

Research on the Development of New Media Has Brought to Popular Music Industry

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Abstract. Popular music holds significant importance in people's lives, and new media has exerted a substantial impact on the popular music industry by altering the way people access music. This article aims to analyze this influence and identify the underlying logic. Research indicates that new media has affected people's music habits and the modes of music production, distribution, and advertising. Social media has emerged as the mainstream for music marketing, and new media also offers equality, facilitates communication, and transforms musicians into online celebrities. It has strengthened the bond between fans and music, enhanced the interaction between producers and audiences, and diversified music styles. However, it also brings challenges such as a decline in music quality, privacy concerns, and intensified competition. Nevertheless, it also presents prospects like more diverse music content and flexible development paths for musicians. Overall, new media has both positive and negative implications for the industry, and musicians need to adapt and make the most of its advantages while addressing the problems to ensure the healthy development of the industry.

Keywords: New media; Social media; popular music; Music production.

1. Introduction

Popular music constitutes an important part of people's lives nowadays, and the means by which people acquire music has been continuously evolving. In the past, people purchased CDs, vinyl records, and magnetic tapes to listen to music or listen to the radio. As time has elapsed, the present situation is markedly different. Various social media and new media platforms have developed rapidly, and to some extent, they have completely transformed people's habits, thereby bringing about substantial changes to the popular music industry. New media formats have furnished creators with more opportunities for inspiration, connecting them with consumers more closely than ever before and simultaneously broadening the advertising and marketing channels significantly. Some musicians have followed this trend and achieved remarkable success, not solely due to the high quality of their music. How the development of new media platforms has influenced popular music itself and how musicians can adapt to this represents a significant issue. This article will analyze this situation, uncover the basic logic behind it, and offer some suggestions for musicians.

Firstly, some research has already demonstrated that the development of new media has had a profound influence on people's music-listening habits. In 2015, Kuyucu pointed out that new media has deeply influenced the channels through which the young generation listens to music as well as their music tastes. Firstly, Kuyucu's research reveals that students at the University of Turkey tend to obtain music through music apps like Spotify and they tend to obtain related information through social media. At the same time, Kuyucu noted that the consumers' music tastes are also affected. Students' tastes tend to be more diverse. Meanwhile, the playlists generated by music apps and other people's comments about the songs have become crucial factors influencing consumers' music preferences [1]. From another perspective, short videos have become increasingly popular in recent times, and this is also influencing people's habits, including their music listening habits. For example, TikTok has acquired more than a million users since 2020, and the average time a user spends on short videos is 52 minutes, which is not short at all. Short videos are also closely related to popular music. According to Anderson, music videos and dancing videos remain the mainstream of short videos, thus people are exposed to music more than ever before [2]. Another researcher, Bolter,

pointed out that using social media and other new media platforms to access music has become a mainstream trend in recent years [3]. Meanwhile, new media platforms and social media have made music more complex. Warr pointed out that music nowadays is not only for people to listen to but also closely related to listeners' self-identity. He also mentioned that some consumers listen to music because it can help them acquire a sense of belonging [4]. Based on his opinion, listening to music nowadays, especially pop music, can actually be a kind of social activity in some cases. These circumstances usually influence people's music tastes and endow popular music with more roles in people's lives.

Secondly, there has been research exploring the influence of new media platforms on music production itself. Choi and Chung pointed out that new media improves the interaction between musicians and listeners, enabling musicians to communicate with their listeners throughout the production process. They also mentioned that with the help of various new media forms, the targeting can be more precise and timely, giving musicians the courage to create whatever they want to create because their songs can always be heard by their audience with the help of new media [5]. At the same time, Ruthmann and Hebert explored how new media act as a platform for musicians worldwide to communicate, cooperate, and learn from each other, making the boundaries of different popular music styles fade, which is also very inspiring for musicians [6,7]. Meanwhile, according to Hargittai and Walejko, as the new media platform develops, more and more people are able to produce music, greatly enriching the themes and content of popular music [8].

Thirdly, new media has completely transformed the way people publish and advertise music. More and more songs have become popular and well-known through the Internet. Firstly, musicians do not rely on music companies as much as before, and advertising and marketing through new media platforms is easier and cheaper [9]. Secondly, musicians tend to pay more attention to advertising themselves rather than just their music. Therefore, fans pay more attention to the musicians themselves, their lifestyles, daily outfits, and even their relationship situations. The musicians themselves have become products.

Based on these researches, this article will explain how new media and media platforms influence the popular music industry by influencing people's behavior and habits. Therefore, this article will analyze this situation and find the basic logic behind it.

2. The Development and Characteristics of New Media Communication Mode

2.1. The Development of New Media Platforms and Their Influence

New media platforms are developing rapidly these days, and many kinds of social media and streaming media platforms have had a significant impact on people's lives. In a recent interview, more than 70% of the interviewees said that they mainly use social media to obtain the information they need, and for people aged between 18 and 24, 90% of them depend on social media to obtain various kinds of information [10]. Social media has become the largest part of the media nowadays, providing more diverse information and being more interactive than traditional media.

From the perspective of music, new media music is also developing rapidly. Spotify has successfully gained more than 100 million users from 2016 to 2020. At the same time, the same song is usually played more times on Spotify compared to using traditional methods [11]. Online music platforms like Spotify have made it easier to produce and access music, making these platforms larger and more influential.

Social media is also closely related to online music media. Taking the interactions between TikTok, Instagram, and Spotify as an example, research shows that artists who frequently post their lives on Instagram, their songs will be exposed to consumers more times, giving the artists more income [11]. Meanwhile, another research shows that the song used in short videos which has been played a million times, its creator can get more than 20% of the listeners on Spotify [12]. Using social media to advertise and market has become mainstream. In other words, only in this way can a song become successful in this digital age.

2.2. The Characteristics of New Media Mode

Compared to traditional media, new media is not merely a highly developed version. New media is completely different in some ways.

New media provides people with more equality. Everyone can be an information source, making the traditional mainstream media less relied upon. As early as 2015, 60% of people decreased their use of traditional media to obtain information and turned to using new media platforms. Meanwhile, 80% of people regard Facebook and Twitter as their first information source [13]. The traditional information suppliers, such as government or companies, are not as needed as before.

New media enables people to communicate better than ever before. Firstly, people are exposed to a vast amount of information, far more than before. The more information people obtain, the clearer they can understand other people's thoughts. Secondly, nothing in history can be as timely as new media. Messages passed by new media are always very fast and timely [14].

New media, especially social media, has developed various online groups extensively. New media gathers people with the same interests together and forms groups, making their common interests more solid and facilitating advertising to these groups. Media and shared-interest sites play a key role in promoting community formation and maintaining membership identity, structuring the community and promoting the identity of its members, which are essential for the stability and expansion of the community [15].

New media contributes to the emergence of online celebrities. Using new media to become famous is much easier than using traditional methods. All kinds of social media give influencers the ability to acquire a large number of followers in a short time [16].

3. The Influence of New Media Development on the Pop Music Industry

3.1. Music Fan Communities Developed by New Media Platforms Tighten the Connection between Popular Music and the Fans

There are already many fan communities nowadays, and they even have their own names: the fans of the famous K-pop group BTS call themselves the Army, Taylor Swift's fans call themselves Swifties, and Billie Eilish's fans name themselves Avocados. As various new media platforms continue to develop, there are more and more communities, and the communication between community members is also developing. These communities play an important role in the musicians' lives; they share information, communicate, and support the musicians in many ways. At the same time, the connections between the community members are also very close, and it has an even greater impact on them. According to the Discourse Community Theory, getting involved in discourse communities and groups gives a person a sense of unity and belonging, and some people regard it as an important way to socialize [17]. At the same time, fans can feel more confident and proud when they find the community they like, and they are not very likely to withdraw from this community [18]. When it comes to music fan groups, whose content being communicated is mainly music, in order to better fit into the community, the members tend to listen to the musicians' work more actively in order to have something to communicate with other members [18]. This event has informed the musicians of the importance of these groups, and some musicians have already taken action to pay more attention to their fans' communities. Take Taylor Swift as an example, she regularly invites fans to her house and plays them her new songs, which is called the "secret session". Every time she does this, the "Swifties" will get excited and have heated discussions on social media and do a great deal of help to the advertising and marketing of Taylor's new work.

3.2. New Media Platforms Improve the Interaction between Producers and the Audience

Social media and various new media platforms connect popular music producers closely to their audience, and the interaction between them is greater than ever before. This event makes the consumers feel more involved and encourages the musicians to make better music at the same time.

A great example among musicians is Justin Bieber: as he was producing his album "Changes", he kept sending his music fragments on social media like Instagram. By doing this, he successfully obtained suggestions from his fans and finally the album "Changes" became very successful, being the first on the Billboard 200 in the first week it was released [19]. Musicians can benefit a great deal from such interactions. Meanwhile, the consumers and the fans may feel respected and taken seriously by the musician. These effects will ultimately bring benefits to both sides.

3.3. The Styles of Popular Music Are Becoming More Diverse

The styles of popular music are becoming more diverse with the assistance of various new media platforms. Firstly, musicians from different cultures can easily communicate and cooperate. In Post Malone's third album "Hollywood's bleeding", he cooperated with Travis Scott and Ozzy Osbourne and released the very successful single "Take What You Want", which combined Hip Hop and Rock and Roll together. Finally, this single turned into a huge commercial success [20]. Secondly, more and more people can easily learn to produce music and get themselves involved in this industry, bringing various personal styles into the industry [21]. Both these events are making the styles of popular music more diverse.

3.4. The Development of New Media Gives Musicians Multiple Identities

All kinds of social media have been acting as a new powerful platform to advertise and promote any kind of product, pushing musicians to transform themselves into online celebrities and brand managers. Firstly, being famous on social media benefits the musicians a lot. Many famous musicians have become popular because of social media: A representative example is Jacob Dodge Lawson, whose stage name is JVKE. He became a musician after dropping out of college, but at first, he did not become famous. But during the COVID-19 lockdown, he sent his song "Up Side Down" on TikTok, and that is how his song became popular. Nowadays, JVKE is one of the most famous musicians and he still frequently sends videos on TikTok and other social media. Other musicians are also paying more and more attention to managing their social media accounts. Drake sends posts on Instagram frequently, boosting the interaction with his fans, and he can also get paid by social as he brings much focus to the platform. Secondly, with the help of social media, advertising is easier and cheaper, some musicians saw this opportunity and launched their personal brands, some of which have become super successful. Drake's OVO (October's Very Own) has been cooperating with Nike for a long time, and the Air Jordan shoes released are still of great value on secondary markets [22]. With these new opportunities provided by new media, musicians can acquire more identities and better express themselves.

4. Challenges and Prospects

4.1. Challenges

The development of new media is deeply influencing the industry. Due to the significant changes in the advertising and marketing processes, the quality of popular music is sometimes decreased. Some musicians tend to focus more on running their social media accounts and following the trend rather than on the music itself. New media has completely changed the mainstream way people get to know a song. Firstly, the concept of an album is slowly being abandoned by some musicians. The playlist function of various streaming media platforms has a great influence on consumers' habits. Consumers will choose to use personal and individualized playlists instead of listening to a musician's whole album. Musicians' reaction to this is to focus more on singles: They tend to design independent concepts and expressions for each single rather than using many songs to create an album with a unified concept. This can sometimes negatively affect the expressive ability of their music [23]. Secondly, Wikström also pointed out that musicians are more likely to release high-frequency, catchy, and short-duration songs to get commercial success [23]. And this will unfortunately change the consumers' habits slowly, bringing negative effects to the industry.

As popular music musicians are slowly turning into online celebrities, fans are too eager to know everything about the musicians, and it is much easier for them to get the musicians' personal information. Sometimes it is too much, and it really bothers the musicians. Crazy fans always bring trouble to them. Billie Eilish has been plagued by depression and anxiety since childhood, as she became famous, these psychological problems got worse because her privacy was violated and she was always faced with body criticism on social media [24, 25]. Another example is Harry Styles. His love life is completely exposed and his fashion choices are also scrutinized online [26, 27]. Famous musicians' personal lives are always overly concerned, and new media gives fans access to all kinds of musicians' personal information. All of these finally give musicians extreme pressure and anxiety.

4.2. Prospects

A large amount of information keeps inspiring musicians, making the content of popular music more diverse and even giving birth to new styles. In the long run, this can be beneficial to the development of music. At the same time, this is also slowly changing the audience: Being exposed to all kinds of music improves the capacity of the audience, although a song is of a new style, the process of its acceptance by the audience can be accelerated. This can give the musicians more courage to try new styles and finally develop the whole industry of popular music.

New media provides popular music musicians with the opportunity to cooperate with other forms of popular cultural products. Take short videos as an example, popular songs can be used in a short dance video and become popular.

Musicians can be turned into successful IPs with the help of new media, instead of just advertising their songs, they can advertise themselves and develop other suitable careers. Kanye West is a representative example. Since he released his first album "The College Drop Out", many companies have discovered his huge commercial value and want to take advantage of it, including top brands like Nike, Adidas and Louis Vuitton. And this trend, musicians cooperating with clothing brands, has become mainstream nowadays. From another perspective, musicians are not limited to only producing music, it is easier for them to create other cultural products. Donald McKinley Glover Jr., whose stage name is Childish Gambino, is an amazing example. Besides being a musician, he is also an actor, movie director and scriptwriter. The TV series "Atlanta", in which he is one of the main characters, has won two Golden Globes and two Emmys since 2016 [28]. Musicians are not only paid by releasing music, they can also sell products, cooperate with fashion brands and even shoot TV series. The development path of musicians is more flexible and more extensive than ever before.

The use of Artificial Intelligence in the field of social media is another important perspective. For musicians, with the assistance of AI, they can easily find the beat they want or any other materials they need; for consumers, the playlist system based on AI can provide more personalized music recommendations and offer a more personalized experience. At the same time, the use of AI can greatly boost the potential of virtual idols, making the concept of virtual popular musicians more complete, and bringing fresh blood to the popular music industry.

5. Conclusion

The development of new media has had a profound impact on the popular music industry. While it has brought about positive changes such as enhanced fan engagement, improved interaction between producers and audiences, and increased diversity in music styles, it has also presented challenges such as a potential decline in music quality, privacy concerns for artists, and intensified competition. Looking ahead, the future of popular music appears promising. With the continuous advancement of new media technologies, we can expect even more innovative ways for musicians to create, distribute, and interact with their fans. The boundaries between different music genres may continue to blur, leading to the emergence of unique and hybrid styles. Additionally, as audiences become more exposed to a wide variety of music, their appreciation and demand for diverse sounds are likely to grow. To ensure the sustainable development of the popular music industry, musicians

should adapt to the new media landscape, leverage its advantages to create and promote their music, and address the associated challenges. This requires a balance between utilizing new media for wider reach and maintaining the integrity and quality of their music. Additionally, the industry as a whole needs to find ways to protect the privacy and well-being of artists while fostering a healthy and competitive environment. By doing so, the popular music industry can continue to evolve and thrive in the digital age.

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