Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

make
learn

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

THE USE OF THE INTERNET BY A MUSIC BAND - THE CASE STUDY OF MR. IRISH BASTARD

Przemysław Łukasik
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland
przemysław.lukasik@umcs.lublin.pl

Inga Kaszycka
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland
ingakaszycka@gmail.com

Abstract:
This paper is a case study concerning the use of the Internet by Irish folk punk band Mr. Irish Bastard. The main aim of this work is to explore this phenomenon and to show what goals and by what means the band which is the subject of this case study wants to achieve. Research shows that the Internet has significant impact on the success of bands. Independent bands have always relied on word-of-mouth to attract attention and fans, making available free songs, for download and sharing on the Internet. The Internet not only can help with finding new fans but also provides bands with an opportunity to interact with them and for selling music and other band-related products. What is more, having an attractive website and video recordings from concerts possible to watch on-line increases the chance of drawing concerts' organizers and agents' attention and, essentially, the possibility of hiring the band. Finally, in order for the band's activity on the Internet to be effective, precautions should be taken when publishing new content itself appropriately picked out and prepared beforehand.

Keywords: internet marketing, music industry, social network sites, musical groups and artists, music audiences

Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a very characteristic means of communication which, thanks to its comprehensiveness, can be used to achieve the objectives of various market participants. The music industry, both big record labels and the underground scene included, quickly realized its great potential.

On one hand, the Internet made reaching listeners easy like never before. To confirm this one can point to the wide array of available websites which allow bands to communicate with their listeners relatively easily (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Last.fm, own websites). On the other hand, however, we need to be aware of the fact that the widespread use of the Internet by musicians led to a large-scale competition for audience attention. Including in the discussion the problem of illegal music downloading we have to examine the effectiveness of band's actions focused on records and tickets sale.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Back in the day, music fans had limited ways of finding new music, so they relied on commercial media sources to filter new artists to them. Music consumers who were primarily found by the music industry system have now become real music hunters and find it easier than ever to discover new music on their own (Baker, 2007).

Social network sites (SNSs) attracted publicity in 2003 due to the start-up of Facebook (originally named Facemash). Since then they have marked their presence in man's virtual environment significantly, differing from each other on many levels but at the same time always possessing certain general SNS features. Websites focused on media sharing began implementing SNS features and becoming SNSs themselves, e.g. Flickr (photo sharing), Last.fm (music listening habits) and focused on video sharing – YouTube (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In February 2013 (Alexa, 2013) among the world's most visited Web sites were Facebook (No. 2), YouTube (No. 3) and Twitter (No. 10). Definitely the most music-oriented SNS that gained global popularity was MySpace but now its position is much worse and MySpace can be considered as a niche website. This is a place for youth, and particularly females (Wilkinson & Thelwall, 2010). Some authors propose the key recommendations regarding appropriate social media use, e.g. to choose them carefully from the wide range of platforms, to pick an existing social media application and benefit from its popularity and user base or create one of their own, to ensure activity alignment and media plan integration access for all (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Every social media site has its functionalities and some authors make attempt to list them and examine their importance within a specific platform (Kietzmann & Hermkens & McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).

For this case study, the most important is this aspect of SNS which refers to the possibilities it creates and consequences of its use by musicians (Forde, 2009; Adams, 2004; Swenson, 2012; Rose, 2009). From their point of view it is obvious that the bigger the fan base, the bigger the financial benefits will be. It is pointed out that the differences in benefits may result from the prominence of an artist, as larger sums are generated by musicians with large fan bases, who advertise themselves more (Antin & Earp, 2010).

Internet creates the right conditions for the distribution of the band's songs, and increasing interest in touring. The matter that must be discussed is the assessment of the phenomenon of illegal downloading (Gündüz, 2012). From the band's point of view such behavior does not need to be regarded as threatening to their interests. On the contrary, a musician may benefit from illegal downloading, e.g. in the form of increased attendance at concerts or sales of legal records and band apparel (Pikas & Pikas & Lymburner, 2011).

The use of the Internet by music bands is also a natural response to some of the behavior of fans who want to know about the artist as much as possible. Getting fans involved and allowing them to be co-creators of a band's success story is very important (Baker, 2007). Fans read the entries made by the musicians on their SNS profiles and interact with them and with other fans. Listeners go further and, increasingly, they want not only to participate in the concert but, e.g., also be able to have a look behind the scenes and watch the artist's concert online on their computer screens when they are not be able to be physically present at the show (Bennett, 2012). Social platforms allow artists to be in close touch with their fans and to interact with them every day. This creates a feeling of privilege and

Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

make learn

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

appreciation among loyal fans because an artist also answers some of the questions its fans ask on these channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012).

3.   RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this work is to explore the phenomenon of using the Internet by a music band and to show what goals and by what means the band which is the subject of this case study wants to achiee. In particular, the aim of the paper is to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is the Internet an effective way of gaining popularity by a music band?

RQ2: Can a music band deepen the relationship with their listeners and how can it be achieved?

RQ3: Is the Internet an effective way of band's merchandise distribution and organization of concerts?

RQ4: What should be avoided when using the Internet as a part of the band's activity?

The case study method will be used in the research. It will allow to solve the problem of the research more precisely than employing empirical methods of research. The data will be derived from the band's profiles in SNSs and own website and also from direct conversation with the band members.

4.   RESULTS

Research shows that the Internet has significant impact on the success of bands. The band Mr. Irish Bastard has profiles on few SNSs but the most important for them are the ones on MySpace, Last.fm, YouTube and Facebook. Their importance has changed over the time, mainly due to changes in popularity of individual services and tools which they offer.

Since the beginning of Mr. Irish Bastard's activity, the band had their own website which is integrated with the SNSs they are using. Its matches the style of the band's newest album. The website contains the latest news, dates of concerts (integrated with bandsintown.com), music (integrated with MySpace, Amazon and iTunes), photos (integrated with the gallery on Facebook), videos (integrated with YouTube), a link to the store with the band's official merchandise, contact information and press materials and references. The greater part of the website, apart from the information on the band's history, is in English. Currently, the official website redirects visitors to the band's profile on Facebook, until the new website will be ready. It is a temporary action, taken in order to avoid errors being displayed whenever someone tries to access the band's website.

Uploading videos and MP3 files may have indirect effect on the acquisition of new fans which was expected in RQ1. For this purpose band focuses mainly on three websites – MySpace, Last.fm and YouTube.

The first and initially most important profile for this type of promotion was created on the 28th May 2006 on MySpace. It has gathered 14 119 friends and thanks to it 9 new songs uploaded by the band were listened to 473 686 times. The band's profile received 2 810 comments from other users of this network. From 2007 to 2010 the band used this profile to share their photos and since the time the profile was created it was tagged in 339 photos uploaded by the fans.

In March 2007 the band created their Last.fm profile which currently has 5649 listeners and 165 504 scrobbles. As an addition to the music files shared by the band, a YouTube channel was created on the 4th April 2008. Up until now, the band has uploaded 16 videos which were viewed 47 363 times in total (which gives an average of 2960,2 views per video). The analysis of this platform has shown a general trend of rising number of views. Videos uploaded by the band are most frequently viewed in Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, the Åland Islands, Japan, Austria, Reunion, Russia, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Costa Rica.

It is very important to add as many tags as possible to every file because video-sharing websites, such as YouTube, employ suggestion tools which can be used to draw attention of potential fans. YouTube's search engine returns ca. 2840 finds, including 1060 videos, connected with the phrase "Mr. Irish Bastard". The proper use of tags increases the possibility of videos being presented as the ones suggested to a user listening to a given music genre, who may become a potential fan of the band. Moreover, independent bands have always relied on word-of-mouth to attract attention and

Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

make learn

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

fans, making available free MP3 files, sometimes full length and sometimes only short samples, for download and sharing on the Internet. Also, videos and MP3 files uploaded by bands and fans can be shared by them on such websites as, e.g., Facebook. The fact that a person, who is on band's friends list there, likes a certain band makes this band's music more appealing and interesting to a band.

Such websites as Myspace, Last.fm or YouTube, which are used by bands mainly to gain popularity by presenting their material, do not give an opportunity for interactions between band and fans and also between fans.

The second research question (RQ2) helps gain insight in how the Internet not only can help with finding new fans but also provides bands with an opportunity to interact with them. The website, which gives the greatest possibilities in this field is Facebook, where the band has created its profile on 19th August 2008. In the first months of its existence their page was not vastly popular among fans and the band itself also focused on their activity on other SNSs. The initial growth of interest in the Facebook profile, on both sides, can be dated back between May and August 2010. The band began to use Facebook regularly in June 2011, mainly because of the possibilities it offers in terms of maintaining contact and interacting with fans. The band's times of greatest activity are the months when tour dates are announced or when the tour is already underway and also before and after a new album premieres. In turn, the greatest activity of the fans can be seen after the concerts. Currently, the band had published 297 posts (average of 6,8 per month), with every single post receiving, on average, 3,3 comments, 14,3 "Likes" and 0,27 shares.

All this interaction plays a great role in the band-fans relationship, as fans nowadays expect to be in contact with band not only by going to concerts and buying CDs but also, e.g., by knowing what is happening backstage and bands which share their photos from backstage or from recording sessions with their fans are more interesting. Such posts on Facebook constitute almost 17% of the overall number of entries and are characterized by a greater number of "Likes", comments and shares per single entry in relation to the average numbers of all the posts. Also, the response time, after which the first comment appears, is shorter on the average. These differences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences in fans activity in regard of the type of post

Type of post on Facebook	"Likes"	Comments	Share	Response time
photos from backstage and recording sessions	29,4	6,3	0,32	233,7 minutes
all published	13,4	3,3	0,27	369,3 minutes

Source: Own elaboration of the base of the band's Facebook profile. Retrieved 14 April, 2013 from http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mr-Irish-Bastard/40524367120.

While recording one of Mr. Irish Bastard albums, the band uploaded 2 short videos on YouTube which concerned the progress of their work and 1 longer video with footage from the studio. The overall number of views for these files is 2512 which gives an average of 837,5 views per video. All this is done to remain in contact with the fans, as this is the best way to maintain and deepen relations.

Maintaining contact also includes answering their e-mails, comments on posts, photos or videos. Also, a very useful tool for that is the possibility for the fans and not only for the band to post on their Facebook page. On average 7,6 posts are published monthly which mostly contain questions for the band, words of appreciation after the concert, a link to a video or pictures made by fans. The band has created a gallery on their profiles on Facebook and MySpace which contains photos sent by the fans and presents their tattoos inspired by the band's logos.

The members of the band remain in contact with the fans through Facebook not only through their official page but also by using their private accounts, as it is crucial to the band not only to perceive their fans as customers but also as friends who want to know what certain members of the band feel, think, listen or like. An example of such steps taken by the band is the publishing of diaries from tours and Facebook posts in which they ask the fans to propose a good movie to watch while on the road from one concert to another or create games where the fans have to finish a sentence.

The band used to use Twitter, where between 5th May 2009 and 29th July 2011 it had 122 followers. However they have resigned from activity on this SNS because it was not providing them with better tools for communication with their fans when compared with other SNSs.

Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

make learn

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

The results of analysis conducted in connection with RQ3 shows that the Internet provides a number of different opportunities for selling music and other band-related products. Keeping the band's website updated with the latest information not only helps with gaining popularity and deepen relationship with fans but also improves concert attendance and album sales.

What is more, an online shop with band merchandise run, in a way, by the band members themselves provides a better incentive for the fans to shop there. This form of shopping also eliminates the middlemen, who charge sales commission, and in effect allows the band to earn more. Merchandising sales over the Internet is very important for the band. They have opened their own online shop in 2006 where they offer promotional products, vinyls, CDs, accessories, shirts, hoodies, hats, bundles and tickets for concerts. It is the only online shop where fans can purchase band related gadgets. The number of orders depends on how many shows they play and if there is a new release. At present there are two orders per week. Orders come mainly from Germany but there are also orders from all over the world, e.g. from USA, Japan, Spain, Poland, Italy, Sweden, Brazil and the Netherlands.

Additionally, offering music in different formats (normal CD or MP3 files) and in various online shops increases the number of distribution channels which gives more options for effective sales. To achieve that, the band sells albums through Amazon and bandworm.de in Europe, interpunk.com in the USA and uncleowen.shop-pro.jp in Japan. Music in MP3 format is sold through Amazon and iTunes. Ordering products online has also many advantages for fans, e.g., in the case of MP3 files when they order them this way they are instantly delivered to them, also via the Internet. It is particularly important, bearing in mind what it means to the fans to have the ability to quickly gain access to the music of the band they like, especially when it comes to the newest recordings.
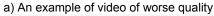
Furthermore, the band's efficient use of the Internet and their intensive activity on the world wide web also creates possibilities in the field of organizing concerts. Many organizers and agents use such websites as, e.g., Myspace and Facebook, to find interesting bands. The band has made a lot of friend via Myspace which helped them get invitations for tours in China (2009) and Japan (2010) and also release their records there (Japan - 2008, China - 2009). Having an attractive website and video recordings from concerts possible to watch on-line increases the chance of drawing their attention and, essentially, the possibility of hiring the band.

Regarding RQ4 it can be seen that as far as the band's effective activity on the Internet is concerned, precautions should be taken when publishing new content and the content itself appropriately picked out and prepared beforehand. Bands should never upload videos or music files which are of bad quality. Worse quality videos published on YouTube have a smaller average number of views per video amounting to 2168 when compared with the average for good quality videos which is 3576,7. Those videos are also characterized by shorter popularity in comparison to the every growing number of views of better quality videos (picture 1).

When one of such files becomes the source of first contact with the band's music it can have negative influence on the overall impression concerning their artistic output. The band should also be careful with uploading too many materials at the same time.

The analysis of the band's profiles on Facebook and MySpace showed that uploading many photos at the same time is less interesting for fans (according to comments, "Likes" on Facebook and views on MySpace) than uploading less materials but more often. They should also avoid sharing photos which casts them in an unfavorable (in opinion of their fans) light. Especially in punk rock subculture ideas embraced by the band hold great meaning for the fans who identify themselves with the band.

Picture 1: Differences in video's popularity in regard of quality

a) An example of video of worse quality

Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

make learn

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

b) An example of video of better quality

Source: a) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dnQGz4iQ5E, b) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqRiUoPLHOI (retrieved April 14, 2013).

The band which gives concerts around the world should refrain from posting entries in a language which is not commonly used by fans from other countries. In the case of Mr. Irish Bastard, the posts in German constitute no more than 16% of all the posts and are characterized by a slightly larger amount of comments and "Likes" per single entry than the average for all the entries. It might be caused by the use of online translation tools and the translation service offered by Facebook. However, such posts can result in negative reactions among some fans, an example of which can be this comment from one of the users who does not know German (picture 2).

Much more visible is the difference in reception of the materials in German by fans on YouTube. Three videos documenting studio work on the new album are characterized by a considerably lower average of 837,3 views per movie when contrasted with the average of views of all the videos uploaded by the band which is 2960,2 views per video and the average of "Likes" amounting to 3,3 in relation to 5,5 per video.

Picture 2: Fan's reaction for post in German language

Source: The band's Facebook profile. Retrieved 14 April, 2013 from http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mr-Irish-Bastard/40524367120.

Overall, taking mentioned results into account, the Internet can help bands gain popularity and deepen relationships with fans. Also, it can be used to sell merchandise and organize concerts.

5.   CONCLUSIONS

The results confirm that the Internet is an important part of the band's activity which can help them become and remain popular.

Active Citizenship by
Knowledge Management & Innovation
19–21 June 2013 · Zadar, Croatia

make
learn

Management,
Knowledge and Learning
International Conference 2013

First of all, different SNSs give different possibilities of monitoring fan activity, e.g. Facebook – through the number of posts by fans, comments, "Likes" and shares or MySpace – through the number of times the tracks were listened to and photos were viewed and comments. Thanks to that, the band can achieve and realize various goals.

Secondly, the integration of the use of tools available from different networks makes it easier to keep all the websites and SNS profiles updated and increases, through unification of graphic outlook and information available there, the speed of relaying information. Apart from that, using different SNSs allows the band to operate more effectively on the Internet which results in reaching a greater number of fans, using different networks, not necessarily all of them. It also helps achieve the effect of synergy.

Thirdly, publishing smaller amount of material often is more effective than publishing a bigger amount of material at the same time. Moreover, if the band wants to gain international fame it should publish everything in English.

Finally, it is important to remember to focus not only on acquiring new fans or on frequent sharing of new materials but also on maintaining constant contact with the fans.

REFERENCE LIST

1. Adams B. (2004). Marketing Your Music Online. Canadian Musician, *26*(5), p. 46-56.
2. Alexa (2013). The top 500 sites on the Web. Retrieved February 14, 2013, from http://www.alexa.com/topsites
3. Antin J., Earp M. (2010). With a Little Help From My Friends: Self-Interested and Prosocial Behavior on MySpace Music. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, *61*(5), p. 952-963.
4. Baker B. (2007). Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook. 201 Self-Promotion Ideas for Songwriters, Musicians and Bands on a Budget, Spotlight Publications, St. Louis, (40-45).
5. Bennett L. (2012). Patterns of listening through social media: online fan engagement with live music experience. Social Semiotics, November, *22*(5), 545-557.
6. boyd d.m., Ellison N.B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, *13*(1). Retrieved February 14, 2013, from http://www.danah.org/papers/JCMCIntro.pdf
7. Forde E. (2009). Music embraces the Twitter revolution. Music Week, 3/7/2009, *9*, 9-9.
8. Gündüz U. (2012). Digital Music Format Mp3 as a New Communications Technology and the Future of the Music Industry. Scientific Journal of Humanistic Studies, *4*(7), 202-207.
9. Kaplan A.M., Haenlein M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. Business Horizons, *53*(1), 59-68.
10. Kaplan A.M., Haenlein M. (2012). The Britney Spears universe: Social media and viral marketing at its best. Business Horizons, *55*(1), 27-31.
11. Kietzmann J.H., Hermkens K., McCarthy I.P., Silvestre B.S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Business Horizons, *54*(3), 241-251.
12. Ouellet J-F (2007). The Purchase Versus Illegal Downloading of Music by Consumers: The Influence of Consumer Response towards the Artist and Music. Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, *24*(2), 107-119.
13. Pikas B., Pikas A., Lymburger C. (2011). The Future of the Music Industry. Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness, *5*(3), 139-149.
14. Rose F. (2009). Nine Inch Nails iPhone App Extends Reznor's Innovative Run. Wired, April. Retrieved February 15, 2013, from http://www.wired.com/underwire/2009/04/trent-reznor-wa/
15. Swenson G.K. (2012). Survival of the Artist. Electronic Musician, *28*(9), 22-30.