

SUPSI

DJS AS A BRAND: THE CASE STUDY IN ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research is carried out with the aim of understanding what is the winning strategy and what are the guidelines to be taken into consideration in order for a DJ Producer to achieve his personal goals and thus be successful in the electronic dance music industry.

The first part takes a look at the general framework of the music industry, in correlation with digitisation and technological development. This provides an understanding of which elements play an important role in the music world, for example the advent of social media or streaming. Next, a focus was carried out on electronic music, its importance and development over the years.

A literature search was conducted on the importance of branding and branding strategies, considering Keller's Brand Equity model and Aaker's Brand Vision model. Then, an in-depth look at what personal branding is and why nowadays even individuals need to build their own brand to achieve success. Next, I illustrated the DJ Producer industry with some of its main features.

After an explanation of the methodology used and some limitations and difficulties encountered during the research, I outlined some main points on building a solid DJ Producer brand.

Finally, I presented the case of the Dj Producer Marshmello, which I found very interesting to better understand the steps that should be taken into consideration in order to build a strong brand.

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2. THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

2A. DEFINITION AND CHANGES DUE TO TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

The music industry can be defined as the “business of performing, recording, and selling music through a number of different methods”. (*What Is the Music Industry?*, s.d.).

Over the years, it has experienced several major changes, and it is still going through a process of transformation. Digitisation and technological advancement play an important role in this regard. Some of the changes and developments related to the internet include the invention of the MP3 file, file sharing, online music fandom, digital music sales etc.

Digital technology offers several advantages both in the production phase (the different existing software used for composition and mixing) and in the consumption phase. Today, in fact, in order to produce or listen to music, it is necessary to have a digital device.

Past technologies & piracy

In the world of music, we can say that four main changes have taken place, each time disrupting the industry. At each stage, the world of music has had to confront a threat that has always existed: the piracy. The topic is controversial because today it is said that piracy has been saved by streaming, but on the other hand, streaming would not exist without piracy.

Thus, this is a very sensitive issue: according to the estimate of the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), today there is less pirated content and more Subscription services. More than half of young Europeans do not access digital cultural content by using illegal sources: out of the 97 percent of young Europeans who listened to and downloaded music in 2019, only 39 percent also did it through illegal sources, a decrease of 17 percent compared to 2016. (Euiipo Annual Report 2019) (Fox & Wrenn, 2001)

Briefly, the 4 main changes in the music industry are as following:

1. First change – vinyl, cassettes, CDs

Initially, music was consumed through vinyl, on which several tracks were grouped together. Economically, the expenses were higher, since in addition to the purchase of the individual vinyl, it was also necessary to purchase turntables, the equipment to be able to listen to music. However, the sensory experience was totally different: vinyl is characterized by beautiful covers, which still hold great value for collectors today. Plus, there is the whole concept of delicacy, precision, and attention to detail that brings with it charm. Following vinyl came cassettes and

compact discs (CDs), but the concept was still the same, the one of grouping a certain number of songs on a single medium. (*Digital Disruption in the Music Industry*, s.d.)

2. Second change – Napster, Internet

The second major change came in the year 1999, when it moved to the digital world, namely that of file sharing with the emergence of Napster. This is a peer-to-peer file sharing application and was the first one of its kind, easy to use by those who are not experts in technology. With Napster it was possible to easily share MP3 files on one's computer and



Figure 1 – Napster old logo
(1000 Logos)

likewise search through the files uploaded by others and download any desired song. It was a completely new concept because it involved searching through a huge amount of music and so many people, in fact, discovered new songs and artists. With the connection not yet so advanced, it had to take several minutes or even hours to download a single song. With file sharing, music is perceived as something that can be get for free. The music business at this stage, is divided, as you can get a single song or track. (Fox & Wrenn, 2001)

Napster and other similar technologies such as Freenet or Aimster have provided music consumers with more free access to music than ever before. (Foege 2000) (Fox & Wrenn, 2001)

3. Third change – iTunes

“Steve Jobs created something that made it so easy for people to buy music. He had a complete thought that went from iTunes to the iPod. It made complete sense, and it was something he felt people would be willing to pay for. In the end, he was right. It was all about having the right product.” – Doug Morris, CEO of Sony Music Entertainment and former head of Universal Music Group

iTunes was the first online music shop that made it possible to buy the individual song, so it was no longer necessary to buy the whole album to maybe listen to just a couple of songs liked. It was a benefit for artists, producers, record labels, etc. because they were able to commercialise music again. iTunes was very easy to use, and the songs were sold at a reasonable price, which is why it has achieved such success: 99 cents for each individual track, and there was also the possibility to listen to a preview, in order to choose the tracks, so iTunes was the first legal alternative after Napster.

4. Forth change - streaming

People started thinking that it was no longer worth buying an album on iTunes for \$10 when for the same price it was possible to sign up for a monthly subscription to get all the music in an unlimited way, with customised playlist, according to preferences, lifestyle and mood of the day (Direct Liscening, Ivan L. Pitt). In this phase there is a return of song grouping, in this case everything is bundled into one service. This is the example of Spotify, a streaming platform that allows customers to listen to all the music they want, quickly and easily without risking downloading songs illegally and endangering their PCs. (Wlömert & Papies, 2016)

The potential market has changed, for example, the fact that today thanks to digitization it is possible to listen to music almost anytime and anywhere and it is easily accessible because the costs for any digital device are low and affordable for almost everyone. This clearly has an impact on culture as well; listenability becomes ubiquitous.

Streaming services earn income in two different ways. The first revenue is the earnings from subscriptions for the service: what each person pays monthly to use the platform and access all the music without limitation. Alternatively, the second source of income is advertising, which is included in a free version of the platform, but which has limitations for users. (Halbheer, Stahl, Koenigsberg and Lehmann, 2014) (Wlömert & Papies, 2016)

The following graph shows how the use and value of streaming has increased over the years and how, on the other hand, the part related to physical formats has become less important.

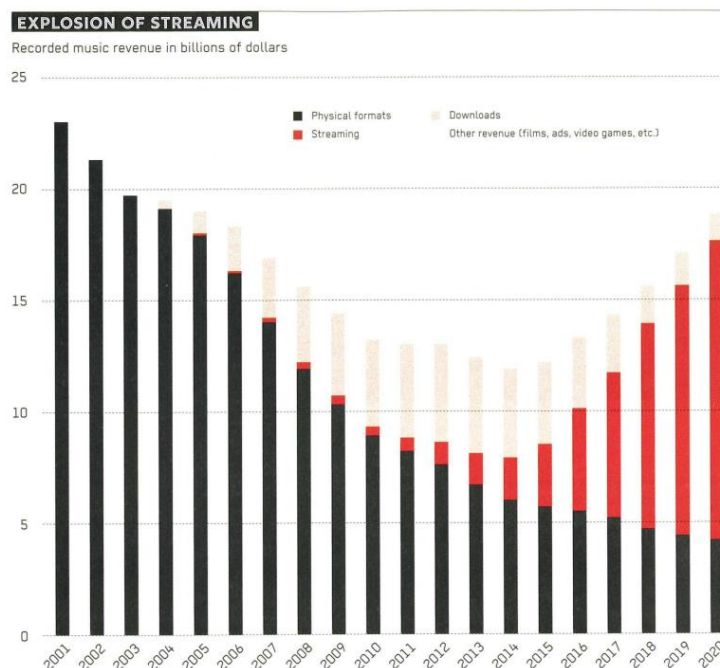


Figure 2 – Explosion of streaming, (SwissQuote 2021)

2B. THE MUSIC INDUSTRY TODAY: ITS FEATURES

2B.1 The music streaming

The music industry today is characterized by the latest technology that has emerged: the streaming, which has created new ways to monetise music. Streaming has solved a problem that the music industry has been facing for several years: the piracy. It has resulted in a huge loss of revenue for the music industry, which, as explained before, it has been heavily threatened by illegal file-sharing and various attempts by artists to bypass traditional methods of reaching audiences. (Johansson et al., 2017)

Currently, however, the industry seems to be working with the streaming service, as it appears to have helped a lot in encouraging the use of legal forms of access to music. While several advantages have emerged, controversies have also surfaced. With streaming, customers have access to a vast amount of music with no storage or download time limits. Users prefer to pay for a subscription to listen to music rather than downloading it for free, which requires more time and resources. In the first quarter of 2021, 487 million people worldwide paid for streaming services and the number of users is expected to continue to grow, reaching a figure exceeding 2 billion by 2030. (SwissQuote, 2021).

The following are some of the different music streaming platforms around the world: Spotify, Soundcloud, Apple Music, Tidal, Amazon Music, Google Play Music, etc. They have almost the same catalogue of tracks and are all accessible in most countries. (Rushan, 2021)

Spotify

Spotify is a platform that was launched in 2008 and the service is now used by millions of users from all over the world. Several criticisms are related to the model of distribution of revenues for artists generated by these streaming platforms such as Spotify or Apple Music. They pay two-thirds of their revenue to the three major labels, Universal, Warner and Sony, which control 70 % of the music market and own most of the song catalogues. Spotify does not pay the artists directly, but the rights holders, so the remuneration of artists and songwriters depends on their agreement with the rights holders, and each agreement is different. Hence, the subscribers' money simply ends up in one place and is given back to the artists depending on their total streaming share. Those who receive a lot of listens also receive a lot more money. The system favours the few international artists & stars who get millions of streams, as revenues are shared and redistributed according to the total number of hits: for a song streamed 10 times, Spotify pays 10 times more than for a song streamed just once (Swissquote, 2021). Spotify has the advantage of possessing a strategic position within the industry

since it is highly influential: for example, Spotify's playlists generate 1/3 of the streams played. On the other hand, it possesses the weakness of not producing its own content, so it is dependent on other important pillars. (Marshall, 2015)

A FAST-GROWING INDUSTRY



Figure 3 – Spotify, distribution of money, (SwissQuote 2021)

SoundCloud

Soundcloud was created with the aim of offering "something for artists to share and connect through music". (Ljung, 2017).

Responding to the various controversies over payment of artists by platforms such as Spotify there is Soundcloud, a music streaming platform that is widely used in the world of electronic and dance music and hip hop, not yet highly developed in other music genres. (Allington et al., 2015; Caramanica, 2017) (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2019)

It has adopted a method called "Fan-Powered Royalties" a more direct payment system, a first-to-market user-centric royalty payment model. The royalties, precisely, come directly from Soundcloud, without going through a third part, and the money generated from an individual person's subscription goes directly to the artists that the single person listens to. Artists using this are generating 60% more streaming revenue than they would have otherwise. (IMS Business Report 2022)

Big and growing:

\$219.6m revenues **+31%**

Electronic:

11,000,000 electronic artists (28%)

30% listen electronic music

(At least one track on a given day. Remember electronic overall music's market share is about 3%)

Engagement:

2x save rate vs other genres.

5.2% of electronic music plays were saved

4x repost rate vs other genres

3x sharing rate vs other genres

Figure 4 – Soundcloud data (IMS Business Report 2022)

Jack Bridges, Sr. Manager, Label Relations at SoundCloud:

- “Whatever sub-genres or emerging artists a listener loves, we want to make sure their money goes back to the creators they love, rather than being diluted across the whole platform and all artists and all labels ...”
- “... We want to surface data to highlight superfans. To help artists go direct, build communities and upsell fans to merch, tickets etc. We want to give artists the data they need to re-engage lapsed fans and to make it really clear where they should invest ...”

With this method there is a more direct sharing between fans and listeners, by rewarding even less well-known artists who own a small niche, who do not necessarily have to become mega-stars in order to earn a reasonable amount of money. It should be noted, however, that this payment system works if the artist benefits from a strong fanbase, which is why as an artist it is important to invest in the creation and management of the community. (SwissQuote, 2021)

2B.2 Social Media

In the various social media, users gather various detailed information about themselves, which is why it is particularly interesting for marketing activities (Shannon, 2008). Today, in fact, music nowadays is promoted a lot digitally, for example through the presence on social media in order to create a community and build a real relationship with the followers/fans, or by posting the own music on the major music streaming platforms such as Spotify or SoundCloud, or simply by talking about yourself on the web.

Social media enable the production and interaction of content, through forums, blogs, tweets for example (Costantinides & Fontana, 2008 ; Kozinets, 1999), attracting the attention of users who do not want to limit themselves to participation, but rather want to create content and share it themselves (Näkki & Virtanen, 2007). The increasing importance of the use of social media has led to the rise of various opportunities to earn and achieve success through music. The relationship between fans and artists and the way they interact, have radically changed: social media play a key role. A fan can communicate directly with an artist simply by following him/her on social media, watching and commenting on the content posted. The artist, on the other hand, has the possibility to communicate with fans from all over the world: for example, by sharing streams, photos and videos of the shows, involving them in every activity organised. Social media allow artists to share their thoughts or promote a new single/collaboration in real time and this can be simply made by sharing a video on YouTube or through the Instagram's stories. Moreover, the audience can be involved in the artist's choices: making them co-creators, fans are more active and more satisfied as well.

The barriers, therefore, between artists and fans are very thin, today there is limitless interactivity in terms of space and time thanks to social media and this has led fans to be emotional more connected to the artist. Social networks presence for an artist is a prerequisite for success because they are a great opportunity to do business and increase popularity.

TikTok

Tik Tok is a social media that has emerged and advanced very quickly and holds value in the industry.

Serious about monetisation: TikTok registered the highest global consumer spend ever for any app or game in a given quarter. It is the first app to ever beat a game in consumer spend!

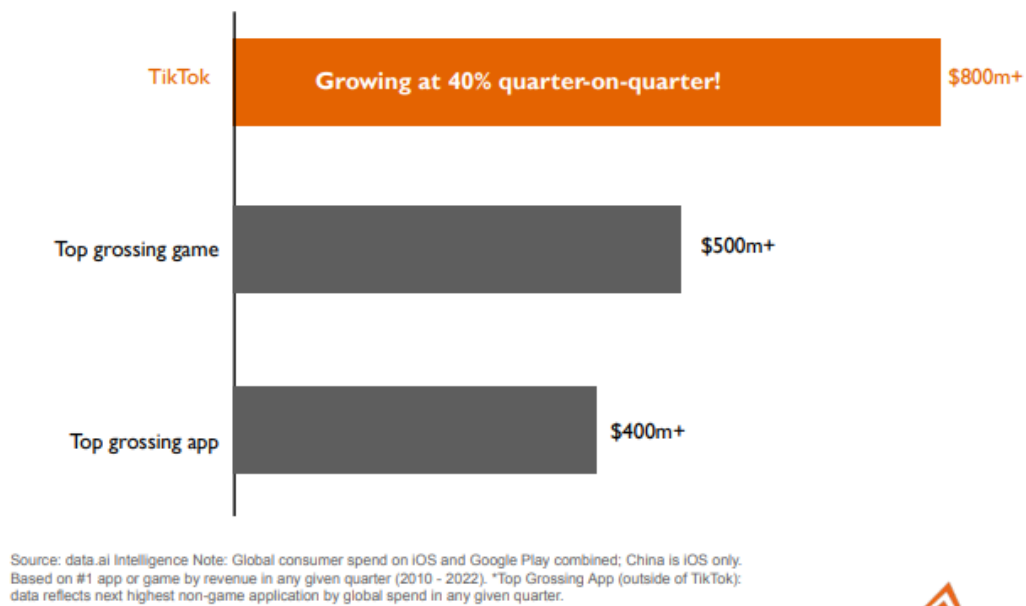


Figura 5 – Consumer spend on TikTok and top grossing app, (IMS Business Report 2022)

TikTok has become a real tool through which new talent can be discovered. One example is Dixie D'Amelio, who began posting her music videos on TikTok and then signed with a record label. Today it is no longer necessary to go around to different venues to discover "hidden stars," one can take a look on social media and pay attention to the users and content posted. (SwissQuote, 2021).

In addition to this, social media have the ability to make a song popular, through the creation of challenges to be performed by dancing over a particular song. Thanks to the invention of these challenges, it happened that "old" songs gained popularity, and everyone started listening to them again. (Cervi, 2021) (Zuo & Wang, 2019)

A very interesting example concerns David Guetta and Bebe Rexha. These two artists five years ago had started a collaboration, where however, no official song was ever released. They just played

the unreleased song during the Ultra Music Festival in 2017. This song recently went viral on TikTok as it became the subject of a challenge (+145k videos with this song as sound have been posted), drawing attention to the song and making people wonder whose song it was and where to find it. David Guetta then posted a TikTok with this song, asking the TikTok's community opinion about the possible realisation of the song.

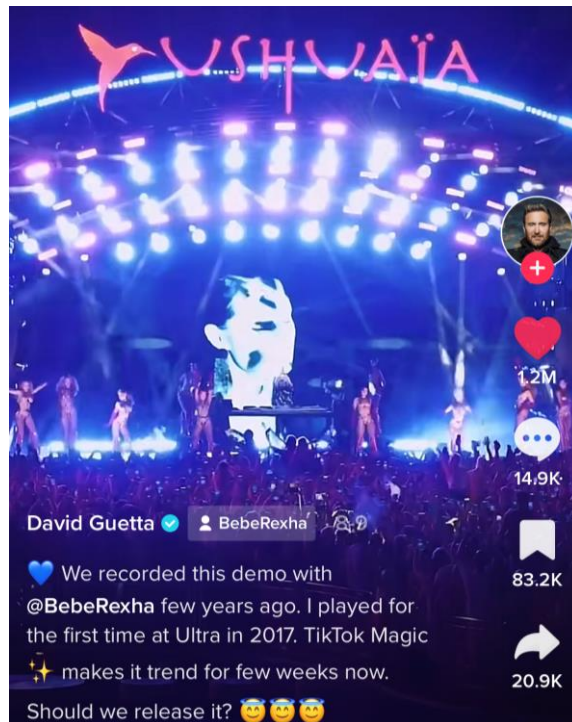


Figura 6 – David Guetta TikTok (D. Guetta's TikTok) account)

He also played the unrealized song during several of his shows in Ibiza and around the world. The audience response was impressive: the crowd knew the whole lyrics: this is unusual for a song that has not yet been officially released. The two artists finally realised 'Blue', the song that became a hit thanks to TikTok. This example I think makes think about the immense potential of social media today, from the point of view of reaching a huge audience in a short time. David Guetta and Bebe Rexha did not spend any money to publicise this song as it was not even their intention to make it, they simply considered and listened to the wishes and requests of the public.

davidguetta The story behind this release is just crazy, I still cannot believe it! From a demo played at Ultra in 2017 to a TikTok trend past weeks, the track is finally OUT TODAY!!! Happy to collab once again with 🐻 @beberexha 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌
link in bio

Figura 7 – David Guetta Instagram caption (D. Guetta's IG profile)

How to use social media

Therefore, artists, depending on where they are in their career path, may decide to take advantage of these platforms and opportunities in different ways. For example, those who are not known, through social media have the opportunity to put themselves out on the market, presenting their musical content. All it takes is having an account and having a device to launch themselves. On the other hand, however, it is not so obvious to emerge given the very high amount of information and data on the web: one must possess creativity to stand out from the crowd and succeed in going viral. The artists instead, who are already known, use social to increase engagement with their fans and reinforce the character they have built. Indeed, they can, for example, answer questions that are directly asked by the community, post informative videos, or create engagement activities such as providing contests. This shortens the distance an artist has with his or her fans. Unlike a few years ago, where people would only post in honour of a special event such as the launch of an album or the start of a tour, today it is important to keep social accounts up-to-date by frequently posting original and quality content.

In addition, content must adapt to the different formats required by each individual platform. For example, over the past two years TikTok has disrupted the work of all social media managers by forcing them to produce short videos enhanced by music and special effects.

Some questions have emerged regarding this important role that social media possesses in the music world concern the quality of music. It seems that platforms prefer catchy tracks, so artists or songs that can appeal to a large mass of people. Therefore, it is possible that there are several hidden artists who are present on social media, and although they may not have gained visibility, it is not necessarily the case that they are not valid or interesting to a particular record company.

(Swissquote, Music a beaming industry). (Salo et al., 2013) (Zuo & Wang, 2019)

In conclusion, social media are used for the following main reasons:

- Reinforcement of individual, group identity
- Sense of affinity
- Participation in the form of user-generated content
- Bidirectional interactions between group members

(Salo et al., 2013)

1B.3 Live Events

Live shows are of utmost importance for artists for two main reasons. Firstly, they contribute a great part to the artist's income, precisely because as mentioned in the first chapter, CDs and 'physical' sales of music are increasingly disappearing. Secondly, they are a great opportunity to create a deep

connection with the audience and thus with the community. An artist who decides not to go on tour misses a great opportunity to connect with the audience. Live shows have a more lasting impact because strong emotions emerge from attending a concert.

Artists interact in different ways with the crowd during the show, connecting with it and keeping it continuously engaged. Among the different activities that can be done are:

- Inciting the crowd to sing a piece of the song/chorus: in this way the audience feels important, as if it is their job to sing and be heard, engaging them to raise their voices as much as possible.
- Walking on stage & moving around: by changing position several fans are able to see the artist and this is even more exciting for them.
- Saying words in the original language of the place - for example the opening or closing greetings.
- Showing happiness, expressing positivity - people come to concerts because they want to have fun and feel good.

The goal is to make the audience feel important and part of the production, so a strong connection is also created because the experience will improve and the emotions will be greater.

To be able to create a connection it is first necessary to know the audience, because every artist has the task of entertaining it and must know how to do it. Throughout the show the artist must monitor the audience, their interest and how they respond. Moreover, today thanks to technology an artist can also live stream the concert and share it on social media. This can create even more engagement. For example, large electronic music festivals such as Tomorrowland or Ultra Miami present all mainstage sets live on YouTube. Live streams however do not replace live events, they are an alternative to be able to create engagement with their fans and offer them something highly valuable. (IMS Music Report 2022) (Supply Responses to Digital Distribution, s.d.)

2C. RESULTS OF THE INDUSTRY

As a result of all the transformations the industry has undergone in recent years, it is now an extremely dynamic and highly connected world where everyone has more opportunities to achieve success. Today's music industry is called the 'new music economy' or the 'new music industry dynamic', as the changes and transformation that the music industry underwent in the first decades of the 20th century were even more radical than before (D'Arcangelo 2007; Denis 2008; Goodman 2008). Digital technologies offer new ways to listen to, distribute, and promote music and also new ways for artists to interact with their fans. The music industry is described by Wikström as if it were a "cloud": there is a shift from physical music, thus music on hard discs for example, to virtual music, so streaming services. According to Wikstrom, music today is no longer something that can be collected or owned, but rather is found in the cloud. Every part of the music business, including

promotion, talent development, etc., has entered the 'digital' sphere due to the internet technologies that have been the main driver of change. There are numerous music technology brands characteristic of this era: iTunes, YouTube, SoundCloud, Spotify, Shazam, etc. These new technologies have lowered the barriers that limited the distribution of information online in the past, as it is now very quick and easy to upload information to the cloud. If in the past, physical distribution, for instance maximising revenue through the intellectual property of each song, was of utmost importance, today it no longer acquires such significance: distribution through media on the Internet has increased enormously. (Wikström, 2020)

This is a new "music economy" that according to Wikström differs from the old music economy on three levels: Connectivity vs. Control, Service vs. Product, Amateur vs. Professional. There is less control in the industry, for instance by record companies; it depends mainly on connectivity between the audience and the artists and between the different services that provide music. Today it is a matter of access rather than ownership.

Indeed, people listen to a lot more music today than in the past because of the simplicity of access. In the past, specific devices were needed, you had to physically buy the tracks you wanted to listen to (through CDs), etc. Now, you just need to connect to the internet and with any media you can easily gain access to a large amount of music. (Pham, 2013)

This shift to the digital world also requires different promotion methodologies to be adopted and also requires different creativity, which is redefining how musicians and their fans interact (e.g., the concept of co-creation, fan funding, and other social and creative uses are becoming the **norm**). The relationship we have with music today is increasingly dependent on the different technologies involved in presentation, distribution, and consumption. (Wikström, 2020)

The music industry is characterised by 'digital', so everything also concerns digital information and information technology. Thanks to this technological development, today it is possible to retrieve data that can be very useful for analysing and getting to know one's community, competitors and more: for example, one can analyse data on fan behaviour through social media. (Tim Paul Thomes, 2013). Knowledge of one's target audience is crucial to be able to sell or offer one's product/service and distribute it in the right way. Today, as could be understood from the previous pages, the focus is on social media, but one would think that robotisation and artificial intelligence will have an even greater impact in the future. Every activity and element will be more and more digitally present and this leads to a change in interactions that will be more digital and different.

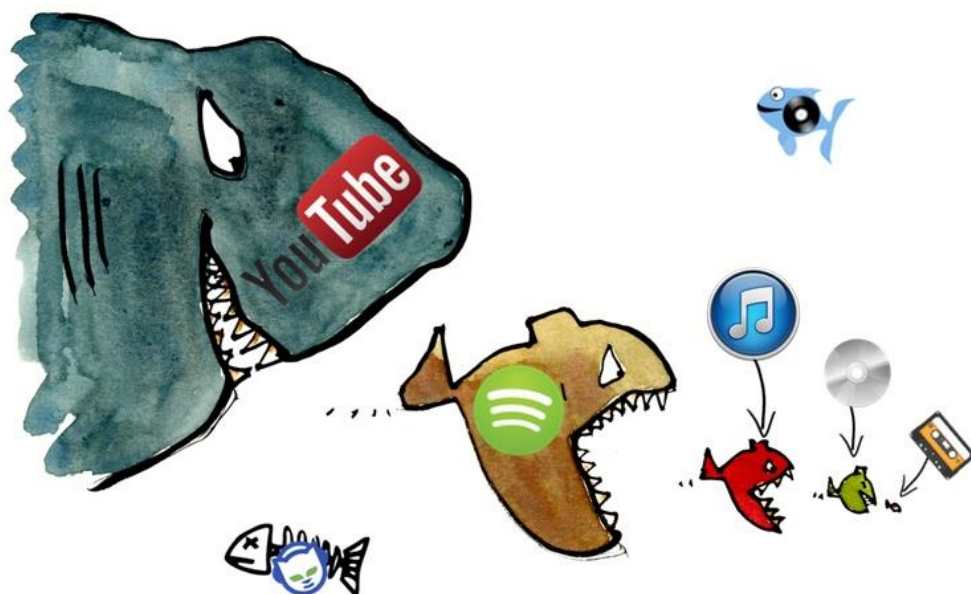


Figure 8 – How streaming ate recorded music (Resnikoff 2014)

3. ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC

The growth of electronic music was possible thanks to the advent of the Internet. This has made electronic dance music easily accessible to anyone, as people are able to listen to and discover new artists and genres of music thanks to the ease of connection. As seen in Chapter One, MP3 players have led to high-speed file sharing due to improved Internet connections. In addition to this, the growth of social media, starting with MySpace, have made it easier for artists to share and distribute music instantly. DJ Producers such as Armin Van Buuren and Tiesto started hosting international radio programmes on the Internet, increasing people's interest in electronic music, until they reached the highest levels by distributing their performances online. («Armin van Buuren», 2020)

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) encompasses any type of music produced electronically with digital (computer) and analogue equipment. (Russell, 2020) The sub-genres of EDM are many, the most popular of which are future bass, big room house, dubstep, future house, etc. Lesser-known ones include deep house, trance, hardstyle, garage, etc. The objective of electronic music is to make people dance.

In the last 10-15 years, EDM has started to gain more recognition and be taken into account as a real music genre. The sub-genres and thus EDM itself have changed and evolved a lot over the years, for example new sounds and new genres have emerged and the importance of others has declined. (Russell, 2020) In fact, EDM has contributed a lot to the creation of new music through the meeting and mixing of different cultures, an example is the Dj producer KSHMR, who characterises his songs with typical Indian melodies and sounds. In addition, electronic dance music is more easily appreciated by people from all over the world, since the most important part of a song in this genre is the instrumental part, even though the songs sometimes contain vocals. In this regard, understanding the lyrics is not necessary or at least not the central point as it might be for another type of song.

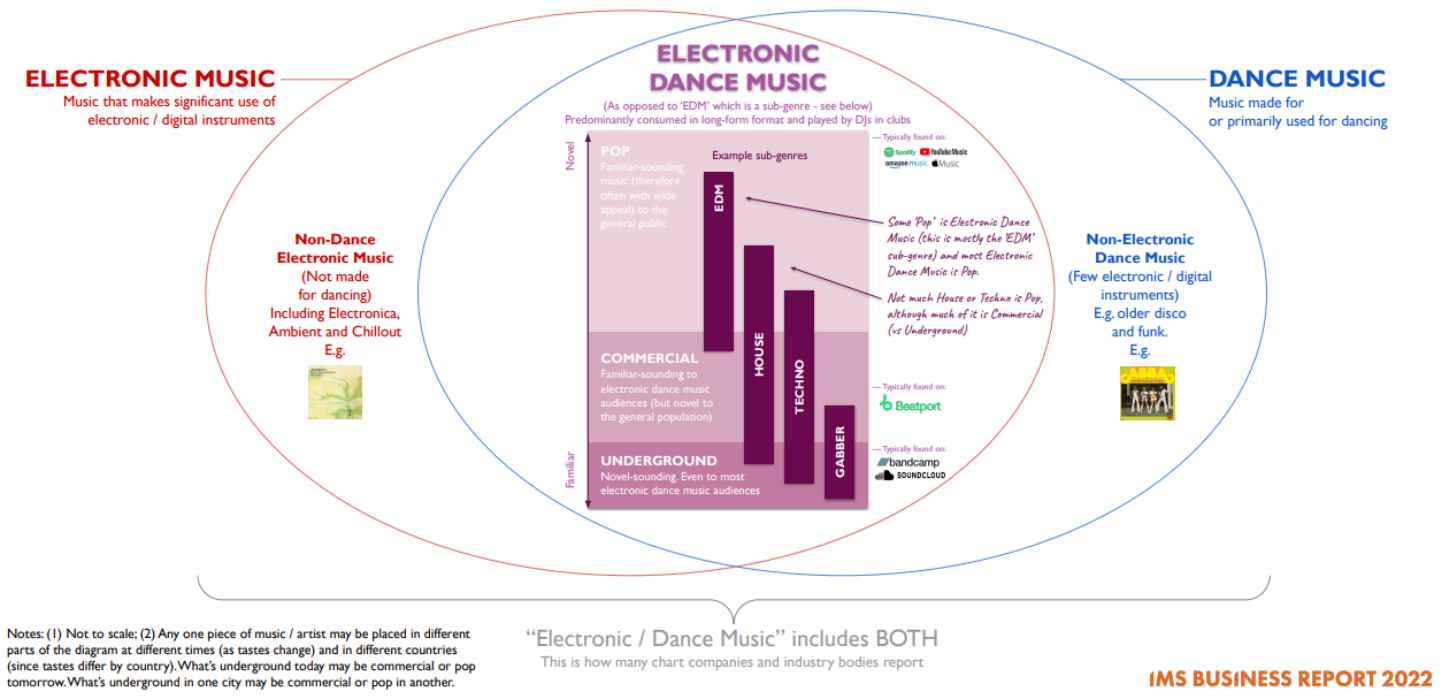


Figure 9 – Electronic Dance Music Industry (IMS Business Report 2022)

2A. POPULARITY WORLDWIDE

Today, EDM is listened to and appreciated all over the world. According to the research by the International Music Summit Ibiza (IMS), where 19,000 people aged 16-64 were interviewed, in 18 different countries, EDM is one of the three most listened to music genres in the world; this data gives an idea of how important and popular it has become worldwide. According to their report (2022), in the year 2021 there were 130k core artists, 11 million casual artists and 412 million fans. There are several reasons why this musical genre has developed worldwide. One of these is the 'simplicity' with which it is possible to produce a track, thanks to the different types of equipment that are now available at a very good price and therefore accessible to practically everyone. In short, you need a good laptop and headphones to get started, the difficulty clearly lies in learning how to use the different programmes, in discovering a new and proper musical genre that will entertain the audience and have a lot of creativity. In fact, in electronic music, it is easier to experiment with new things and thus create new styles, and in this way new and different genres/sub-genres are born. Another reason that has contributed to its popularity is the fact that there are several huge, globally known festivals such as Tomorrowland or Ultra, which attract more people's attention and increase interest in electronic music. EDM is very broad, as previously mentioned it encompasses any electronic music genre, including the more underground and commercial part, this last one has

become Mainstream because various international pop stars often want to collaborate with DJ producers, and in this way the song becomes popular everywhere.

2B. RELEVANCE OF EDM IN THE NETHERLANDS

Electronic dance music is highly developed and well-known in the Netherlands. Most of the best-known DJs in the EDM scene and also in the world come from the Netherlands, for instance Tiesto, Armin Van Buuren, Martin Garrix, Sander van Doorn, Hardwell and Oliver Heldens, who continually achieve top positions in DJ Mag's 'Top 100 DJs' ranking. Electronic dance music became popular in the Netherlands earlier than in other countries and the fact that it was played in public venues, festivals or on the radio made EDM a part of Dutch culture.

2B.1 The Gabber Movement

It all started with the Gabber movement, a subgenre of techno derived from hardcore. The meaning of the word 'gabber' itself was 'friend' in the Dutch slang of the 90s. This subculture was born and spread in the Netherlands in the 1990s within the Dutch rave movement and was a symbol of opposition to the Amsterdam house music, which was considered more snobbish. The Gabber movement is characterised by much faster (BPMs between 150 and 220) and aggressive sounds and rhythms, and is not limited to being just a music genre, but is also a lifestyle. (Moelants, s.d.) (van der Hoeven, 2014) For instance, one of the distinctive features was sportswear: the Gabbers were characterised by a fluorescent tracksuit and Air Max 90s. Public opinion defined the Gabbers as drug addicts searching for fun, as this movement was formed and developed through the organisation of small underground raves, usually illegally organised in warehouses, basements, etc. In fact, the consumption of pills and other drugs was high. (van der Hoeven, 2014)

Some of the best-known rave parties that had an impact on Dutch culture in the 1990s are: Thunderdome organised by the entertainment company ID&T and Mysteryland. The first Thunderdome party was organised in 1992, but in recent years it has been brought back to the Netherlands, welcoming more than 40,000 people. Both this music genre and its associated culture quickly spread throughout Europe and the rest of the world, to rave communities in countries such as Spain, Italy, England, the United States and Australia. Today, gabber is still popular and appreciated by a number of people; it is one of the few European subcultures that is so large and influential. In the Netherlands (but also in Australia and Chile), the Defqon 1 festival is organised annually with around 65,000 people, where mainly hardstyle music and related genres such as hardcore techno, hard house and hard trance are played.

2B.2 Various successful DJs

One of the other reasons that contributed to the high importance of EDM in the Netherlands is the introduction of trance and hardstyle music in the early 00s and the fact that several Dutch DJs such as Armin Van Buuren, Ferry Corsten and Tiesto were already well known. These DJs played a very important role in making dance music popular all over the world, but above all in raising awareness and interest in this musical style in the Netherlands. Dance music thus gained such importance and recognition that it was listened to by all ages, and also raised interest in pursuing a career as a DJ. DJing had become so important in the Netherlands that several schools were also opened to teach how to become a successful DJ given the high competition now created in the industry. Therefore, investment in the electronic dance music industry has always been high, with several investors and producers interested in finding young talent and supporting them financially and through marketing activities. The opportunities in the Netherlands are huge and it is easier to pursue a career as a DJ producer. In addition, well-known Dutch radio stations such as SLAM! FM or Radio 538 strongly support EDM culture, for example by broadcasting songs of this genre that are usually not heard on other radio stations.

2C. EDM Festivals

As the importance of EDM has increased worldwide, there has also been a consequent increase in the number of EDM festivals organised worldwide. Figures from Skiddle show that in 2022 the demand for events is bigger than ever: the number of tickets that have been sold so far this year is higher than in the same period in 2021. The forecast is that ticket sales in 2022 will be almost double the volume of 2019.

(IMS Business Report 2022)

EDM festivals are an opportunity for fans of electronic music to experience it live in addition to usually going to clubs and discos. EDM festivals have become more expensive to produce, as they have grown in size due to the demand for

bigger and more exciting musical experiences, so it means higher costs for security, logistics in terms of accommodating, entertaining, feeding, etc. a large number of people, and all of this means higher costs. Furthermore, DJ Producers require more and more money for each show, because live shows are a major source of income, given the change in the music industry in Chapter 1. As a result, the price of tickets to attend has become equally high. Today, festivals last longer: from one day up to

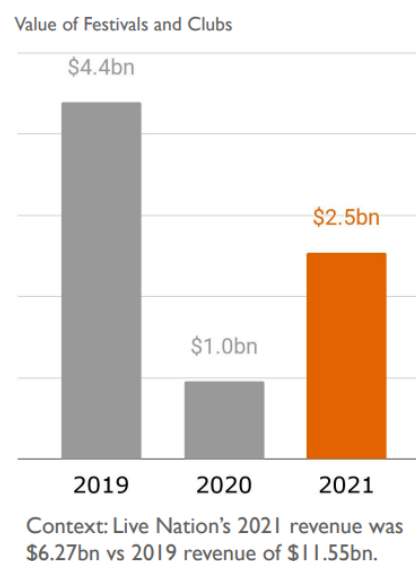


Figure 10 – Value of Festivals and Clubs (IMS Business Report 2022)

three consecutive days and every festival has to work hard on the concept of uniqueness and wow effect, so their organisation and management becomes even more complex.

Around the world, we can encounter several well-known electronic dance music festivals, which are also one of the main reasons why electronic music has become so popular worldwide. Access to these large festivals is usually expensive as they feature very exciting line-ups with names of top DJs from all over the world. The Netherlands, on the whole hosts the largest number of dance events in the world and festivals have become an important part of Dutch culture. Some of the best known and most important festivals are as follows:

- ⇒ **Tomorrowland**: one of the biggest electronic music festivals worldwide, it takes place in the city of Boom in Belgium. It is very well known for its fantasy and storytelling themes that characterise the stage, all the event infrastructure, transport, costumes, etc. provides a unique experience. (Tomorrowland, s.d.)



Figura 11 - Tomorrowland Logo
(Tomorrowland's webiste)



Figura 12 - Tomorrowland Mainstage 2022
(Tomorrowland's website)

- ⇒ **Ultra Music Festival (UMF)**: the main edition of the festival takes place in Miami, Florida, every year in March, for a duration of three days. There are, however, several editions in the rest of the world called 'Ultra Worldwide' that are of less importance and size and are located in Spain, Japan, Argentina, Chile, etc. (*Ultra Music Festival - Mar. 24, 25, 26 2023*, s.d.)
- ⇒ **Airbeat-One Festival**: takes place in Neustadt-Glewe, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and lasts four days during the month of July. Today it has about 65k visitors and presents a line-up with DJs of different kinds of electronic music. (*Airbeat One Festival 2023 | 12.- 16. JULY 2023 | Neustadt-Glewe*, s.d.)

⇒ **Untold** is the largest electronic music festival taking place in Romania in Cluj-Napoca. Its first edition was held in 2015, year in which it was also awarded Best Major Festival at the 2015 European Festival Awards. More and more international artists and audiences from all over Europe attend this festival. (*UNTOLD Festival - Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania, Romania, s.d.*)

4. BRANDING STRATEGIES & PERSONAL BRANDING

4A. BRAND MANAGEMENT, INTRODUCTION, DEFINITION

The term brand, which is originally derived from the Nordic term 'brander', "to burn" (related to the activity of branding cattle), was used to determine the origin of a product. Today, brands have become an integral part of our daily lives: from any object we use, to food, to any other product or service. (Farhana, 2012)

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers". («What Is Marketing?», s.d.)

The Brand has also been defined as "a symbol or name that differentiates and influences the purchase decision, assigning the product a utilitarian and/or symbolic value". (Aaker 1992; Farquhar 1989).

Consumers today find themselves overwhelmed by a huge amount of information, given the excess of communication and the large number of products and services on the market today, so making choices in a rational manner is very difficult for a consumer. For a customer, the experiential benefits of a brand are more important than the functional ones. (Ismail, Melewar, Lim and Woodside, 2011 ; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). This is why, today, companies strive to build a unique and memorable 'experience' for their customers, putting it as a central point in their marketing strategies (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009). According to Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009), brand experience can be defined as 'internal subjective consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's identity, packaging, design, environments and communications'. (Rahman, 2014)

The different touchpoints, so all the points that allow the customer to connect with the company and experience it, form the whole experience. (Chattopadhyay & Laborie, 2005). This is why it is of paramount importance to pay attention to touchpoints and try to make them all as aligned with the brand as possible. (Rahman, 2014) The brand, however, is able to simplify the consumer's choice, because it promises a particular quality level, reduce risk, and/or engender trust. (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Consumers therefore rely on specific brands that they trust and which are recognised as a sign of quality, safety, guarantee, etc. The brand is thus the instrument through which consumers make decisions, because they simplify their search and choice to satisfy their needs.

Owning a brand is highly advantageous for a company because whatever the product or service, when it becomes a brand, it promises a particular level of quality, trust and a distinctive position

among a number of choices. The aim is to encourage customer loyalty: customer loyalty is nowadays a key element for a brand and is also the primary purpose for a company. It is becoming increasingly important to build a strong and lasting relationship with the customers, as the benefits are numerous: for example, a loyal customer is who consistently buys your product/service because he is satisfied with it. In order to do this, it is necessary to identify and know the needs of the public, in order to be able to satisfy it in the best possible way and exceed its expectations. (Tommaso Sorchiotti, 2010).

The brand is a strategic asset that allows the company to draw distinct differences between its business and that of its competitors and thus possess an important competitive advantage. Brand differentiation is essential today in order to compete effectively with competitors, which is why brands must pay attention to the strategies other companies use (Carpenter, Glazer, & Nakamoto, 1994 ; Ehrenberg, Barnard, & Scriven, 1997). However, each company has its own distinctive strategy to differentiate itself. (Baker, Hunt, & Scribner, 2002) (Rahman, 2014) In order to provide customers with a unique brand experience, brand owners devise and implement strategies to achieve brand differentiation (Labrecque & Milne, 2013 ; Makadok & Ross, 2013). Simply put, achieving brand differentiation is a prerequisite for providing a unique brand experience. (Rahman, 2014)

Differentiation for a company means offering a product or service that possess characteristics different from the others and these differences do not necessarily have to be in the product or service itself, but for example in the advantages they can attribute to the consumer.

The brand is considered as the result of a set of feelings, thoughts, perceptions that people have about a certain product/service/company with which the brand is associated. Creating a brand therefore means building a personality, a relationship with the parties involved. In order to build solid relationships, it is necessary to give customers something they can relate to, for example representations such as logos and symbols or a storyline. (Tommaso Sorchiotti, 2010). (Middleton, 2010) "Branding" is a marketing activity involving various techniques and strategies, with the aim of increasing the value of a product/brand, through the management, creation and promotion of the brand image, so that the product can be perceived by the customer in a most advantageous way.

The brand does not have to have a minimum number of people relying on it, rather the important aspect is consistency in the messages that are sent and the actions that are taken. Owning a strong brand means possessing a strong set of meanings, and thereby being able to help customers make purchasing decisions more easily. (Middleton, 2010) (*A Comprehensive Guide to Branding in 2020*, 2020)

A very important aspect of branding is the emotional connection between the brand and the people, because only when an emotional connection is established with the consumer is it possible to speak about brand (Gobe, 2001, p. xiii).

Nowadays, the music and DJ producer industry is highly competitive. There are so many artists trying to emerge and many who are already established. Therefore, it is not enough to "simply" produce good music, you need to differentiate yourself, through different marketing strategies. That is why it is extremely important to invest in managing and improving your brand, with the help of a specialized team.

4B. Brand Equity – The dimensions

Brand equity has been one of the most popular and potentially important marketing concepts since the 1980s. Brand equity seems to be essential for a company to be successful, it is a key asset especially in cases where competitiveness is very high. Brand equity has become increasingly important, and efforts have been made to find and create methods to measure and monitor it. (cf. Ailawadi, Lehmann and Neslin, 2003). One such model that has been developed is Keller's. (Oliveira-Castro et al., 2008)

Building a strong brand, according to Keller, is a sequence of phases, where each phase is bound by the completion of the previous one. Brand equity is the value that a brand possesses. A well-known brand is more likely to be chosen by consumers than a not-so-well-known brand. (Ioannou & Rusu, 2012)

Keller's Model - Keller's Brand Equity (CBBE Resonance Pyramid)

Keller, developed the CBBE or customer-based brand equity model: it is a tool to determine the growth and evaluation of brand equity, very important activities to be performed in order to increase the chances of building a successful brand. Keller's idea was that in order to build a valuable brand, it is necessary to create a perception in the marketplace that is appreciated by the audience and to build an experience around it that is able to nurture and enhance this perception, thus paying attention to every touch point the audience has with the brand. The aim is to, through the use of the different stages of the model, grow brand equity through associations, emotions and connections.

Keller's pyramid looks like this:

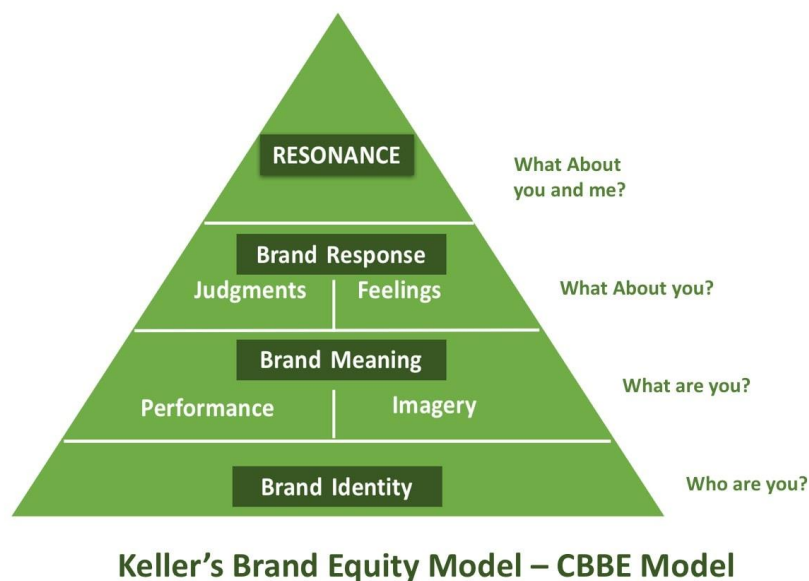


Figura 13 – CBBE Model, (Keller, 1993)

LEVEL 1: IDENTITY

Brand identity represents who we are. It is built by the company/person itself, choosing the communication style, visual identity etc. trying to be perceived by consumers in a certain way. This is not necessarily the same as what is actually perceived by the public. Identity can be expressed in terms of human traits/characteristics that are attributed to the brand, taking the name of brand personality, and is the way the brand speaks and behaves. Other elements, however, could be visual factors such as logo, name, slogan, colours, etc. that can contribute to brand awareness once the identity is communicated. The public must be able to become aware of the brand and even recognise and remember it. The first step is the identification of the brand with customers and association of the brand in customers' minds: linking the brand (name, logo, symbol, etc.) to certain associations in the memory. The measure to which a brand is recognised by potential customers and how it is associated is called Brand Awareness and is a primary objective of advertising, especially at the introduction of a product/service. This includes brand recognition and brand recall. In the purchase decision process - brand awareness plays a key role. (Keller, 1993)

LEVEL 2 - MEANING

This second level is about 'what' we are, it is therefore about communicating the value of the brand in the market, trying to explain why the brand is different, why choose this brand and not the competitors, etc. The level is divided into two parts, one of "performance", and the second is "imagery", how the brand aligns with the consumer in their beliefs for example. It is explained what the brand does, but more importantly what it is able to do for the consumer. (Keller, 1993)

LEVEL 3 - RESPONSE

The third level is about how the brand is perceived by the target audience. Here as well, there are two parts, one of judgements and one of feelings. The judgements are the conclusions the audience draws about what the brand actually is, what role it plays in their lives, etc. Feelings on the other hand are what the consumer feels, hence the emotional value perceived by the consumer about the brand, through messaging, images, associations, etc. (Keller, 1993)

LEVEL 4: RELATIONSHIPS - RESONANCE

The fourth and final level is to evaluate the ability to connect with the target audience on an emotional level. For example, it can be asked whether the consumer self-identifies with the brand. The audience will feel an emotional connection as they realise and understand that the brand aligns with their beliefs, identifying with the brand. They will be loyal customers, but more importantly brand advocates because they will be proud and become 'salespeople' of the brand. A consumer who is loyal to the company, business, will be a consumer who will choose the brand even if it is necessary to pay a higher price to access the product/service. Companies today, invest a lot in building but especially in maintaining relationships with their customers, because it is less expensive to do activities to keep customers than to acquire a new one (it would mean starting with awareness, then advertising, etc.). (Keller, 1993)

4C. HOW TO BUILD A SOLID BRAND

Aaker's Brand Vision Model

David A. Aaker, former professor of marketing at the University of California at Berkeley and author of the book *Building Strong Brands* (1996), developed a complete model on brand identity planning that is known as the 'Aaker Model', offering several unique solutions for building a strong brand. Aaker decided to build the model because he believed that the methods and models used by advertising agencies at that time were wrong. In the past, advertising agencies defined brands on the basis of a single thought or concept or a three-word phrase on which they then developed a campaign around it. Other models used were those called 'fill-in-the-box', where each brand was defined by the same kind of ideas. («David Aaker Got Religion on the Power of Stories», s.d.)

"I thought brands—certainly B2B brands, but any brand—have got multiple dimensions. ... You have to allow a brand to stand for more than one thing—maybe six or twelve things. The second thing I really disliked was the fill-in-the-box model. ... It just drove me crazy. They would have eight boxes and you had to fill each one ... even [if it] wasn't relevant to your brand." – David Aaker

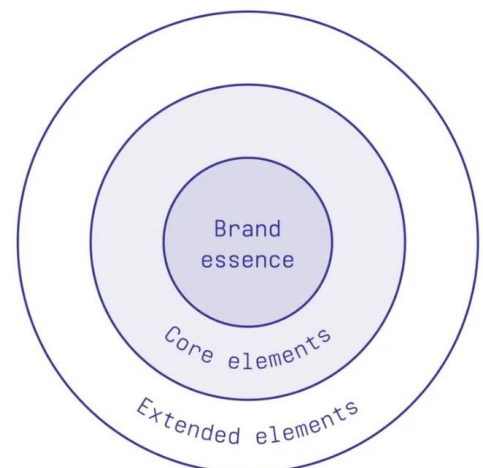
The particularity of this model is that it does not require the inclusion of specific components such as personality for example: the advice is to consider only those categories that are relevant to the

own brand. In the model, Aaker emphasises the fact that the brand identity is a mix of ideas and values that are divided into core or extended elements. According to Aaker, there are two levels of Brand Identity: a first 'core' level and a second 'extended' level. Core characteristics are those that should remain intact regardless of the strategies one decides to implement. The extended ones, on the other hand, complement the brand. Furthermore, the brand identity must be split into four different dimensions in order to give the brand depth and consistency.

Brand identity is composed of 12 dimensions organised around 4 different perspectives, which it is good to consider in order to see the brand from each angle: brand as product, organisation, person and symbol.

- Brand as a product – product scope and attributes, quality/value, uses, country of origin,...
- Brand as organisation – organisational attributes, local vs. global, etc.,...
- Brand as a person – a set of human characteristics attributed to the brand name
- Brand as a symbol – visual images / metaphors and heritage branding

You need to think about what you want the brand to represent in the minds of consumers, employees, etc. and the idea behind the model is that each brand can represent several ideas (six, ten or even twelve). Some of these (three or four) are the most important and become the core, the basic identity of the brand, for instance the most constant and enduring part of the brand, consisting of those attributes that drive most of the brand-building activities. They are the characteristics that truly differentiate the brand and are something that can actually be offered now or in the future. Extended identity on the other hand includes the different elements of brand identity that add consistency but may be less important or less differentiating. Finally, the essence of the brand, which was only added at a second stage because it was useful in most cases, is described by Aaker on “Branding: 20 Principles That Drive Success” (Aaker, 2014) as “a central theme of the brand vision” or “a single thought that reflects the core of the brand vision”.



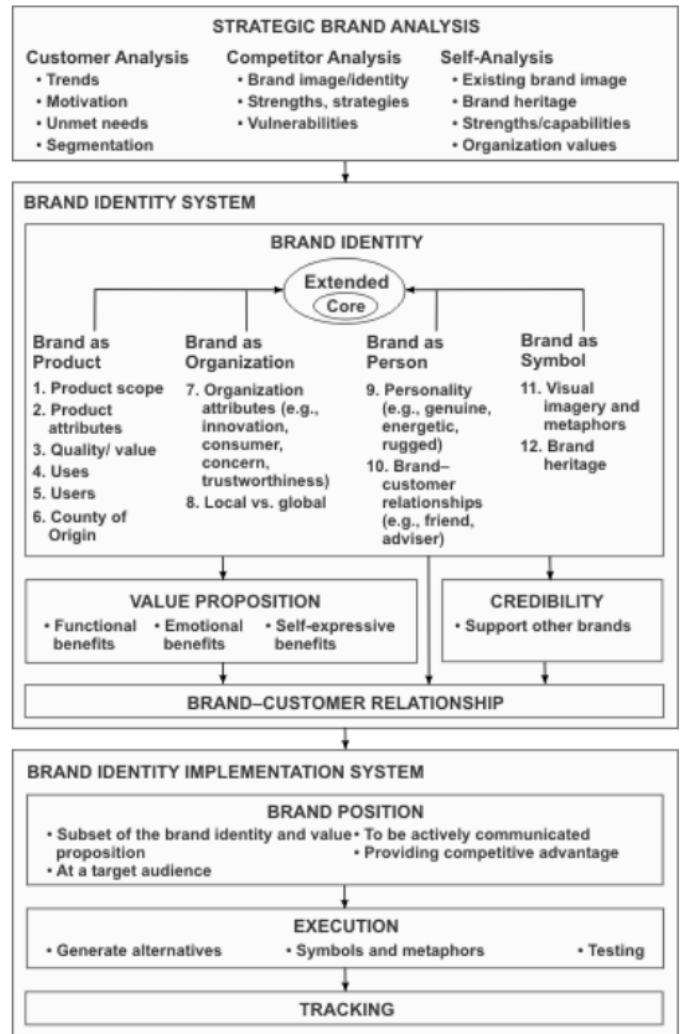
David Aaker's Identity/Vision Structure

Figure 14 – Aaker Identity / Vision Model (Aaker 1996)

Applying the Aaker Model

Building a strong and solid brand requires careful planning and a large long-term investment. The basis of a brand's success must be a great product or service, supported by creative design and various marketing activities.

To begin using this model in practice, Aaker suggests starting with “a strategic brand analysis”, which is basic research consisting of identifying customers, evaluating competitors and the existing brand/organisation. In addition, it is important to consider all the categories to identify what are the brand vision elements and then select through additional research, what are the most important elements by classifying them as core and what are the consistency elements, the extended ones. Through such a complete and clear map, it is easier to achieve a good positioning and also a valid value proposition. This is a good example showing how a brand can be built strategically.



Aaker's Brand Identity/Vision Model

Figure 15 – Aaker's Brand Identity / Vision Model (Aaker 1996)

2C. PERSONAL BRANDING

Introduction and definition

The concept of personal branding was first popularised by Tom Peters, in his article called 'The Brand Called You' (Peters, 1997). At the basis of personal branding, there is the notion that everyone is able to create their own brand and it is assumed that the individual has full control over their path: individuals can choose who they want to be and what they want to do (Peters, 1997). In substance, it is almost the same as the branding of a product or company: it is the way the public perceives us based on what we present and sell to people.

When someone starts working on his/her personal brand, it means that this person is investing in himself/herself. The concept of 'personal branding' has grown a lot over time and is nowadays of

high importance in most sectors. Since people started talking about uniqueness and being able to offer a product or service that has unique benefits for consumers, branding has started to increase in importance. Thus, personal branding is nothing more than an extension of the brand concept and how it has evolved over the years. (Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015)

This concept has become extremely important in the digital age, as initially it was thought that these strategies could be applied just to celebrities, politicians or otherwise important people. Digital, online tools, however, have allowed personal branding to become important for ordinary people as well, who can take advantage of these marketing tactics/activities. (Shepherd, 2005). Personal branding concerns all strategies that aim to promote oneself in order to create a precise image/identity in the mind of the consumer (positioning). It can therefore be defined as:

“...understanding what is truly unique about you and using that to differentiate yourself and guide your career decisions. Through unearthing the true you and consistently and constantly living your personal brand, you attract what you need to achieve your goals without having to ‘wrestle with the universe’ to acquire it” (Aruda 2009)

Another definition is:

“a personal brand identifies, clarifies, and communicates who you are to the world around you, whether it is a business environment, an academic field, or an entrepreneurial setting.” (Arruda, 2009)

A common definition of personal branding concerns perception: according to Rampersad “self-esteem is about how you perceive yourself and personal branding is about how others perceive you.”

The personal brand is the unique combination of a set of skills, experience, know-how, personality of a specific person and it becomes useful when it is able to reflect and describe the individual who we are in the most appropriate way. These characteristics promote the brand by telling the person's story, reflecting the attitudes one possesses, the words one uses, etc. According to Giddens, a person's identity is found in their ability to maintain a particular narrative, rather than simply in their behaviour or relationships with others. In order to be able to interact with the public on a regular basis, the personal profile cannot be totally fictitious, but rather must be continually updated with events that occur in the outside world and incorporate them into the story that is being told (1991, p.54). Furthermore, Giddens argues that individuals possess the ability to create a story about themselves, using biographical narratives, social roles and lifestyles.

Personal branding has to do with what we do and what people say about us, hence how we are perceived. What others think and say about us determines the value of our brand (Holt, 2003).

Indeed, Peters (1997) suggests that we create a network of contacts and share our identity with it (consisting of friends, family, colleagues, etc.). Therefore, he assumes that deliberately establishing a network of an individual's personal associations is of crucial importance.

In substance, a professional image is created from a combination of how we behave in real life, how the media portrays us and people's perceptions.

Building a personal brand allows you to gain popularity among people and become known, which is translated into gaining more trust from people even if you have never established a direct relationship with them. By possessing people's trust, it is possible to be influential, to be heard and to have your opinions taken into account. All of this brings advantages of various kinds, depending on the objectives one has: for example, people will be more inclined to buy the services and products one offers or one is able to achieve good results in terms of advertising. It has also become extremely important today to be able to stand out from the crowd, and through personal branding this is possible, especially today where mistrust of advertising is increasingly high.

Through personal branding we choose how to present ourselves to the world and to the market, communicating who we are and what we do. It is not easy to build a personal brand, but especially to maintain it over time. Nowadays, personal branding is even more important because it is an element that allows one to differentiate oneself and stand out from the competitors. For example, in the world of DJing, those who produce music as a DJ and want to build a career are many, the competition is really high, that is why it is necessary to develop a brand. In short, personal branding must be as remarkable as our actions and the work we create.

5. DJ INDUSTRY & BRANDING

5A. WHO IS THE DJ PRODUCER

The term "DJ" and DJ producer are often used synonymously, but there is a difference in the two meanings.

A DJ uses music that has already been produced by other artists, pre-recorded and is responsible for playing it in front of an audience. The DJ is in charge of selecting the right tracks to play depending on the crowd in front of them and mixing them together. There are different types of DJs, which differ depending on where they play (DJs who only do weddings, others do private parties, etc.) and also in the way they play the songs. The DJ can indeed be the one who in the simplest and most superficial way entertains the audience by choosing a playlist and playing it. The professional, successful DJ producer is in charge of something else entirely.

DJ producers go beyond the role of the DJ, as they as well are in charge of DJing by mixing tracks, but in addition they create original music in a studio and remix songs that are then performed live at concerts and music festivals. They are then defined as real artists who have high popularity in electronic dance music (EDM); some artists of this type are for example are Shrillex, Diplo, David Guetta, Calvin Harris, Martin Garrix, etc. The DJ producer has several skills related to the use of software, programs and equipment in order to be able to create music from scratch, and this requires a large investment of time. To be successful by producing the own music, one must be creative in order to be unique in its genre and also have excellent technical skills. Unlike a DJ, the producer also pays a lot of attention to marketing and promotion activities, of which managing one's brand is very important. (*What Is A DJ Producer? (What They Do, Salary, & Examples)*, s.d.)

Learning how to be a DJ today is 'easy' and fast, because in addition to the tools that are easily accessible to everyone, there are several tutorials available for free for everyone online, the key that makes the difference is the production. (Graham, s.d.)

This research is aimed at finding guidelines that can help DJs Producers, so those who also produce their own tracks, with the intention of being able to operate at a professional level, thus creating a career in the industry. As seen above, there are several sub-genres of electronic dance music, I have taken into consideration 'mainstream' DJ Producers, therefore those who are known internationally and who now have the opportunity to play at big festivals such as Tomorrowland, Ultra, Untold, etc. The reason is because regardless of how success is measured, which may depend on each artist's personal goals, I believe that these DJs have been able to achieve incredible results.

5B. THE DJ / DJ PRODUCER CULTURE AND ITS CHANGES – THE INDUSTRY

The concept of DJing has evolved and changed over time; in the past, the DJ was seen as someone who played music chosen via a radio station. With time, however, the activity of DJing has also been impacted by technology and its evolution. Nowadays, electronic music is mainly produced on a computer, which allows the creation or modification of any sound recorded or created. Thanks to technological advances, the DJ today is able to create and produce music in a completely new way: he can mix old tracks and rename them, invent his own and launch his own distinct music genre, create mixes, introduce different beats rhythms in a track, etc. DJ producers are very creative. Moreover, technological developments have made DJing much more accessible, lowering the barriers to entry. First of all, it is no longer necessary to invest large amounts of money in expensive equipment, as the cost of equipment has dropped from thousands of dollars to hundreds of dollars. On the other hand, software automates several processes such as song selection and mixing, eliminating several basic skills that are fundamental to a DJ who had to spend several hours practising and figuring out how it all worked. (Jaimangal-Jones, 2018)

In addition, the pandemic accelerated the development of electronic music production at home. For example, Yamaha, a Japanese brand known worldwide for selling electronic keyboards and other types of musical instruments, generates 85% of its sales internationally. During the pandemic, demand for musical instruments that can easily be used from home increased, leading Yamaha's revenues to rise slightly. (SwissQuote, 2021) Amongst the different opinions, there is the thought that technology has made it too easy to enter this industry, ruining the culture and the quality.

Dj Producers as celebrities

A DJ producer nowadays is a real celebrity. Forbes in 2019 ranked the world's highest-paid DJs producers. The figures correspond to the year before COVID, so I think that leaving aside the last two years where there was a stop in touring and shows (at least for the most part), these figures are very valid to actually understand what superstars they have become. These figures are now possible for a DJ producer because electronic music, as seen in the previous chapter, is becoming more and more important and has grown into the cultural mainstream.

Djs Producers who operate at such a level are now seen as idols for some people. This has changed a lot from the past, where it was assumed that DJs Producers were not a real profession and were only identified with discos. Instead, some of them now collaborate with international superstars such as Justin Bieber, Ariana Grande, Nicky Minaj, etc. (check names) and organise their own tours travelling all over the world. (Mercuri, s.d.)

DJ PRODUCER	ANNUAL EARNINGS
1. The Chainsmokers	\$ 46 milioni
2. Marshmello	\$ 40 milioni
3. Calvin Harris	\$ 38,5 milioni
4. Steve Aoki	\$ 30 milioni
5. Diplo	\$ 25 milioni
6. Tiesto	\$ 24 milioni
7. Martin Garrix	\$ 19 milioni
8. David Guetta	\$ 18 milioni
9. Zedd	\$ 17 milioni
10. Armin Van Buuren	\$ 15 milioni

Figura 16 – Earning Top Dj Producers (Forbes, 2019)

The dark / difficult part of being a Dj Producer

As changes in this industry have taken place, however, problems have also emerged related to this new lifestyle. As seen in the previous chapter, the 'physical' sale of CDs etc. is no longer a major revenue stream for an artist. In addition, electronic music is more of a music style suitable and listenable for festivals or clubs, so CD sales are even more difficult, as it is not part of the music 'culture'. Djs producers therefore have to find other income to make money from music. Merchandising, royalties, partnerships, depending on the artist and his fame can be of great help, but of high importance are also live shows. That is why DJs have more than 70 shows a year in clubs, festivals, discos, etc.

Lost Frequencies in an interview talking about the djing profession:

“I think it’s easy to assume it’s all parties and fun, yes, it’s an amazing job and I feel so lucky to be able to do this as my career-but it is also super gueling both physically and mentally. We’re constantly traveling between time zones, giving all our energy into performing the best shows we can and missing friends and family. I think it’s important to recognize the though parts of any job, as well as the positives”.

Behind such a lifestyle and such a hectic environment (that of discos and festivals), there is a lot of pressure and stress. In addition, environments such as electronic music festivals and nightclubs are places where drug use is very common. This does not mean that everyone uses them, but given the high frequency the temptations to try them, especially when under stress, may be higher. (Little et al., 2018)

This, in my opinion, is a significant dark side of the Dj producer's profession, which perhaps initially does not seem to be as 'difficult' as it can turn out to be. A concrete example is the case of Avicii, a DJ producer known for some of his singles such as "Wake Me Up", "Hey Brother" or "Levels", he was one of the highest paid DJ producers in the world. Avicii committed suicide in 2018, after announcing in 2016 that he would retire from touring, as the demands of the DJ lifestyle were too stressful. A documentary based on his story called "True Stories" was released where he said that he did not receive the support he would have hoped for from his team at the time he announced he wanted to stop touring and performing. In fact, he had suffered from some problems caused in part by excessive alcohol use: Avicii explains how he felt the tension at the idea of playing in front of several people, so he started to have a few drinks before the start of his show to relieve the tension. He was then hospitalised for operations and realised the way he was living was killing him. In fact, only a day after being released from the hospital he had to go back on tour, without having been able to take the time to recover physically but especially mentally. Avicii, in the documentary 'True Stories', says that he expressed several times that he did not want to perform anymore, trying to explain how he felt. He was not listened to and received no support, but this sad tragedy can make people reflect on the lifestyle that these high-level DJ producers have to deal with. Mental and physical health, etc. are often not taken into consideration, at levels where there is a lot of money at stake. But I believe that the balance between professional and private life must also be there in the life of a DJ producer, each person is different and experiences the live show differently.

Hardwell had also decided to retire a few years ago. His reasons were also related to the excessive stress, but also to the difficulty of adapting to the 'new EDM'. These are not the only two cases, then every situation is different and every artist acts, behaves and responds differently. Therefore, there is also a downside that should be taken into account. Not only for the artist, but also for his team. The health of the artist both physically and mentally is important for him to be feel good, to be able to do quality performances and continue to find the inspiration, the creativity, the desire to produce new tracks.

5C. DJ PRODUCERS AS A BRAND

The DJ producer is today seen as a real business, a commercial resource, a celebrity. To be successful as a DJ producer, talent is not the key and producing good music is clearly important, but not sufficient. Among the most important elements to achieve success there is marketing, which includes branding, promotion, advertising, networking, etc.

Possessing a brand in the market, as seen in Chapter 3, allows one to possess a great competitive advantage, and it is not only companies that build the brand, but also individuals. Therefore, it is advantageous for DJs producers to enter the market with a solid brand.

Schroeder (2005) identified that successful artists can be considered brand managers: they develop, cultivate and promote themselves in the competitive cultural sphere (2005, pp. 1291). Indeed, there are several individuals who believe that differentiating themselves on an entrepreneurial level is a prerequisite for success (ibid., 2005).

In the 21st century (in the “knowledge economy”), the acceptance of the importance of the individual has increased (Saren, 2006). People today dominate production more than in the past, meaning that consumption is geared towards people rather than products (Saren 2006). According to Graham (2004), as far as artists are concerned, therefore, it becomes increasingly important to invest in and see the artist as a real brand rather than to rely on physical products. Frew and McPherson (2016), they are instead of the opinion that the music industry in the 21st century is driven by technology and its rapid advancement. Creativity and entrepreneurship are two key elements used by music artists in order to develop their own personal brand (Barfoot Christian, 2011). DJ Producer Sirius Hood says on the subject of creativity, 'producing music is the art of creating. The skill is therefore to be as creative as possible, i.e. to do something different from the trends, all with a good level of production quality'.

According to Ibid (2015), artists must create and communicate consistently solid and credible stories about themselves that consumers want to engage with and seek attention in a new cultural space. Fans, the music consumers, today want more and more access to music artists, they demand more information and interaction with the artists they follow (Ogden, et al., 2011), in fact the value of live shows (ibid., et al., 2011) for a known artist or one's presence on social media have increased dramatically and both allow for a deeper connection between the artist and the audience. In fact, DJ Producers are highly appreciated for their performances during shows and the fact that they can offer the audience a unique and unforgettable experience is seen as a symbol of their value (Brewster & Broughton, 2000). The way in which DJs perform live will also inevitably influence the public's perception and image of DJs, leading to an increase in demand for their mixes, tracks and

tickets for their live performances, thereby satisfying commercial (Phillips, 2009). (Jaimangal-Jones, 2018)

Moreover, the creation of an emotional bond between artist and community is a key aspect, since only when a product or service evokes emotions can it be considered a brand (Gobe, 2001, p. xiii). Cutler (2010), argues that having a strong brand identity is essential in order to achieve success and this means more than just the creation of a name or logo, it is the combination of what an artist does, how it is presented and how it is perceived by others (p.39). Therefore, it can be useful for an artist, managers and stakeholders to understand the importance of brand management in order to be able to develop effective strategies using the right skills. An artist's management has a huge impact on the development / success of her career.

6. METHODOLOGY

To carry out this research, I mainly relied on the analysis of the literature in order to better and thoroughly understand certain theoretical aspects. Through a collection of secondary data, I have outlined a general context of how the world of music has changed (for instance, how DJs sell their content, etc.), with the aim of understanding how the music industry works today and what its main characteristics are. I then focused on electronic dance music to illustrate how it has changed and evolved over the years. I researched the literature on branding and the importance of branding strategies, looking at Keller's Brand Equity model and Aaker's Brand Vision model, to define how a solid brand can be built. Lastly, I collected data on the Disc Jockey - Producer industry, as technology has also had an impact on the development of this activity, raising new career opportunities. I have outlined a list of points / suggestions that have emerged from an understanding of the literature, real examples of how DJ Producers behave in the industry today, and with the support of two interviews with experts in the field of marketing & branding who work with internationally known DJ Producers. As primary data collection I conducted two interviews with experts in marketing & branding activities who work closely with internationally known DJs Producers.

Interview construction

I designed the interview in a semi-structured format, so I predetermined a theme with mandatory but adaptable guidelines and pre-determined questions; therefore, which allowed the interviewees to elaborate on their answers as the preferred. I started with introductory questions about technology and digitisation and the impact they had on the artist's brand management. Then, I asked questions more focused on what is the actual management of the artist's marketing and branding activities in order for him/her to achieve his/her goals.

Difficulties

Initially the idea was to focus only on DJs who have been awarded by the British DJ Magazine (DJ Mag), a magazine dedicated to electronic music and DJs from all over the world. Every year, as well as ranking the best clubs in the world, it organises the Top 100 DJ awards worldwide, in which more than 1 million people take part in the voting. However, it was difficult to get interviews from those who work closely with these DJs, so I considered experts who work in the electronic music industry with artists/organisations of international importance, but I found out to have the same problem.

I contacted a total of 33 people:

- 24 emails sent to major management companies operating in the electronic dance music industry and representing artists of different levels, both internationally known ones and the more mediocre ones.
- 6 direct messages via LinkedIn & Instagram to Brand, Marketing, Social Media Managers, Artist Managers working with internationally known DJ Producers.
- 4 Artist Manager Groups / professional associations, from: Australia, NZ, US, UK

I received 2 replies from management companies, one informing me that all the managers were too busy and would not be able to answer the questions. A second response I received from Maria Frasso, Head of Marketing & Branding for Cat Dealers. Her response was positive, so I was able to carry out the interview.

I received replies from three managers whom I contacted directly, all three on Instagram. Two of them told me they would be available to do the interview, but then had to cancel due to the high amount of work. Ilaria Maganza on the other hand, Social Media Manager for Armin Van Buuren's record company called Armada Music, was available to do the interview.

Finally, I received a response from the Music Managers Forum which is an organisation of managers in England. I made a call with Manasvi Dethekar who works in the organisation and has also worked as an Artist Manager in the electronic music industry to talk about my project. She offered to do an interview herself and forward me other contacts, but then I received no response.

Limits of the research

It would have been very interesting to be able to interview more experts in the industry, to address some issues in further depth, but above all to get more opinions and information from different people, on what activities are actually carried out today by the Brand Managers of successful DJ Producers. However, this was not possible as the summer period is extremely busy for those working in the music industry as most DJ Producers go on summer tours with 30, 40, 50 dates scheduled, creating a lot of work for the whole team.

I am aware that two interviews do not provide information that is necessarily valid everywhere and for everyone, but rather they provided me with insights or confirmations in certain cases from the literature. On the other hand, with a good search of the literature and different elements surrounding the context in which DJ Producers operate, they allowed me to gain an overall view on what the possibilities of approach are and how to approach the industry. The theory on branding strategies and brand management was very helpful in drawing a general guideline of what are the key steps to consider when in terms of branding.

What I have provided, are suggestions mainly based on information obtained through the literature search, how some of the world-famous DJ Producers carry out their marketing and branding activities, and finally with the support of the two interviews. In the end, I have outlined possible insights to be taken into consideration to create a winning strategy, but also guidelines that can be taken into consideration by DJ Producers in order to move correctly in today's music industry, to achieve success or, at any rate, to reach one's personal goals.

I also wanted to present Marshmello's case study, as I believe that its journey highlights well some important steps that I mentioned in the chapter 'How to build a solid brand'.

7. BUILDING THE DJ PRODUCER PERSONAL BRAND - RESULTS

In this session I will present the essential points to consider when a DJ Producer intends to build a solid brand of his own. For a DJ producer to be successful and achieve his goals, it has become clear that producing good music is no longer enough. Digital development and new technologies have also enabled individuals to enter the market with a solid brand. Today, it is practically a requirement if you want to be successful, and this also applies to DJ Producers. In fact, owning a brand for a DJ Producer means gaining a number of advantages such as differentiating oneself from all others producing music in the same industry, giving more value to one's musical offerings, whether it be music, live shows, etc., and allows one to create an emotional connection with one's audience by establishing a bond of trust, increasing the loyalty of one's fans. Peters (1997) states in his article 'The Brand Called You' that 'the key to any personal branding campaign is word-of-mouth marketing'. To build a solid brand you need a strategy.

From what I gathered from the research, there is no correct or defined path on how to make your way in the music industry; however, there are important elements to take into consideration if you want to build a solid brand and to create a career in this industry. Every DJ Producer starts from a different level. In order to create a strategy, however, I think it can be interesting to pay attention to each of them. The following are the most fundamental points that a DJ Producer starting at the beginning of his career should take into consideration.

1. UNDERSTAND THE MARKET

Before entering the music industry, I think it is very important for the Producer to conduct some market analysis, to better understand how the music industry works, who the main figures are, discover and understand the new trends, etc.

As suggested by Aaker in the 'Aaker Brand Vision Model', the first step to build a strong brand is to carry out "a strategic brand analysis", which more precisely consists of doing analyses on consumers, competitors, but also on yourself to get a general picture of where you stand in the market and get an idea of how it works. Doing analysis on the audience means identify a potential target audience. The artist should be able to answer to some questions such as 'who is it', 'where it is', 'what communicate', "how" so in which way and 'why'. The reference audience of a Producer is the one who listens to the music that is produced by the DJ Producer, who buys tickets to see him play live at a show/festival, buys his merchandise, follows him on the various social networks, etc. Identifying the target audience allows acquiring several advantages: the messages that are sent will be completely understood and accepted because they will be centred and relevant to the identified target. Thus, inbound marketing activities can be undertaken, for instance finding messages and

content that are actually attention-grabbing and that will achieve the desired results. Then, depending on where the target audience is (for instance Instagram and TikTok), it is possible to know where to spread the messages. Understanding the target audience as early as possible allows to build a brand that fits the audience.

It could be really useful to notice what there is already on the market, so for example how the other Djs Producers behave, how they communicate with they community, etc. This is useful to maybe take some ideas that are interesting and could be great for the Dj Producer brand as well, it is anyway important to create something new.

In my opinion, it can also be useful to always be informed about the latest developments in the industry. For example, with the advancement of technology, changes can happen very quickly and being informed about what is happening can bring an advantage. Thanks to this type of analysis, the Dj Producer can for example notice opportunities, observe what is already on the market and then try to take inspiration without replicating something that already exists. There are several advantages in knowing the market in which you intend to operate, the more you know, the better you will know how to act within it. At this stage of analysis, it is useful to find one's target audience or to identify a potential audience.

2. UNDERSTAND THE PERSON YOU ARE

The starting point to build the personal brand is to understand yourself, to analyse what kind of person you are through a deep reflection. It is important for the DJ Producer to understand who he is as a brand, so what values and principles he possesses, both personally and professionally. It is essential to understand yourself, because personal branding aims precisely at promoting the person you are and creating an image in the mind of the consumer. If the DJ Producer himself is not really in the clear, it will be difficult to convey this identity in a comprehensible manner. Moreover, it is the understanding of the personal characteristics of the producer that will allow him to differentiate himself. become aware of himself, what skills and characteristics belong to us so that we can exploit them and achieve our goals.

Ilaria Maganza, social media manager for artists under Armin Van Buuren's label (Armada Music), quotes “the first thing is to agree with the artist on what his brand should be, which pillar stands below it. So, understand the person you work with and what this person stands for”. To help himself, questions can be asked about the values you possess, your passions, what makes you stand out from others, what you are able to do better or what you do well, etc. For example, a SWOT analysis could be very useful in order to more easily understand your strengths and weaknesses. (Philbrick

& Cleveland, 2015) It is important to be aware of what one wants to offer, such as the goals one has, the values one believes in and wants to convey, etc.

Maria Frasso, head of branding & marketing at Cat Dealers, says that it is a fundamental and often also the most complex step to fully understand a person from a personal and professional point of view, as many DJ producers may not really have a clear idea of who they really are, and this step can take a long time. In addition, it is important for artists to also understand how their 'art' and environment impacts the entire brand. In addition, Maria Frasso adds a very interesting aspect about limits: you also need to understand your limits and this is possible by realising the person you are and the music you produce. Every DJ Producer is a different brand and therefore must also act differently, there is no one rule that applies to everyone. She also emphasises the importance of understanding the person, clearly first of all the DJ Producer himself must be clear about this. Furthermore, a point she makes is that among the things to be understood are one's own limitations, and she mentions:

“We're so used to seeing impressive and massive stream numbers, followers numbers and sometimes an artist is so niched that there's no way they can achieve those numbers too, at least not by the regular standards, because the element of luck of maybe going viral is something we cannot count on. You can't compare the metrics of success between an EDM artist and a folk artist, for example. So, you need to understand which metrics actually make sense for each artist otherwise we're comparing apples and oranges and the notion of success and strong brand building will always seem too far to achieve”. In addition to knowing the abilities and aptitudes, knowledge of limits makes it easier to reach the goals. Measuring them can also be useful. If the DJ Producer sets goals that are impossible to achieve because the limit is not understood, monitoring the results will always make it appear that one is not making progress or improving. Having the knowledge that it takes time to achieve a certain result, for example, allows us to understand whether or not our strategy is actually working, because we are basing ourselves on precise, measurable, relevant goals.

3. DESCRIBE YOURSELF – BRAND ATTRIBUTES

After the DJ Producer has understood what kind of person he is on both a personal and professional level, he must be able to describe simply, clearly and effectively who he is, what he is about and what he can offer. This is because one's target audience may have difficulty perceiving the values and meanings attached to a brand / to the person, so 'translating' them through clear brand characteristics simplifies matters. These values must be able to convey emotions to the audience. These characteristics must describe the person. They can be a mix of one's personality traits with visual/symbolic ones, for example name, logo, messages, colours, etc., as Keller argues. One can

then try to understand which are the fundamental ones, for instance those that really differentiate the person and that must always be maintained over time, and which instead will complete one's identity, because they belong to the person, but are of lesser importance, as Aaker suggests. The Producer has to try to describe himself to others, through a narrative chosen by himself that, however, reflects his persona. Here it is necessary for the producer to choose how much and most importantly what he wants to expose and convey about the person he is. It is possible to present the identity through visual elements such as your name, logo, messages, colors, etc. As far as the main visual elements are concerned, the DJ Producer might start thinking about the name. To choose one's Dj Producer name, he must first have chosen how much he is actually willing to share about himself and his personal life. You have to choose your name carefully because it is an important and representative part of your brand and what you want to convey. A first option may be to use one's own name. Some names convey a feeling of 'importance' and value, such as that of Calvin Harris or Armin Van Buuren. In this case, it may be interesting to use one's own name. Of course, one has to realise that in this way there is no distinction between personal/real life and the DJ career. Another idea, however, is to slightly change one's name, in order to make it perhaps more attractive, easier to pronounce or read, or simply with the aim of communicating a different feeling, a different value. One example is Martin Garrix, whose real name is Martijn Garritsen or Tiesto whose name is Tijs Michiel Verwest: they simplified the name because they were difficult to pronounce since they are Dutch. In addition to the name, one can think of expressing oneself through a logo. Most Djs Producers use their own name as a logo, creatively transforming it, perhaps with the addition of some special font, others have a separate sign. Dj Producers' names in line-ups are most often presented as a logo in this way:



Figure 17 – Ultra Miami Lineup (Ultra Website)

4. DISTRIBUTE THE OFFERS

The focus for the DJ Producer remains on producing music. However, the focus remains on music and its production. Maria Frasso argues “it’s also easy to forget that we’re actually talking about art and music, when the word brand comes out, people tend to focus only on the business aspect of it. From my perspective, if you solely focus on the brand as a business and forget about the art you’re creating, you’re basically removing the core of your brand and there’s no way you can actually build a community around you, which is the key point to achieve success, whatever that will mean to you”. Research has shown that streaming is the main way people listen to music today. Music consumers are very comfortable buying a Subscription on one of the different streaming platforms and being able to access unlimited music.

It is important to be present in one way or another in the industry, in this case on the different online platforms, so that you can be seen. So, the DJ Producer must start publishing your own music on different platforms. Nowadays, as shown in the first chapter, Spotify and SoundCloud are two very popular platforms. Even though Spotify does not allow you to earn revenue in the right way due to its royalty payment and distribution method, it is good to be there in order to be visible and to have a chance of being noticed by someone. SoundCloud is firstly very developed in EDM and secondly worth it because of the new payment called Fan-Powered Royalties that benefits artists. Then, in addition you can also publish songs on YouTube, blogs, podcasts, playlists, etc. in as many places as possible. In addition to publishing new original productions that may take some time, one strategy could be to produce remixes of already existing songs. Several Dj Producers well known today have built their careers by publishing remixes of well-known songs on SoundCloud, an example is the famous Dj Carnage. The advantage of producing a remix is to be able to express your own genre of music by modifying an already existing song, and getting more chances that the producer himself or other DJs will start to produce it during their shows, arousing interest from people who listen and appreciate it. As a result, these people will go and find out about the artist.

So, the main idea is to have a presence online, offline, on the market in general with the aim of being found somewhere and to make people aware of the music.

5. COMMUNICATE YOUR IDENTITY - increase brand awareness

Once an identity has been created, it is necessary to communicate its value, so explain what you can do for your audience. The producer must begin to manage his appearance and engaging in good communication with the audience so that we can convey the right message.

Nowadays, a lot of promotion takes place online and social media is a great tool for promoting artists, as seen in Chapter 1. Maria Frasso says “It’s a very confusing environment for artists nowadays, so

much pressure is attached to building a brand, especially through social media, that most of them forget, or plainly ignore, that it's a 360 strategy and there are multiple ways of showcasing your talent and brand". Previously, we should have understood where one's target audience spends the most time in order to take advantage of that particular platform and invest time and money to reach them by showing their content. It must be remembered, however, that it is not enough to simply create an account, one must know how to maintain it, so it is good to think about the contents one wants to bring and how to achieve them. The objective is to make ourselves visible, taking into account how much information we intend to divulge and which ones we prefer to keep private. By publishing content in order to spread the message, it is necessary to support the reputation of the brand and meet the expectations of the audience.

The artist should try to arouse the consumer's interest, so that the consumer will research more information, possibly even learning about the music being produced or the Instagram account. If the consumer likes the music and the content posted, they might start following along on Instagram and in time, maybe even think about buying a ticket to attend a live show. Through marketing strategies and advertising campaigns, consumers become aware of the existence of a particular brand. The very purpose of marketing activities is to increase brand awareness.

People spend a lot of time on TikTok, so it might be interesting to open an account on the platform. Also in marketing there is a need for creativity in order to provide original content that can perhaps go viral and reach a large number of people.

6. CREATE A CONNECTION – BUILD A COMMUNITY

It is important that the DJ Producer creates a connection with the people who follow him.

There are several ways to connect engage the community. As explained above, having an account on the different social media is crucial to be visible. On the other hand, just posting content is not enough to engage your followers, you need to pursue an interaction with them. One can, for instance, publish posts and ask questions, seek opinions, etc. It is also important to respond to the audience and show that you listen to them, take them into consideration, make them feel appreciated. Often, the community of a particular DJ Producer even takes a name, which allows them to distinguish themselves. An example is the fans of Martin Garrix who are called Garrixers.

Maria Frasso argues that everyone has their own unique approach to strategy and communication, some DJ Producers are able to build a community with the help of social media, so through content. Others, however, use the experience at live shows. As presented in Chapter 2D (to be checked), live shows have a great importance in terms of creating a deep connection with the crowd and thus with the audience.

There are, however, many other ways, according to Maria Frasso “There are many tools, channels and possibilities nowadays, you can create pre-save campaigns, giveaways, chat with the fans online, create a discord community or stream on Twitch for your audience, but the secret is actually understanding the artist so you can build a strategy that they can ultimately deliver and then pick which tool will be the best to fulfil your plans” and adds “It’s always important to point out that building a fanbase is not only about the fans’ loyalty to the artist, but also the artist’s loyalty to their fans. That being said, you have to give back as much as you can so you can make the community around you understand that they’re as important to the process as you are”.

A good idea is to build a community through Discord, in fact electronic music Discord communities are growing: In total, there are 215 servers, 318'943 members and between 12-23k people each, on average 350 people (IMS Business Report 2022).

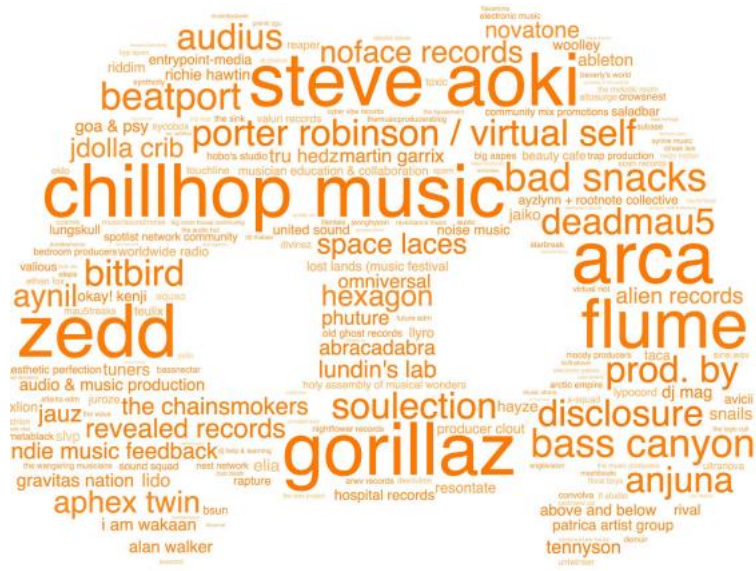


Figure 18 – Biggest Discord Community, EDM (IMS Business Report 2022)

8. MARSHMELLO CASE STUDY

I decided to present a successful case study in electronic music in order to show how the points listed above were put into practice, in different ways. In fact, each DJ producer took a different path before reaching the levels of today. There is really no right formula for managing an artist and achieving success. However, through my research I realised that there are some important points to take into consideration when managing an artist/DJ producer and growing his brand. To better explain these points I would like to consider Marshmello's case study, as I think he is a very interesting case of successful re-branding. It is a perfect example to show a brand that is evidently strong and consistent in every activity it performs. The goal is not to get through the idea that everyone has to reach such a level to claim success, everyone has their own personal goals. This is an example that clearly shows rebranding and building a strong and consistent brand.

8A. INTRODUCTION

Marshmello is an electronic dance music superstar, acquiring billions of views on YouTube, Spotify streams, etc. and today he collaborates with huge artists such as Selena Gomez, Khalid, Ookay, and many more. The 'Marshmello' project was created in 2015 with the aim of building a 'faceless' brand, today the DJ producer is one of the world's highest paid producers in the entertainment industry. Moe Shalizi is a talent manager and entrepreneur who has followed Marshmello on his journey. Marshmello's is a case of rebranding; his real name is in fact Christopher Comstock, originally from the United States. Christopher was already working as a DJ producer under the name "Dotcom", publishing his music and other content on various platforms. This allowed him to already have contacts and a team of people to work with him. This is certainly an advantageous point, also because Moe Shalizi, his manager, already knew the kind of person Christopher was. In fact, he is described by Moe as a very humble, quiet guy, with a good head on his shoulders, etc. It is important that the artist's team knows the artist himself, in order to work with him and help him express himself in the best possible way. As seen in the previous chapter, it is very important for the manager to understand the artist he is working with. In this case, Moe probably knew Christopher very intimately, so in addition to his personality traits, his values, his visions/ideas, etc. and was able to help him in the best possible way because a person's brand must necessarily show the person they are, which is why it is a central point to get to know the artist.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF – BRAND ATTRIBUTES

Moe and his team listening to Christopher's latest tracks described them as being 'super mellow', in other words, smooth, pleasing and soft. This led them to relaunch Christopher in a whole new way,

with a new strategy. The music tracks produced gave them the idea of a new name, which they first thought should be Chocolate Panda, they then chose the name 'Marshmello'. The melodies were evocative of fun, happiness, youth, etc., so they created a character that expressed friendliness and positivity and made people laugh, because Marshmello, especially in the beginning, could also be somewhat ridiculous. Marshmello is clearly inspired by the Mashmellows, in fact they then adapted everything: the look and the clothing, in fact Marshmello often dresses in total white, but also the messages sent, the collaborations, etc. Le caratteristiche di Marshmello fanno sì che il target di riferimento siano i giovani sotto i vent'anni o comunque meno di 25.

You can see the logo underneath which is consistent with the whole theme and reflects the character very well. The aim was to do something that could be reached by everyone, without a human 'ego' behind it. Moe Shalizi explains that the concept they had in mind with Marshmello was to create a brand that could be accessible to everyone, but above all that everyone could relate to: to create a universal character. Marshmello's mantra is Marshmello's mantra is "just enjoy the music, don't worry about me". The meaning is also linked to several sensitive topics, such as bullying or not judging by appearance. About Marshmello and his life before he became famous not much is known yet and it is his goal not to reveal too much.



Figure 19 – Marshmello's logo
(Marshmello website)



Figure 20 – Marshmello
(Marshmello Instagram account)

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

The original contents Chris produced were distributed on SoundCloud, the most popular platform for Dance Music a few years ago, when Spotify was not yet so well known. They started posting music anonymously, one song for a whole week. In addition, Marshmello made remixes of well-known songs with the aim of growing the brand. Moe, claims that it is worth contacting a hundred producers that we like and asking them to create a remix of their songs, even if a small number accept, it is always something more that you have.

The tracks that Marshmello released had 'trap' and 'pop' elements, which made the sound very distinctive and characterised his tracks. The DJ Producer grew quickly with the support of several well-known Producers such as Shrillex, Diplo, Zedd who re-released his tracks. Several of Dotcom's fans realised that he and Marshmello were one and the same, also because with Marshmello's growth came a decrease in Dotcom's presence. I personally remember when his first songs became popular in 2016, even on a musical level I found them very distinctive and with their own unique genre and easily distinguishable from others. I found it very interesting.

COMMUNICATE YOUR IDENTITY – INCREASE THE BRAND AWARENESS

To increase brand awareness Marshmello worked hard on the content to be published on social media. An Instagram profile dedicated to this new 'character' was created. Initially they had used Facebook to be able to build up a fan base, but then as the algorithm changed no longer favouring a certain type of content etc., they decided to move to Instagram: with just one post it was possible to reach anyone. They started by posting different content and the idea was to photograph Marshmello while he was doing 'human' activities, such as riding a bike or going to the supermarket. The peculiarity was that whatever Marshmello did was funny and also ridiculous, because of the costume he wears. The published photos or videos of this kind are accompanied by funny captions where Marshmello makes fun of himself. These are some of the photographs posted on his profile, even today even though Marshmello's identity has been revealed, content consistent with the character is still posted. The difference is that today he attends big events and lives a different lifestyle. So to the contents of the past are added those of shows, festivals, collaborations, etc.

Social media has played a significant role in the DJ Producer's growth. The various collaborations he has undertaken have allowed him to reach new audiences and increase his number of followers exponentially: artists such as Selena Gomez, with just one shoutout have provided him with +30k new followers.

He also expressed himself on Twitter in 2017 by communicating that his goal is to create something positive that people can connect with and explained that he keeps his helmet on so he can remain anonymous and that any person can become a marshmello simply by wearing the helmet too: 'The helmet makes me marshmello and also makes you marshmello...we are all marshmello'. These messages serve to try to convey to people their values by expressing their opinions.

Advertising campaigns & marketing strategies

Marshmello was initially limited to releasing his own original tracks and remixes anonymously on SoundCloud, so officially he hadn't yet launched any advertising campaigns. It was the time of

Coachella and Moe & the team, decided to invest in a billboard at the exit of the festival, with the aim of showcasing the DJ Producer and increasing brand awareness, they wanted people to start talking about him. To get people's attention and get noticed, they decided to post a photograph of Marshmello on the billboard accompanied by a sentence:

"I'm working hard now so my future daughter doesn't have to sell detox tea on her social media".

Since the DJ Producer had always published his tracks anonymously, they decided to keep the producer's identity secret for the time being, and so they covered his face with a kind of helmet resembling a marshmallow.



Figura 21 – Marshmello First Marketing Campaign

Nobody knew a lot about Marshmello (nobody knew his identity), since as just mentioned, he had never played anywhere, had never presented himself in public, Coachella being the first appearance. However, he had already started at the same time as producing the music to create and post on Instagram. That's why the social media username was given out, so that people could go and find out more about him, get interested and eventually maybe even follow his IG profile. That's why I think it's important to have a solid presence online, on the different social media, which needs to be very well taken care of. It's important because in some cases they are one of the first impressions the audience has of the DJ Producer, if you convey professionalism, character, curiosity, etc. it's a big advantage.

After this episode, the Marshmello's notoriety increased, also because he attracted the attention of several Dj Producers who were known worldwide thanks to the music they released. To the point that they started to receive a lot of bookings for Marshmello, but for a whole year they refused because they wanted to launch themselves on the market at the right price. The strategy was to continue with the distribution of music tracks on SoundCloud even without earning money because the free download was clearly available to everyone. They increased their notoriety in addition to the

good music released, advertising campaigns and continuous updating of their social profiles with news, new content, etc. They then agreed to play at a festival for 30k while still keeping Marshmello's identity a secret. (importance of timeline). In fact, another strategic move was to play on people's curiosity. Moe noticed how much people's curiosity had increased about knowing Marshmello's identity: in fact, several newspaper articles had come out where speculations were made and theories were presented about who he might be.

Therefore, they decided to continue to protect his identity even though it was not initially the goal, in the sense that they would have announced almost immediately who was under that helmet. Moe argues that they acted on the results of previous actions, paid attention to the audience, the media and acted on their own. In fact, at the first festival where Marshmello was going to play for 30k, they decided to take a picture of him (with the helmet on, of course) in the area and send it to Billboard as the 'first photograph of Marshmello'. People went crazy as he had never played anywhere before, they created a lot of hype.

CREATE A CONNECTION – BUILD A COMMUNITY

Not having a 'human' figure, but rather a character, people connected to him through music. That is why in order to remain consistent with his character, he initially never gave interviews because he wanted to remain just a figure, a cartoon and not be associated with a human being: he is a mascot. Therefore, his voice still remains very unknown and without having really heard him speak, people appreciate him for their own reasons.

They created a very deep connection with the audience, through very meaningful messages, like the one called 'Everyone is Marshmello'.



Figure 22 – Marshemello Tweet, 2017 (Twitter)



Figure 23 – Tweet (Twitter)

Music videos have also been a tool to convey messages and create connections. For example, one of the first singles that was very successful is called 'Alone'. The video in question touches very important topics, such as feeling alone, dreams, bullying, etc. It also makes one tender to see this character who nevertheless evokes positivity, a good, sweet, kind being treated in a certain way.

“Truth is, I had just moved away from my friends and family and I started to feel very home sick and lonely like I didn't belong in my new settings. Everything was just happening so fast and I couldn't really grasp where I was or who I was but all I knew was that I felt Alone.” - Marshmello

Marshmello, Moe and the rest of the team have been involved in many different kinds of activities, taking any opportunity that has presented itself to them. Moe says that the world of music is very volatile and that it changes every day, which is why they have initiated several projects. These activities initially served to increase people's awareness of the brand, but now that it is well established they have the main purpose of connecting more with their fans. They worked a lot on content, so much so that they also developed on YouTube, launching a series on Marshmello called 'Cooking with Marshmellows'. The content was aimed at his fanbase and so they used the opportunity to make a cultural connection with fans. What the DJ Producer and his team decided to do was to cook typical dishes from the countries where most of the fans came from, such as Brazil and Indonesia, with the aim of creating more engagement.

Another thing that Marshmello does to connect more with his community is during live shows is to include in his playlist that he performs, songs that are typical of the place where he is playing the show that may seem like normal songs, but for the people who are originally from there, they have a very important meaning because they may be part of their culture, everyday life, etc. For example, during a show in India, he played some Indian songs that are 12 years old, very well known there, in the country so as to get closer to the audience, who in fact were very surprised wondering how it was possible that he originally from the United States knew these songs. He is everything, but above all the message is that he can be any person: the target audience can more easily identify with him in this way.

Another content designed to get closer to the audience was to post video tutorials on YouTube, explaining how to build your own 'Mello Helmet' at home. This allowed anyone to build their own customised helmet and wear it if they wanted to, intensifying the 'Everyone is Marshmello' message. As a result, many people showed up at festivals, even where Marshmello was not in the line-up, with a Marshmello helmet and identified with the character, as people recognised the logo and stopped

or commented 'Hey Marshmello', giving recognition. So, even people who suffer or have suffered from bullying, by putting on this helmet feel recognised, taken into consideration, protected, etc. These are all extremely important elements and connections that people make with Marshmello. His fan-base calls itself 'Mellogang' and is said to love positivity and good music.

CONCLUSION

This does not mean, of course, that this is the 'correct' path to follow. As the manager himself mentioned several times, they also paid attention to the reaction of the audience, how situations evolved, etc. He is not the first DJ to appear in disguise in the electronic music industry. The first were Daft Punk wearing robot helmets, then Deadmau5 characterised by wearing a giant mouse head, also Malaa wears a balaclava and even Claptone wears a mask every time he performs. However, he succeeded because he fully developed his brand identity, which is extremely attractive to young people.

The difference lies in creativity, in finding something new or simply different to stand out from the crowd. Diversity can also be found in the personality of a DJ Producer or in a specific characteristic of the artist's style as in the case of Skrillex.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Conducting this research was very interesting although I was disappointed not to have been able to interview more experts in the field. This research made it possible to realise that there is no one right strategy. My initial idea was to be able to identify a single, well-defined path that a producer can follow in order to achieve success in the electronic dance music industry. On the contrary, there is no definite path to follow, rather there are factors such as creativity, so the fact to create something new, to differentiate from others, plays a very important role.

Another important thing I understood is that technology provides almost everyone a chance to try to break into the music business, regardless of who you are and where you live. Today, a DJ Producer can really be himself and build a brand on the personal characteristics he possesses. Thanks to the advent of the internet and improved technologies, it is possible to reach a truly vast number of people and a worldwide audience. So, regardless of the personal feature, the identity created, it is much easier to be able to find a target audience that is interested in your music. Maybe this audience is on the other side of the world, but this does not limit the DJ Producer in terms of where he lives. I think it can be an interesting challenge for any aspiring producer who wants to try and create a career in the electronic music industry: the opportunities are numerous and I think it costs nothing to try.

In conclusion, I noted that there are not many scientific articles dealing specifically with DJ Producers as brands, probably due to the fact that personal branding is still a developing topic that is slowly being considered and studied. It is clearly something that exists in the world of electronic dance music, but which is probably not being studied in depth at the moment.

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