

Music Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age: Opportunities and Challenges for Performing Artists

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ABSTRACT

The digital era has changed how musicians produce, distribute, market, and sell their work. Online markets, streaming platforms, social media, and digital production tools have made it easier for artists to become independent businesses. These advances provide unparalleled global reach, direct audience involvement, varied income sources, and creative liberty. Meanwhile, the digital ecosystem faces complicated obstacles including increased market rivalry, income volatility owing to streaming-based payment schemes, intellectual property issues, algorithmic gatekeeping, and the need for ongoing digital skills development. Artists must now reconcile creative integrity with business skills including branding, marketing, data analytics, and audience relationship management. This abstract discusses the changing nature of music business in the digital age, stressing both the opportunities and restrictions for modern performers. In a platform-driven music business, adaptable techniques, digital literacy, and regulatory support are essential for creative sustainability.

Keywords: Music entrepreneurship, Digital age, Performing artists, Streaming platforms, Creative economy.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has changed music production, distribution, consumption, and monetization globally. Internet connectivity, digital technology, and platform-based ecosystems have transformed music entrepreneurship. This transformation has given performers great promise and major issues. Artists are becoming independent entrepreneurs who need creative talent, business acumen, technical literacy, and strategic self-management. Rapid rise of streaming platforms, social media, digital marketing tools, and cheap music creation technologies supports digital music entrepreneurship. These advancements have removed obstacles and let artists contact global audiences directly. Live streaming, digital merchandising, crowdfunding, licensing, and brand collaborations let artists reach fans, build personal brands, and diversify earnings. [1-2]

Music in the Digital Era

The digital transformation has brought both possibilities and problems to the music business. Music was the first cultural business to fully embrace the digital age. This has been one of the hardest changes to digital economic, commercial, and cultural realities. New technologies, like as compressed digital music files and the Internet, have made digital music widely available and unpaid. Digital music downloads and streamed music's rise reflect a recurrent trend in music and other creative industries: new technology challenge commercial structures, artistic practices, and regulatory frameworks. Music in the digital age faces comparable challenges to those in the 20th century, when recordings, player pianos, and other new technology challenged legal, institutional, and financial arrangements. [3-4]

Creative industries have taken pre-digital business structures into the digital age. Industry contracts with artists represent pre-digital commercial patterns that persist in the digital age. YouTube, Apple Music, and Spotify have emerged as intermediates in the music industry's digital shift, with Spotify dominating streaming with inconsistent financial success. Recently, short-form mobile video platform TikTok has become a big music

business player. Although new technologies have disrupted music in the digital age, contractual relationships with recording artists have often remained pre-digital.

In recent years, several artists have complained about their unfair share of industry income. Since music industry profits have risen, streaming revenue disputes have increased. [5-6] In the streaming era, some have advocated changing fundamental payment arrangements, although debate over artists getting a fair share has frequently centered on streaming payments rather than the unfair contractual standards on which they are founded:

“Does streaming hurt artists' careers? The number of artists who can make a living from recording their music may actually be increasing, rather than decreasing. But it's obvious that the present system is just as bad as its predecessors when it comes to working conditions and glaring inequality. More thoughtful criticism and evidence-based public discourse would be beneficial, but this could only happen if music-industry companies and MSS were more forthcoming regarding use and payments. Still, it's encouraging to see that change is being seriously considered and that people are speaking out about the injustices faced by artists.”

Disputes around streaming services are not exclusive to the music business. After a round of strikes rocked the Hollywood business in 2023, many began to question how the streaming sector should divide up its profits. There was an initial decline in illegal uses of music with the introduction of streaming. [7-8] Nevertheless, new technologies still provide chances for a variety of illegal purposes, such as stream ripping, which lets users download broadcasts. There was a resurgence in traffic to music pirate sites in 2022.¹⁸ New sorts of manipulation may be possible with this modern technology as well. Even while there has always been a problem with people manipulating business measurements, streaming has opened the door to new kinds of fraud and manipulation.

Distinctions and experiences in the digital age are not always easy to pin down. So, it's clear that there are a lot of different ways to own, access, consume, and use material. The complexity of copyright, especially as it pertains to music, is brought to light in the digital age. When many in the creative industries saw their financial fortunes decline in the early digital age, they turned to copyright enforcement in an effort to turn things around. [9-10] This emphasis on copyright law has shaped copyright legislation and legislative actions.

Disputes over the proper production, consumption, and dissemination of creative works in different settings and regions have persisted throughout the digital age. These occurrences further highlight how creative, cultural, and commercial norms and practices are evolving, which in turn underpins the ubiquitous contestation that now defines large parts of digital life. To get to the core of these issues, you have to know how cultural and commercial practices are evolving and how those changes connect to the prevailing assumptions about copyright and social norms. [11-12]

Digital Era Opportunities – Changing Artist Practices and Changing Business Models

Superstar Beyoncé Knowles-Carter shocked fans in December 2013 by releasing an album on the iTunes Store. Within three days of its release, Beyoncé's album sold over 800,000 copies, propelling it to the number one place on iTunes charts in 104 countries and becoming the biggest album in iTunes Store history at the time. In addition, Beyoncé made history when her first five studio albums debuted atop the Billboard 200 list. The release of Beyoncé's album provides valuable information for analyzing the significant shifts occurring in the music business due to the advent of digital technology. [13-14]

There were \$26.2 billion in sales for the recording business worldwide. Streaming services generated 67% of worldwide and 84% of total income for the US music industry in 2022. The significance of touring as a main source of revenue for several recording artists is highlighted by the ongoing conflicts regarding the distribution of profits from record sales: According to the report, "On average, the top 48 touring musicians in 2017 earned 80% of their income from touring, 15% from recorded music, and 5% from publishing fees." Interestingly, throughout the early digital age, successful popular performers made far more from selling concert tickets than they did from record royalties, even if record sales brought in significantly more money overall. [15-16] A

2018 study found that musicians only kept 12% of the \$43 billion in overall earnings from the music business in 2017, even after accounting for tour earnings:

“Musicians get a pitiful percentage of the profits. The majority of the value leakage in 2017 was caused by the costs of maintaining the many distribution systems, including AM/FM radio, satellite radio, Internet distributors, and record companies' expenses and profits. Artists only kept 12% of the music earnings.

However, from 7% of industry sales in 2000 to the current share, artists are seeing a steady increase. The expansion of music subscription services is not the primary factor propelling the development. On the contrary, it is propelled by the robust concert industry. While music labels facilitate subscription services like Apple Music and Spotify, they are generally shielded from the concert industry's financials. Therefore, performers benefit greatly from increases in concert money.”

Notably, the music industry's revenue peaked in 2006 and was surpassed in 2017 as well.

The larger economic effect of concerts by high-earning artists is substantial. The world's economy saw the effects of two of the biggest names in digital music in 2023, with tours by Beyoncé and Taylor Swift. The inflationary influence on accommodation expenses from fans taking advantage of advantageous exchange rates to watch Beyoncé's tour in Sweden in May 2003 may have contributed to an increase in the Swedish inflation rate, according to estimates. [17-18] The event took place in Stockholm, Sweden:

“The beginning of Beyoncé's tour could have affected the inflation numbers, according to analyst Michael Grahn of Danske Bank. It may account for the most of the 0.3% rise in monthly inflation that food and lodging costs contributed, though he admitted on Twitter that "how much is uncertain.”

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, "despite the slowing recovery in tourism in the region overall, one contact highlighted that May was the strongest month for hotel revenue in Philadelphia since the onset of the pandemic, in large part due to an influx of guests for the Taylor Swift concerts in the city." This indicates that Swift's Eras Tour had a noticeable influence on the local economy.

The promotion and marketing of albums, as well as the visual imagery that accompany them, were both influenced by Beyoncé's album release, which altered the playbook for subsequent album releases. Additionally, the success of Beyoncé's album proves that people are willing to pay for their favorite songs. It was more costly than the average album on iTunes at the time \$15.99 for Beyoncé's album. When the album was out, not only could buyers not download any of the 14 songs on it separately, but they also got 17 special music videos to go along with each song. [19-20]

Not only that, Beyoncé's album was released "with no warning, no other promotion, no launch parties, no advance radio play, none of the traditional pre-sale retail hype," further challenging established industry business standards. Not even high-ranking employees at Beyoncé's record label knew the album was coming out; the release was top secret. When Beyoncé's album was originally exclusively available on iTunes, it disrupted the retail distribution chain for albums and caused several music retailers, including Amazon and Target, to stop selling physical copies. In retaliation for the Target boycott, Beyoncé visited a Walmart in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, and handed out \$37,000 worth of \$50 gift cards.

The rising unpredictability of the music industry in the digital age is evident even in the most fruitful releases by celebrities like Beyoncé. On the contrary, the release by Beyoncé highlighted the flaws in the current models used by recording companies. Existing business structures in the music industry continue to depend heavily on assumptions made during the physical distribution period, which were challenged by Beyoncé's release. Because they are mostly based on business models that emerged during the physical distribution period, current models could not fully consider the consequences of customer choices for streaming and downloads. Digital music streaming and downloads are now artists' primary sources of income, but their continuous dependence on business methods developed during the physical record distribution period has serious consequences for their ability to earn a livelihood. [21-26]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative, analytical, and interpretative approach to analyze music's worth and ownership in the digital era, especially in music entrepreneurship and cultural sectors. Value, ownership, control, and sharing are conceptual and normative; therefore, a qualitative approach is best for capturing the complexity of digital-era music creation, distribution, and consumption. [27-28]

Research Design

A descriptive–analytical research approach is used to critically assess music as a valuable asset vs a cultural and communal resource dispute. Secondary sources are used to study digital ecosystem industry operations, artist experiences, and consumer perspectives. This design lets you examine power imbalances, contractual frameworks, and digitization- and platform-based distribution-shaped ownership concepts. [29-30]

The Value of Music and the Meaning of Ownership

How Much is Music Worth? Music as a Valuable Asset

Digital conflicts center on content value and usage. Industry attention on preventing material access is disproportionately driven by a continuous inclination to regard content as cultural assets. Available technology, intellectual property laws, and contractual and economic practices have enabled and mediated such constraints. Cultural industries were dominant in a technological context where control was common. Digital technologies have changed how producers, consumers, and others access material, reducing industry control. This reality of reduced control highlights conflicting ideas about content value and usage, which has led to ongoing disagreements.

Recent catalog sales for Bob Dylan, Stevie Nicks, Tina Turner, and Bruce Springsteen show that popular musicians may make huge profits: Some artists' libraries sell for 30 times normal yearly royalties. These deals usually include publishing and music rights. Catalog and music rights buyers “reap the money from royalties, licensing, brand deals and other revenue streams that would have gone to the artist.” Catalog buyers obviously respect popular artists' catalogs, which may have increased during the COVID-19 epidemic when many artists had to limit or halt traveling. [31-32] Recent catalog sales may also be overpriced.

“It's sad, but I think recorded music doesn't have any value and maybe never did. Visibility may have always supported music sales. Music is roughly as complicated and costly as email (free). Real worth lies in music... its intangibility is greater than ever. You can listen to music as you can breathe or walk. Is air valuable? Yes, very! It's also always around us.”

Today, music has more competitors than ever. Consumers can choose from music with or without streaming video, a variety of streamed TV shows and movies, video games, social media, mobile and other apps, physical media content, and live entertainment options. Cultural sector enterprises' growing emphasis on culture's valuable asset models may conflict with consumers' values.

Industry statistics show the cultural industries' worldwide economic and commercial importance. Film, sound, music, print, computer software, theater, advertising, radio, television, and cable were among the “core” copyright businesses that contributed about \$1.8 trillion to the economy in 2022.

Copyright in business is heavily influenced by contract. [33-34] The contractual conditions provided creators imply that copyright policy arguments about the value of invention and the necessity for incentives to encourage new creations are not always reflected in commercial terms for many artists. Contracts in the recording business show power inequalities in intellectual property rights and economic rewards:

“Even though the idea behind copyright law is to safeguard artists' rights, in practice record labels and publishers use these rights to their advantage when negotiating contracts. This puts artists in a strong position to potentially remove certain contractual clauses, but the music industry's “mantra of ‘take it or leave it’” puts them in a very strong bargaining position.”

What the incentive narrative of copyright is and how much perception might differ from reality in the context of famous business models as they are now is shown by the treatment of numerous artists in the cultural industry's present business structures. A key component of recording industry business strategies and success has been controlling over the creative side.

What Does It Mean to Own Music in the Age of Social Media?

Perceptions of music's worth could be influenced by its intangibility. Because of the "absence of legal ownership and perceived ownership associated with streaming," customers may "place greater value (emotional and monetary) on the physical product," which might lead to a decline in music value as a result of digitization. Music ownership is evolving due to factors like as streaming and the overall intangibility of digital age music custody, as well as technological factors that may influence consumer music value. With digital material vanishing in unforeseen ways, use rights for streaming music might be delicate and unknown at times. The way companies handle streaming material reflects their beliefs, which can be similar to the low regard and lack of commitment that customers have for it. [35-36]

After COVID-19, it became clear from a commercial standpoint that many streaming models had economic issues. Furthermore, there's a good chance that music and other content's worth have dropped significantly:

"As if transported back in time to the Middle Ages, when beggars played music at banquets to help the nobles eat, music appears to have made a triumphant comeback. To describe the current state of music, it is an appropriate metaphor. There has been a severe and quick change in economic patterns. With the extra cash in its bank account, Apple could potentially purchase every major record business. But Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, is too astute for that. As a matter of fact, his employer has actively contributed to the fact that content creators like him make no money. Business methods like the increasingly popular 360 contract allow record companies to diversify their revenue sources beyond record sales.

From a corporate standpoint in particular, our music valuation practices can fail to adequately account for the significance of sharing as an essential component of music's worth to several artists and listeners. Human culture is inherently characterized by borrowing and creolization. Differing cultural perspectives may be at the root of the current arguments about music's worth and intellectual property. [37-38] These conflicts arise often in many different types of intellectual property disputes. to the extent that cultural systems are impacted by and influenced by borrowing and dissemination factors.

The significance of sharing in the cultural domain is brought to light by cultural hybridity. The significance of sharing in music and other cultural arenas, particularly as a key component of cultural innovation, is underappreciated by some ideas of authority in conversations around intellectual property. Considering consumer sharing patterns in the digital world, the meanings and relevance of which may vary greatly, this realization is crucial. The key to deciphering digital music trends is to see music through a culturally informed lens, which involves appreciating its worth as an asset in and of itself. In instance, we may learn a lot about fan culture by observing the dynamics between famous artists and their followers, such as Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and others- A As part of her connection with some of her followers, Beyoncé may encourage them to buy more of her music in the digital age via dom78 and other activities, including unlawful usage. [39-40]

CONCLUSION

Digital music entrepreneurship has transformed how artists operate. Digital technologies have democratized production tools, global distribution channels, and audience communication, improving artist chances. Independent artists have benefited from reduced entry barriers, creative freedom, and the ability to build personal brands and revenue streams outside of record companies. Performance artists are now creative businesspeople who must mix artistic vision with savvy business approaches. Creative professions face continuing and complex difficulties from the digital music industry. Platform-driven revenue models, like streaming, often pay performers poorly. Market saturation, algorithmic gatekeeping, and fierce competition hinder visibility and long-term success. Artists' business tasks need greater time, expertise, and resources, which may hinder artistic progress.

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