

The Influence of Music Streaming Media on the Spread and Development of Music: A Case Study of Tencent Music Entertainment (TME) and Its Promotion of Chinese Rock

Shuwen Zheng*

Department of Music and Management, University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: ml224sz@leeds.ac.uk

Abstract. In recent years, music streaming platforms have proliferated, attracting a large number of users and musicians. Musicians choose to upload their music to these platforms and make a profit. Digital music has become an extremely important part of the music industry. This paper delves into the influence of China's Tencent Music Entertainment (TME) on Chinese rock music, analyzes the factors influencing the development of this genre, and reflects on the evolution of music streaming media.

Keywords: music streaming; Chinese rock music; fan culture.

1. Introduction

1.1. The streaming music

In recent years, the development of music streaming has accelerated, accounting for a large proportion of the global music market. Each era has a specific musical carrier that belongs to that era. However, the emergence and development of the music streaming media has a negative impact on the traditional music carrier. Records, CDs and cassettes are symbols of music of all ages. Now, in the era of big data, music streaming has become the most popular way to listen to music. Streaming music refers to the digital format that processes music by streaming and plays it on the network [1]. A music streaming platform is an application program that plays and downloads music. Generally, such application program also has a certain degree of interactivity and entertainment. Music products and services born in the period of digital revolution are more convenient than those traditional music products. Music in music streaming media could spread far and fast. Therefore, music streaming can meet the different needs of people, thereby improving the quality of life. Streaming music has no physical carrier and people do not need to buy CDs, tapes and other players. People just need to use mobile phones, computers and other tools to download music streaming application program. When users listen to music using such streaming application program, they do not have to spend many time downloading the entire music, and sometimes they do not even have to pay for it. Users only need to wait 2-3 seconds to listen to the entire music while the music is playing. It is precisely because of this fast form of playback that streaming media is favored by the public, gaining huge profits and seizing the music market. However, traditional music carrier is gradually fading out of people's vision. This is not only a change in the way people listen to music and their habits, but also a change in the music itself. Why is music streaming growing so fast? What are its advantages? Will its development have any negative impact? What are the benefits of music streaming for musicians? Taking Tencent Music Entertainment Group, the largest music streaming company in China, as an example, this paper attempts to expound the influence of streaming media on the development and dissemination of rock music through data analysis and literature analysis, combined with the theories of fan culture.

1.2. Research status and significance

The author conducted a search on CNKI and found approximately 200 literature sources related to music streaming. These sources encompass a wide range of research perspectives and approaches. Most of them are related to fan interaction, cultural communication, players, music streaming trends

and marketing models. There are only about 40 literature sources on the impact of streaming media on music transmission. About the rock music and media presentation, there are only 4 articles. Among them, Lv Zhibin mentioned in his article how traditional music media and new media influence the development of rock music [2]. However, most of the space focused on TV, radio and video platforms, and did not mention much about music streaming. The author also searched a large amount of literature on google scholar website. Most of it is about the relationship between streaming music and people, including psychology, interactivity, advantages and disadvantages. There are two articles on the impact of streaming on subculture music. It can be seen that, although the academic community has made great contributions to the study of music streaming media, scholars should also pay attention to the conflicts and interactions between subculture music and mass media. Research in this area is still lacking.

1.3. Research method

1.3.1 Data analysis and literature analysis

The author collects relevant data of music streaming platforms through official websites and literature, including information and characteristics of each platform, revenue data of Chinese streaming media in recent years and sales data of physical music. And integrate these data as the basis for analyzing problems. Through the Internet and the library, the author searched the literature related to music streaming media and the development of rock music, including various papers, academic journals and books. The author classifies, collates and analyzes these documents, and summarizes the development of rock music and the development trend of music streaming media.

1.3.2 Theoretical framework: the fan culture

In the process of analysis, the author will take fan culture as the theoretical basis and research perspective. Fan culture is an emotional economy that can promote idol behavior and promote the generation of culture [3]. Through their feelings for their idols, fans spontaneously interpret their idols' behaviors and produce fan culture. There are not only individual interactions but also group interactions. Once giving starts in fan culture, fan economy will follow. The interaction between fans and idols is a two-way interactive process, which increasingly relies on online media which fans rely on to assist them in the process of star-chasing. The author will analyze the influence of music streaming media on music dissemination with the help of the concept of fan culture.

2. Rock phenomenon in music streaming media

Nowadays, more and more people are using music streaming media. Music crosses generations and distances and comes to the public through streaming software. Rock music also has a place on these platforms. More and more users are getting to know and love rock music through these platforms, and more and more new musicians are choosing to sign with music streaming and release their own music. In this part, the author will summarize the development and status quo of rock music and music streaming media in China and the influence of TME on rock music.

2.1. The development of rock music in China

In the 1950s, rock and roll emerged in the United States. This bold, unrestrained art form attracted a large number of teenagers to participate. Rock music developed rapidly as a result. In the 1980s, rock music first emerged in Beijing, China [4]. Most of the musicians in this period were still in the imitation stage, adopting the form of western rock music, imitating their creative methods, singing styles and dressing styles. However, due to geographical restrictions, people in other regions at that time could only rely on traditional music media to contact and understand rock music, such as reading newspaper reports on rock music, watching TV and listening to radio. In the 1990s, the development of Chinese rock music reached its climax [4]. Musicians had realized that rock music needed to be localized in order to better spread and develop in China. In 1991, the Black Panthers released their

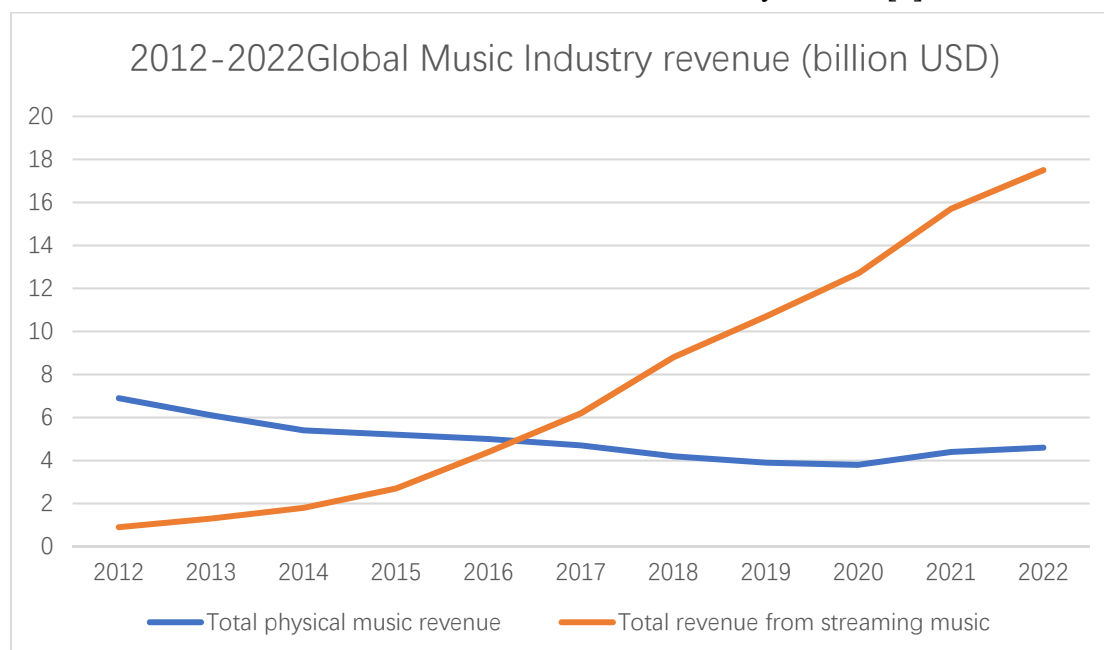
first album, Black Panther I, which sold 1.5 million copies. Later, Tang Dynasty band and Compass Band appeared one after another, and the styles of Chinese rock music gradually diversified [4]. In the late 1990s, the development of Chinese rock music was hindered. With the vigorous development of the music industry, overseas pop music has gradually entered the Chinese music market. The rock market was forced to shrink. After television and radio also reduced rock exposure, rockers began performing in underground venues [5]. With the development of the Internet, various websites and forums have been established. The Internet has gradually become a place for rock music fans and musicians to communicate and interact. Various video sites have also started to upload videos related to rock music. Douban even has a special section for it for fans to discuss music. Then the emergence of music streaming media added a strong boost to the spread of it. In 2005, Tencent's QQ music platform appeared, this music streaming media is fully functional, not only according to user preferences for song push, but also with entertainment interaction, so that musicians and fans more closely connected.

2.2. Status of music streaming media

Music streaming media uses network data to transmit audio and video to users in a streaming way. This music does not need to be downloaded in advance when playing, which has a certain convenience. When users want to listen to music, they can use electronic products to download software and play it anytime and anywhere. There is no time and space limitation in the process. Users do not need to prepare special equipment to play music, such as tape players and CD players. Therefore, music streaming media is a more convenient way to listen to music. Music streaming companies can offer music to users by purchasing music rights. Therefore, the music that is retained through recording could have the chance to be played in music streaming media. Network data enables the transmission of music across the geographical constraints, and music can be spread around the world and spread quickly.

Lei Peng, the lead singer of New Pants, mentioned in a 2010 interview that he does not accept any digital form of music [6]. However, in 2021, the New Pants band released their first digital album, Love Radio Plane. They set the price between 1 and 25 yuan, and fans can decide how much they want to pay for the album. The album sold 280,000 copies within five months of its release [6]. Is this New Pants' compromise to the age of digital media? They just see the huge business value behind digital media. Music streaming media not only brings huge traffic to music, but also promotes cultural integration and production. Music streaming in China is on the rise. According to the 2023 data report released by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), mainland China has become the world's fifth largest music market for the first time [7]. From the data presented in the report, it can be seen that global music streaming revenue grew from \$15.7 billion in 2021 to \$17.5 billion in 2022. Total physical music sales, while still low, show a slight upward trend, increasing from \$4.4 billion in 2021 to \$4.6 billion in 2022.

Table 1. 2012-2022 Global Music Industry revenue[7]



As can be seen from Table 1, music streaming sales have been showing an upward trend and have increased significantly since 2015. However, Physical music sales have been on a downward trend, but sales have gradually picked up since 2020. Music streaming may continue to dominate the music industry in the future. Its sales will continue to rise significantly. Therefore, in the future, music streaming would continue to be the best choice for young musicians to promote their music and earn income.

2.3. The influence of Tencent Music Entertainment Group (TME) on rock music

The TME is China's largest online music platform with more than 800 million Monthly active users. TME has mastered most of the domestic music copyright and resources, and has two types of music streaming and social entertainment products, including four mobile music products: Kugou music, QQ music, Kugi music and national k song. The platform provides users with online music, online singing and music live streaming services, which could bring the best listening experience to all types of users. As the largest music streaming company in China, TME has made great efforts in the dissemination of music and provided employment opportunities for many young musicians.

2.3.1 Tencent Musician project

"Tencent Musician" is a project launched by TME in 2017 to provide more opportunities for independent music creators at home and abroad. After the musicians enter the platform, the platform will provide traffic push services for the musicians to promote high-quality works. The program covers a total of 20 broadcasting channels and platforms [8]. Musicians' works will be heard by the world. According to the annual report of Tencent Musicians (2022), there are more than 380,000 musicians on the platform, with 2.3 million works. There are ten ways musicians can earn money after signing up to the platform and releasing their songs. This includes revenue generated when paying members listen to the song, when users buy the single, revenue generated when users watch advertisements, fan tips, digital album sales, participation in official performances, quality artist Tours, revenue generated when others cover the single, songwriting sales and gifts received during live streaming. The platform will first evaluate and score the songs, and then promote them. If the promotional figures are good, the song will have a chance to receive the highest level of publicity and promotion. The platform also often launches large-scale projects to encourage and promote musicians to actively create. TME has long worked with a number of TV variety shows, which will provide musicians with the opportunity to reach the bigger stage. In early 2023, TME gave more support to promising musicians in terms of revenue, traffic, and commercial partnerships. As of July 31, under

the support of TME, 1,977 songs have received millions of plays for the first time, and 3,983 songs have appeared on the Tencent Music all-platform chart. More promising musicians gain the opportunity to quickly improve themselves and get on their own music stage.

By 2023, according to the author's statistic, TME's QQ Music platform has a total of 729 musicians or bands in the world's rock music category, and has produced 1,386 rock music lists with more than 10,000 plays. A music list is a collection of songs categorized and created by platform users according to their own preferences and music types. Each music list represents the preferences of a different group of people, and these lists can be searched by other users and users can like, like and interact with each other. Music fans can find friends with common interests on the platform through lists.

2.3.2 Rock music project

It is undeniable that music streaming media has contributed to the spread of rock music. In the case of TME, the author has collected a large number of cases about the company's promotion of rock music. First of all, TME will irregularly push various types of music, including rock music that belongs to subcultures. For example, in 2018, TME premiered and pushed a song Green Fat Red Thin on QQ Music and Kugou Music platforms. The song is a fusion of rock music and Xiangxi's crying marriage song composed by Su Band. And it received critical acclaim upon its release. Secondly, TME has a long-term cooperation with iQiyi variety Summer of the Band. Kugou Music platform became the official music platform of the variety show. The show attracted a large audience to use the platform to listen to rock music during its broadcast, attracting many new fans for rock music. Because TME has the exclusive music rights, it has won many new users and revenue for the Kugou platform. In addition to these online programs, TME also provides musicians with offline performance opportunities, such as concerts and festivals. To enable young musicians to truly connect with their fans face to face.

3. Analyze the factors of TME affecting music transmission from the above cases

In the age of digital media, the ways of communication of music culture are gradually diversified. People are beginning to put aside the limitations of distance and access the cultures of the world through the Internet. Virtual cultural circles began to be established. Music fans around the world can share their preferences and communicate with others through streaming media. Through this platform, independent musicians can quickly launch their own works at a lower cost and gain interaction and feedback from fans. In contrast to the physical music model, the dissemination and promotion of music is often limited by time and space, such as offline concerts, which require traditional music ceremonies in specific locations. These musical forms are heavily influenced by space. Despite the aid of television, its audience is limited. It's still hard for people who are geographically distant to participate. However, the way of offline music transmission can arouse the emotional resonance of the audience. This form of face-to-face interaction still has great advantages in today's active digital media. In this part, the author will try to explain the influence of TME on music from four aspects: virtual cultural space, fan interaction, musician support program and music recommendation system through the literature and data found.

3.1. Establishment of virtual cultural space

QQ Music is a business model that integrates online music and social entertainment. On its open platform, users can freely comment. This platform ranks music according to the number of recent plays by users' friends, which increases the interaction between users and friends. This innovative social mode has attracted a large number of users to the platform [9]. The way music is shared and discussed online has created a new virtual space for the public, and the space is occupied by real people [10]. This is the new field carved out by the Internet. TME provides users with this space where various cultures can come together. Through this platform, users could find the music they are

interested in, and also find like-minded friends. In the virtual world, the boundaries of time and space become blurred. Although music loses some of its essence as it travels through digital technology. For example, the ritual music that needs to be performed in a specific performance place, Vibuzza therapeutic music, loses its original function and special meaning after being spread through special media, and gradually becomes a spectator art form. The emotional information that the public experiences when listening to music offline is completely different from that when listening to music online. The rapid development of music is still inseparable from the assistance of scientific and technological media. When more and more people begin to understand subculture music and the audience gradually increases, this music culture can continue to survive. Whether it is the "friends' playlist" function in QQ Music, Kugou Music fans say, or TME's music social zone, it has created a new space for music lovers that is different from the traditional cultural field. The establishment of virtual cultural space pulls into the distance of various cultures, whether it is pop music, rock music, folk music or classical music, it can develop harmoniously in music streaming media. These also enhance the user's sense of identity and belonging. Therefore, virtual social space formed by music streaming media creates a new cultural exchange place for the spread of music virtually. Unlike previous popular music online forums, this virtual space has a much wider audience. The connection between fans and musicians is even closer. People share playlists and review music together in the media, which accelerates the flow of music among people. Especially large companies like TME that cover hundreds of millions of users. Users are constantly exposed to new music and new culture under the recommendation of the media. The spread of music culture is accelerating.

3.2. Fans interaction with musicians

Driven by fan culture, it seems that music is not only a product of expressing musicians' emotions, but also a tool for communication. In the process of development, Chinese rock music has gradually shifted to a popular aesthetic, and its content has become more moderate and constantly tries to integrate into traditional Chinese folk instruments [5]. When fans have expectations for a piece of music, musicians may consider how to cater to the preferences of fans and the market. When the purpose of the creation changes, the formation of the music largely depends on the feedback and ideas of the fans. Music streaming has redefined the relationship between fans and musicians. For musicians, signing with streaming companies has the potential to reach a global audience [10]. Online audiences have the potential to create benefits for musicians [11]. According to the data on the official website of TME, the total number of paying users of online music business in the second quarter of 2023 is 99.4 million, with a payment rate of 16.73% [12]. That number is at a record high. It can be seen that the spending power of online viewers is gradually rising. The demand for quality music is growing. Therefore, effective interaction between fans and musicians can accelerate the development of the music market and promote the spread of music.

3.3. Musician support scheme

TME Platform launched the New Power program in 2022, in order to find the most potential new generation of original musicians, to provide a broader development platform for high-quality and professional musicians. In order to stimulate the creative desire of musicians, TME adopts measures such as increasing the income and flow of musicians and offering commercial cooperation to musicians [13]. The program accompanies musicians as they grow and helps them get started and further their careers. This might help to improve the quality of music. According to data from the DONEWS website (2023), as of July 31, 2023, a total of 1,977 songs on TME's platform had their first million streams and 3,983 songs entered the TME Music chart. Today, the New Power program continues, and TME will support more young musicians and add new blood to the music scene. In 2022, the TME Star Program launched. Through the use of AI, the program has created a new music production platform to help more musicians create. In just one year, the program attracted around 5,000 songwriters, 1,000 singers and more than 200 music labels to the platform [14]. More than 800 songs have been successfully traded and produced. These programs actually translate into profits and

promote the active development of music creation. The platform improves the overall quality of music creation through the evaluation of musicians' works. This also increases the willingness of users to pay for music, gradually expanding the group of people who pay for music in music streaming. On the surface, TME's support for musicians is a musician-centered service. In effect, it is a boost to this form of music streaming. It is also a boost to the development of music.

3.4. Music recommendation system

TME has built a huge Tencent music recommendation system by collecting and analyzing user data, and you can see various music charts on almost every music streaming platform. At the same time, on the home page of the platform, users can receive recommendations for different types of music every day. These recommended tracks are in line with the user's usual listening habits and preferences, and can promote music that users may like. This promotion is simple and effective. Compared with traditional music carriers, this music playing mode can promote music in a wide range and accurately, which can not only meet the needs of users to listen to songs, but also help musicians obtain more traffic and profits.

4. Reflection

4.1. The balance of music and entertainment interaction

TME's business model consists of two parts: online music and social entertainment. Its streaming media platform did not have enough subscription revenue. Therefore, in the previous years, TME emphasized more entertainment functions in the platform, such as live tipping, short videos and karaoke [15]. However, in this mode, users are easily attracted to these interactive modes, which affects the music content and autonomy. How to adjust the investment ratio of these two parts is a problem that the company should pay attention to. In recent years, the emergence of short video media has had an impact on the music streaming industry. Many musicians choose to use short video media to promote their music. The combination of music and short video playback mode and the fast rhythm mode of short video have attracted a large number of users, and the huge traffic benefit has seriously affected the revenue of music streaming media. In the face of such a severe situation, TME decisively changed the focus of the marketing model, putting more cost and energy on the online music part, and reducing the social entertainment component. The result is that, for the first time, the platform's online music revenue is equal to its social entertainment revenue. Thus, the healthy relationship between music and social entertainment is conducive to the stable and sustainable development of music streaming.

4.2. Music copyright

Copyright has always been the focus of discussion in music streaming. In the early stage of the development of China's digital music market, people's awareness of copyright is weak, and the laws and regulations on music copyright are not perfect. The digital media market is flooded with pirated music. However, with the development of music streaming, the relevant laws of music copyright are gradually improved, and music streaming has opened the period of digital music payment. Music streaming is certainly cheaper than traditional music. Users don't need to spend much money to listen to most of the music. As a result, many consumers who were inclined to buy pirated music in the early days are now choosing to use music streaming instead [16].

While providing services for users, music streaming media should also have copyright awareness and try their best to protect the rights and interests of musicians.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this essay takes TME as an example to elaborate the status quo of Chinese rock music within the realm of music streaming platforms. Building upon this foundation, it analyzes the various

factors that impact the dissemination of music through streaming media. Furthermore, it delves into the marketing strategies employed by streaming platforms and the associated copyright concerns. The following conclusions are drawn. Rock music has gained new traction in music streaming, with more and more rock musicians choosing to work with the platform. They began experimenting with digital music albums and participated in various rock and roll commercial shows on TME. The author believes that there are four reasons why music streaming media affects music transmission: virtual cultural space, fan interaction, musician support program and music recommendation system. Music streaming creates a virtual space, pulls in the distance between music and people, and spreads music rapidly through the promotion of social entertainment. Music streaming has changed the distance between fans and musicians. The effective interaction between fans and musicians is a big factor in the development of music. The Musician support program is the most direct way for music streaming media to discover more potential musicians, which can effectively stimulate their creativity and promote the rapid development of the genre. The music recommendation system is the most common feature in music streaming, which not only brings convenience to users but also helps musicians get more traffic.

However, music streaming is still problematic. In the process of platform operation, how to control the proportion of music and social entertainment is important. Too many social features can interfere with the user's attention to music. Regarding music copyright, it's crucial for music streaming platforms to safeguard the rights and interests of musicians by preventing piracy and unauthorized use of their music.

References

- [1] He Mengxian. The music industry is developing new forces: Review and reflection on contemporary streaming music service. *Journal of Chizhou University*, 2015,29(4): 111-118.
- [2] Iv Zhibin. Research on the Media Communication of Chinese Rock and Roll Music from the Perspective of Subculture. Shandong: Shandong Normal University, 2023.
- [3] Xu Yujiao. The Generation and Dissemination of fan Culture in the New Media Environment, Jinzhou: Bohai University, 2019.
- [4] Huang Yiting. On the difficult development of "localization" of Chinese rock music from the post-colonial Context. *Drama House*. 2023, 14: 96-99.
- [5] Meng Xin. Research on media presentation in the new stage of Chinese rock culture: A Content Analysis based on Domestic mainstream Media reports (2018-2021). Beijing: Communication University of China, 2022.
- [6] Chengdu Business Daily Red Star News. The new pants who hate people listening to music on their phones the most are releasing a digital album today. March 18, 2021. Retrieved on August 28, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20210318A057H900>
- [7] International Federation of the Phonographic. Global Music Report 2023. March 21, 2023. Retrieved on August 28, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://globalmusicreport.ifpi.org/>
- [8] Tencent Music. Tencent Musician Platform. 2023. Retrieved on August 30, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://y.tencentmusic.com/#/index>
- [9] Fan Xiuping. From music platform to content ecology: Tencent Music's business model innovation. *Beijing Cultural Creativity*, 2021,4: 22-28.
- [10] Jones Steve. Music that moves: popular music, distribution and network technologies. *Cultural studies*. 2002,16(2): 213-232.
- [11] Beer David. Making friends with Jarvis Cocker: music culture in the context of Web 2.0. *Cultural Sociology*. 2008,2(2), 222-241.
- [12] Haynes Jo, and Lee Marshall. Beats and tweets: social media in the careers of independent musicians. *New Media Society*. 2018,20(5), 1973-1993.

- [13] China Financial Website. Tencent Music -SW(01698): Announcement of unaudited financial results for the second quarter 2023. Retrieved on August 28, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfi.net.cn/p20230815002164.html>
- [14] DONEWS. Tencent Music: A "service provider" rooted in the depths of industry value. Retrieved on August 28, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.donews.com/article/detail/5191/59113.html>
- [15] Qu Shuwen, David Hesmondhalgh and Jian Xiao. Music streaming platforms and self-releasing musicians: the case of China. *Information, communication and society*. 2023,26(4): 699-715.
- [16] Borja Karla and Suzanne Dieringer. Streaming or stealing? The complementary features between music streaming and music piracy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. 2016, 32: 86-95.