

BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC FANS

Reflective Report
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I. Summary

Project Overview

A survey was undertaken in which 4,404 respondents participated to share their behavioral habits with regard to their interaction with music and its marketplace. Analysis of the responses was performed in order to discover relevant differences in behavior between those who identify as electronic music fans and those who identify as fans of other genres. Various behaviors were questioned in relation to listening habits, social media engagement, spending history, willingness to pay, and more. The data show that electronic music fans do behave differently from fans of other genres in a variety of respects (e.g. price expectations, music format preferences, and methods of music discovery – among others). The data have the potential to be useful in aiding the development of business and marketing strategies for artists, record labels, and others by providing a more accurate view of the marketplace.

Context & Inspiration

Due to improvements in information technology, niche and segmented areas of music now have greater accessibility and availability to consumers than ever before. With the increase in the amount and variation of available goods comes a need to understand the particular characteristics of consumers in each segment of the market. This research focused on discovering the behavioral tendencies unique to those people who identify primarily as electronic music fans. The motivation to conduct this research stemmed from several music industry reports and other studies that have shown that the business and the consumers surrounding electronic music have certain characteristics that differ

from the rest of the music market. This research aimed to expand upon the existing information and provide a deeper analysis of why this is the case. The intention was to find answers for any previously observed cross-genre behavioral anomalies as well as to explore other potential differences in behavior not yet studied. One example highlighting the differences between electronic music and other genres was a 2012 Nielsen industry report which showed that digital track sales of electronic music grew 36% that year while over all digital track sales growth for the industry was a mere 5%.¹ An assumption was made that in order to achieve such a relatively high level of growth, consumers of electronic music must be behaving differently than consumers of other styles of music.

Upon further investigation, this assumption was supported by a 2013 study performed by ticketing company Eventbrite in partnership with the Harris Interactive Service Bureau. The study took the form of a survey of 1,019 respondents through which they were able to show some clear differences in the behavioral patterns of electronic music fans compared to fans of other genres. For instance, the study found that 67% of electronic music fans heard about the events that they attended via social media compared to only 40% for “other” concertgoers.² The study also found that 73% of electronic music fans have an increased desire to attend an event after seeing friends post about the event on

1. Nielsen Holdings. “The Nielsen Company & Billboard’s 2012 Music Industry Report.” BusinessWire.com. <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20130104005149/en/Nielsen-Company-Billboard%E2%80%99s-2012-Music-Industry-Report> (accessed June 20, 2014).

2. “EDM Fans: Not Your Average Music Fans.” Eventbrite.com. <http://blog.eventbrite.com/edm-fans-are-not-your-average-music-fan/> (accessed June 20, 2014).

social media. This was compared to other music fans where only 36% reported the same response.³

Several other sources of information served indirectly to raise questions that could potentially be answered by performing this research. For example, the Ibiza International Music Summit (IMS) reported in 2013 that popular electronic DJ, Hardwell, increased his number of social media followers per day by 300% while performing at Ultra Music Festival in 2013.⁴ This raised the more philosophical question of whether social media was promoting the live performance or vice versa, which then led to the bigger question of trying to decipher what role social media actually plays in the eyes of the consumer. Is that role consistent throughout all music genres? The ambiguity of the purpose of social media has been called into question before by the online magazine *Social Media Examiner*, who found that only 26% of marketers agreed that they are able to accurately measure the ROI from their efforts on social media.⁵ With no clear answer as to what social media is achieving, why are so many artists active across a whole spectrum of different platforms?

By attempting to shed light onto these and other issues concerning the music business (and specifically electronic music), results were uncovered that can potentially be used by artists, record labels, distribution companies, marketers, and others in order to better serve the greater community of music

3. "EDM Fans: Not Your Average Music Fans." Eventbrite.com

4. Watson, Kevin. "IMS Business Report 2013." InternationalMusicSummit.com. http://www.internationalmusicsummit.com/img/stand_alone_files/file/original/ims-business-report-2013-final2-10.pdf (accessed June 20, 2014).

5. Stelzner, Michael A. "2013 Social Media Marketing Industry Report." SocialMediaExaminer.com. (pg. 10) <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2013.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2014).

fans. A better understanding of consumers can improve the health of the music industry ecosystem by providing more valuable products, more appropriate distribution methods, and more agreeable pricing strategies.

Personal Motivation

I am an electronic musician at heart. I have a strong interest in discovering the preferences of electronic music fans in order to provide my own music in a method that meets the demands of those who wish to consume it. Combining business and art can be a delicate matter, so I aimed to build a project that would aid in creating a better synergy between consumers and suppliers of music and to make the relationship between business and art more fluid. Although producing electronic music is currently an ambition I pursue in my free time, I also have a strong interest in developing a full-time career within the same business. That career could be centered on myself as an artist, but I would also like to pursue gaining experience working with other artists, record labels, distribution companies, marketing companies, or anyone else who has a hand in taking the music from its creation into the hands of consumers. I wanted to carry out a project that would better equip me to be able to consult and develop relevant business strategies so as to make myself useful to companies operating within the marketplace. The format of this project allowed me to explore several key areas related to pricing strategies, release methods, and social media marketing – among other issues. I sought to design a project that could create value for myself and also for those I wish to work with in the future. By creating this value, I believe I will better position myself to enter the work force as a contributing member of the electronic music industry.

II. Process

Proposal & Initial Ideas

The beginning stages of this project were quite different from the final result. Initially, the proposal centered on researching existing marketing methods and trying to discover their relative efficiencies. The original research question was “Which marketing and distribution tactics are able to best encourage sustained brand loyalty and reach new potential fans for modern electronic music artists and why?”. This meant that I was to be comparing various marketing methods only within the world of electronic music. The plan was to undertake significant qualitative research and collect information from professional marketers about their own experiences with various marketing tactics. I also planned to conduct quantitative research to support whatever conclusions I could gather from the qualitative research.

After some time of preparing this course of action, I realized that with my plan I would not be providing a significant level of value to anyone other than myself. The marketing methods used by electronic music marketers are mostly already able to be analyzed, and therefore the companies making decisions about marketing already have a foundation of information to support their strategies. Furthermore, there was no real focus on electronic music as I had originally intended. By performing the research as initially laid out, I would have no comparison to the music industry as a whole and my findings would become nothing more than generic and fundamental data about the most basic marketing techniques in the industry. Instead, after meeting with my advisor, I decided to shift the focus of the work from looking directly at marketing techniques to

looking at consumer behavior and psychology. This would allow me to collect information that could potentially be used to develop *new* marketing methods. By having a more accurate view of consumers, it is possible to better predict how they will react to new ideas. The data could discover certain consumer characteristics that were previously unknown as well as discover behaviors which could suggest that alternative business strategies might perform better than current ones.

Additionally, I formed the idea to carry out the research on a wide spectrum of consumers, including those outside of electronic music. By doing so, I would allow for comparisons in the data, which could be used to specifically show the characteristics of electronic music fans in relationship to fans of other genres. This would be much more useful than finding generic data which may or may not apply to each segment of the market. From the studies and reports mentioned in the introduction, I already knew that there were some distinct characteristics that were unique to electronic music fans that were causing them to behave differently and creating a massive affect on the growth of electronic music in relation to the rest of the music industry. Thus, my final idea was formed to carry out large-scale data collection in the form of a quantitative consumer survey with various qualitative aspects sewn throughout.

Survey Design

The first step of the creation of the survey was to find some electronic survey tools that would meet the needs of the project. Several different options were considered and analyzed including Google Forms, Zoomerang, SurveyGizmo, and SurveyMonkey. After careful consideration, SurveyMonkey

with the upgraded “Gold” account was chosen. Although it was a pricey option, it was necessary to be able to handle the functions needed in order to perform the best collection and analysis of the data. Some important features were that had no question limits, no response limits, filtering, comparing, data export, text analysis, trend reporting, and individual respondent analysis. In hindsight, this was the best option especially due to the unlimited number of responses since the survey turned out to have a huge number of respondents.

The next step of the survey design was to research effective survey methodology. I do not have a background in statistics, so I felt it was necessary to at least study some fundamental concepts in order to steer clear of any easily avoidable mistakes. I studied confidence intervals, sample design, mode effects, question and format biases, odds ratios, and probabilities among other topics. While the survey was not perfect in the end, I do feel that I was able to improve what it would have been had I not researched these topics. This knowledge helped improve my confidence for the decisions I was making and helped me to realize the flaws of mistakes I made as well as to recognize the general problems with a self-reporting survey that I need to take into account in considering the impact and meaning of the results.

After this stage, a draft of the survey was created. This draft was sent to my CE advisor as well as my jury member for feedback and advice. I then distributed the survey to a selection of trial respondents in order to detect any confusion in the format, writing, or logistical completion of the survey. I took all of this feedback into account and reworked what needed to be changed in order to make the survey more efficient, accurate, and dynamic. Through these trial respondents, I was also able to test the survey tools and the limits of the analysis

capabilities in an effort to revise any questions so that the final data could be analyzed more completely and accurately. A post-analysis critique of the survey can be found in the “Results & Expectations” section.

Data Collection

After completion of the survey design, it was time to collect data. The data collection period lasted for two week from May 26 – June 8. In total, 4,404 respondents participated. I was able to collect 90,559 individual answers including 54,211 multiple-choice style answers and 36,348 open response answers (some open responses were simple quantitative answers and some were longer more qualitative answers).

There were two strategies in place to collect this data. The first was personal requests to friends, family, and acquaintances. The second was through online communities of various types of music fans. The survey was distributed to 62 music and audio forums related to different genres of music including everything from Jazz to Chiptune. Some of these forums required registration and prior participation before posting outside links and others were communities I was already a member of which I believe helped lend some credibility to my request. In the end, there was a lot of discussion. The survey generated 478 comments with many people asking questions, giving feedback on the survey, or writing longer comments about their views on the music industry. To validate my identity and personalize the request that I was making of the forum members, I felt the need to participate in these discussions. I answered specific questions, defended the merits of my methodology, and generally gave people a sense that there was a real human behind the survey. I think this

participation helped immensely in creating a sustained interest in the project, which was a key success factor in gathering results.

Data Analysis

The data analysis phase comprised a significant portion of the overall work involved with this project. The survey received an unexpectedly large number of responses and despite having some survey tools available, there was a lot of time spent formatting, categorizing, organizing, and comparing data. This required using filters, text analysis algorithms, excel spreadsheets, and graphing software to discover trends and interesting outcomes. In addition, the data was compared to some of the reports and studies mentioned in the inspiration for this project. The statistics research I performed also needed to be applied in order to carry out various ratios and probabilities accurately. The data was compared as-is as well as through multi-variable comparisons to execute a deep analysis in search of any pertinent information. The full text of the analysis along with all of the data can be found in the results section and appendix section of the outcome paper respectively.

III. Results & Expectations

Despite the trial respondents and revisions on the survey, there were still problems that arose with the survey design that were only recognized after the data was collected. One of the biggest problems that had to be overcome was with the design of the first – and most important – question. Question 1 asked “Of the following, what is your preferred genre of music?” Nine genre options were given (Rock, Electronic, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Folk, Classical, Pop, R&B, and

Country) as well as an option to declare “Other” with an open-response box to write the unlisted genre. The issue was that the “Other” option wasn’t an official selection in the survey as it should have been – it was only an additional comment box. This means that respondents who selected a genre from the list were still able to write in the box. Therefore, in my data all of the genre-selectors’ open responses were listed alongside those from the non-genre-selectors. This required me to manually go through the 1,296 responses and look at each respondent individually to separate the genre-selectors from the non-genre-selectors. There turned out to be 401 non-genre-selectors. This gave me some good information on those particular respondents, however it did not solve the problem completely.

For the purposes of comparisons, I had devised two genre categories: “Electronic Fans” and “Other Genre Fans.” Hypothetically, I could have used those respondents by placing them into the category of “Other Genre Fans.” But, since “Other” was not an *official* option on the survey, it would require me to both enter all 90,559 individual data points manually into excel as well as lose all use of the survey tools (i.e. filtering and comparing). I was not willing to do either of those things, much less both. Those 401 respondents’ data would still be available on any overall analysis of the data, but would have to be excluded from any direct comparisons between the two genre categories I had devised. I decided that this was the only acceptable solution. Furthermore, since the category of “Other Genre Fans” already contained 2,963 respondents, I believe the sample size was already large enough to successfully make meaningful comparisons between the two fan types.

Nonetheless, due to this situation it was necessary in the results to be very clear that I was comparing people who identified as electronic music fans only with people who identified with one of the other genres listed in Question 1 and not with all music fans in general. Table 1 below shows the open-response answers to Question 1 for those who did not identify with one of the given genres. The table shows that there were numerous responses that overlapped with the genres listed in the question (e.g. other forms of electronic music along with metal, post-rock, prog-rock and others that could be classified under “Rock”). I looked into the open-responses of Question 1 for those who *did* select a genre and many of those responses were the same as those who *did not* select a genre. There were entries for Metal, Punk, Alternative, and others that respondents found possible to categorize under one the listed genres. I believe this also helped to mitigate the problems of excluding this data from the comparisons because most of the genres were still represented within the overall data.

Table 1 – “Other” responses to survey Question 1.

Response	Total
Metal	258
Multiple / No Clear Answer	36
Alternative / Indie	32
Other (< 3 responses each)	21
Punk	15
Electronic (other)	13
Ska / Reggae	9
Blues	6
Post-Rock	5
Funk	3
Prog Rock	3
Total	401

Despite some of these procedural flaws with the survey, I was quite pleased with the results. I feel as though, under the circumstances, my expectations for the data collection were exceeded. As my initial proposal stated, I had planned on perhaps doing multiple rounds of quantitative analysis and possibly a strictly qualitative data session as well, but with the overwhelming response that I received it was clear that this should be the main focus of the project.

As far as my classes at Berklee are concerned, I felt better prepared for this project especially after completing the “International Marketing & Branding” course as well as the “Online & Social Media Management” course. These courses gave me some good foundational knowledge about what sort of new practices were happening in the realm of recorded music. They led me to better create questions that reflected the current state of the industry (e.g. asking about social media and streaming platforms, “free” goods, as well as online music discovery methods). Although most of the project relied on statistics, which wasn’t a course offering for me, I was still able to use what I have learned in order to better craft the project.

IV. Next Step

The next step of this project will be to create an abridged version of these documents suitable to publicize and distribute via music news websites and blogs. This will involve writing an article geared towards the public that can be easily read and understood. It could involve creating some sort of infographic to visualize the most relevant data in a meaningful way. I will hopefully be able to

partner with someone from Berklee, such as my advisor Alexandre Perrin, to lend more credibility to the article and the data. Then, I will contact the relevant music news companies in an effort to create some press about the findings of the research. The Eventbrite studies mentioned in the summary were publicized in the same way, so there is already precedence for a public interest in this sort of data. The only challenge will be creating something compelling both visually and intellectually in a concise format that is easily digestible.

V. Industry Contribution

This research will provide insight into the modern landscape of marketing efficiencies and practical possibilities for marketing professionals, artist managers, public relations specialists, and artists themselves. It can help to make clear which aspects of the recorded music marketplace are engaging consumers and promoting healthy interactions for all parties. Consumer satisfaction is incredibly significant to the length and depth of the potential career of artists in that it is a product of the foundation for which all monetization occurs. By understanding the consumer, various revenue streams can be more easily created and the risk associated with those new financial ventures can be minimized. The fate of many companies – publishers, distributors, live operations, venues, etc. – is heavily dependent on the success of the artist and it is in all of their best interests that the artist is able to connect with consumers in a meaningful way. And, although there are many new mediums and methods for marketing arising from the digital era, there is also a decrease in the signal-to-noise ratio from which consumers select what will and will not become a part of their lives and habits. Finding which of these new mediums and methods are genuinely engaging the consumer base will help to

eliminate arbitrary time and resource allocation, making an easier pathway for marketers to accomplish their goals and in turn will help to create a simpler and more navigable environment for the consumer. Unsurprisingly, according to *Social Media Examiner*, “the number-one question marketers want answered (90%) is which tactics work best.”⁶ By directly reaching out to consumers, this research may be able to provide real insight into consumer behavior and preferences regarding not only marketing tactics that currently exist, but also potential avenues for new marketing and consumer engagement in the future.

VI. Personal Impact

Through this project I was able to study and learn more about statistics and marketing. I learned new methods to collect and analyze data sets as well as learned about the tools and software available to do so. I gave myself a foundational knowledge in research methodology and bias issues that can carry over in the future to any marketing work I will do. This project also gave me a tool to market myself, if I wish to do so – especially if the information can eventually be publicized (as mentioned in the “Next Step” section of this paper). Most importantly, through this work I was able to gain a deeper insight into the minds of electronic music fans. My career goals are to work closely with electronic music, especially with independent artists and labels that may need more specialized marketing expertise. This project has made me better equipped

6. Stelzner, Michael A. “How Marketers Are Using Social Media to Grow Their Businesses.” *Social Media Examiner*. (pg 6)
<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2013.pdf>
(accessed June 20, 2014).

to consult and develop strategies for artists or labels regarding pricing, release methods, and social media – among other things.

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