



Why Artists Aren't Growing on Social Media.

In today's digital age, the music industry is both a land of opportunity and a sea of challenges. With the accessibility of music through digital streaming platforms, aspiring artists have the world's catalogue at their fingertips. However, this accessibility has also led to a flooded market where standing out becomes increasingly difficult. In such a landscape, social media emerges not just as a promotional tool but as a powerful platform for connection and audience engagement. The purpose of this article is to discuss the role of social media for independent artist development & discuss what we observe to be the biggest mistakes artists make in developing their project across the digital sphere.

**Please note: We understand that every musician, band, producer and artist is different. This article is only relevant for individuals who are looking to develop their project's audience and ultimately build into some form of career sustainability. We also understand that utilising social media doesn't always fall directly under the passion an artist has for their project, but it would be remiss of us not to highlight the importance of it in the development of acts.*

Social media has become indispensable for artists. These platforms offer a direct line of communication with audiences, facilitating artist development and promoting catalogues. For the purposes of this article, we wish to reference social media as a whole as opposed to diving into specific platform trends. Below we have provided a simple breakdown of platforms and their specifications.

Social Media Platforms: TikTok, Instagram, Threads, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, X (formally Twitter), Pinterest, Tumblr, Messenger, Whatsapp, etc.

Digital Streaming Platforms (DSP's) (Music Specific): Spotify, Apple Music, Youtube Music, TIDAL, Deezer, SoundCloud, Bandcamp, Beatport, Pandora, Google Play Music, Amazon Music, etc.

Search Engines: Google, Yahoo, YouTube etc.

It is undeniably clear that in this market that the vast majority of the world are utilising social media. "As of April 2024, there were 5.44 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 67.1 percent of the global population. Of this total, 5.07 billion, or 62.6 percent of the world's population, were social media users." Full Statista report [here](#). Speaking frankly, if you are an artist (with the intention of creating a sustainable career) and social media isn't something you are focussed on to communicate your musical catalogue, you are simply kidding yourself.

Now that we have identified that social media is a massive part of development, discovery and connection, it's time to address the elephant in the room - that most independent artists fall short in utilising social media effectively. Below we have listed some key symptoms, we observe daily, in the attitude of artists and creatives when it comes to media and how it negatively affects their overall development.

**Please note: If you feel like you fall under one or more of the below categories and wish to generate processes to develop repeat listenership on key platforms please email us: info@cartelmanagementaus.com*

Only focussing on content (not connection) -

While posting content is essential, it's equally vital for artists to engage with their audience. This means going beyond scheduled posts, profile aesthetic and the see through promotion tactics. By forging these connections, artists humanise their brand and create a loyal following invested in their journey, not just their music. By only focusing on

their own content, artists limit themselves to the reach of their own profile, instead of supplying data to the platform about who their audience is, and forging direct relationships with their target niche audiences.

We urge all artists to spend a small amount of time each week generating a database of audiences who are likely to like what the artist is doing and engage with them.

Organically there is a few steps to it:

1. Identify the audiences you want to target
2. Engage with them over a long period of time

Identify Audiences.

Create a list of 3-5 reference songs for each single in your catalogue, these should be from artists that you feel have a similar audience as your project

- Go through audio pages on Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube Shorts and Facebook Reels for popular / similar songs from those artists.

- What you are looking for is people who are consistently using the sounds (or sounds similar), and accounts who are consistently engaged in that niche. That is your audience.

- Save those specific usernames into a google sheet of some form and split it by platform.

Engage.

- Spend a small amount of time 10 - 15 minutes daily (min 3 days a week) commenting, engaging, liking and communicating with the people in that database. Please note, we are not encouraging artists to spam anyone, or talk / promote about themselves or their music. Communicating with this audience by generating meaningful discussions with audiences in your specific niche.

What this does is showcase data to the platform about who the 'target audience' is, therefore helping their content surface in the right newsfeeds (ie. the newsfeeds of potential fans of the project). Second, and more importantly, it's a pure connection point between the artists and the listener to help them generate discovery over a long period of time. Unfortunately this can't happen over a short period because the audience needs to be exposed to artists multiple times to elicit organic discovery.

Too focussed on grid or content aesthetic -

This is fairly straightforward, if the intention is to develop an audience and you're focussed solely on the 'aesthetic' of your profile (not posting specific things because of how the grid will look, not engaging with audiences, not promoting music or shows, not sharing who you are as an artist and person behind the project, only posting glossy press images etc. - you will be held back from developing. If nobody is searching your profile in the first place, no one cares about how aesthetic the feed is.

Viewing themselves as content creators, not artists:

Artists are NOT content creators. the content they produce is their audio catalogue. Not the press images, not the cover art, not the videos. Although the aforementioned content does play a role in the development of narrative, the focus on any platform should not be solely on that, it should be on generating discovery for the audio.

Romanticising platforms:

As the internet evolves, the audience's attention will evolve with it. Just because a platform is popular today, there is no guarantee that it won't be irrelevant in 6-12 months time. For artists, this can be a scary notion, the platforms they tirelessly work to generate audience and discovery on can be gone in the blink of an eye. Our advice to artists is to go where the audience is as opposed to the platforms they are comfortable utilising. The platform is not important, the audience that uses the platform is.

Virality is not the answer:

This is a major issue we see almost daily. Independent artists often look at larger acts that have international fanbases, a large amount of marketing spend behind them and access to other resources that a local developing act do not have and chase virality as opposed to generating direct connection with their niche audience.

For acts that have gone 'viral' seemingly overnight, (most / almost all of the time) those artists have been a product of a very specific marketing strategy - developed over a sustained period of time - with considerable resources. For independent artists who are exposed to this at the end of the line, it is made to seem that the larger acts' awareness has come overnight and out of nowhere. What is important to understand is that for these acts going viral, there is often infrastructure in place to ensure that the viral artist can meaningfully develop off the back of that virality.

Are we saying that all virality is manufactured? Absolutely not!

There will always be exceptions to the rule where songs have gone completely viral out of nowhere. For the 'lucky' artists this happens to, the real challenge becomes backing that virality up. How do they repeat something they had no idea how they generated in the first place? Following that, for most of those artists, their 15 minutes of virality often does not have the infrastructure to drive meaningful discovery and catalogue consumption, almost always resulting in no meaningful development for a sustained career.

Chasing vanity, and assuming the audience will care:

Media support is fantastic. To be featured on an editorial playlist, have a blog written about a project, or even be played or interviewed on radio are great goals artists can share across social media. In addition, hitting specific goals or targets for an artist project (selling out a show, hitting a certain stream count etc) are also fantastic moments to be shared across social media. Just don't make the mistake of thinking your audience cares.

Artists are very quick to utilise third party endorsement across their social media platforms as a ploy to reach new audiences. The issue is that for most audiences, they only care about listening to music that makes them feel something, whether or not an artist has a playlist or a million streams is completely irrelevant to them, and therefore not a strategy to develop more audience.

Assuming that likes and following directly correlate to audience:

In previous articles we have discussed that as music consumption on streaming platforms is mostly passive, streaming success rarely ever transfers into other areas of the project. For example 1 million streams is not 1 million ticket sales. The exact same rule applies to social media, 1 million views, likes, comments or followers is not an accurate indication of real audience because content consumption is passive.

If artists focus is on developing vanity metrics such as following, likes and views on social media platforms with no real emphasis on direct connection, their social platforms will not be a true reflection of their audience base and often not be translatable into other parts of their project (touring, merchandise, brand opportunities etc).

For more information on why high streaming does not correlate to ticket sales please read our article [here](#).

Assuming the audience will care as much as artist does:

Another fairly straight forward issue that artists struggle to get past. No one cares about your project as much as you do, and nor should they. Audiences simply want to listen / be exposed to music and content that makes them feel something (happy, sad, angry etc). In the case of social media straight up promo "*My new song is out now, please listen*" has never and will never work, as you're expecting the audience to care about something without adding any context over time. Instead of marketing without context, artists should look to develop direct connection with an audience and elicit discovery by showcasing parts of the narrative that audiences will want to buy into.

Assuming the music will connect with little effort because the release is 'good enough':

If you are an artist that wants to create a career and your attitude toward social media is that of the above then developing an artist project in the music industry simply isn't for you. This is a dangerously arrogant attitude that is out of date and does not serve any artists in today's market.

Thinking what works on one platform will work on all platforms:

Each social media platform has its own culture, features, and audience demographics. Artists must tailor their approach accordingly. For example, Instagram may be ideal for visual storytelling and behind-the-scenes glimpses

into their creative process, while X can serve as a platform for engaging in real-time conversations with fans. Understanding the nuances of each platform allows artists to maximise their impact and reach with their intended audience. We recommend artists test multiple things across multiple platforms and develop a strategy and platform pillars based on the features of the platform, the niche they are trying to connect with, while remaining authentic to their project.

Blaming the algorithm:

In social media, algorithms are rules, signals and data that govern the platform's operation. These algorithms determine how content is filtered, ranked, selected and recommended to users. In some ways, algorithms influence our choices and what we see on social media. In layman's terms, the algorithm is 'people using the platform' and 'how they use the platform'. It's common practice for artists to complain about the illusive algorithm due to a lack of understanding or that it's a magic formula they need to crack in order for the artist project to grow. It's important to understand that as artists, you are not expected to be marketing experts. What you should do is hold yourselves accountable to your audience, how they use the platform and ultimately the data they supply to the platform. If an artist can generate that understanding over a period of time, the algorithm is actually designed to help, not hinder.

In conclusion, social media offers artists a multifaceted platform to connect, engage, and grow their fanbase beyond mere self-promotion. By prioritising authentic connection, platform-specific strategies, data-driven insights, and creative engagement tactics, artists can harness the full potential of social media to propel their careers and leave a lasting impact on their audience. Focussing on the above over a sustained and consistent period of time is vital to your development.