

# Music Marketing and Promotion on Mainstream Radio

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**-----ABSTRACT-----**

*There is a symbiotic relationship between musicians and the media where one depends on the other for survival in the market especially in the broadcasting sector. Musicians need their music to be marketed and promoted by the media and this means that it is necessary to understand the procedures involved. The media are envisaged to play a key role in music marketing and promotion and this role and processes involved must be clearly brought out to the artists. The study sought to explore the role of mainstream media with particular reference to radio in music marketing and promotion. The research was informed by a constructivist philosophy which argues that knowledge and meaning are generated from an interaction between researchers and participants. A qualitative research methodology was employed for the study as it is appropriate when one does not need to manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study. A case study research design was used as it enabled a detailed and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because of the need to identify data rich sources. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used for data generation. The trustworthiness of the data was established through triangulation of data sources and data generation techniques, recording of interviews and Focus Group Discussions proceedings, for data analysis thematic content analysis was used.*

**Keywords:** *Mainstream media, Music Marketing, Music Promotion, Radio.*

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Date of Submission: 26-08-2021

Date of Acceptance: 10-09-2021

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Music has been defined as more than just ordinary entertainment as revealed by Umezina (2009) when he states that to the owners and practitioners, it is a force, a living force that yields to various forms of meanings and interpretations. It is just not one thing but many things reviewed from a prism, which unifies all". This means that music can be precisely described as an ethical detector, a mobilizer, an educator as well as an agent of social, political and cultural values, just to mention a few. Music is a moral law, It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, and life to everything, without music, life would be an error. (Plato).

As a newly established artist it is important to ensure that the right strategies are in place for one to build a fan base as well as to ensure that your music is being heard by your target audience. Marketing is non optional as it plays a crucial role for publicity and brand visibility purposes. Even for renowned artists music marketing is still key in their quest to evolve in the industry as the industry grows hence music marketing ought to be considered greatly. Music marketing is done to promote the works of an artist as indicated by McGuire (2020)

The Radio 1 Breakfast Show with Nick Grimshaw, during this show music is largely play listed, what is to be played is decided by a committee where they choose around 40 records each week for repeated daytime play. (OCR 2017). The selection is guided by what is popular at the time and the older artists many of them are not included as the station seeks to target the under 30 audience. Music is a universal language, a human activity, which forms "part of human existence" (Okafor, 2005).

Music marketing is an essential component necessary for artists to embrace as this will enable their music to get to the public domain. There is a need to ensure that there is a strong relationship between musicians and the media. The study assumes that there is a lot of good music produced, however, most of it does not reach the public domain and the intended audiences and this is due to limited or no marketing techniques used. For purposes of this study, radio is expected to pioneer the process of music marketing so that music reaches every corner necessary. For music marketing to be attainable media must work hand in hand with the artistes giving them the much needed space to reach the wider audience.

The study sought to reveal how radio as a medium of communication markets and promotes music as well as to show how knowledgeable are artists about the kind of procedures involved in music marketing. The study also looked at why some radio stations prefer to play yester year or old school music than the latest from upcoming and emerging musicians. The study also revealed the different formats followed by the radio stations in music submission for marketing purposes.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How knowledgeable are artists about the role of radio in music marketing
- 2) How does radio aid music marketing
- 3) What are the steps to be taken by artists to get their music on radio
- 4) Describe the selection process to be play listed

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative research methodology was used for the study where we also used a case study design where focus was mainly on the role of the media in music marketing. The purposively sampled participants were drawn from journalists in the electronic media as well as musicians from Matabeleland South region. Data were generated through Interviews on WhatsApp platform with both journalists and the musicians. Interviews were conducted with 5 journalists from different radio stations and with 10 musicians from Matabeleland South province of Zimbabwe.

## **III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Knowledge by artists on the role of radio in music marketing**

Several participants, musicians, demonstrated a limited understanding of the role of radio in music marketing and this is why their music did not get to be played on radio. They however showed an understanding of what music marketing is all about when one of them said the following:

‘I can say music marketing is making a product known and in this case, music is our product. Now, on how media make a new product (music) known is where I need to be enlightened, it is through the radio, television or the press that the new releases from the artistes reach to the audience but then the necessary steps, I am not fully aware of.

From the investigations carried out on what musicians understand as the role of media in music marketing, it is clear that there is limited knowledge regarding this subject hence it is the duty of artists to ensure that they take their professions seriously and be knowledgeable about this important aspect in getting their music to their audience through radio or any other form of media.

### **Media role in music marketing**

The following resonated in FGDs as well as in interviews carried out with different personnel from local radio stations regarding the role of radio in music marketing:

- Artistes must be the chief chauffeurs of their products to the audience through well organised marketing strategies. For instance, we have seen some artistes launching their albums or singles live on different radio stations and partnering with different newspapers for promotional advertorials. Sulumani Chimbetu, Jah Prayzah and Macheso have done this before with Zimpapers where their albums were sold at Zimpaper’s newspaper vending sites.
- As media we compliment the efforts that are being taken by the artists to push their products on the market through reviews that have the power to attract even promoters to engage the artists. In this regard, we have heard some artistes confirming that promoters got in touch with them after reading their stories from the press.
- Gone are the days when musicians would just release their music and let the record company market and distribute the material for them. In the past, musicians would just wait to collect royalties from their record labels without making much effort to market their music. However, due to piracy that has eroded sales royalties, musicians are taking it upon themselves to come up with strategies to unveil their music to the public. This to be successful, it however requires proper structures that can collaborate with the press in the marketing and promotion of the music either through radio or any other form of media.
- In the absence of music distribution companies, different synergies must be created so that the music will reach every corner and media plays a pivotal role in this drive through reviews before the release and after the launch as well.
- As media companies we work hand in hand with the artistes giving them the much needed space to reach the wider audience. However, some artistes think it is our sole mandate to look for them so as to take their music to the people
- While some might assume that this is how it is supposed to work, failure to reach certain artistes the media is therefore considered to be biased towards those who would have received the much needed coverage.
- Striking of partnership deals between artistes and the press leading to distribution pacts as well as advertorials is much needed.
- In this world of digital era, artistes must be available on social media platforms for easy interaction, it is through such platforms that we can also pick up story ideas though with serious verification to be considered.

- New technologies have given artists the room to promote and package their music differently. Radio in its nature, indicates what is current and hot in the world of music. As a recent report by Nielsen Music 360 showed, 48% of people are still discovering new artists by listening to the music played on the radio, and 56% of teenagers' still listen to their music that way. If an artist's music is play listed by a radio it demonstrates the amount of potential, they have to be the next big thing in the music business. An artist's credibility is boosted by his/her music getting airplay. In Zimbabwe over the past few months' artists like Poptain, Fidel Country Boy, Anita Jaxson, Melyssa, Mark Ngwazi have become household names as their music has been dominating radio playlists. For emerging artists, radio gives them convenience, flexibility, and familiarity with the listeners. When we creating playlists radio makes deliberate effort to create shows that resonate with listeners.

#### **Steps that Artistes Must take to get their Music and Stories to the Press as indicated by media organisations**

- A "serious and professional" artiste must at least have a proper structure that is, management or a publicist as the contact people with the press since the artistes is mainly known to be a studio personnel, though some might differ, so as to share some duties.
- When a musician releases new songs, they can organise a press conference where they invite the media for coverage and complimentary Compact Discs (CDs) are shared with the media practitioners for review purposes.
- If they have no capacity to host a press conference, there is a cheap way of doing it, a press release can be ideal. This release can be distributed across media houses, bloggers and other relevant media stakeholders.
- Listening sessions with the media is another route that can be explored by artistes to get their music and stories to the press.
- There is need for a good relationship with journalists in your respective field, even hosting them over lunch or drinks.

#### **In submitting music, the following steps have been cited by the participants**

- Research which radio station resonates with your sound, here you identify their sound and style. It wouldn't make sense to present a dancehall project to a station that plays predominantly RnB music
- Packaging your music – it is important to nicely package your CD or CDS. Some bring CDs written by a mighty marker, the radio station might assume that you do not take your craft seriously. Artists need to present their work with press kits, which summarize what the artist or group is all about. The press kits also can explain, what the music project is all about. The press kits will also highlight all the people involved in that project.
- It also important to know and understand the station's requirements when submitting the music. Some have that information on their websites. If you are not sure you can call the station in advance and they can refer you to the necessary personnel to help you with that.
- Artists need to learn to submit their best work for radio airplay, so for instance if you have an album on the horizon or it is already out, create your own listening committee, they can indicate to you what they think is the best material to send to radio.
- It is important to make follow ups with the station, once you have submitted your music.
- Also establish contacts with the radio station, attend their activations and introduce yourself to their personnel
- In radio, we continuously research on topics that affect our listeners, therefore when it comes to music, we also identify artists whose content resonates with our content to create a winning formula. Zimdancehall, has dominated airplay on youthful radio stations like Star FM, ZiFM and Power FM, because the content on these stations is youth oriented. Emerging artists especially in the Zimdancehall fraternity like Celcius, Nutty O, Poptain have scored successful brand ambassadorship roles with Blue Chip companies because their music has dominated playlists and these corporates in turn want to associate with them. Some of these artist's songs have become the theme music for various advertising campaigns being run by corporates in Zimbabwe. Because of radio play, artists have been able to tour other countries as a result of the relationship they have with radio.

#### **Selection Process To Be Playlisted**

- Music is listened to by the music committee
- They shortlist what they think is best music for the station's identity
- A music committee will include on air personnel, music manager, programming manager and picks other staff members that work for the organization randomly, so as to have a full spectrum of its potential listeners
- The music is play listed in categories which are Hot or New especially for music that has just been added to a station's playlist

- Once an artist's music has been play listed they will be granted interviews or invited to perform at the station's activations.
- Releasing singles for radio is a standard worldwide practice because if the first two singles fail to gain the desired traction, then you will know that maybe the project is not on the right track, so you will need to go back into the studio and with your team you might be able to identify the missing ingredients in your project
- What would be ideal is once your project is finished, you can have your inner circle give you their opinions. For radio, we receive an average of 10 CDs per day, so in our weekly music committee sessions we want to listen to as much material as possible, so for the committee to sit down and listen to one project is a disadvantage others also wanting to have their music listened to as well
- Using prominence and newsworthy we always try our best to give our local artists the much needed exposure.
- Each station has a format they follow, a format describes a station's overall content for broadcasting, some formats known in the world are Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR), Hot Adult Contemporary(Hot AC), Urban/Rhythmic so these determine the music to play
- All music goes through a system and we advise musicians not to deal with on air personnel because they do not determine what plays. When they get into their show all the music is already prepared for them
- Avoid anyone who offers to pay stations for airplay. There is no credible music curator in radio who accepts payment for airplay. That is considered payola, and is unethical to say the least. There are also radio promotion services that offer artists airplay for a fee. This is also something to avoid.
- Music has no formula, you might make it or not. My belief is if your stars are aligned then success is guaranteed. We have artists who have gone for years before they score their big success and we have those whom with the first song, score great success but fail to follow it up

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

From the above findings the following serve as conclusions

- Radio plays a key in music marketing
- Radio has the capacity to reach a large audience
- There is need for artists to establish long lasting relations with the media
- Proper procedures need to be understood and followed by musicians in order to have their music played on radio
- The media are envisaged to play a key role in music marketing and promotion and this role and processes involved must be clearly brought out to the artists.
- Music marketing is an essential component necessary for artists to embrace as this will enable their music to get to the public domain.
- There is a need to ensure that there is a strong relationship between musicians and the media.

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Miss Sithokozile Sibanda. "Music Marketing and Promotion on Mainstream Radio." *The International Journal of Engineering and Science (IJES)*, 10(09), (2021): pp. 13-16.