanding of the relationship between music and marketing.

The music business, particularly the recording industry, has undergone radical change in recent years, which is often attributed to digitisation. In the period between Napster (the peer-to-peer file-sharing network) gaining critical mass of usage (1999-2000) and legal streaming becoming a mainstream consumer practice (approximately 2014-2015) the recording industry declined in sales by approximately 47% (The Recording Industry of Association of America, 2015). Despite this, the overall trend is upward. In 2017 the global record industry grew by over 8% (IFPI, 2018). Of course these figures are often disputed because technical, delivery and consumption changes make it difficult to compile figures which for example equate each pirated song to a sale (Cusic et al., 2005), or more recently any song that is streamed freely to a digital or physical sale (Weijters et al., 2014). The precise figures are not all that matters however, - it is the narrative and those groups that such narratives serve that are important to recognise. It is certainly not serving the majority of artists judging by the continuing problems they encounter regarding royalties (Marshall, 2015) and the lack of attention that this issue receives in wider public debate.

The narrative is that the record industry - a term used incorrectly (UK Music, 2016) in both academia and industry as shorthand for a wider industry - has been declining for 15 years because of digital disruption and now it is growing again because the major record labels have finally figured out the necessity of embracing this age of digital disruption. The economic fate of the industry at this time and the 'disarticulation' of the marketplace status quo (Giesler, 2008) attracted marketing scholars who were interested in the morality of consumers and marketplace strategies of technological containment (e.g. Fisher, 2004; Chiou et al., 2005). It is understandable why such matters would get most of the attention from business scholars because of the immediacy of the economic problems that it caused, not just for major labels but artists and a host of other stakeholders. However, the reality is that such technological disruption has created a variety of other questions that marketing scholars were somewhat slow to address initially. Consequently, in recent years studies have focused on what music looks like as a 'consumer product/service' (Saren, 2015) in the digital age. Research has asked how the digitalisation of music changed our psychology around ownership and identity (Denegri-Knott et al., 2013; Sinclair and Tinson, 2017), the sociomaterial conditions of music consumption (Magaudda, 2011), communal creativity (Gamble and Gilmore, 2013) and everyday life.

The papers in this section explore specific industry and consumer contexts and raise new questions that contribute to our understanding of marketing and music in an age of digital reproduction. However the importance of these studies goes beyond their immediate context, which acts as a

metaphor and illumination of key themes and as battleground for theoretical engagement and progression in the social sciences. What is so special about music though? Surely the same can be said about almost any context of consumption. There is a practicality to using music as a lens in the contemporary digital society. The recording industry was the first significant marketplace to experience the impact of digital disruption at such a visible public level. Its position has almost been seen as a canary down the goldmine, for media and publishing industries in particular, as it embraces or stumbles head first into a wave of new technological innovation, both in production and consumption.

This perhaps speaks to the creativity and innovation we associate with a variety of stakeholders concerned with music and leads us to our next point. One of the key jobs of an academic is to find ways of communicating ideas in an accessible and engaging way. Music is a universal language from which we can do that. Although the level of our interest in music differs, depending on the individual, it is not something we can avoid in our daily lives (e.g. muzak), nor something that we can ignore socio-historically or culturally (e.g. national anthems). It embeds itself into the rhythms of everyday life and is intrinsically entangled with emotion, memory and identity (Hesmondhalgh, 2008) and hence we argue that, like language, music has the potential to inform our experiences and perception of the world. Consequently, it makes perfect sense to use music for the purposes of engagement and communicating broader ideas and there is a long tradition of marketing academics that have used this approach from Milliman (1982) right up to this journal edition. However, the majority of these studies contextualise music through text. Every paper submitted to this call for papers (including this one) reverted to the inertia of traditional academic methods of communication, rather than engage with the core feature of the very subject we are discussing (i.e. the music!). The authors were of course left with little option but to submit via text. The wider point we are making is to emphasise the limitation of the academic journal format and to call for more opportunities for wider forms of communication and expression of the topic. Following on from the interpretive turn in consumer research (Hirschman, 1989) there has been an increase in alternative modes of expression such as poetry and videography (Rokka et al., 2018). Bradshaw and Brownlie (2009) called for greater use of 'audiography' methods almost a decade ago in their portrait of Morris Holbrook, where Holbrook's playing of the sax helped communicate important ideas about the future of marketing theory. Hartmann and Ostberg (2018) recently published a paper that critiques consumer culture theory through song but in general music tends to be conspicuous by its absence in any academic discussion of marketing and music outside of a minor number of CCT studies. This is something that needs to be addressed in the future in all areas of marketing research that use music as a lens and perhaps even beyond the immediate context.

Commerce vs art

The title of this special section paraphrases that of Walter Benjamin's (1968) essay on the work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction. Benjamin contends that reproduction substitutes a plurality of copies for one unique existence and so threatens the work of art's embeddedness in tradition by 'tearing it out of context'. He goes on to examine how the 'aura' and 'authenticity' of the work of art jeopardised by its reproduction beyond its origins in time and space.

In contrast, marketing and consumer research scholars have discussed music, or any form of art for that matter, in more binary terms of art versus commerce. Their gut instinct tends to be that commercial incentives obscure and suffocate true art - and this is often acknowledged in arts marketing research (Kubacki and Croft, 2004; Schroeder, 2005; Bradshaw et al., 2006). Critical theorists such as Adorno still play a crucial role in framing their conversation – the central argument

being that any commercial involvement in art cheapens its value, suffocates critical expression and essentially turns it into another industrialised and mass-produced product. As Benjamin's essay illustrates, not all members of the so-called Frankfurt School would be seen at the extreme end of this debate, but the ghost of Adorno and his core arguments regarding popular music still linger in the shadows for most arts marketing scholars of this tradition. This is despite the greater prominence of accounts that emphasise and celebrate the agency of individuals to interpret and shape the social world around them through music (Goulding et al., 2002; Goulding and Shankar, 2011; Ulusoy, 2016).

These accounts are a backlash to the passive way in which Adorno and critical theorists frame consumers of music. The consumer's voice is never heard. Such experiential accounts of music are also a reaction to the behavioural paradigm of music and marketing research which can often ignore the agency of the consumer. Interpretive consumer culture accounts take a more nuanced position concerning the relationship between marketing and music, exploring the significance of consumer power, creativity and resistance in escaping (Kozinets, 2002) or shaping (Goulding et al., 2009) artistic (emphasis on music) marketplaces (albeit temporarily). However, there is an explicit understanding of the complexity and fluidity of how cultural capital is shaped and attained in such markets. In simple terms, it often depends on the degree of visibility of a commercial presence and hence marketplace myths and demythologising practices (Arsel and Thompson, 2011) are often deployed to obscure the reality that some form of commercial and marketing thinking will inevitably inform the production and consumption of music.

Digital disruption and the de-centralisation of commercial power

The digital disruption of the marketplace has further complicated this relationship and a few years ago appeared to have ushered in a new era beyond the control of big record labels and whims of the commercial imperative. Lost within the moral and economic panic of piracy was the potential this provided to democratise access to music (Rojek, 2005) and develop a greater sense of social inclusion. Furthermore, the technology, legal or otherwise, allows for a larger number of voices to be heard and in theory should foster greater creativity and innovation. Bradshaw and Shankar (2008: 522) argue that music is an insightful context from which we can view the blurring of the boundaries between production and consumption and that 'the musician may be creator, consumer and seller at once, music can be thought of as a social model in which consumption and production co-exist and are mutually constitutive.' The major record labels stifled creativity and diversity because they controlled the means of production and public taste through their relationship with key gatekeepers (e.g. radio DJs). Consequently, they could focus on promoting and disseminating a smaller number of artists/genres and essentially print money through recycling the same old music through different formats. Independent labels and artists were left to feed off the crumbs of the top table in their own individual ways but it could be argued that this provided (and still does) a greater sense of authenticity to their artistic endeavours.

The digital disruption, the apparent day zero of the new music world, did and still does offer a sense of excitement because of the sudden de-centralisation of power, the greater ease of access and variety of choice available to consumers. However, it would be naïve to think in such utopian terms. In the short-term piracy has created many casualties; for example the runners, the production assistants, the session musicians and the small artists (Shultz and Nill, 2002). These are the stakeholders who suffer most when times are hard - not the established superstar artists. Musicians have been viewed historically as servants of the patronage class (Elias, 1993) and even when the social status of musicians shifted in the 18th century (See Ogden et al., 2011 for a history of music and marketing), it was often a small number of powerful stakeholders who profited most from their

work. Artists will inevitably suffer during times of technological disruption because of the history of lopsided power dynamics in the industry. In the long-term the major labels (Sony and Universal own over half of the recording music market) have demonstrated powers of recovery similar to the T1000 from Terminator 2 in terms of how it apparently seems impossible to kill and even when it is killed it manages to reform through any shape it touches, in this case the shape being the digital sphere. The centralisation of power very much exists again in the recording industry and the trends suggest that this is also happening in the digital sector with Spotify and Apple competing for supremacy.

The question is what such monopolies mean for the relationship between art and commerce in the contemporary setting? How will it influence the content of the music that is produced and the ways in which we consume it? The recording industry has historically attracted similar questions as a consequence of its commercial motives. On the one hand the emphasis on building a marketplace and the technologies used allows for us to access almost any music we desire and instantaneously in almost any space for free or a very small cost (premium accounts). Such consumption helps improve the quality of applications such as Spotify as the increasing usage creates more data which feeds the algorithm and the recommendation function which helps us discover and share (in theory) a greater variety of music that we are likely to enjoy. In short, the more users it attracts, the more connected it becomes, the bigger it gets, the better for the consumer and the artist. So far so good.

Cost of 'free'

On closer inspection it seems that we are discussing such music applications in a similar celebratory techno-progressive manner and tone that we might associate with the early discussions of social media and the internet. Consequently, we should be asking the same hard questions that scholars now ask of social media platforms such as Facebook. In particular, what is the cost of free? Who has access to our music consumption data, how is it used and what are the privacy implications? The commercial advantages of having access to such data are obvious. Music taste reveals so much about our interests, values, personalities and how we make judgments of others (e.g. North, 2011; Boer et al., 2011; Knox and MacDonald, 2016). Streaming services are not shy about communicating the many uses of this data to potential partners. Music has always been used to target individuals along these lines, whether it is in the retail space or through advertising. The difference is that it can be done now with a greater degree of accuracy. Research is needed that reflects the changes that have taken place in this marketplace as a consequence of how companies such as Soundtrack your Brand and Mood Media are using big music data sets. What is really different here is that big data can be used to target individuals at an emotional level and in real-time. It is surely not a coincidence that streaming applications are increasingly structuring music content by categorising mood and affect. There is a playlist for every mood and for each task (e.g. commuting, exercising) of our everyday lives (Sinclair and Tinson, 2017). Consequently, such streaming applications can feasibly develop a comprehensive emotional profile of any individual user and of even more concern is that this data can be potentially used to alter or influence mood. This has of course been an issue in social media where Facebook courted much controversy when it experimented with its user's emotional states through adjusting the algorithm to measure the impact it had on the content users posted (Recuber, 2015). This is an issue that requires greater transparency and the data management of the major music streaming applications is one site where researchers should pay attention to.

The major recording industry labels have been critiqued because of the influence that their centralised power had (and still does) over the quality and types of music that is given prominence in the mainstream media (Kretschmer et al., 1999). The proliferation of digital platforms has provided musicians of a variety of genres the space in which to disseminate their music. However, as a

reduced number of companies come to dominate the space, we are left again in a situation where the balance of control is held by a small number of key gatekeepers and the influence this has on the quality and variety of music that gains public attention is unknown. To take a cynical view, it can be argued that the era of digital music will follow a similar pattern of standardisation to the commercial era it is currently displacing – the difference being that the emphasis on analysing big music data to understand and predict music consumption will accelerate the standardisation process to a much more efficient and controlled level. Instead of signing bands because they sound similar to successful acts such as Coldplay and Oasis, it might be artists who achieve the optimal lyrical valence, beats per minute and chord progression that historically indicate the probability of a top 40 hit. Léveillé (2017) has already demonstrated how popular music compositional practices have changed in line with attention economy principles. For example, the average length of an introduction in a song has reduced significantly in recent years. It is only a matter of time before it becomes the standard practice for labels and artists to draw from these types of data insights. Consequently more research at an industry level is needed.

Rage against the Machine

The concerns that we identify here in our discussion of the relationship between art and commerce follow a familiar pattern. Prominent within this analysis is a scepticism and possible fear of the influence that technology will have on art. We have gone from imagining the democratising and creative potential of new music technologies of production and sharing to concern about privacy, the potential stifling of creativity and unequal labour practices. There is a historical precedence to such arguments. As we have seen, Benjamin was concerned about the effects of mechanical reproduction on any art form. More specifically, Adorno (1945) was highly critical of the impact that the radio had on music. He argued that it was complicit in standardising music as another commodity of reproduction which discouraged meaningful critical engagement because of the increased amount of music it allowed individuals to access. Furthermore, he claimed that popular music radio gave voice to, manifested the illusion of choice and a sense of ‘pseudo-individualism’ amongst music consumers. The concerns that Adorno identifies regarding the access and choice that radio provides and the subsequent impact it has on the ‘quality’ of music and our level of engagement is something that is considered in the context of every significant music technological leap, whether it is the popularity of music television or the contemporary trend for streaming music. Sinclair and Tinson (2017) refer briefly to the largely functional use of music by streaming consumers and the sense of mundanity that is experienced despite (or possibly because of) the increase in their consumption in what Schwartz (2004) refers to as the paradox of choice. Furthermore, there is evidence within marketplace trends and in academia that there is a resistance to digital music technologies with significant attention paid to vinyl (Batmanski and Woodward, 2015; Hendricks, 2016) which has seemingly been anointed the gold standard in music ‘authenticity’ and the symbol of everything that was good/is right about music. The year on year growth in this market for the last 15 years indicates that this is no fad but does speak to an increasing obsession with nostalgia within the marketplace (Cervellon and Brown, 2018). Papers within this very issue use music to explore the subjects of nostalgia and authenticity and it is likely this particular area will expand and become increasingly important as the technologies continue to develop.

What is the reason for this resistance to or at least unease with new technologies that democratise access to music consumption and provide us with almost infinite choice? In short, it appears to be the fear that ‘the machines’, a loosely used term here to infer a non-human mechanical entity, will increasingly functionalise our experience with art and ultimately de-humanise it, be it at a corporate and/or experiential level. We must of course be wary of considering the relationship of music and

technology along such deterministic lines. It is the individual and the society's use of a technology that ultimately shapes its influence. And it is that point precisely that creates concern when one considers our earlier discussion regarding music and commercial data management. Is it not up to us how we integrate these technologies into our lives, are these anxieties and misuses of technology not a product of our own social construction? Do the actual characteristics of the technology even matter?

These are the questions that we must keep in mind when examining the relationship between music and technology. In particular they are likely to be significant as we traverse into the age of machine learning. We are already at the point where machines can create music with perhaps the most famous example being 'Daddy's Car' a song created by researchers at Sony which programmed software to analyse a large data set of lead sheets to develop a song that sounded stylistically similar to the Beatles. This has of course attracted the attention of a marketplace that sees the potential to cut costs drastically (who needs musicians or royalty payments?) and perhaps creates a more focused and 'effective' product, particularly in retail. How might one programme a machine to write a jingle for an advertisement or background music that is designed specifically to maximise a specific emotion or encourage a specific behaviour? These are the questions that will be increasingly asked by businesses. Our job is to scrutinise the implications of this change in the marketplace, particularly from an ethical perspective. However, again it is important to point out that these are human-made algorithms; these are human-made intentions and subsequent concerns regarding the use of such technologies.

Although the technology for this is at its relative infancy (it is mostly used for background music in YouTube videos), it is improving, as all machine learning applications do when fed by an increasing amount of data. The instinct is to fear or dismiss such technological advancements because of the potential implications this may have on the already precarious position of musician and other affiliated jobs or because of the literal de-humanising aspects of the art itself if a machine is responsible for creating it. It appears to be the inevitable end game of music production that began with the development of the first instruments in the Stone Age. However, history tells us that we usually succumb to the benefits of a disruptive technology in music, whether this is Bob Dylan using an electric guitar in concert for the first time, the prevalence of artists using laptops, drum machines and Autotune or whether it is machines actively creating music. The appropriate response to such technologies has always been to engage with them creatively, whether you are artist or marketer. One could argue that the increasing precision of machine learning algorithms could potentially address some of the issues within the music industry, both creatively and otherwise, to generate the unpredictable and exhilarating experience of music that we are all seeking (see Wolinski, 2017).

Topics addressed in the special section papers

This special section brings together the latest research and thinking about music and marketing that are highlighted by the revolution in the technologies of music reproduction and consumption. The idea for the special section was developed from a British Academy funded workshop which took place in the University of Stirling in November 2017. The large number of papers that were submitted (38 in total) indicates a wide berth of interest in the topic of music and marketing and the variety of contexts identified signals a strong inter-disciplinary focus concerning the topic. All of the papers submitted offered a potential relevant contribution to this collection and influenced this editorial but unfortunately we could only select seven papers for publication based on the external reviewers' final evaluations. Marketing draws from a wide number of academic perspectives and the editors have attempted to represent as many of these voices as possible to reflect the audience of this journal.

The paper from Kask and Oberg speaks to the themes of disruption and recovery that are prominent in this editorial. They outline how the major record labels have survived as a consequence of a legacy of control of the supply chain and the marketing assets that they hold. This paper offers an alternative narrative to the often common conception that the days of traditional labels are numbered because of the rise of peer-to-peer sharing activities. The study by Gamble follows the industry focus of the previous paper through examining the feasibility of record labels using equity crowd funding. The potential appropriation of such methods paints a picture of the traditional industry at a crossroads which at once shows the potential of embracing consumer-centric initiatives while also demonstrating the problematic nature of an overtly commercial presence.

A key theme in this paper is the importance of loyalty which provides a companion piece for the next paper in the section by Obiegu et al. which focuses on how loyalty is constructed in the digital spaces of a U2 fan forum. This shifts the narrative of the special section to the consumer, highlighting the active role that fans play in shaping a community and what it actually means to be a music fan. Such music based case studies allow us to go beyond the immediate context as Obiegu and colleagues make an important contribution to the brand loyalty literature by demonstrating the role of a discursive understanding of consumer-consumer engagement.

The focus on loyalty informs our understanding of music as a product/service at the front and centre of our lives. The increasing presence of digital spaces allows the consumer to engage with artists and other fans in multiple ways. Additionally, advances in digital technology also allow for music consumers to integrate their consumption in their everyday life to a greater degree than ever before. Fuentes and colleagues shift the focus from music consumption as a central practice to explore how music listening shapes, interweaves and is in turn shaped by other practices through what they term as *soundtracking*. Fuentes and colleagues really demonstrate the impact that music has on emotion and mood, even in mundane settings. Although coming from a completely different theoretical perspective, Kim and Zauberman contribute to this discussion by contributing to our understanding of how this affect can transform retail spaces. In particular Kim and Zauberman focus on the speed that music is played at and how this impacts upon our perception of time.

The paper that follows is an interesting companion piece in that following an analysis of fast music in an increasingly impatient society Khoshghadam and colleagues change the pace completely and consider the impact of music-evoked nostalgia. The increasing popularity of nostalgia as a theme in marketing literature is no doubt a reaction to the rapid speed of technological transformation. Khoshghadam and colleagues demonstrate the desirable impact that nostalgic advertisements have but stress that this is contingent upon the type of product and the life satisfaction of the individual. The re-emergence of vinyl is often attributed to nostalgia. Vinyl is the focus of the last paper in this collection but is not framed as a product of nostalgia by authors Goulding and Derbaix. Instead, fighting against notions of cheap nostalgia, the authors place emphasis on the role that authenticity plays in the experiences of vinyl consumption for both buyers and sellers. In somewhat ironically ending a special issue on music and marketing in an age of digital reproduction in the pages of the analogue world, we are reminded, regardless of music technologies and contexts – both past and future – that the issue of authenticity will always be at the apex of any discussion regarding music and marketing.

Where do we go from here? The papers in this section provide a detailed scholarly response to the call for papers by contributing to a wide variety of issues, both new and old. We would encourage future research to also cover the broader range of stakeholders involved (e.g. artists, intermediaries, agents, events, manager, promoters) beyond the predominantly consumer-oriented accounts that dominate the research area. Furthermore, if we are to focus on the consumer, more effort needs to

be made to represent a broader variety of voices in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic background. This clearly represents a challenge for a field that is largely dominated by academics who have easy access to university samples of white, middle-class students. In order to be truly representative however greater effort needs to be made to look beyond this convenience sample.

We have already emphasised the importance of engaging with emerging contexts such as machine learning and music because marketing practice plays such a crucial role in encouraging the quantification of music consumption data to understand and shape its production, distribution and consumption. This role will become increasingly influential as the technology evolves. This is not necessarily a call for data scientists to converge on the field in order to understand how to best utilise marketplace data. It is a call for researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds to come together and shape our knowledge of this relatively new context technically, ethically, socially, culturally and psychologically. It is call to continue to use the subject of marketing and music as a site for truly inter-disciplinary research.

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