

Marketing Plan Assignment

This semester's project is going to focus on emerging and mid-tier artists. You may pick any one artist that fits either of these categories for this assignment.

Imagine your selected artist will be releasing an album in three months. You are working on behalf of the artist to promote the album (digital distribution only) and must present a proposed plan of action to the VP of Marketing or to a private investor who is funding the album. Not including the title page and bibliography, your plan should be no longer **than five (5) pages, double-spaced with 12-point font**. It should include the following sections/content:

Overview - artist name, album name, release date, list of artist's socials

Research - use research sources to clearly define your audience and the overall market.

Audience Research: Understanding and identifying your fan base is a key element of a successful marketing plan. This section starts with listening to your gut on who your fan is, then validate those assumptions with research. Start by using Simmons OneView (many of these are available by using the Quick Reports tab) to explore the following:

Age: Look at popular age brackets like 18-24, 25-54, 18-49 and so on. In which age brackets are the majority of your fans?

Gender: Is your fan base split evenly between male and females or do they skew more heavily to one or the other. This information will have a significant impact on many elements of your plan.

Geographics: Although you may want to look at where they live (that could give you insight as to where to tour or which large cities you could target for a publicity stunt) the majority of music released now should have at least a national focus. Rather than targeting specific geographic regions for an ad campaign, for example, you would be better off targeting fans of that genre nationwide because all of them have easy access to download or stream the music. There really are no longer geographic barriers when it comes to selling music.

Psychographics: What other activities interest your fans? What other artists or genres do they love? Which social networks do they use, and which ones are their favorites? How often do they consume different types of media – are they more likely to read about news on socials, hear it on the radio, or see something on TV? Do they like to travel? Eat out? Shop? (If so, where?). Clarity in this section will help you determine the best media and promotions to use in your campaign.

Behavioristics: Are they heavy streamers or buyers of physical product? Do they tend to be

heavy consumers of the genre or are they light users of multiple genres?

In addition to Simmons, you should look at the information on the artist's target audience available through a free account on Next Big Sound. You should receive an email within the first two weeks of the semester with instructions on how you may access your account. If you can't find your artist in NBS, you may add them by choosing the "add" button at the bottom of your search screen. If the Next Big Sound information you pull is similar to what Simmons is reporting, it's a safe bet that you're on the right track.

Market Research: You should also look at the market as a whole for opportunities on which you might be able to capitalize. For example - do male vocalists with a similar sound dominate your targeted genre right now? If so, that might mean that's what consumers and tastemakers (radio and streaming services) are favoring; however, it could also be an opportunity for a really strong female act or a group with a unique sound to break through the clutter." Will your artist be performing on a major tour or will they be appearing on an upcoming episode of The Voice? These opportunities need to be noted in your plan, so you can leverage them as much as possible.

Marketing Objectives and Target Market: Use the information you've gathered from your research to identify your targeted genre(s) and a few key objectives for your campaign.

Artist positioning: What sets your artist apart from the competition? Do they have a particular strength you would seek to leverage?

Primary target audience: Clearly state who your audience is based on the data you've reviewed. You may add a secondary target audience if you feel it's necessary (for example, Taylor Swift appeals to very young girls, but it may also be wise to target the moms of those young girls as they are the ones with the funds to buy the album and tickets to the shows).

Retail and Streaming sites – Would you use an aggregator to get the music on major retail sites? Which playlist curators would you target and why? What type of special content might you pitch (they all love "exclusives") to iTunes, WalMart.com, Bestbuy.com, Target.com and other music-related sites in exchange for promotional support on their websites and/or social accounts? Would you seek inclusion on playlists and, if so, which ones? Is it realistic to ask for a tile on iTunes' homepage or is placement on the genre homepage more probable? Could you approach Wal-Mart with a cool idea for the "Soundcheck" section of their website? Dig around on these sites to see what promotional inventory is available and start strategizing.

Online media/publicity targets (this is your "Earned Media") - entertainment sites and blogs, etc. Do your research and be realistic here. If your artist is an unknown Americana act, it's unlikely they will be featured on the homepage of rollingstone.com, but there are numerous blogs that review Americana music - find the most popular ones and list them here. Note: artists at every

level should have at least 10 good targets for this category.

Social media and website (this is your “Owned Media”) – What types of activities would you recommend across each of the artist's major promotional platform to engage with the fan base? What type of content and album promotion would you recommend be prominently displayed on the artist's website? What type of content would you feature on the artist's socials? Facebook live chats? Sneak peeks? Behind-the-scenes videos? What contests or promotions would you recommend (note: you should come up with at least one big promotional idea to support the album launch)? Just to clarify - strategies and tactics for social media should be detailed and tailored to each platform (in other words, don't just say you're going to post news about the album release on the artist's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts); you should have a detailed paragraph for each.

Digital advertising (this is your “Paid Media”) - This section includes your **paid** ad campaigns across all digital platforms including socials, search, related websites and more.

Social media: On which platforms would you recommend purchasing ad units? What type of ad units?

Retail sites: What would be your paid strategy on Spotify, Pandora and other sales and streaming sites? Be specific for each in noting the types of ad units you would seek and what keywords or placement you would target.

Search: What keywords would you recommend purchasing on Google, Bing and other search engines? What about contextual ads (would you recommend these and, if so, what keywords or phrases would you target for them)?

Be succinct but thorough in your recommendations. Provide logic for the recommendation if it's not something that's obvious (e.g. "According to Simmons, XXX% of people who listen to jazz music are xx% more likely than the average population to drink wine, so a partnership with foodandwine.com would be targeted).

Bibliography - formatted MLA, APA, or Chicago style.