The present and the future of marketing independent music in Egypt and breaking an artist in the mean region

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1.1. Research background

In the sector of creative business, the music industry is said to be a dynamic dimension, which relies on production and distribution of music (Burnett, 2002). With the help of building partner networks between three sides (i.e. the music production side involving songwriters and singers, the business side involving managers, labels, and agents, and the consumer side involving listeners), the music industry operates essentially (Pastukhov, 2019). The total revenue of global recorded music industry has crossed 21.5 billion USD in past couple of years, as reported (IFPI Global Music Report, 2020). Moreover, it is also predicted that it will continue to grow in future as a result of music streaming platforms. As discussed by Swanson (2013), artists can share their music to public using music streaming through commercial services of music, for example: Apple Music, Tidal, Spotify, YouTube Music, and others. Noted by Moore (2021) that self-promotion of music artists and breaking through by means of commercial service platforms of music is the most momentous transformation in the music industry. With this change, the way of operation in the industry has been shifted completely from experience of music by consumers to artists making their living from received streams.

1.1.1. Egyptian Music Industry – Overview

There are few major recording companies typically that dominate mainstream music market in Egypt. The most notably recording company is Rotana; after that Alam El Phan dominating the music market in Egypt (Khalil and Zayani, 2022). These labels have their own satellite channels playing an important role in promotion of singers by means of releasing music videos. In Egypt, these music videos are commonly known as "video clip" (Wolny-Abouelwafa, 2020). In the success of many Egyptian artists, these short music videos have become an imperative mainstay

within the culture of music that has developed progressively interested in the chromatic. It can be said that the overall scheme of firms for music production is directed towards exclusiveness.

The aim of these corporations is linked with making investment in artists for driving the developing in the Egyptian music industry. Major labels or corporation of the regions, according to Benner and Waldfogel (2016) are known for performing and adopting costly models of marketing so as to ensure that good return on investments is received. It is done by approaching a much broader market or reaching that financial potential. Along these lines, it is also noticed that labels are responsible for distributing, marketing, and promoting the work of artists. However, the advancement of technology in these years have declined the significance and relevance of these big corporations in the digitised business of music.

As the research of () has discussed, social media platforms have turned into the tool of high prominence that allow artists to build self-promotions using their own style and their own pace. Meanwhile, services for streaming music also make this possible for the independent artist to directly upload their content onto different forums without the involvement of recording companies in Egypt. As a result of these factors, Daniels (2019) mentioned that many of the music artists prefer working themselves taking the path of independence instead of getting signed to a corporation. Being an independent music artist in Egypt (or all over the world), implies to the meaning of creating and sharing music all alone without any assistance or support of major labels or marketing agencies in music industry.

As a result, 100% of all generated profits from music launch belongs solely to the independent music artists along with the advantage of having complete control over his or her career (Rani, 2018). Some of the scholars (such as ;;) have argued that accessing the music market and launching own music videos has not become unchallenging to major extent because of the digitalisation of

industry; with respect to promotion of music content as well as with respect to its production. Indeed, technology is playing a strong role in recording music effective with the help of features such as augmentation and distortion that can be accessed using recording software in the music industry. With the emergence of digital platforms like social media, marketing and promotional strategies have been revolutionised that have facilitated the music's spread across number of online platforms.

1.2. Problem Statement

In the contemporary music world, Voorhees (2019) argued that having talent and sound is not the only skill required – an artist must have the skills of branding. Therefore, it can be said that indie music artists are required to have marketing and self-promotion techniques in the business world. However, Carter (2010) has been starting that indie artists are more likely to encounter struggle in standing out and market their music in effective manner. This is said to be the outcome of the fact that there are too many aspect for indie artists to focus on since they do not have recording label's support. Utilising different marketing strategies is one of the ways to success for independent musicians. Pontes and Vinhas da Silva (2017) have mentioned that digital era has made it conceivable for these indie artists to market and promote their music in successful and effective way.

As artists tend to have ability and channel for communicating and delivering value to their audiences, there is no need left for third party; thanks to the advancements being done in technological realm.

Independent artists are able to distribute their music through the same channels as artists under record labels (Haynes and Marshall, 2018). There are many newly emerged tools available, such as social media networks, music streaming services, playlists, and when utilized correctly, unsigned musicians can reach the success they have always longed for. Given all the new dimensions imposed by technological developments, the topic of digital marketing is particularly relevant nowadays (Pontes and Vinhas da Silva, 2017). Since the key objectives of digital marketing are to promote a brand and market a product to consumers (Alagoa, 2015), it is crucial for independent artists to adopt various marketing techniques for their self-promotion. Existing studies focus on self-promoting independent artists around the world, but limited research has been conducted on narrow regions. Thus, the authors of this paper took the decision to examine the Scandinavian region further. According to Henry (2008), the music industry in Scandinavia is continuing to grow in terms of sales, employment and global reach. In order to make the scope of the research narrower, the decision to put focus on a single country was taken. The researchers chose to investigate Egypt's music market on account of the facts that the country is one of the world's most successful exporters of chart music () and is also among the global leaders in digitalization, according to the Digital Economy and Society Index 2020.

One of the factors for play aside from ill-equipped venues while the high cost of rental live music scene in Egypt. Most of the independent musicians work without any external or organizational support, or any financial sustainability.

Between restricted channels, red tape, and a society unwilling to take its musicians seriously (most Egyptian parents do not feel music is a viable career option), maybe the most defining element of the indie music industry has been its continuing fragility over the last 15 years. What was taken as a blazing, promising playground at the start of the millennium never fully blossomed?

It was so different in the earlies 2000s. This period saw the birth of El Sawy Culture Wheel, Cairo Jazz Club, and the novel (not active now) music festival SOS. The helm's programmers tried to bring up the hidden talents and underground music to the masses. The programmers at the helm tried to introduce underground music to the masses and such spaces are the launch pads for the bands like Cairokee, Massar Egbaria and Wust El Balad compares the sound that is standard in today's scene. But then things began to fester.

One of the reasons for this is that opening or expanding a venue is difficult. The independent music scene tried to move away from state support for years, which in Egyptian artists' case is a bid to resist restrictions on creativity. There is a law that says non-member musicians can face jail if they fail to secure permits of the government-aligned syndicate.

Continuing this battle, smaller venues end up paying money to the syndicate (and the censorship authority and taxation authority) particularly, to make sure that the show continues – a web of outdated and dishonest regulations that are a barrier to venue expansion.

Another big reason is that musicians have to compete for attention. For example After eight and Cairo Jazz Club operate within a standard bar, where audiences coming for the music blend with those enjoying a night out. As such, musicians see themselves wasting their talent and singing to an uninterested and disengaged audience. Explained by El Shazly: sometimes you want to play music without worrying that you might become the background act.

Cairo Jazz Club, considered by many a boon to the scene, recently acquired a bigger space in an affluent suburb south of Cairo that is set to boast a mobile stage and accommodate between 700 and 800 people – a much-needed upgrade from its current, infamously inconvenient layout. But perhaps the long-term solution to Egypt's beleaguered music community is not in another bar, given that the majority of the 20-some million inhabitants of its capital do not drink.

A third issue is the role that corporate money is playing in Egypt. There is a growing interest in independent musicians by powerhouses in the telecommunications and beverage industries. This has allowed a select few to dedicate their time to producing and performing music, and in one recent instance guaranteed 10,000 fans at one concert. What these bands have mastered are a steady stream of relatable lyrics and a solid fan base to start with.

But despite these corporate opportunities, the question of sustainability looms large, as it remains unclear whether the benefits of corporate money can trickle down to a wider musical playground.

The fate of the SOS festival is a case in point. When Vodafone's global marketing strategy migrated to the web, SOS folded its operations in 2009, after three years and 18 wonderful editions. A number of other festivals have entered the scene in the past few years, and the one that managed to prevail is Sandbox, which is backed by Heineken.

A fourth point lies with the musicians and the wider political landscape. Cairo Jazz Club hosts four live gigs a week. Its roster apparently boasts 60 to 80 bands but the club's entertainment and events manager told me recently that it's often a challenge to fill up the monthly programme.

As most venues are unable to offer sufficient fees, musicians often find themselves between a rock and a hard place. This reluctance to commit to music becomes more pertinent within the wider

political landscape. There was a fleeting explosion of self-expression post-2011 after the downfall of Hosni Mubarak. But many musicians joined the exodus of artists, academics and political dissidents, following the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in 2012, and the economic slump that followed its ouster.

Some sought refuge and exposure in venues and festivals abroad (this weekend, Beirut's Irtijal is showcasing five solo artists, the largest ever participation from Egypt) but a few persevered, including El Shazly, whose debut album will be out at the end of the year.

Is there any bright spot for the live music scene in Egypt? When architect-turned-cameraman Ahmed Zeidan launched Room in the second half of 2013, he envisioned a studio space that could be shared between his musician friends and a young crowd of film professionals, as revenue from coffee and tea was intended to cover rent. But after the opening, music took over, so eventually the wall that separated the studio from the cafe came down and a small but essential live music venue was born.

1.3. Research Question

The research question, this study seeks to answer is as follow:

> ➤ What are the factors that shaped Independent music scene of Egypt?
> ➤ What are the recent events on the live performances in Egypt?

1.4. Research Aim and Objectives

The research aims to explore the evolution of independent and the underground music scenes in Egypt along with exploring the setbacks in the live performance scenes and other areas of the music industry that was impacted, following the coronavirus pandemics and the subsequent political consequences.

With the help of this study, the information regarding different tools have been delivers and with showing the examples of self-promotion techniques that can be adopted by the individuals who work independently in the music industry. Moreover, it is also discussed that what limitation or possibilities an artist could face in recording for a label in their music career. For developing a deeper understanding of entirety of the topic, researcher of this study has conducted structured interviews along with surveys among marketing managers and independent artists based in Egypt. The findings of the study are then supported or critiqued using existing literature.

In order to achieve this afore-mentioned aim and answer research question(s), following are the objectives:

➢ To observe the reconstruction of underground hip-hop and modern music scenes in Egypt in recent years

➢ To develop an understanding of the obstacles and issues that can arise following the impacts of the global pandemic

➢ To foresee the influential factors that can affect the industry in the future

1.5. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters that are generic in nature. While the information presented in each of the chapter is distinct and unique, these are inter-connected with each other in coherent manner so as to maintain a flow of the information and presenting the work in the form of one piece of research. The arrangement of chapters in appropriate manner is said to be very crucial in presenting a study that is informative and understandable to its readers (). Therefore, despite presenting a unique aspect of information in each of the chapters, the overall essence of the research remain connected with its core topic and aim which ensures overall connectedness

and coherency. Due to this, the study remain useful and beneficial to be utilised in future studies. The details of each chapter are given below:

The 1st chapter of the study is titled as introduction in which the researcher has discussed introductory information linked to the subject matter – as depicted by its name. Under introductory sections, the aspects related to background of the study is very important (). Therefore, the first section in introduction's chapter involve presenting the brief account of research study's background. Then, a brief overview of Egyptian music industry is also presented in this part followed by shedding light on the problem statement of the study. In completing a study, it is very important that proper aim and objectives are devised, therefore, this chapter has also mentioned the research questions and aim & objectives of this research. The chapter then ends on providing the dissertation's structure so that readers can understand what each of the chapter is discussing along with its outline.

In the second chapter, which is named as literature review, a thorough and detailed review of literature is presented for showing what is already presented in the studies. Reviewing the literature offered researchers with different themes and data trends allowing researcher to get close to achieving its aim. As the study of () has discussed, review of literature in the research plays the role of setting the clear direction for the upcoming chapters. By reviewing the literature, gap in the research is also identified in the chapter. The information presented in this chapter is also recalled in the latter chapters for supporting or contradicting the primary findings or results. The chapter has explored the range of aspects varies from music's history to digitalisation in the music along with highlighting indie music in Egypt.

Third chapter of the research offered great extent of details regarding the methodological aspects of this study. The title of this chapter is methodology that discusses the approaches and decisions

taken for completing the research. Started with acquiring familiarity linked with key approaches, the best approach is chosen in line with the objectives and aim of the study. Reading through the studies, it is understood that methodology of the research holds great significance in offering the blueprint of the study (). It can be argued that this chapter does not contributes directly to the results of the study, it provide a very clear and effective path of retrieving research studies. In this wake, the chapter attempts to answer some of the fundamental question arising in the mind of readers from methodological viewpoint including why the researcher has chosen certain research design over other i.e. justification of the research design chosen and how the planning of research has been done i.e. intended design of the research . The chapter, thus contain rationale behind every decision so that the research weaknesses can be eliminated.

After formulating the methodology of the study, the research moves towards its one of the crucial chapter i.e. results and findings. The researcher's focus, in this chapter, moves form context setting to formulating the results of this study. This chapter played a significant role in answering the research question and fulfilling the aim of the study (). The primary data has been presented and analysed in this chapter using narratives and statistics. Therefore, it involves presentation of data, its interpretation, and analysis summary in sequential manner.

After formulating results and conduct its analysis, the last chapter of the research performs a discussion where results are compared with the evidence and information collected in the second chapter. This way, it not only answer the research questions but also assist in identifying the primary data if it is in line with the literature or not. Eventually, the conclusion of entire research is also presented in the last chapter of the study followed by the recommendations to indie music artists in developing a good marketing plan. The recommendations are given in the light of

literature along with eventually shedding light on the limitations of the study. The future work direction is also presented at the end of fifth chapter.

This is how the research is outlined in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter No. 2 – Literature Review – 3000 words

The Music Industry

Art is a name of expressing yourself and music is one of the artistic form of expression. It has been a primary form of expression ever since the dawn of civilization. (Throsby, 2002) and is also considered as one of the universal cultural aspects of humanity. When different individuals engaged in the production of songs the music market began to shape, and later was performed at multiple event venues like opera hall and concert halls (Leurdijk et al, 2014). At the end of the 19th century the music industry took its major turn by inventing and introducing new instruments and equipments to produce music and sounds. The more advance recordings were made with the help of innovation in music industry. The modern world's music is helping the new musician in generating billions of dollars through music production. (Throsby, 2002). According to Nielson (2014),The music industry consist of the many key players like composers, producers, the professionals who create the music and sell like publishers and producers, those who assist the music artist based on their career like talent coaches and manager etc. And those behind the broadcasting the music on television shows and radios like journalists and program directors. Defined by Moyon&Lecocq (2015) one existing prior to the appearance of technologies, the traditional business model thinks of the industry as an oligopoly during the late 90s. Because there were only five leading companies in the market that were controlling the music market becoming the centre of all the process like contacting the artists, stakeholder, publishing and studios etc. (Hracs, 2012). Up till now, they are still considered as the major companies of the music industry.

They consist of Vivendi Universal, Bertelsmann BMG, Time Warner, EMI Records and Sony (Graham, 2004). The sign the contracts and enter into agreements between the artist and the label is the way how they operate. The duration can vary depending on the number of songs or albums released (Cook, 2003). Some more responsibilities that the record companies fulfit is promoting the music artists, creating and prublishing the music while building their career overall and growing their company. Nonetheless, while labels were once necessary for the production, marketing, and promotion of music, digitization has already undermined the conventional benefits that recording businesses provided). (Day, 2010) Technological improvements in the sector, such as music streaming platforms and digital marketing channels, have intervened in the Big Five's iron grip on the music industry.

The music industry has become completely permeated due to digitalization. Technological developments have been affecting the industry for many decades, (Dolata, 2020), the evolution caused the invention of radio broadcasting, after that cassettes, vinyls and compact discs (CDs) were invested in order to store the music. The most drastic shifts sen by the music industry in the history of music is the consumption of the music from physical to virtual. (Wikström, 2013). As the digital cunsomption of the music increased the sales of the actual product decreased, (Richter, 2021). The Technological advancement proved to be much helpful in reaching out a much greater audience making the listeners able to get high-quality music directly from the Internet (Lam & Tam, 2001), by using streaming audio services as their primary method (Zantal-Wiener, 2019). Digitalization of the industry was also helpful to the music artists, since they can use these newly existing streaming platforms as a means of distributing their music and also as a marketing tool (Awbi, 2013). Social media also plays a big role today, it enables the artists to market themselves freely and reach out to their fans.

Signed artists VS Independent artists

In the music industry there are two types of music artists, the signed music artists and the independent music artists. The signed ones are hired to record labels owned by them through long-term contracts, and the independent ones work independently without any organizational backup (Oliver & Green, 2009). Artists are gathers to make records and their results are packaged by the producers hired by the music record labels (Perrow, 1974). Furthermore, labels have a multiple-rights contract with artists (Allen, 2018), which gives them the authority to fully control and manage the marketing, distribution and promotion of an artist's music. They also have the authority to decide the artist's direction of music genre, and change the sound and lyrics of a song as well (McDonald, 2019). They can Even change the musician's physical appearance and persona in order to establish a visual identity that will be admired by a large audience (Do Looks Matter In The Music Industry?, 2021). And In all scenarios, music record labels get a significant cut of an artist's earnings (Negus, 1992).

 There are other artists at the same time who operate outside a record label with the help of self funding usually (Oliver and Green, 2009). Chance the rapper, Macklemore and Frank Ocean are the few examples of such artists. They have full control of their career choices as compared to the signed artists. They also get the full amount of their earning and do not have to pay the companies for it. But they are also responsible for handling their own distribution and promotion of their music. According to Paine (2021), such artists who are independent they have strongly over performed the music market.

Digital marketing in the music industry

Marketing is one of a complex interrelated field web including consumer's delivery, branding and digital advertising (Harrell, 2021). The artists in the music industry has a huge benefit of becoming

known and popular as marketing plays an important role in the life of musician turing them from a average artist into a star. It amplifies the hard work of an artist's to potential fans. (Agrawal, 2016). When the industry was not digitalized, the traditional marketing media consisted of radio stations, television and industry press according to Cohn and Vaccaro (2004). But today the business models are more focused on digital delivery and promotion of the music. However, the business model today is more focused on the digital delivery and promotion of music (Cohn & Vaccaro, 2004). There are several internet channels available for musicians to distribute their songs, sell their creative work, express their personal brand, build a fan following, and engage with it. This article categorises digital media into three major groups: social music streaming platforms, networking platforms, and distribution platforms.

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Appendices