

The Norwegian Music Export Business

A case study on the digital recorded music industry in Bergen

SYNNE LOKØEN STORMOEN

SUPERVISOR

Daniel Nordgård

University of Agder, 2022

Faculty of Fine Arts

Department of Popular Music

Abstract

This study seeks to discover the Norwegian music export business where the digital recorded music industry in Bergen will be explored. It seeks to understand the current issues in today's music industry where it examines how digitalization have affected the export and marketing strategies for artists, gatekeepers and other stakeholders within the industry.

Based on in-depth interviews with informants from the industry in Bergen, the aim of this study is to demonstrate how the music export business can be understood by conducting a case study of Bergen, in particular with a perspective on the digital recorded music industry in the city. It seeks to discover which valuable position the music industry of Bergen signifies for Norway's culture and how export of music from Bergen can contribute in strengthening the nation's identity within international markets. Additionally, the research examines how the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic affected the business actors, and in which ways it has affected their central strategies for export activities.

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1. Introduction

Through the last decades, the global societies have experienced technological developments affecting the ways in which we listen to music. ‘Digital technology is transforming the global music market’ Krueger states (2020, p. 231). When the music market is constantly introduced for and disrupted by new technologies, it remains an everlasting circle of issues concerning how different stakeholders within the music industry will react to and implement the digital technology into the world of music distribution.

Longhurst & Bogdanovic (2014, p. 216) highlights that until recently, the recorded music has been available for the global societies in five main formats: compact discs (CDs), LPs, cassettes, singles and music videos. One of the key features of the technological developments the music industry has had to adjust to in a high degree, have been the emergence and rise of music streaming services. Longhurst & Bogdanovic further describe that the introduction of the digital format, downloading, streaming and listening to music on mobile devices such as smart phones, have all had a significant impact on trends in consumption (2014, p. 216). To exemplify, statistics from International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), illustrate that in 2020, Norway generated a revenue for 1.075 billion NOK for recorded music, whereas digital music sales and streaming alone constituted approximately 1 billion of these money¹. In the Norwegian music economy, recorded music equals digital music and particularly streaming.

Since the introduction of music streaming services in the turn of the century, digitalization has created opportunities for artists worldwide to reach international markets and gain an even vaster audience. Because in today’s global music market, music can be exported all over the world due to the globalizing effect of the streaming services. When providing more attention to artists from different markets in different countries, this will likely reflect in affecting the music economy of a country, additionally to their status within the international music market. As a matter of fact, the Arts Council of Norway has reported that Norwegian artists’ concerts abroad have resulted in great revenue for the Norwegian music industry (Valecillos, 2020). Simultaneously, Valecillos highlights that the international successes that represents the highest share of revenue from abroad, are artists from the city of Bergen. In this connection, she emphasizes the organization Music Norway, a foundation operated by the Ministry of Culture that works with exporting and promoting Norwegian music (2020). At the

¹ <https://ifpi.no/musikkaret2020/>

same time, she states that even though the biggest international artists mentioned above comes from Bergen, Music Norway does not have locals in this city. They are only based in the capital Oslo, in addition to London and Berlin. It is in this context, the CEO of the organization Brak, which is a competence centre for musicians in the Western region of Norway, states that ‘this is not good enough’ (qtd. in Valecillos, 2020). Therefore, he now requests Music Norway to provide Bergen with their own local department.

Furthermore, he argues that international successes from Bergen inspire new talents to think internationally from day one. He claims that Music Norway obtain a chain of resources that aid to assist record labels, management, bookings agents and artists when they are investing internationally (qtd. in Valecillos, 2020). In other words, this can be understood whereas the establishment of a local department in Bergen will increase more talents and improve the Norwegian repertoire in a higher degree in the international markets. Simultaneously, it may be relevant to question why the local music industry in Bergen finds it important to establish a Music Norway department in the city at this point. And of which significance the establishment can create more opportunities for the artists based in the city. We may question how an eventual department can contribute to further promoting and exporting of artists to international markets, and if the establishment can increase the digital knowledge of the stakeholders. These thoughts around Music Norway in Bergen have formed the basis of the study and the motivation for investigating the music export business.

1.1 Motivation

For the past years, I have been working within the live music industry, especially involved with festivals, in Bergen. Additionally, I had an engagement with the organization mentioned earlier, Brak, as responsible for communications and their social media channels. Because of these experiences, I have had opportunities to get to know and learn about the different competent stakeholders in the local industry of the city. Moreover, I have always been fascinated with the music industry in Bergen. The business actors within the industry, have been included in creating some of Norway’s most significant artists, creating a large amount of festivals within different genres and made music into one of the most culturally notable characteristics of the city. Additionally, it would seem like everyone knows each other across every sector within the industry. They all seem open to exchange their different experiences from different sectors, and we may believe that this increases the general knowledge of actors within the industry.

Simultaneously, in order to obtain even more knowledge, I moved to Kristiansand to begin my master's degree in Music Business & Management in the late summer of 2020. When moving to a new city, I was quickly involved in an independent record label with two of my fellow students. In Parajam Records, my experience as A&R (artist and repertoire) and Marketing Manager have developed my interests and engagement in connection with promotion of artists. Additionally, in April 2022 I started working with the record label GEMS based in Bergen, engaged with similar activities as in Parajam.

While working with these two labels, I have gained more attention towards the opportunities and challenges artists and independent labels have in a growing marketplace. Because of the digitalization we have experienced since the turn of the century, we may interpret that it is easier than ever to become an artist. It will be described how digitalization has blurred the traditional intermediaries, where artists are no longer dependent on signing with a record label in order to break through. In theory, they can achieve this on their own. On the other hand, it may be more difficult to break through due to a large competition with many artists in the same position. In this context, we may ask how it is possible to stand out in such a marketplace, and which resources one can use in order to do so. All these issues bring together opportunities and challenges that are interesting to address and discuss, in order to plan for creative strategies with the aim of success.

Connecting the marketing experiences in the record labels with the experiences in the local music industry in Bergen, I will explore how the gatekeepers, intermediaries and artists in the industry in Bergen contribute to create even more international successes by promoting and exporting Norwegian music globally. Hence, the result of previous experiences and an interest for exploring the challenges and opportunities concerning promotion of digital music, have formed the basis of the thesis when formulating the research question for this case study.

1.2 Research Question

In connection with Bergen and their success of creating some of the most successful international artists in Norway, we may understand this local industry as a proactive department filled with skilled business professionals that contribute in a high degree to promote the Norwegian repertoire abroad to global markets. This creates an interest for investigating their knowledge and digital experiences with music export. In the introduction, I

highlighted how within Norwegian music economy, recorded music equals digital music and particularly streaming. Thereby, the Norwegian music market can be observed as a digital market, and will be understood as such through this thesis. Hence, the digital music industry is the field in focus. There is some research and literature which investigates export within the music industries, where the researchers certainly provide excellent theoretical background and framework for this thesis. Although, considering the constant speed of technological developments which disrupts the digitalization within the music industries, a great extent of evolutions and happenings have occurred within the music markets and digital media platforms since the earlier research were conducted.

For instance, a highly relevant incident occurred in 2020, which must be taken into consideration when investigating the evolution of digital music media over the last two years. In the winter of 2020, a global pandemic emerged due to the spread of the virus Covid-19. The pandemic has affected countries and their societies all over the world, where countries have experienced constant restrictions implemented to attempt reductions of spreading the virus. In connection with the global music market, music industries were highly affected by the pandemic. The artists' tours, concerts and festivals were cancelled, and the noisy live music industry stood silent. Over the last decades, revenue from live music performances have become the most central source of income for artists to gather revenue. As a matter of fact, this can be expressed by observing ticket sales. Krueger (2020, p. 19) describes that the average price of a concert ticket has increased with more than 400 per cent from 1981 to 2018. In other words, we may envision that cancelling of events within the live industry and loss of income for artists will create a chain of challenges for the music economy.

In connection with digital technologies then, I would argue that these are central for the different sectors within the music industry to take usage of when society stood still. We may understand that the most important aim for the world of music, is to continue to spread music. In other words, the pandemic and its limitations have forced the music business professionals to take usage of digital music media in an even higher degree to export music. Therefore, I would argue that it is relevant to provide a case study-based research of these topics with consideration to the developments and happenings within digital music and media that have occurred during the last years. All these thoughts have formed the basis of the study,

and it is central to include situations that occur around the topic of study when writing the thesis.

Hence, one main research question has been established in this thesis to examine the music industry of Bergen and export of music. The following question:

How can the music export business be understood by studying Bergen and their promotion of Norwegian music to international markets?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in six chapters. As already demonstrated in Chapter 1, the topics of the thesis, in addition to the relevance of the topic, were introduced. Moreover, the research question was presented. In Chapter 2, relevant theory will be presented in order to set a theoretical background of the topic but also to establish a framework for the thesis. In Chapter 3, the methodology applied in the study will be presented, where the design of the research methods will be described, additionally ethical considerations concerning the interviews will be elaborated, in addition to presenting the interview guide. Furthermore, Chapter 4 will present the findings from the research method, where interviews with business actors will elaborate on the topic of the thesis. In Chapter 5, the findings will be discussed in where the theoretical framework demonstrated in Chapter 2 will be taken into consideration to conduct well founded arguments. Finally, Chapter 6 presents a conclusion where main findings will be summarized and main points concerning the research question will be emphasized.

2. Theoretical Background & Framework

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework of the thesis by presenting relevant theories concerned with the object of study and the disciplinary field. The theories presented in the chapter seeks to highlight both historical point of views in addition to current situations, in order to provide a broader image of the development leading to current market situations and alterations. These theories will create the basis for analyzing and discussing the findings from the in-depth interviews. Primarily, the theoretical background will be emphasized on sociological theories and point of views. The reason for this, is to take usage of these sociological frameworks when exploring the research question. As a matter of fact, Nordgård (2018, p. 103) argues that a part of the concept on the music industries' internal dynamics, must be understood in a macro perspective, and as an inherent feature of the field.

As earlier mentioned, considering that the Covid-19 pandemic has been affecting societies' economy, welfare, culture and social life, it would then perhaps be reasonable to argue that it is central to discuss and analyze digital music industry and export business in the light of what is happening in the society on a macro-level. In the following subchapter, these sociological frameworks will be implemented when observing and highlighting how Spilker (2018) understands the sociology of music in digital environments. But firstly, some general definitions of the music industry will be presented to provide an understanding of the current industry dynamics.

2.1 Defining the Music Industry

There are several ways in which theorists have provided definitions and descriptions of the music industry. For instance, Wikström (2020) focus on digitalization and its effects in the music industries, where his main point is that he argues that music has become 'in the Cloud'. This statement may be referring to how music has been transferred to digital devices, whereas mobile Internet offers the possibility to take usage of streaming services to listen to music anywhere at any given time. His point of views regarding the digitized industry we have today, seems to create the foundation of his way of defining the industry. Hence, he presents the following definition: 'the music industry consists of those organizations concerned with developing musical content and personalities which can be communicated across multiple media' (2020, p. 52).

Observing this definition, it is possible to interpret that 'multiple media' refers to digital social media platforms. We may understand that Wikström's definition is based upon his

topic of research – the digitized music industry. Furthermore, the definition is broad and includes many different stakeholders, considering that he highlights that the industry consists of ‘those organizations concerned with developing musical content [...]’ (ibid). Organizations may then be understood in a wide context, and may perhaps include record labels, managers, booking agents, promotion agents, digital advisors or people working with social media.

Simultaneously, there are other theorists that presents definitions of the music industry in more traditional ways, referring to previous norms that existed in the industry in advance of digitalization. To exemplify, Tschmuck (2017) provides the basis of economics within the music industry, where he elaborates more broadly concerning the different sectors that builds the industry. In this connection, he argues that the industry may not only be understood in singular as ‘the music industry’, but in plural as ‘the music industries’. Hence, he argues that the industries consist of three closely linked sectors: the recording industry, the music publishing industry and the live music sector. He argues that these three sectors follow different production, distribution and consumption logics (2017, p. 2).

Even though these sectors differ with regards to the mentioned logics, Tschmuck claims that they are closely linked. To exemplify, he states that a recorded music company usually unites a recording and music publishing branch, since the former relies on the copyrights of the latter. He claims that the concert business is not just the most important revenue source for musicians, but it also helps to sell recorded music (ibid). It is observed how the sectors are linked, and we may interpret that they all contribute in sharing the equal aim, as Wikström stated: ‘[...] developing musical content and personalities which can be communicated across multiple media’ (2020, p. 52).

The two different definitions and observations have been presented which both provide a broad picture of what the music industry contain. Combining these two definitions of Wikström and Tschmuck, the term ‘music industries’ will be taken usage of through this thesis, in addition to elaborating and discussing how digitalization have affected the sectors within. The purpose of doing so, is to provide a relevant framework of direction before focusing on the music export business. In advance, digitalization and its effects within the music industries will be described and discussed in the following subchapter.

2.2 The Evolution of Digitized Networks in the Music Industries

In Spilker's text, he approaches changes in the digital music media landscape from a sociological point of view (2018) as mentioned. He describes that the emergence of networked digital technologies has opened up the possibilities for radical changes in the ways in which we produce, distribute, consume and otherwise relate to music (2018, p. 2).

Simultaneously, he highlights that he does not approach them primarily as a sociologist of music, but as a sociologist of new media (p. 3). This may signify that he perceives the changes happening in the music industries in a broader image, perhaps on a macro-level. In other words, the changes must then possibly be seen in the light of media changes happening in the rest of the society, which may create a chain of disruptions affecting those sectors that take usage of new media in a high degree.

As a matter of fact, this macro-level point of view is observed in his introduction where he highlights how architecture, laws, markets, norms, literacy and interests are important contributors within the society that fold the digital music landscape. Likewise, he further emphasizes that all these contributors interact with and reinforce each other. He argues that this is the reason for why the development of digital music technologies should be studied as an on-going, not finished process, and hence should be studied as a multi-sited process (Spilker, 2018, p. 8).

Spilker's arguments indicate that due to the constant evolution of digital technologies in the music media, this must then be observed as an on-going process. In the next subchapter, some historical perspectives will be presented in order to provide descriptions and reflections concerning how the music industries have developed since the turn of the century.

2.3 Historical Perspectives of Digitalization in the Recorded Music Industry

In the introduction, the central position of the live music sector in today's society was shortly highlighted. Historically, Wikström (2020, p. 142) elaborates that live music have primarily been considered as a means to promote the industry's most important product – the recording. On the other hand, the balance between live music and recorded music has shifted in the 21st century music economy, and as mentioned, revenue from live music have increased.

Wikström proposes explanations for the growth of the live music sector. As mentioned, the average price of concert tickets has increased, secondly, more artists are giving more concerts,

which have caused the number of shows to multiply (p. 142). Other possible explanations will be returned to later.

As the growth of live music has continued, the fall of revenue for recorded music continues; Wikström describes that global revenue from recorded music have been declining during fifteen years, starting in 2000. As a matter of fact, he highlights that several recorded music markets reported sales during this period diminishing by more than 50 per cent from the peak in 2000. The fifteen years that followed were disruptive and extremely difficult for the recorded industry, Wikström explains, where the decline did not end until 2015 when revenue from new online music finally were able to reverse the trend (2020, p. 102-103). Wikström explains how the industries underestimated the threat from the new technologies, where the response was followed by phases where the industries fought to make the Internet go away, followed by a disappointed resignation to the fact that it would not go away (p. 103). This can be connected to Spilker's argument that the digital music technologies should be considered as an on-going process, where fighting against it is not going to prevent the process from proceeding.

Furthermore, it was emphasized how the loss of revenue from recorded music is a possible explanation to the increase in the number of live events. As Wikström argues, a live music experience is difficult to digitize, and is therefore considerably easier to control compared to those areas of the industry that have been affected more profoundly by digital technologies (2020, p. 143). He proposes that a more plausible explanation is related to the performers and their demand for higher guaranteed payment levels. He understands the performers' push for higher guarantees, considering the falling revenues from recorded music. By increasing the guarantees, and consequently the ticket prices, he suggests that it is possible, at least to some extent, to compensate for the reduced income from recorded music (p. 142-143).

Eventually, Wikström presents that the revenue from access-based streaming music services such as Spotify, Deezer and Apple Music were able to bring back hope and growth to the recorded music economy (2020, p. 103). He describes that access-based music services have been successful because they have been able to make music 'feel like it is free', even though a substantial amount of the users is paying a monthly fee for their subscriptions (p. 189).

On the other hand, Nordgård (2018) observes dialogues between music business professionals where they express a general concern around the 'feels like free' model, relating to a fear

where it devalues recorded music's economic value, but also its cultural status, the position of music as a piece of art (p. 58-59). This illustrates how freemium affects both economic and social values, where it may be interpreted that music is not getting the same acknowledgement as before the streaming era, when consumers physically bought music, such as a CD or vinyl. Nevertheless, Nordgård argues that the freemium model builds upon a dependency on external industries and companies, and on economic models that are different today than previously. He refers to future models relying on new logics and values from big tech companies such as Google or Apple (p. 58). His observations concern how traditional models in the music industry are almost obsolete due to new economic models forged by external companies.

Even though Nordgård observed that the industry professionals expressed a concern of the 'feels like free' model, they also expressed a certain consent that the model has economic potential (p. 58). This gives the impression that the new models are gradually obtaining more acceptance within the industry and that the professionals thereby have gained more optimism for them. Perhaps it may be interpreted that they have received more acceptance because of the tech companies' constant evolution of technological developments. As a matter of fact, Gordon (2015, p. 226) highlights this acceptance when discussing the 'feels like free' phenomenon. He claims that 'since "free" unauthorized music is not really free – you need to pay for a computer, tablet, smartphone, or other device to trade copyrighted music, as well as high-speed Internet connection'. In this connection, Chen et al (2021, p. 5) emphasize that music can be understood as a cultural form of leading consumers to new digital technologies, with music consumption then as a secondary consideration. They describe that this has been accompanied by the presence of new global companies such as Amazon, Google, Apple, Spotify, that are significant for their distributional power (ibid).

As a result, Nordgård (2018, p. 42) emphasize that while technology and music always have had a long-established symbiosis, the nature of this relationship then seems to have changed. Whereas the old tech companies merged with content producers, vertically integrating their businesses, we now have a different landscape with the tech companies operating from distance. This gives the impression that even though the tech companies are introducing and affecting the music industries with new technologies, they may perhaps have a more cooperate collaboration. It may be understood that they have led to this collaboration with an aim to generate more consumers. As highlighted by Gordon (2015) and Chen et al (2021),

you need to pay for a digital device in order to listen to music through high-speed Internet connection, which makes it profitable for both parts.

It can perhaps be argued that this collaboration can be connected to the term ‘disruptive innovation’. Nordgård (2018, p. 40) defines disruptive technology/innovation as technological progress that leads to innovation and market alterations. The tech companies may be understood as disruptive innovations for the music industries, whereas they lead to innovative changes for market economics and dynamics within the industries. Concerning the streaming services, such as the most popular tech giant Spotify, Spilker (2018, p. 30) argues that the turn to streaming services represented a shift in industrial strategies, where the services hold the promise for letting the music industry regain some control over its products and revenue streams. This signifies again how the tech companies and music industries cooperate in the aim of market alterations, and that the industry have had to adapt to the collaborations in the sense of changing their strategies.

In this connection, it may be relevant to emphasize how these changes in strategies and market alterations within the music industries have disrupted traditional structures in the sectors. To exemplify, in Hughes et al (2016) they elaborate on how digitalization has evolved the music industries into a ‘new’ industry, where they observe and highlight how the digitized platforms create opportunities and challenges for the industries. These opportunities and challenges will be elaborated later, in this context there will rather be highlighted how Hughes et al observes changes in traditional career development. This may be referring to the development of an artist’s network, since they describe it as ‘a process centered on discovery of the artist by an audience/fans that has the potential to stimulate interest from and through a range of industries’ (2016, p. 28). In the context of network, Gibson (qtd. in Chen et al, 2021, p. 92) claims that network is defined as ‘goal-directed behavior which occurs both inside and outside of an organization, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships’. Thereby, the relation and importance between artist and fan/audience and building network is highlighted and may perhaps be understood as a central aspect both in advance and during the age of digitalization in the new music industries.

Hughes et al argue that the industries have experienced a transition from a traditional linear model to a circular model (2016, p. 28). Watson (qtd. in Hughes et al, *ibid*) describes that the traditional linear model in following manner: ‘The artist would find a manager, and the manager would have relationships with the record company and the booking agent... And

those people would get you exposed through the venues, and through the media outlets and the audience would then shop from that menu'. We observe that this model highlights the role of the manager as a central link, connecting the artist with the rest of the industries in order to get them exposed.

On the contrary, the circular model illustrates how this process have changed. Watson (qtd. in Hughes et al, *ibid*) defines it in such manner: '[...] instead of it going -artist-industry person-industry person-industry person-fan. It now actually goes -artist-fan-industry-artist'. He further states that 'the artist is able to communicate directly with the fan, and then when the artist engages enough fans, all these other people go 'hey, there's something going on there, I think I can help grow that' [...] and everybody starts to come on board' (Watson, qtd. in Hughes et al, *ibid*). It may be interpreted that digitalization have led to this transition from traditional linear model to circular model. Within the circular model we experience today, it would seem like the artist does not have to depend on a manager or similar industrial person to expose themselves for an audience. We may argue that when observing how the music industries is structured now, this refers to the digital music industries. Due to the digital platforms arising from digitalization, these can perhaps function as channels for artists to communicate more directly with their fans or audience in general. The opportunities and challenges artists may have on the digital platforms will be returned to in Chapter 2.4.

Having established relevant theoretical background concerning the current issues within the digitalized music industries, the focus will be narrowed into theory concerning the topic of the thesis: export. In the following paragraphs, the export business in the music industries will be examined and explained, looking at how digitalization has led to opportunities and challenges in the world of export, and for artists aiming to reach internationally.

2.4 The Music Export Business

Chen et al (2021) examines the business of global music export, and further discuss challenges and opportunities new technologies have for export strategies and their effect on economics and policies for a country. When defining exports, they describe that it concerns goods or services produced in one country and sold to a customer in another country (2021, p. 26). Furthermore, they understand export figures to commonly assess the economic strength of a country. For instance, they describe that a trade surplus is beneficial in increasing a

country's foreign currency reserves and in creating employment for local workers in the exporting industries, as well as supporting industries that provide goods and services to the exporting industries (ibid).

Export may thereby be understood as a central aspect of a country's economic status in a global context. In the context of the music industries then, Chen et al describe that the industries have been similarly affected by the need to demonstrate economic value. Even though these industries are relatively small compared to other industries in most countries, Krueger (qtd. in Chen et al, 2021, p. 26) argues that the music industries importance is greater than might be suggested judging purely by its economic value. They then state that 'the strength of the music industry exports of a country is often seen as a key indicator of the importance of the national culture on a global stage' (ibid). Because of its key feature within a nation's culture, they claim that its cultural value far outweighs its economic value. Therefore, the balance between the economic and cultural value is one of the key issues for many nations in developing a national music export policy, they describe (2021, p. 62).

Chen et al further examine music export in the connection of defining what export mean in the music industries. Among other things, they highlight that it often involves products that refer to tangible items, which can be consumed, and services which refers to tasks provided by individuals or organizations. In this connection, they emphasize that most countries have traded exports of goods. In the context of the music industries, they claim that the definition of goods includes recorded music in the form of records and CDs (2021, p. 29). On the other hand, music listening is increasingly moving towards digital streaming and downloads provided by music service providers (ibid).

Sales of physical goods are hence becoming less important, but much more music is being traded as a service, in the form of provision through streaming or downloads, even though they are not defined as tangible goods, Chen et al claim (ibid).

When making a distinction between services and goods exports, they define that many services that are exported, never cross any physical boundaries. They exemplify that a local live music event is considered as engaging in export when foreign visitors pay to attend the event, even though the event is held locally. Additionally, a local musician may be engaging in export without leaving the country when a listener in another country pays to listen to a song on the Internet. They describe that such payments are difficult for government trade

agencies to track, making the collection of national and international trade statistics on music difficult (Chen et al, 2020, p. 30).

As a result, they state that there is a lack of comprehensive statistics of estimating the value of music exports in the music industries. They emphasize that comprehensive financial data for the global music industry do not exist, including data on music exports, and much information is private. Hence, they state that there are ‘few reliable studies of the size of music exports in a country for the reasons above’ (ibid, p. 31). As a matter of fact, there will be provided a description later of a recent study done by the Norwegian music export organization Music Norway in 2021, which focus on national and international trends in both the Norwegian and international market. By highlighting this research, the aim is to show how Norway have attempted to provide a reliable study of the size of music exports in the country. This will be returned to later.

Furthermore, Chen et al (2021, p. 53) emphasize the opportunities of digital market analysis when planning for export, where in the digital environment, accessing international markets from the outset is proving to be viable. They argue that digital streaming and downloads provide copyright owners with much more accurate and recent information on global sales, in addition to enabling new ways of reaching an audience. To exemplify, they mention that during interviews made for their research, one manager discussed how the ability to monitor sales in real-time has enabled more targeted marketing strategies in key export markets (ibid).

As a matter of fact, in the research of Chen et al (2021), digital marketing strategies seems to be highlighted as one of the most central and important aspects in the connection with the current state of the music export business. For instance, they believe that ‘increasingly complex digital technologies have various obvious implications for the music industries’ including what they call ‘datafication’ of listening (p. 6). In the connection of defining ‘datafication’, they describe that it represents new opportunities for artists, managers and record labels to better plan for emerging export opportunities, especially in tracking and analyzing new potential territories (2021, p. 6). In this context, these opportunities will be examined and discussed.

2.4.1 Digitalization and its Effects on Creating Opportunities for Export Strategies

In the context of export, Chen et al argue how it is crucial to be ‘born global’ if one is going to manage to reach international markets. When using this term, they describe that in a ‘born global’ culture, the potential to instantaneously access global markets and networks is crucial and can be expressed in many ways: via a digital presence, establishing international offices, international partners and constant travel (2021, p. 75). To be ‘born global’ then, they describe that to establish an international presence, a team will be responsible for the following: touring, defining a niche audience, digital marketing, social media tools, product identity, international networking at industry events, employing international booking agents and publicists, and follow-up travel for meetings (p. 74). Building a network and creating a presence on digital platforms stand out as important factors, which describes how digitalization has impacted the ways in which the digital music industries develop their export strategies.

As illustrated above, Chen et al express that the ability to network is an important skill. These networks can be defined by roles and relationships which can be contractual, professional, commercial or fan-based (2021, p. 92). In the context of accessing, building and expanding your network, there exists international music market events consisting of conferences, showcases and festivals. Chen et al describe that these industry events have long been seen as crucial in the development of export strategies, as the primary forums containing key stakeholders, gatekeepers and intermediaries, bringing people together into one space (p. 101). Furthermore, they define that a gatekeeper controls access to information within a network. They describe that a gatekeeper could be either management, journalists or social networks (p. 94). They additionally explain the gatekeeper is someone who controls and decides on value, while the intermediary is seen as someone who facilitates or creates value (p. 99).

Due to the Internet, they argue that the traditional approaches to gatekeeping are being revised to include new actors such as curators, bloggers, influencers and aggregators (p. 98). This expresses how the traditional gatekeepers are affected by actors connected to the social media platforms. Even though, it would seem like the traditional international music market events still represent a crucial strategy for the music industries in a digital era. However, it is clear that networking is a central factor for the artist in order to grow their network and their audience, and that social media can contribute to networking for artists, which was emphasized through the circular model explained by Watson (qtd. in Hughes et al, 2016).

As a matter of fact, Chen et al highlight that according to their research built on a survey consisting of artists and managers, social media is now the most used tool in music exports, but also the use of publicists, streaming and attending trade and showcase events (2021, p. 53). Publicists refer to a sector within the music industries which have not been elaborated broadly on so far through this thesis. As earlier signified by Tschmuck (2017), the industries consist of the recorded industry, live music sector, and finally then the publishing industry, which will be explained more in this context. 'The use of publicists' may refer to the ways in which publicists operate with the artist's copyright, perhaps with the aim of exposing them to larger markets. In this connection, Chen et al highlights that contemporary performing rights cover musical performances via radio and television broadcasts or the Internet (2021, p. 36). In connection of digitalization, they emphasize that a growing subtype of performance rights is synchronization (synch) rights, which concern music being used in a film, TV show or a commercial (ibid). This indicates that not only usage of social media tools on digital platforms and building a network are important, but distributing copyrighted work to the public for instance through a film or TV show, function as a good export strategy as well where artists may perhaps be exposed to a large audience.

They further explain that synchronization requires two licenses, one for the phonographic, which is the performance of the master recording, and one for the performance rights, which concerns the composer's royalty. Distribution rights concerns to authorize a copyright holder to distribute copies or recordings of a copyrighted work to the public, Chen et al defines (ibid). They explain that when music was recorded through physical media such as vinyl records or CDs, distribution rights were referring to the rights to distribute those recordings, and many specialist music distribution companies existed then to provide a service to distribute a record label's products to retailers. However, the decline in physical record sales have led to these companies being largely replaced by digital distribution companies, known as digital aggregators. Today, aggregators such as Tune Core and CD Baby distribute artists' music to digital music providers such as Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon (ibid).

Additionally, the social media platform TikTok, which may be understood as the largest platform today, are entering the music distribution business with a service called SoundOn (Stassen, 2022). Ole Obermann, who is TikTok's Global Head of Music describes that the aim is to make it easier for independent artists to get their music on TikTok, and that they are going to work with the artists to understand how to reach their audiences on the platform (qtd.

in Stassen, 2022). This indicates how social media platforms aim to cooperate more with the artists in order to provide possibilities for them to reach an audience.

As described in Chapter 2.3, digitalization may have resulted in the transition from the traditional linear model to the circular model for career development and building an artist's audience or fan base. Chen et al claim that in a digitized environment that is heavily reliant on fan interaction through the use of social media, career success involves a mixture of various factors (2021, p. 73). We may then understand that building a fan base and having great interactions with the fans, can contribute in creating success for the artist. As a matter of fact, Gordon (2015, p. 274) highlights the importance of creating a website in the connection with an artist's digital arsenal. He claims that the artist can use their website to administrate promotion, sales and distribution of their own music as either physical albums or downloads, sell merchandise, and promote live performances and tours.

Gordon argues that the creation of the website is essential for the artist for particularly three reasons: first, he states that even though having accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter also represents an important relevance of the artist's promotion, a well-developed website will make the artist's project look professional and easily searchable on engines such as Google. Second, the website allows artists to have full control over essential aspects of their online presence. Finally, it can function as a connected hub, linking to all other social networking accounts, which may add further credibility to their Internet presence (ibid). As a result, we observe that digitized platforms are present in the circular model, whereas it contributes in the interrelation of artist-fan.

In the connection with the circular model, it may be relevant to elaborate on how other traditional roles within the music industries have changed. For instance, an interviewee in the research of Chen et al, claims that a lot of managers are acting as labels in a global context, where the manager now is the one who operates the strategy and is using all of the intel in order to plan international global release (2021, p. 52). This disruption has led to that in some cases, with access to online fans, networks and new income streams like crowdfunding, some artists are choosing to bypass the traditional record companies altogether and distribute their music themselves, they describe (ibid). This expresses how the traditional linear model is gradually being replaced by a model where artist and managers stand out more dependent to operate the strategies for building an artist and exposing them to new markets and audiences.

We may then interpret that digitalization have led to more opportunities for music export strategies and to be creative with finding new online ways or promoting artists on digital platforms. On the other hand, there will be explored which challenges there are within the digitized export business.

2.4.2 Challenges in the Digitized Music Export Business

In the new digitized music industries, Chen et al argues that the ‘datafication’ requires industries and firms to be equipped with the means and knowledge to manage and exploit the precise information on offer across markets and platforms. The export strategies in the new digital music industries may then require specific knowledge about the digital tools one take usage of. It may be interpreted then that the Internet offers an ocean of tools, analytics, services which must be carefully chosen and used in specific manners to obtain success. But even though artists and music industrial actors use these digital tools, we may believe that the tools do not guarantee success. But as Gordon (2015) and Chen et al (2021) have argued, obtaining more knowledge about digital platforms and the tools, definitely provide an advantage in the connection with export strategies.

Furthermore, Chen et al explain that digital analytics play an essential role in helping managers determine where artists’ fan bases are located. Because of streaming’s reliance on access-based music services, the relationship between artists, managers, labels (major and indie) and audiences is in flux, they state. They further claim that ‘datafication’ is making managers rethink their relationship with labels and international fan development (2021, p. 78). In this context, they argue that the digital activities required to get one’s product global, is critical. Whereas fan development via co-creative experiences must be added to the music exporter’s digital tool kit as a crucial addition needed for a return on investment (p. 79). Here again, the importance of the artist-fan interrelation is emphasized.

It could perhaps seem like digitalization seems to put more pressure on artists. We may interpret that building constant interrelation with fans is forcing the artist to be present for their fans almost constantly. An interviewee in Chen et al states that ‘you need to be ready to export the moment that you start. You’re operating internationally from the moment you put a song online and to think otherwise is short-sighted’ (ibid). This signifies that due to the globalized world we live in today, where everything that occurs online can be sent and spread

immediately, the statement of the interviewee may connote that release of new music must be understood as a part of this globalized export process as well.

Likewise, due to the complexity of the music industry and its utilization of social media, streaming and technological innovation, 'music export readiness' cannot be prescriptive or limited to traditional definitions of export, Chen et al argue (2021, p. 79-80). Music export readiness may be understood as to which degree the artist has developed strategies for their career development. While access to data is now ubiquitous in a 'born global' world, they claim that the awareness of facilitation and management of that music export within a complex ecosystem, is transactions, analytics and many stakeholders (p. 80). This statement expresses how even though we have access to a large ocean of digital tools that can be provided to create export strategies, this ocean may be connoted as large and with endless alternatives to choose from, considering their usage of the word 'complex' in the statement.

Furthermore, Chen et al (2021, p. 43-44) elaborate on the barriers to foreign market entry for artists. They highlight that some indication of the challenges for artists competing in international markets, can be observed in the international music charts. Here, the Billboard Top 100 (US) and the Official UK Top 100 charts are emphasized as two of the best known. These are concerned with the popularity of songs and albums, and are ranked according to sales or streams. As a matter of fact, it is then discussed that it is immediately noticeable that there is a greater presence of home country artists (US) in the Billboard Top 100, compared with home country artists (UK) in the UK Official Charts (Chen et al, 2021, p. 45). It is further highlighted that this is consistent with the export figures at the country level showing the dominance of the US in music exports, and confirms the strong advantages held by US artists in international music export markets.

Another noticeable feature highlighted by them, is the relatively low number of appearances of artists from non-English speaking nations such as France and Germany, which are described to have relatively large domestic markets, confirming the importance of language in music exports (ibid). Their statement presents two challenges for new artists in the digital age: competition with US artists on charts, and language barriers. In the light of export, similar language then contributes to opening your music up for a larger international market. We may believe that creating music in your mother tongue or another language than English, may perhaps reduce your export possibilities of reaching global markets.

As a result, it is even more difficult to stand out. As a matter of fact, Chen et al highlight that in 2020, Soundcloud reported that while it has over 25 million creators, only 12 million of these creators get heard every month. These statistics illustrate that all the help from representation, channeling, marketing, influencing etc. is crucial. Being ‘born global’ is not enough, and they argue that an entrepreneurial perspective is necessary in order to cut through the overcrowded landscape (2021, p. 98). Later in this thesis, there will be presented interviews with some entrepreneurial music business actors that aims to illustrate how they have attempted to cut through the market landscape.

Through Chapter 2.4, the music export business has been explored and explained, and which opportunities and challenges there are for the export strategies in the light of digitalization have been discussed. Having established this theoretical foundation, the focus will be narrowed into the nation which is explored through this text: Norway.

2.5 Music Export in Norway

In the following subchapter, there will be presented some main findings and central points from the report *Trender i norsk og internasjonal musikkbransje: En kunnskapsoppsummering* (Trends in the Norwegian and International music business: summarizing knowledge) (Ryssevik et al, 2021). The aim with this is to provide an introduction to and framework of the Norwegian music export business, but also to illustrate the economic and cultural values concerning the Norwegian music industries.

Firstly, Ryssevik et al states that the opportunities to reach a global audience with their music have never been greater than at the beginning of the 2020s (p. 17). They et al also highlight that the digitalization of all processes in the connection of production and distribution of music, have made it easier for artists to operate themselves. In this context, they emphasize the changes in the music business chains to be of significance. Among other things, it concerns changing markets, new business models, changes in the habits and behaviors of the audiences, and a new structure of the industries (p. 10). For instance, independent actors and smaller labels now have the access to the same production technologies and the same channels for audiences as the large and established companies, where they have gained more control over copyrights and potential income, they describe.

Simultaneously, the increase in market share for independent artists and smaller independent record labels have been followed with an explosive growth of number of business actors within these segments. Although, the number of artists increase and there are released an enormous amount of new songs on streaming services every single day. Therefore, a bigger piece of the puzzle does not signify that it becomes easier to live of music for the majority of the new participants, because there are more people competing (p. 17). For the majority of independent artists then, the streaming services in themselves are not capable to secure a livelihood for the artists without other sources of income. As a result, Ryssevik et al states that the democratization of access to the music markets have given more young musicians the opportunity to fulfill their dreams of creating music for a global audience, but not to live and make a livelihood of this dream. They state this issue as ‘the paradox of small’ (2021, p. 18).

In this connection, Ryssevik et al illustrate the discussions of the issues with the business models of the streaming services. To exemplify, Eriksson et al (2019) study the business model behind Spotify in their text. As a matter of fact, they present that there are widespread problematic claims about how much money Spotify generates for artists (p. 38). In this connection, Ryssevik et al explain that many of the services, including Spotify, take usage of a pro-rata model (2021, p. 24). Maasø (2014) presents a report on the distribution of income from music streaming in Norway, where he discusses the issues concerning business models, especially the pro-rata model, and argues for some possible solutions to the challenges. In the connection of the pro-rata model, he defines that within such a model, the money no longer went directly from one subscriber to the artist the listener had streamed. Instead, all subscription fees are divided by the collected streams from all users (p. 4). This definition may perhaps be understood as uneven and can seem unbalanced, considering that we may interpret that this model favors the bigger artist instead of smaller niche artists, which is confirmed and argued by Maasø who highlights that they would struggle as it takes time to generate income from streaming (p. 3).

As an alternative to this, many have favored a so-called user-centric model, which is also proposed by Maasø. Within this model, he explains that each individual stream will not be worth the same (as is the case in today’s pro rata model), but rather the streams per user each month will decide how much each stream will be worth (p. 5). He explains that the main difference between these two models is that the user-centric treats each individual paying subscriber the same, and that a share of each user’s contribution goes directly to the artists

this user is listening to (via the label), no matter how much other users listen, or which artists other users are listening to. As a matter of fact, he states that it then resembles the model in the era of physical sales (p. 5). This expresses how the user-centric model may appear as a more balanced solution to generate fair income for artists based on the streaming numbers.

The model, which is among others used by SoundCloud, is often emphasized as a more fair model, especially for the smaller artists (Ryssevik et al, 2021, p. 24). Ryssevik et al explain that there has been made several attempts to calculate which effects a full transition to a user-centric model would lead to. Some research, among others based on Norwegian data, suggested that local artists with a large domestic share, for instance Norwegian artists in Norway, would be able to profit from a user-centric model. On the other hand, they emphasize that other studies have claimed that the biggest stars and the biggest record labels would be able to lose something in the benefit of the smaller artists. Another point is that artists who are popular in audience segments that consume a lot of music, will be able to perform somewhat worse in a user-centric system than with today's pro-rata model. However, they state that what most people seem to agree on, is that the effects of a change will not be great. The transition to user-centric payment is not a quick fix, and will have a dramatic effect on the revenue situation of the majority of musicians, they argue (ibid).

Considering that this issue seems like a situation that will have serious consequences for many different business actors within several chains in the music industries, we may interpret that more calculating and research needs to be done in advance. In the meantime, then, social media platforms are highlighted as an important way of exposing artists and their music. Ryssevik et al (2021, p. 20) emphasize that in the role as a promoting channel, the social medias do not function as a source of income in itself for the music industries, but is a measure that can draw the attention towards the actors digital presence for more income-generating arenas, such as live and streaming. It may be possible to interpret that the importance of building your digital presence is crucial because it may contribute to give the artist more attention.

Now that some current issues within the Norwegian industries have been explained and discussed, some key features of the music export economics will be elaborated. The flow of money in the international music market are constantly changing and have not become less complex in recent years, Ryssevik et al claim (2021, p. 36). Established methods for

documenting the extent of music exports are therefore quickly outdated and deficient. For instance, it is highlighted that the numbers for Norwegian music exports are relatively modest (334 MNOK in 2019 and 255 MNOK in 2020). These numbers are presented even though it is highlighted that many Norwegian artists and creators such as Kygo, Alan Walker, Aurora, Astrid S, boy pablo, Cashmere Cat, Girl in Red, Ina Wroldsen and Lise Davidsen, have marked themselves in the international music market. Hence, there has been discussed in which degree these numbers for export are accurate and valid (ibid).

The figure below illustrates export income from the three different sectors within the industries: recorded music industry, concerts from the live music sector, and publishing industry:



(Obtained from Ryssevik et al, 2021, p. 50)

As earlier mentioned, the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020, have affected the revenue streams within the export business. Considering that the numbers of recorded music have not fallen drastically, this may be because people have continued to consume music when other opportunities to enjoy music were removed due to lockdowns. Therefore, it is not surprising that the numbers of concerts have fallen so drastically. A closed society with harsh measures in order to reduce the risk of spreading the virus, affected the live industry in severe manners.

As a result, Ryssevik et al describes how artists arranged streaming concerts and live performances from their home. They needed to do something for the replacement of cancelled concert, while the audience needed an arena to show that they cared for the musical life of the musicians (2021, p. 22)

In Norway, Ryssevik et al describe that concert series such as ‘Brakkesyke’ and ‘Koronarulling’ were quickly established to secure that the audience could pay a small amount for this offer. This kind of initiative occurred in most counties all over the globe. Ryssevik et al emphasize that according to Music:Ally, there were arranged minimum 60 000 online concerts with approximately 20 000 artists from March 2020 and throughout the year. The interest and attention towards online concerts increased. The offer became gradually more professionalized with larger and more expensive productions, with better sound qualities. Tech companies got involved, and more new platforms were suddenly created. The concerts were no longer something that were streamed from the artists’ Facebook-page, but in integrated solutions with optimal sound and video quality, ticketing, promotion, chat, meet-and-greet and other social functions (2021, p. 23).

Moreover, the figure presented of the export income, illustrates how the numbers for rights in the publishing industry are the only that has experienced an increase. As earlier defined and explained, synchronization rights may be a reason for this increase. Even though the pandemic has resulted in lockdowns in countries all over the world, using music in films or TV shows are still possible to carry through in a closed society.

As a matter of fact, it would seem like there is a growing interest for this topic. For instance, the Oslo-based industrial By:Larm, announced that they would host seminars specifically focusing on synchronization, where they highlight how the TV and film industry have had an enormous growth in the entire world. This is being more recognized and acknowledged by the music industries, especially after two years of lockdowns resulted in preventing the live industry for functioning (By:Larm, 2022). They argue that this have resulted in a new relevance for the field of synch, and considering that Oslo and By:Larm implement this topic when creating their festival lineup, this may perhaps give the impression that Norway is affected by the international trends in the music industries.

Furthermore, Ryssevik et al highlight that there has been claimed that the intermediaries and support surrounding the artists are too weakly developed in Norway. Apparently then, many artists use foreign-registered companies to manage their rights and artistic activities. The work to promote Norwegian music exports is therefore not just about networking and marketing, but just as much about ensuring that Norwegian rights remain in Norwegian hands, and that strong intermediaries are built that can contribute to the management of these rights (2021, p. 37). There seems like there is a need for more professionalized structures

within the industries. In the light of the pandemic, this may grow into a larger challenge, considering that Norway may then have to deal with building the industries again after years of lockdown, while experiencing an industry in change and focus on strengthening the structures. These issues express how the Norwegian business actors may need to be more solution-oriented and proactive than ever before.

In Chapter 2.5, current issues within the Norwegian music export business have been examined and described. This section also represents the final termination in Chapter 2 concerning the theoretical background and framework for this thesis. During this chapter, relevant current issues within the digital music industries in general have been demonstrated, where the disruptive effects of digitalization have been especially emphasized. As described and discussed, digital platforms have led to both opportunities and challenges within the music export business. In Chapter 4, this will be explored through the findings from interviews with business actors. But firstly, Chapter 3 will be presented which demonstrates the methodological basis for this study, and how methods have been approached and used.

3. Methodology

In advance of demonstrating the methodological concerns of this thesis, I would firstly like to return to some statements presented in the introduction. Since this thesis concerns a case study of the music industries in Bergen, where the intention is to examine how music export can be understood by studying the second largest city in Norway, it may be relevant to ask: why Bergen? What makes Bergen a relevant object to study? As mentioned in the introduction, many of the largest international successes in Norway, are artists from or based in Bergen (Valecillos, 2020). As a matter of fact, it would seem like these successes have been made from Bergen through several decades. For instance, Lønningen (2019) present the term ‘Bergensbølgen’ (translated to the Bergen Wave). Løland (2022) defines the Bergen Wave as a term for flows of popular music arising from the Bergen area. Lønningen further explains that music business actors in the city used the term when the music scenes in Bergen had an upswing in the beginning of the 1990’s. He describes that the Wave quickly developed into an ocean, an ocean that keeps growing and giving. And the musicians that paved the way are still releasing music that is worth listening to (Lønningen, 2019). The fact that the city has established its own characteristic with Waves of musicians emerging, gives the impression that there are interesting objectives concerning the music industries in Bergen that may be relevant to investigate and study further.

Likewise, these characteristics are being acknowledged repeatedly through media for new up-and-coming artists as well. For instance, a music reviewer made a review of an artist based in Bergen and stated that she ‘[...] continues to be one of these in Bergen that drinks another drinking water then us other’ (Bøe, 2022). In this connection, Bøe’s humoristic statement creates the impression that the musicians based in Bergen are something special and distinctive than the rest of Norway. Another up-and-coming artist appraise the environment in the city, and states that ‘the music environment in Bergen is incredibly including. The people here are really supportive’ (qtd. in Brusdal, 2022). As a result, the different descriptions express that the music industries in Bergen obtain something special which stand out in the Norwegian market. Their success with the Waves and exporting music to international markets, make it relevant to study through research.

3.1 A Case Study Approach including Qualitative Methodology

This chapter will as mentioned elaborate on the methodological approach that has been used to investigate the topic and address the research question.

First of all, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, literature research has been implemented in order to establish a theoretical background of the topics presented. Denscombe defines documentary research as a kind of social enquiry that uses documents as its source of data. It treats documents as a source of primary data, and these can involve books, articles, reports etc. (2014, p. 225). Literature research may be understood as a significant introduction to every research and can connote a starting point of the study. It establishes the foundation of obtaining general knowledge of the field one is researching and the main themes that are surrounding it. As we saw in Chapter 2, there has been done much research on the music business in general, but also from different point of views. Such as sociological; looking at interrelations, changes in dynamics and foundational values, or economical; looking at how physical and digital sales affects the economy, how streaming is growing and the business models behind the firms.

Meanwhile, I have chosen to address a case study approach that aims to combine these two views, whereas this study aims to provide a case that represents sociological and economical themes in connection with music export business. Denscombe (2014, p. 54) explains that case studies focus on one instance of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance. By studying Bergen as a case, this aims to in-depth descriptions of the experiences of the business actors within the industries. Denscombe describes that case studies pay attention to relationships and social processes within social settings, focusing on what goes on in the setting and explaining why those things occur. He then claims that the real value of a case study is that it offers the opportunity to go into sufficient details to unravel the complexities of certain situations (2014, p. 55).

As a matter of fact, Denscombe argues that the case study approach allows the researcher to use a variety of types of data and methods (p. 55), and in this connection qualitative methodology will be used with the aim of unraveling details from the music industries in Bergen. Denscombe describes that qualitative data take the form of words (spoken or written) and visual images (observed or creatively produced) (p. 276). In this context, he emphasizes interview as a type of qualitative data.

For the study in this thesis, interviews have been implemented as a source to gather data. Denscombe states that in the context of low-budget small-scale research, the time and effort put into conducting interviews are best rewarded when the research wants to explore complex and subtle phenomena, this such as opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, where the aim of the research is to understand them in depth rather than to report them in a simple word or two (p. 186). He also highlights that the interview may offer privileged information, where the opportunity arises to speak with key players in the field who can give particularly valuable insights and wisdom based on their experience or position (ibid). Due to the research question presented in this thesis '*How can the music export business be understood by studying Bergen and their promotion of Norwegian music to international markets?*', it may be possible to interpret that in order to find answers to this question, qualitative methodology involving in-depth interviews can perhaps function as the most suitable method when studying Bergen as a case.

3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

When the planning and organizing of the interviews were executed, I quickly realized that they should be structured as semi-structured interviews. Denscombe (2014, p. 186) defines that with this type of interview, the interviewer does have a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered. At the same time, the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, whereas the interviewee is let to develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. He states that the answers are open-ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest (ibid). Semi-structured interviews may therefore be understood as a chance for the interviewee to address current issues and thoughts in a wider context, where it opens for an empirical framework that can extent broader than the questions the interviewer had prepared.

Semi-structured interviews will therefore be adopted through this case study, where the aim of organizing them as such is to address issues and questions prepared in relation to this thesis and the research question, in addition to let the interviewee have the possibility to freely speak more broadly. By doing so, the interviewer has the opportunity to ask follow-up questions spontaneously, and may gather valuable data they had not planned for. In the following section, some strength and challenges with this type of interview will be demonstrated.

3.2.1 Strengths and Challenges with the Interviews

First of all, some strengths regarding this type of interview will be described.

Denscombe argues that interviews are particularly good at producing data which deal with topics in depth and in detail. Followed over a relatively long period, subjects and issues can be investigated thoroughly (2014, p. 201). Likewise, the informants have the opportunity to expand their ideas, explain their views and perhaps identify what they regard as the crucial factors (p. 202). He highlights that the researcher then is likely to gain valuable insights based on this depth of the information gathered and the wisdom of key informants. Furthermore, he emphasizes how interviews require simple equipment, one only needs a digital recorder, computer and online connection (p. 201).

Concerning face-to-face interviews, which will be used in this research, Denscombe states that direct contact at the point of the interview means that data can be checked for accuracy and relevance as they are collected (p. 202). This concerns validity of the data, which will be explained more in Chapter 3.2.2.

On the contrary, Denscombe highlights some challenges regarding interviews. In the context of validity of data, he argues that there are challenges regarding this in addition to the strengths mentioned. He explains that the data from interviews are based on what people say rather than what they do, whereas what people say they do, prefer and think about something cannot automatically be assumed to reflect the truth (ibid). This expresses how validity is an issue within interviews, where we cannot know what the truth is based on what the interviewee says, even though it can be checked through relevance and accuracy.

Furthermore, he explains that interviewing can actually be considered as an invasion of privacy and/or upsetting for the informant. He argues that while interviews can be enjoyable, it can invade the personal element of being interviewed, which then carries its own kinds of dangers as well (p. 203). We may interpret that it is then important that the researcher, the one who initiates the interview, informs the interviewee of the ethical boundaries. These boundaries may involve how the researcher administer the interviewee's personal information during the research, but also after. Additionally, it can involve information about the interviewee's right to get insights and do changes in the context of their statements.

Having established some descriptions of the strengths and challenges with the interviews, there will demonstrated for the ethical considerations in connection with them.

3.2.2 Ethical Considerations

In the connection of qualitative research, Kvale presents central terms within this methodology which he argues are necessary to take into consideration when interpreting the research (1996, p. 229). The following terms are generalization, reliability and validity. The last term was lightly explained in Chapter 3.2.1, where it was highlighted how it may be challenging to interpret if what the interviewee says represents the truth or not. In terminological terms, Kvale defines that validity refers to truth and correctness of a statement, hence confirmability (p. 236). Furthermore, generalization involves a reasoned evaluation where the findings from a study can be used as a guide to what may occur in another case (p. 233). Finally, reliability concerns to how reliable the research findings are, in other words, credibility (p. 235).

It may be understood that these ethical considerations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the research. In the context of generalization, we may perceive that considering the fact that this research is a case study of something specific, it can perhaps be difficult to envision that something that occurs in this study, can occur in another case. As emphasized through this thesis, an important aim is to discover which underlying sociological and economical values the different actors within the industries of Bergen carry when promoting and exporting Norwegian music to international markets. Therefore, the findings concerning these values, can perhaps be understood as subjective thoughts that cannot be used as a guide in another case. For instance, if one conducts a case study of Oslo, involving the similar topic and themes as in this study but with a focus on this city instead, we may argue that the findings of that study would be different from the findings in this thesis.

In the context of validity, it may be challenging to know and confirm if the statements of the interviewee's are correct and referring to the truth. In the context of the challenges with semi-structured interviews, Denscombe (2014, p. 203) claims that consistency is hard to achieve, whereas the data that are collected are somewhat affected by the specific context and the specific individuals involved. For instance, we may believe that if the individual has strong opinions on a theme brought up during the interview, these are subjective thoughts that may not refer to the truth or what is actually correct.

Furthermore, we may understand that validity can be connected to reliability. For instance, if the interviewee is a known individual that has a lot of knowledge or experience of the specific

theme, this can perhaps increase the credibility of the interviewee's statements, and may then again give the impression that these statements are valid sources that provide some kind of confirmability and correctness to a research.

These ethical considerations must be taken into consideration when doing a research, where the interviewer must be critical when asking questions and receiving answers during the interview, in addition to be critical when analyzing the findings. The following paragraphs will demonstrate the interview guides where this was taken into consideration.

3.3 The Interview Guide

The interview was structured to include three different sections including approximately ten questions.

In the first section, I asked the informants about the music industries in general in Bergen and how they would describe the environment, to get an impression of their values. Considering that Bergen is the case of this study, it appeared natural to introduce in this general manner.

In section two, the focus is narrowed into music export. I was interested to discover in which ways the different individuals work towards export and how their businesses have reacted to disruptive innovations of digitalization, which was discussed in Chapter 2.

In section three, I was concerned with investigating in which ways the Covid-19 pandemic affected their business, and their opinions concerning the governmental funding provided to help the industries in crisis.

In the connection of finding and choosing the informants for the interviews, I quickly realised that I could not ask the same questions for the informants due to their different experiences and positions in the industries, which affected the structure of the interview guide. Taking this into consideration, I had to create different guides obtaining questions which were directed towards the different informants. These issues will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs, before the result of how the guides were structured will then be presented.

3.3.1 Finding and Choosing the Informants

Denscombe (2014, p. 245) describes that qualitative research often involves relatively few people or events. Much of this reflects the preference for depth of study which only becomes possible in relation to limited numbers. In order to receive different point of views in depth for this research, I wanted to find informants that had different backgrounds. When stating

backgrounds, this involves their position in the music industries, what their job is and their subjective experiences with export. This resulted in four different informants: CEO of a regional music organization, an artist manager and two artists.

CEO of a regional music organization: The first informant is CEO of an organization that works with guidance and consulting for all musicians in the Western region of Norway. He may inherit much relevant competence and experiences concerning the music industries in Bergen, and is therefore an important informant for giving a broad description and image of the industries in the city, in addition to elaborating on the city's experience with music export.

Artist manager: The manager is an important part of the artist's career and growing their reach to different markets. As Chen et al (2021, p. 68) highlights, the artist manager is a collaborative partner in the music export process, and may therefore be understood as source for obtaining knowledge of the music export business in Norway, hence the case study of Bergen. The manager works within one of the largest managements in the city, and has been the manager of several of the largest international stars from Bergen.

Artist 1: The first artist interviewed for this research is the lead vocalist and guitarist in a pop/rock band. This band had its breakthrough in the beginning of the 2000's and has been highlighted as one of Norway's largest international successes on several occasions. They have had many hundred shows and been touring all over the world.

Artist 2: The second artist interviewed is known from the black metal environment in Bergen, where he earlier has been a drummer in a black metal band and currently the lead vocalist, composer and playing several instruments for a Nordic folk/dark folk band. He has produced music for globally known games and TV-shows, and have had concerts all over the world.

When presenting the interview guide on the top of the next page, there will be demonstrated how some questions were formulated and directed towards the specific informants, but some were more general questions where all informants were asked.

The interviews were structured in three sections (music industries in Bergen, music export and Covid-19), and was arranged as follows:

The Interview Guide

1. The Music Industries in Bergen

- 1.1 How would you describe the music industries in Bergen?
- 1.2 In several newly published reports and articles, there has been highlighted that the largest international successes are artists from Bergen. Why do you believe this have happened?
- 1.3 How does the music industries in Bergen differ compared to other cities in Norway? **(CEO)**
- 1.4 How would Bergen take advantage of establishing a Music Norway office located in the city? **(CEO)**

2. Music export

- 2.1. How can one navigate and stand out in the disruptive digitized market we have today?
- 2.2. In which ways are revenue from export distributed within the music industries? **(CEO)**
- 2.3. How does the music export sector lead to economic and cultural consequences? **(CEO)**
- 2.4. How can artists take usage of social media to promote themselves? **(Artist manager + artists)**.
- 2.5. How would you describe Norway's position in the international market? **(Artist manager)**.
- 2.6. How have you experienced the development of digitalization through your career? **(Artists)**
- 2.7. How have you experienced the international markets? **(Artists)**

3. Covid-19

- 3.1. How have Covid-19 affected your business? **(Artist manager + artists)**.
- 3.2. How have Covid-19 affected export/export activities? **(CEO)**
- 3.3. How do you think the music industries in Bergen have reacted to the pandemic? **(CEO)**
- 3.4. What are your thoughts regarding the governmental support provided by the Norwegian government, with the aim to help the music and cultural industry through the pandemic?

The guide illustrates how the questions formulated aim towards the informants in different ways. Whereas some general questions are asked to everyone, while some are directed more towards their role in the industries to take their field of knowledge and experiences into consideration.

When performing the interview with these four different informants, they will be executed through one-to-one interview, which Denscombe describes involve a meeting between one researcher and one informant (p. 187). Hence, the interviews for this study are performed one-to-one and face-to-face where the researcher meets the informants in person, or through online video meeting, while the informants have the opportunity to express their thoughts with only the researcher present. The next chapter focus on how the data will be gathered for this kind of interview, through transcribing the data.

3.3.2 Transcription and Analysing Interviews

In the context of face-to-face interviews, Denscombe emphasizes that they in practice rely on audio recordings (2014, p. 196). He describes that audio recordings offer a permanent record and one that is fairly complete in terms of the speech that occurs. For this study, the interviews that was conducted were recorded using the mobile app 'Diktafon' which contains

a digital recorder. The recordings were then stored at the website platform of the app. The conversations in the interview were open and interesting, where the topic was held within the frames of the interview guides, at the same time as follow-up questions occurred of relevance to the themes of the conversation.

Concerning semi-structured interviews, Denscombe claims that this type of interview produce data that are not pre-coded and have a relatively open format. This implies that data preparation and analysis are generally 'end-loaded', where he states that transcribing of interview data therefore are a major task for the researcher, which occurs after the data have been collected (2014, p. 203). The interviews lasted between 30 to 80 minutes, which generated approximately 4 hours of data recorded material. Transcribing the interviews, were therefore a time-consuming task, but manageable considering that there were few informants. Immediately after the interviews were conducted with the informants, I sat down to begin transcribing. While transcribing, I began to slightly analyze the findings in the recordings, attempting to understand what the main points of the informants were.

The next chapter will present the findings from the interviews and demonstrate how these findings were understood and analyzed in the context of the music export business.

4. Findings

In Chapter 4, the findings from the in-depth semi-structured interviews with the informants will be presented. The three main themes of the interviews concern: their thoughts about the music industries in Bergen and how the city have achieved international success through export, secondly, their views about music export, how their business work with export and their thoughts of the Norwegian export business in general. Finally, the situation of Covid-19, how the pandemic has affected them in general, but also how it has affected their export activities.

4.1 Bergen is different – size and industry structure

I opened the interviews by firstly asking how they would describe the music industries in Bergen. The manager claims that it is a small and close industry where most people know each other. He describes there are constantly coming many new artists and businesspeople into the industry. He further compares the industry structure to Oslo, where he explains that the industry is much smaller in Bergen and that there is an absence of large record labels or the big organizations such as TONO, Gramo and NOPA, and absence of commercial actors that people make money from such as The Voice or Idol.

Likewise, the absence of larger companies and labels is also mentioned by CEO of the regional music organization. Besides Oslo, he argues that Bergen is probably the only city that has a real and established music industry. He also claims that they have a small industry, but it is quite complete, where this means that they have all kinds of companies; record labels, managements, booking agencies, plenty of event organizers, big festivals. Because of this, he explains that they have a kind of ecosystem where they have all the links to function together. Concerning the consequences of how structure of the industries in Bergen has for the music environment in the city, the manager claims that this has resulted in that they have built an infrastructure that is completely unique. He argues that it is important to take care of, and it is different here than in Oslo. At the same time, he expresses that the people in Bergen are a certain kind of type. *'I like this typical Bergen thing, where people can be a bit peculiar, slightly arrogant bezzerswissers. People are dealing with something weird in every corner, and often something good comes out of this. So, I like it a lot! It's a very fine dynamic'* (Artist manager). Likewise, artist 1 highlights the work ethics and creativity of the businesspeople in the city. *'There's so many weird people here. But what I like is that we worship and keep*

growing these weird and unique qualities. I would say there's more creativity than business here. BUT; the people here have an insane work ethic, they work extremely hard' (Artist 1).

Both these statements express that the businesspeople in the city and their personality represent a key feature within the industries in Bergen, and how the work ethic can be observed in the entire industry chain.

On another note, the CEO have different thoughts concerning the consequences of the structure of the industry. He believes that it has resulted in that they have a different approach to live of music. He questions if it perhaps gets less mainstream here, because he thinks they have a greater diversity, where there is room for more expressions. There are many strong representatives from different genres, like hiphop, club music, techno, pop, black metal, he explains. But the different genre environments are so small that they get a nice flow and collaboration across the genres. He believes that this results in the rise of things that are unique. *'And I believe that the music industries reflect this again due to the absence of the large actors and companies'* (CEO of the regional music organization).

When the CEO was asked how Bergen differs from other cities in Norway, he claims that if one look at the smaller cities, he thinks the challenge they have is that they are even more exposed of people moving away from it, because there is not a good enough infrastructure where they come from. They lack a great part of the companies, and artists are not able to fulfill their potential, he claims. He believes that is what Bergen has managed to do, that the city has managed to create a frame around the creative that tempts people to continue to live her, and to produce music and live of it. He thinks artists may be more vulnerable if they are from a small place or a small city, because it requires much more to create a complete industry, which many artists are depending on to fulfill their projects. Then, he argues that a city must have all the ingredients in the structure of the industry. He reflects on how Bergen and Oslo have this, but other cities in Norway can make this happen as well.

Following up, I highlighted that in newly published reports and articles, as for instance demonstrated by Valecillos (2020) in the introduction of this thesis, it has been illustrated that the largest international successes are artists based in Bergen or from Bergen. I asked my informants why they believe this have happened, which will be illustrated in the next subchapter.

4.1.1 Mindset and Culture

The manager makes a connection to historical perspectives, where Bergen has had a history with export for many decades. He reflects on how it may be connected to the location of the city, and that they have always seen West instead of East to Oslo. Because of this, he claims that they have not been interrupted by the large commercial actors, where he highlights that it has been shown that signing with smaller labels have led to great success. He argues that it is more difficult to export through the large record labels Warner, Sony and Universal considering that they are Norwegian labels disguised as international labels, he claims.

Likewise, artist 1 is also highlighting the city's history with export and explains that Norway is among the three largest shipping nations, where Bergen is at the forefront. Furthermore, he believes that the successes may perhaps be connected to the weather of the city: its characteristics of rain. He explains that many of the cities where it rains a lot, there are good music scenes, where he exemplifies Seattle, the sister city of Bergen. *'The logic is that if it rains a lot in a city, there's not much to do outdoors. Naturally, you end up sitting inside, playing your guitar or working with music on your digital machine. I believe that the rain is an important condition for establishing an inside-culture for practicing, playing with the band and performing at concerts'*. (Artist 1). The artist expresses how this kind of inside-culture for music is cultivated because of the city's weather, and we may interpret that these are thoughts other artists can recognize as well considering that the weather is one of the main characteristics of Bergen.

The historical perspectives of Bergen and export is highlighted by the CEO of the regional music organization as well. He explains that this is something that goes way back in time, where he believes it has to do with a kind of attitude, that Bergen is known of looking out instead of in. The city has historically been a trading station that traded a lot with the continent for several hundred years ago, where he expresses that this have established a certain kind of mentality for exporting things. It would seem like the intentions of export have developed into a traditional mindset of the businesspeople in Bergen over several decades. Artist 2 confirms this mindset whereas he expresses how the attitude towards the international and think outside the land border results in a competence in the music environment for the topic of export. He believes that therefore it is not accidental that artists from Bergen have stepped outside the borders and achieved success by doing so. *'All culture and all tradition is a result of your environments'* artist 2 states. He believes that this concerns everything that

have happened historically, where the city, the nature, the resources and availability of resources have formed the culture of Bergen.

Even though this international mindset has existed over such a vast time, the artist manager reflects that Norway is very small in comparison with how large it is out there. *'But we have managed to get a piece of the puzzle. We have artists that have been high up on the global charts and that has a large market share. We're being seen. We have a credibility in Norway and people are looking more towards us. We have become more exclusive, cool and credible in a way. We are getting an extra ear from the big guys'* (Artist manager). The statements from the informants describe how Bergen's work with music export have resulted in more international attention towards the Norwegian music market.

Furthermore, considering that the CEO of the music organization obtains a central position in the music industries where he has a broad overview of music distribution and economic factors regarding this, I asked him how income from export is distributed within the digital music industries in Norway. The aim of doing so was to investigate in which ways this establish a mindset and purpose for export. He elaborates on how Spotify, YouTube and Google have received a lot of critics concerning bad and unfair payouts. He argues then that if one is to live of streaming as a source of income, it is important that the artist's music is available and attractive for other markets than only Norway, because of the country's small market, which the artist manager also demonstrated. The CEO exemplifies that large Norwegian successes such as Kygo and Alan Walker have both had over 1 billion streams on just one song and argues that this is impossible to do in the Norwegian market. *'If you manage to get 10 million streams, you're extremely good, because in theory then every Norwegian have streamed your song twice'* he states.

The statements concerning bad and unfair payouts, may be connected to the pro-rata business model explained in Chapter 2.5, which express how the business models are generated in such a way that it is not possible to live solely of the income from streaming services. Additionally, we observe that he states how small the Norwegian market is, as the artist manager also stated. It would seem like the CEO argues that the small size of the Norwegian market, creates a reason for why artists need to look for larger markets when distributing their music. As a result, music export to international markets seems like an important aspect for both the artist manager and the CEO. For the manager, the consequences of exporting and promoting their artists internationally, may increase the artists fan-base and give the artists more

attention. For the CEO, the consequence of export is that it may contribute to building the Norwegian identity and strengthen Norway's position in the global music market.

The following paragraphs will demonstrate in which ways they have developed strategies for reaching global markets.

4.2 Music Export Strategies – Social Media

In Chapter 2, the theoretical background demonstrated that in today's technological environment, social media platforms function as central channels for promoting and exporting music. I asked the artist manager how artists can take usage of social media to promote themselves. His response expresses in which ways their management work with strategies within this area, where he describes that social media platforms are important, but they are very focused on the product: the music of the artists. With their artists, they have always had a plan with aiming the international market. He explains that they have built a network in Europe and the US, and here they have some red carpets that can go into the several offices with the product. And developing the product, is something they always have been very focused on, he states. Many managements have different strategies regarding this topic, where he explains that some go straight into creating a plan for building the artists' profile in social medias, creating the visual profile and building a network.

But they use minimum one year on just the music first, so when they take an artist into their management, they firstly work with product development as a focus, while the social medias come naturally in this process. And then they adapt this with the ambitions the artist has. He describes that they attempt to find artists with high ambitions and that wants to work really hard. When the music then is good enough, he claims that the rest goes so much easier, where they can then test the product in Bergen, test the visual profile, music and the live expression, to make it grow. The manager's response explains how they have the aim of reaching international markets from the beginning, where it can be understood that the establishment of networks in England and the US sets the foundation of developing marketing strategies and increasing networks in these countries.

Furthermore, in the context of the theoretical background demonstrated in Chapter 2, I highlighted how the introduction of new technologies, new social platforms, new streaming services and new emerging markets may result in an ever-larger market. I asked the informants how one can navigate and stand out in such a market. The manager looks at this as one of the biggest problems in the music industries. He highlights that Spotify release nearly

100 000 songs on this streaming service every single day, where he claims that artists most often do not understand how many they are competing against. He states that it does not help to release music that is incredibly good, because Spotify does not see you. In this context, he connotes Spotify's system and how it works as a warehouse, and explains that he normally compare it to IKEA. *'If you go down to the storage on IKEA and you're going to find a couch, you're going to have a problem. If you're going to have the world's best couch to a cheap money, you won't find it. You have to get up in the exhibition window. And this exhibition window in Spotify, exists for maybe 400 artists a day. The rest is just laying there like some kind of pile of trash'* (Artist manager).

This describes challenges artists have in the digitized music industries we have today. Based on the manager's statements, it would seem like Spotify favours the bigger artists, where the smaller artists have challenges with reaching this exhibition window. Therefore, he argues that artists must take usage of social media platforms. The importance of these platforms was emphasized in Chapter 2.4.1, where it was illustrated how export marketing strategies can be developed through these platforms, and where the artist can build both a fan base and increase their network. The artist manager highlights TikTok as the most important social media today, which he understands as one of the largest music distributors and functions as a window out towards the rest of the world. He states that *'if an artist isn't interested in going at TikTok, there isn't so much we can do for that person'*. Because he argues that TikTok has proven to work very well for artists. He highlights that the biggest differentiation that distinct it from Instagram, is that it goes out to everyone, not just friends. Therefore, he claims that it functions like a global TV-channel. The fact that the manager states that *'there isn't so much we can do for that person'* if an artist is not interested in doing TikTok, expresses how much power the social media platforms have gained in today's music industries. Considering that TikTok now have entered the music distribution business with the new service SoundOn, which were elaborated in Chapter 2, this indicates how social media obtain more significance for the growth of artists and their audience.

When questioning artist 1 how they use social media platforms to promote themselves and their music, he reveals that they are bad at using it. He highlights that social media is fantastic but they experience it as difficult to use and reach through. In fact, he describes that they do not use TikTok either, but they have decided to give it a shot at this platform. Because during the 20 years they have had with the band, can be presented in a new media reality, he

describes. Much of the things they have done have been incredibly cool and fun, but he thinks that it may be forgotten, and they need to remind people of their big success. This expresses how the artist and his band is feeling the pressure of going at the largest social media we have today. In addition, it is clear that he has reflected on the promotional advantages the band would receive by creating a profile at TikTok and publishing videos there.

In connection with how they have experienced the development of digitalization through their career, he elaborates on how they saw the world before the digital situation. They entered the music industries before the rise of the streaming services where he explains that in the beginning of their career, they created a web site where they had embedded a music player so people could listen to parts of their music. They were also active on forums, such as Myspace, where they had millions of listeners. But he emphasizes that they did not earn any money on doing any of this. Although, because of its global availability, he explains that they gained an audience with people from all over the world, where they, as small underground artists, would get equally outcome of using the Internet as the bigger artists. He expresses therefore how their usage of the social media platforms gained an international audience. He states that they would even be signed for million-dollar deals based on their good net presence, where he explains that they would suddenly have their songs in commercials for companies such as Apple and Coca Cola, in games such as FIFA and Sims, in addition to movies and TV-shows.

As a result, he describes that they had luck because they randomly managed to hit the market. He elaborates on how they have good fantasy concerning visual content, where they have been good at using YouTube to create creative things. But he admits that they always forgot to promote themselves directly, such as ‘describe to our channel’ or putting in the direct links to their music. He explains that they suddenly got quite famous and were streamed a lot. On the other hand, he reveals that this does not necessarily imply that they would have sold records in what he calls ‘the old world’. *‘I don’t think we would have gotten any attention or made anything happen in the old world. What happened to us online, was a chaotic and extremely fun time where anything could happen, but we always knew that it wouldn’t last forever’ (Artist 1)*. Furthermore, he reflects on how the streaming services have disrupted the recorded industry and discusses how the situation is today. He explains that today there are 100 000 songs released on streaming services every day, and believes that the music world has become so much more streaming oriented. And the ways in which the algorithms and the playlists are organized, he feels that there is much you have to do to get attention. Because of

this, he feels like there is much less variation in the music today, where he claims that the people that get the highest number of streams, are those that create music that fits the playlists and to perform at media profiled festivals. The artist describes how they have experienced the disruptive effects of digitalization, both in the connection of exporting music, in addition to promoting it online on social media platforms.

When artist 2 explains how him and his band experienced the development of digitalization since the turn of the century, he explains how they quickly understood that to create their own online store and sell their music from their own website was a smart thing to do. He describes that they sold more digital music from their own online store than from iTunes, so the largest market share came from their own site. He believes they were innovative and ahead of the disruptive years that followed. When explaining how his band take usage of social media today to promote and export themselves, he describes how they rather focus on creating relevant content than directly pushing people to buy their music. He believes by creating great content which have a value in itself, such as creating aesthetic music videos, small documentary films or writing some articles concerning relevant themes, this creates an interest for the music. To establish this interest and create growth through creating interesting content, have been their strategy since the beginning of their career. He further explains that they create and publish content on Instagram and are not interested in doing TikTok. If they had attempted at doing TikTok, he believes they probably would reach an audience there, but emphasizes that it needs to feel right for them. If it does not feel right, they do not want to do it. In this context he expresses that it is crucial for them to have 100% control of their art expression on their own channels. So even though they would be advised from a marketing team to do something, it must feel appropriate for them and their expressions.

He further reflects how things are changing all the time in the digital environment, and that artists must have an entrepreneurial mindset and be proactive. He believes that the positive with things becoming more digital, is that this creates opportunities for creating your music at home and doing work from digital devices, but also results in other challenges. He has the impression that many artists think they have reached their goal or end destination when they sign a deal to a record label. But he argues that this is completely wrong, because that is when the 'real' job begins. He also believes that you must accept to your own manager or PR-agent for a period of your career, where he claims that the longer you do so before obtaining

external people to help you, the better opportunities you have. Because those artists who are willing to put in that self-effort, are those that achieve success, he believes and argues.

When questioning the CEO of the regional music organization concerning how artists can navigate and stand out in the global music market, he argues that they do not have to be present at all platforms. He advises artists to pick out the platforms they like, if they are really good at one, which they handle well and feel they can be themselves on, they should focus in building the network there. Furthermore, he highlights the importance of not trying to resemble someone else, because he believes that artists may drown into an ocean of mainstream songs. The artists must go deeper in themselves, try to figure out what they want to say and how they want to say it, he claims, describing how artists can be inspired by things, but rather be inspired by other things instead of musical influences, rather movies, arts, family, animals. He believes that is the key to create a good starting point for their own career. His descriptions indicate advice on how new artists need to create something personal and unique for their persona before establishing their profile on the platforms.

The informants have described from different point of views how they use social media platforms for creating export strategies and promoting their music to international markets. The following subchapter will illustrate how the Covid-19 affected these strategies.

4.3 Covid-19 and its Affection on Traditional Export Activities

It comes naturally to discuss how a global pandemic have affected the music industries and their businesses. As described in Chapter 2.5, the lockdowns resulted in the live industry shutting down, and almost no concerts being arranged for two years. We may interpret that this have had consequences for the music export business. When I asked the artist manager how their management were affected, he described that the last two years have been extremely difficult. During these two years, the Norwegian government provided governmental support with the aim to help the music and cultural industries through the pandemic. Concerning this support, the manager explains that they have not received any support for the money they have lost abroad. *‘But what is crazy for our part, is that we rather chose to arrange festivals. This is something that we usually do not do, considering that it is not the core of our business, that is what booking agents deal with. But we did it in order to receive support and compensation’* he describes. The manager’s descriptions express the issues the management have had during the last years, we observe how they have acted

solution-oriented in order to receive some support, even though this went beyond their traditional core activities of their business and export activities.

Furthermore, artist 1 reveals how his band have gotten more time where he explains that this have led to more positive outcomes, since they got time to think and reinvent themselves.

They got time to develop stage design and plots, and think of ways to make things more professional, in addition to produce a new album which will be released. This indicates how the artist and his band managed to stay creative through the pandemic.

Artist 2 describes the years with pandemic as very chaotic, where they constantly had to have a plan a, b and c ready at any time. For instance, they had planned four tours that were rebooked to-three times and postponed the release of last album with half a year in 2020.

When they understood that the pandemic was going to last for a while, they decided to release the album even though they could not support the release with concerts. He argues that by doing the opposite of what many other artists did in this period, they managed to be more 'present' through the entire pandemic, which he believes their fans and audience appreciated.

The artist expresses how the pandemic limited them for performing traditional export activities, where they would normally release the album to then do a tour to promote it.

On the other hand, the CEO of the regional music organization highlights how he believes that the music industries in Bergen have handled it well. He emphasizes that in many countries, the government have not supported the musicians or music industrial people at all. Therefore, he argues that even though it may be difficult to see it, Norway have managed to maintain the industry and many creative environments. However, he criticises some practical things concerning the support that have not been good. He mentions that when the restrictions on the audience capacity was removed due to low numbers of virus infections, the support aid disappeared the same day as well. He argues that there should rather be implemented some measures to make sure this transition run more smoothly, because many actors struggled with this. He connotes this as very threatening for the industries, that companies may risk going under because of the way the support has been arranged and structured.

He further reveals that he is concerned with how the pandemic affected the crucial export activity networking events. He explains that when the lockdown happened, the opportunity for these events disappeared, and artists did not have the opportunities with showing themselves physically to international gatekeepers and intermediaries. He believes this have had a very negative impact, that people have not been able to travel around the world and have concerts or perform at showcases. This concerns the established artists as well, who have

not been able to meet their fans for two years, he explains, but emphasizes how the usage of social media platforms have allowed the artists to feel close to their fans there.

Referring to the CEO's thoughts on how the lockdown have been threatening for the music industries, the artist manager likewise reflects on how the lockdown have affected the entire value chain in the industries, referring to those who contribute to making the live performances, all from light and sound technicians to the booking agents. He explains that what he is most afraid from after the pandemic, is that people are going to find something else to do, where he refers to the term 'kompetanseflukt', meaning that competent people escaped the music industries and found new jobs outside the industries. He argues that if the industries do not take care of this competence, they will not be able to achieve the large successes, because he understands the competence they all carry as instrumental for building the new talents and export them. He expresses how he wish the government, the regions and Music Norway could see this, where he argues that they have to invest to generate income for Norway.

Considering the fact that he mentions Music Norway, who works with music export from Norway as earlier described, I was curious about how the establishment of a Music Norway office in Bergen would be of advantage for the city. I questioned the CEO concerning this topic, with the aim to receive a broad description of the eventual advantages. He describes how the magnitude of music export arise from Bergen. In Oslo, there are 11 employees in Music Norway that works with stimulating and facilitating for export, where he states that this is completely wrong, and the setup and measures are structured incorrectly. He argues that when there is established a culture and tradition for a mindset of export in Bergen, then there is a great need for competence and guidance present in the city. He understands that there is a need for it in Oslo as well, but at least the similar need for it in Bergen. Because of the unbalance in this structure, he expresses that he wishes for an office in Bergen with the same amount of employees in Bergen as in Oslo, where this illustrates how the establishment of an office in Bergen would stimulate the growth for export from the city. It is interesting to observe that the CEO and manager wishes for Music Norway in Bergen, while they express that they are satisfied with not having the large institutions in the city. But it may be interpreted that this establishment represent more symbolic values in addition to practicality.

Having demonstrated the main findings from the interviews with the informants, the next chapter concerns further analysis and discussion of the topics elaborated on in the interviews.

5. Discussion

This chapter is concerned with analysing and discussing the findings from the interviews presented in Chapter 4, in relation with building the argumentation based on theory elaborated in Chapter 2 and in connection to the research question of the thesis. The analysis of the interviews aims to demonstrate a practical understanding of the dynamics within the digital recorded music industry, in particular discuss how the experiences of the informants can illustrate the disruptive innovations within the music export business.

5.1 The Cultural Value of Music Export

In this thesis, there have been observed, examined and demonstrated current issues and relevant topics within the global music export business. Furthermore, the focus was narrowed into the Norwegian music export business, when subsequently the findings from the interviews with the informants illustrated how Bergen's industries can contribute to provide a practical understanding of the issues within this context. Based on the statements from the informants, we may argue that the music business sector represents an important aspect within the business life in general in Bergen, but it may also be relevant to connote the music sector as one of the most central cultural values of the city. As earlier highlighted in Chapter 2.4, Chen et al argues that 'the strength of the music industry exports of a country is often seen as a key indicator of the importance of the national culture on a global stage' (2021, p. 26). As indicated by the informants, it is clear that to develop music export from Norway, an important aspect for Bergen is to find the balance between economic and cultural value to then emphasize these features within the culture of the country.

To exemplify, this is argued by the CEO of the regional music organization. When elaborating on the music industries in Bergen, he highlights how artists have taken elements into their musical projects that he argues have had a great value for Norway. He mentions that Kygo performed at the top of a mountain with his piano, with magnificent fjords in the background, that Alan Walker made a music video where he runs on the top of a mountain in Bergen, that Aurora created a music video appearing as a kind of fairy in the forest. When exemplifying how these globally known artists from Bergen have taken elements from the city into their musical expressions, he argues that all of this has great significance for Norway and the Norwegian identity, and that this permeates in a lot of the music that is being exported. This argument is also proposed by Ryssevik et al (2021, p. 37) who argues that the

value of Norwegian music and Norwegian artists being recognized in international markets, cannot be measured economically. Rather, they state that they should be interpreted in strengthening the Norwegian identity, as the CEO also argued.

While the CEO's statement represents the cultural value of export from Bergen, the artist manager argues for its inspirational value. He emphasizes successes such as Röyksopp and Kings of Convenience, and reflects that these acts have illustrated how it is possible to break through without having to travel to Oslo for the larger record labels. He argues that this has probably been inspiring for many and is something others want to follow, and reflects on how artists may even get bigger in Bergen than in Oslo. In this context, he actually highlights that the successes the city has experienced, have resulted in the Bergen Wave ('Bergensbølgen') which was described earlier in this thesis. He reflects on how we do not talk about these waves anymore, because it is something that is constantly present. It may be interpreted that it is always present due to what the manager mentioned in Chapter 4, that the international market is looking more to Norway and that they '*get an extra ear from the big guys*', where he stated that the interest out there for the things that come from Bergen, is massive.

As a matter of fact, artist 1 describes how his band were part of the Bergen Wave in the beginning of the 2000s, hence the beginning of their career. He describes that when they began working internationally, all the artists they knew and were involved with were already in the international genre. He explains that these artists had a breakthrough in the beginning of the 2000's and were very clear to say that they were inspired by the club scenes in New York, at the same time as they were clear to say that they are from Bergen Norway. This gave extremely much international press, and the press came to the city to visit the stars. So, the artist reveals that when his band had their breakthrough, this was thanked to being part of such an internationally media exposed area, which people thought was quite exotic. The artist reveals how his band managed to breakthrough and gain attention internationally due to the exotic value of Bergen and their network in the city. In this context, the importance of building a network will be discussed further.

5.2 Networking Events as Export Strategies

As demonstrated in Chapter 2.4.1, the importance of building and expanding the network is a crucial aspect for artists, where it was described how this can be done through international

music market events. The CEO of the regional music organization confirms the importance of these events in the interview, as demonstrated through the findings in Chapter 4. He believed that the pandemic had a negative impact considering that artists could not do showcases, concerts or meet stakeholders physically. Chen et al argue that for many music entrepreneurs, networks are the most important factor in developing a successful export strategy. Networks create opportunities for partnerships, establishing deals, building on opportunities and increasing knowledge of current industry trends (2021, p. 94). Through the CEO's statements, he describes how the lockdown of the society have impacted the crucial matter of the networking events.

Furthermore, it was demonstrated in Chapter 2.3 how the transition from the traditional linear model to the circular model illustrated by Watson (qtd. in Hughes et al, 2016) happened due to disruptive innovations of digitalization. As a matter of fact, Chen et al argues that in contrast to traditional linear value chains, in which value is added by each participant along the chain, networks disrupt this linearity through their ability for nonlinearity of communication. Rather, their value is informed by opportunity, co-creation, access to information and relationships made through strong and weak ties (2021, p. 93). They define strong ties as the frequent and local interactions, that are probably within a short distance, connecting people with similar goals and interests. On the other hand, they define the weak ties as relatively infrequent extra-local interactions, more likely to span a larger distance, connecting people to dissimilar others (ibid). We may interpret that the music industries' small and close network in Bergen, represent business actors with strong ties, while the actors from other cities in Norway or from foreign countries, may perhaps connote the weak ties they meet on the networking events.

At these industry events then, Chen et al explain that both strong and weak ties exist despite the fact that everyone is in the same room. The events occur over a short time period where everyone has a role and a purpose (p. 101). We may perhaps understand that the informants interviewed for this thesis, have different purposes for the industry events based on their role. For instance, considering that the CEO works for an organization that aims to contribute for building different business actors' networks, he can use the events to introduce new ties to each other and expand their network. Furthermore, the artist manager may take advantage of the event to share experiences with other managers, and find new artists. Lastly, the artists may take advantage of finding new stakeholders that could perhaps be interested in their projects, where they can create new partnerships. This could for instance be a booking agent,

a studio engineer, management or record label. As a result, the international events enable networks and participating gatekeepers, intermediaries, artists and other stakeholders to maintain their identity. Repeated attendance maintains strong ties which are perpetuated beyond the short-term time period of that event, Chen et al argue (p. 109).

Chen et al understand that while strong ties enable actors within a network to exchange and capitalise on information to consolidate their position and status, Ko and Butler (qtd in. Chen et al, 2021, p. 93-94) argue that weak ties are as important, as occasionality or chance interactions enable new inputs from ‘outsiders’. As a result, they claim that this helps avoiding that the communication and interaction is solely between the strong ties, between like-minded actors where it can cause sameness. When it is then established a consolidation of strong and weak ties through the network events, this creates opportunities for the different business actors to achieve new inputs or point of views regarding music industrial issues.

Returning to the transition from the traditional linear model to the circular model, it was demonstrated in Chapter 2 how the circular model we have today has been affected by digitalization and is a model that may be argued to refer to the digital music industries. Chen et al describe that the rise of digital platforms means that gatekeeping can now occur on every level of a network and is multidirectional, where they claim that this can create many opportunities for aspiring artists and managers (2021, p. 109). This is also emphasized by the CEO of the regional music organization who explains how there has been established a culture for digital meetings, which have been embedded even more after the Covid-19 pandemic. He describes that for a Norwegian artist, or a small Norwegian company, it is extremely difficult to get contact with a company in the United States. He explains that you would have to travel there, knock on their door, make an agreement and go out to have dinner. But now it is turned upside down. He claims that there has now been established a culture for digital meetings, which he believes will be positive, because digital networks can be created. He believes that when society starts to open again after the pandemic, there will be established a combination of this: people will travel again, but people will also continue to build digital networks.

It may be interpreted that the digital music industries have grown a more creative attitude towards usage of digital tools, where it seems like an aim to implement it more when networking. We may argue that this creates more opportunities for aspiring artists to get a foot

inside closed network. In this context, digital platforms and the way in which it provides both opportunities and challenges for artist's promotion will be discussed when looking at effects of digitalization in the export business.

5.3 Digitalization in the Music Export Business

In Chapter 2.3, the historical perspectives of digitalization in the recorded music industry and its development demonstrated how the situation we have today, concerns how large tech companies and the music industries cooperate in the aim of market alterations. Due to the disruptive innovations from the tech companies, such as the most popular streaming service Spotify, Spilker argued that the turn to streaming services represented a shift in industrial strategies. He argued that the turn to these services held the promise for letting the music industry regain some control over its products and revenue streams (2018, p. 30).

On the other hand, based on statements from the informants, it would seem like there exists viewpoints that do not favour the streaming services. As a matter of fact, this was emphasized by all the informants. For instance, the artist manager compared Spotify with IKEA, where he argued that the exhibition window to Spotify is only available to 400 artists a day.

Considering that he explains that 100 000 songs are uploaded to the streaming service every day, it may be interpreted that it is difficult for smaller artists to enter this window.

At the same time, artist 1 criticised Spotify's playlists and the way in which the algorithms are organized, while the CEO of the regional music organization elaborated on how many criticize among others Spotify for their bad and unfair payouts, which artist 2 expressed as well. This may refer to the business model of Spotify, which was illustrated in Chapter 2.5. It was demonstrated how some streaming services, such as Spotify, take usage of the pro-rata model, where Maasø (2014) argued how the user-centric model would favour the smaller niche artists in a fairer degree. Due to the statements of the CEO, we may interpret that the pro-rata model in general is not suitable for artists. The issues concerning the streaming services will be returned to in chapter 5.4.

The statements given by the informants gives the impression that due to the globalization of digitalization, the Norwegian music industries and its actors have been affected by the disruptive technologies. The reason for why digitalization is highlighted in this connection and how the informants perceive this, is to demonstrate how this affects their export

strategies. As earlier mentioned in Chapter 2.3, Nordgård defines disruptive technology/innovation as technological progress that leads to innovation and market alterations (2018, p. 40). Therefore, digitalization and its effects on the global recorded music industry, may be understood as leading to market alterations for all chains within the music industries. We may interpret that it is relevant to argue that the disruptive innovations caused by the technological streaming services, have affected both export and marketing strategies for actors within the industries.

Simultaneously, Chen et al argue that digitalization has resulted in affecting the export strategies, where it is required to develop thorough strategies in order to be export ready.

The ‘export readiness’ they defined in Chapter 2.4.2, signifies that being ‘export ready’ now

requires more strategically aimed infrastructures from creation and production to promotion and dissemination (2021, p. 175). As observed on the table to the right, many of the topics for the ‘export readiness indicators’ are connected to digitalization and digital tools for marketing, statistics and analysis. For instance, this can be observed from number 7 to 10, that are directly connected to digital tools. Simultaneously, we may perhaps interpret that the digital tools are present in the other areas as well. To exemplify, digital tools may be equipped from number 1 to 6 in order to plan exporting strategies in a digital network.

For instance, you can perhaps take usage of statistics showing streaming numbers in a country to strategically plan for the specific country. As such, you may grow the territorial knowledge explained in number 5. As we have seen due to the social media platforms, they can be used to grow your international network and may then set the foundation of meeting the network physically at industry events. Finally, financing is emphasized as an important aspect. At social medias such as Instagram and Facebook, record labels and artists may take

1. Representation	The three main actors in this space are the artist manager, label and publisher who negotiate all deals. Some artists represent themselves when negotiating deals.
2. Strategic planning and infrastructure:	Having the appropriate management team and an export strategy are essential. This includes market research, management, an international partner, legal support.
3. International networks	Accessing an international team or community of contacts who have market knowledge or can provide access to key stakeholders and support.
4. International industry events and showcasing	Maintaining a presence at these events enables networking, keeping abreast of industry changes and opportunities.
5. Territorial knowledge	Each territory will have its own demands such as visa regulations, appropriate ground support or specialist skills.
6. Financing	Adequate financing is needed to ensure delivery of product, international follow up meetings, follow up tours and media appearances.
7. Promoting and maintaining the story	A narrative or ‘buzz’, radio and TV broadcast are necessary to be able to get exposure, and maintaining the narrative with backup resources (recordings). This includes repeated airplay and broadcasts, reviews, publicists, tastemakers, influencers and bloggers.
8. Audience/digital footprint	The size of the artists’ fans and associated digital analytics such as as their demographics, country and location are important determinants for different career stages (Emerging, Breakthrough, Established, Epic).
9. A “born global” attitude	Dissemination and promotion through streaming services, social media and sharing platforms such as YouTube and Instagram.
10. Domestic activity	Building a strong local or national audience such as awards, touring, airplay social network activities. Attendance at workshops held by Sounds Australia.

Figure 3.2 Export readiness indicators.

(Obtained from Chen et al, 2021, p. 81)

usage of advertisements in order to promote their product to a wider audience. This demonstrates how economical strategies can be developed through this digital progress on social media platforms.

Furthermore, the 'datafication' Chen et al defined in Chapter 2.4.2, forces the managers to rethink their relationship with labels and international fan development (2021, p. 78). They argued that digital activities required to get one's product global, is crucial. The table they have demonstrated, exemplifies these central activities. As such, they argue that datafication can be seen as a great equaliser (p. 174). On the contrary, they argue that enabling increased market penetration and exposure, requires more resources and investment to cut through a highly competitive and fluctuating environment, where datafication of music underpins streaming companies' use of music as content to support their platform (p. 175).

It may therefore be interpreted that even though digital devices and social media platforms may be understood as great tools in order to promote and expose the music for a global market, the theories of Chen et al gives the impression that there are challenges in this context as well. We may argue that the empirical findings in this thesis confirms these challenges. Based on the descriptions given from the informants through the interviews, they all explain these issues from their different point of views, in consideration to their role in the music industries. They express how this is an issue they are known with, at the same time as they have attempted and managed to find ideas to operate with this issue.

For instance, the manager argues that '*If you attempt to create something that is completely real, honest and unique, you have a chance to stand out and cut through*'. Furthermore, he explains how he works with different methods to challenge the artist to do so. He seeks for the artists to dig deeper and find something that can be extremely unique. He claims that it is a good strategy to be able to make it all connect, where the most important thing is to be able to create a whole integrity, to be able to express the message of your music to match your visual expressions. Even though it is difficult to stand out, he expresses that it is something the artists have to do. To exemplify, artist 1 and his band may be argued as a great example to how one can stand out. The reason for this, is that they managed to match their visual expressions to their music. The artist explains that they had a characteristic outfit which turned out to become their brand. As a matter of fact, he states that the outfit was not something that was strategically planned from a manager or an A&R, but something that

happened randomly. They wore it firstly at the end of a concert, where the audience reacted with great response to the outfit. As a result, he describes that it has now been their trademark for 15 years. Maybe not everyone remembers the name of our band, but everyone remembers the outfit, he explains.

In this connection, the artist presents a quote which can be understood as an advice for the artists that aim to stand out in a marketplace: *'It's important to optimize the opportunities for luck'*. He explains that this is what they did when wearing the outfits for concerts, using it in the music video of one of their songs, which turned out to be their biggest hit. Because of doing this, they have ended up being a large Norwegian success in international markets, playing 1000 concerts in 36 different countries. By connecting a unique visual expression to the music, the artist illustrates how this may increase the opportunities of standing out in the crowded marketplace.

Furthermore, the artist manager argues for the importance of not copying something or someone else, because everything is mirroring the pop culture we are in and what happens around us. Although, the manager reflects on trends in the international markets as a way to be inspired to find methods to stand out. He describes that a current trend we see more now, is that the artists dare to talk more about things, where he highlights that it is more allowed to talk about vulnerable sides and mental issues. He believes people are more allowed to be themselves. He argues that the paradox about these trends, is that social media is involved in creating these trends. *'I think it's a nice thing. The artist can contribute to help people'*.

The manager emphasizes how he observes both opportunities and challenges with digitalization and the social media platforms. As he explains the challenges concerning how to stand out in the digital marketplace, he expresses an understanding of this difficulty from the artists point of view. When he explains the methods concerning challenging yourself to find strategies to stand out online, this expresses how he emphasize the opportunities social media platforms can provide. It connotes the ability of being adaptable to the disruptive technology where the manager explains how digitalization have been implemented when planning promotional strategies for managing a starting point for music export readiness for their artists.

Moreover, as earlier described through this text, the streaming services has been understood and argued as one of the most central disruptive innovations for the music industries. It will

therefore now be discussed how the adaptation to these services have affected the music industries, and how the descriptions from the informants may indicate in which ways this have affected the Norwegian music export business and its economical business models.

5.4 Economical Aspects of Music Streaming Services

Through Chapter 5.3, we have seen how social media platforms can reach a global audience, where it has been argued for its opportunities on developing marketing strategies through digital tools, in addition to building your network. Considering that all the global platforms are international and available in almost the entire world, digital platforms create the possibility for exposing music for a worldwide audience. It may be interpreted that the entire world simply is your market.

As a matter of fact, it may be argued that this argument is relevant not only for the social media platforms, but especially also for music streaming platforms. Besides, Krueger argues for the importance of understanding how this disruptive technology is tied to economy (2020, p. 178). Because since the streaming services introduction in the beginning of the century, they have been evolved and expanded rapidly. As argued by artist 1 interviewed for this research, he emphasized how the music industries today is extremely music streaming oriented. He mentioned how the focus is centred at playlists and attempting to understand the algorithms in order to obtain a place on the playlists. Therefore, it may be argued that it is relevant to discuss how the streaming services have affected economic incentives and business models within the Norwegian music export business.

To illustrate, Krueger argues that the current state of music streaming provides a clear lesson on how economics is tied to technology, and how economic incentives and technology shape our culture (2020, p. 178). In Chapter 2.5 concerning the music export business in Norway, we saw how Ryssevik et al (2021, p. 50) demonstrated that the revenue generated for recorded music in Norway, represented a central part of the income from international export. This indicated that the revenue streaming has accounted for have affected the economy of the music export business in Norway. Moreover, Krueger argues that streaming offers a different type of product than physical album sales or digital downloads (2020, p. 178), which can be connected to Gordon (2015) and Nordgård's (2018) arguments concerning how the streaming services operate with a model that gives the impression that music 'feels like free', as explained in Chapter 2 concerning the historical foundations of the recorded music industry.

In this context, the CEO of the regional music organization reflects on how the situation was in advance of the introduction of Internet and online distribution of music. He highlights that in the 1980's, it was a different deal when you sold and distributed music through vinyl or compact discs (CD's) where artists could get a fair income for the sale of recorded music. But now, live generates the largest part of the income, he explains. This describes the current situation in today's music environment, which was described in Chapter 2, concerning how the economical strategies have changed due to how revenue from the live industry now have become the most important source of income for the musicians, while streaming signifies a smaller part. This is also illustrated in the figure by Ryssevik et al (2021, p. 50) where we observe that Norwegian artists' concerts and festivals internationally generate the largest part of the export income. The CEO further reflects on how it was completely opposite before the digital era. *'You played concerts to market your CD or vinyl, but now you release music on Spotify to sell tickets to your concerts. In essence, the business model has been turned upside down'* he claims.

As earlier mentioned, Spilker (2018) argued how the disruptions from the tech companies and streaming services, represented a shift in industrial strategies. The CEO demonstrates how this have resulted in developing new export strategies and argues that due to the changes within the business models, these changes make it suitable to look for larger markets than Norway. He highlights that this is connected to globalization and how the entire world can become your market in practical terms. He further explains that to distribute music in other markets, have previously been quite demanding, cumbersome and expensive. But now, artists can easily upload music to Spotify, and anyone has access to it, he states. This accessibility to the streaming services makes it easier for artists to distribute their music, additionally the music can reach a global audience.

On the contrary, as earlier discussed, there are issues concerning Spotify and other services in connection with their business models. The criticism concern Spotify's usage of the pro-rata model, where Maasø (2014) argued that the user-centric would be more suitable and fair for smaller artists. Likewise, Nordgård argues that a sustainable music streaming model needs to combine editorial and curated content with a redistribution of revenues based on a different model than the current pro-rata model (2016, p. 187). He argues that a change from pro-rata to user-centric could possibly help to reduce the top-heaviness of the revenue distribution (p. 183). Additionally, he claims that by solving this revenue distribution problem, we cannot

wait for the streaming economy to grow, he rather states that significant changes are necessary for the streaming economy to become sustainable for broader segments of the music economy (p. 187-188). Nordgård's arguments give the impression that actions are soon required to happen if these changes in the models are going to be implemented.

To exemplify the necessity of providing actions for this issue, Ingham (2021) demonstrates statistics from 2020 that illustrate how much Spotify actually pay artists. As a matter of fact, he presents that only approximately 13 000 artists generate over \$50K a year, while approximately 7800 artists generate \$100K. At the same time, he presents that 2,710,000 tracks have over 100,000 plays. This illustrates how the current business model of Spotify may not be understood as fair for all artists. As a matter of fact, Eriksson et al explain that the big three major record labels Universal, Sony and Warner are part owners of Spotify, since they have managed to get shares in return for licenses. They describe that it is discussed whether they use their influence over Spotify to secure better royalty deals than their smaller competitors, and argue that these claims make it difficult to discuss the issue of fair remuneration for artists (2019, p. 38). In this way, it may be possible to interpret that artists signed to these major labels, would then benefit of this when receiving revenue from Spotify.

We may therefore argue that change is needed in order to secure more fair revenue for the smaller niche artists as well. How the industries will choose to operate concerning these issues, is still uncertain. For instance, the music organization IMPALA concludes that even though the 'user-centric pay-outs feels more appealing to some who like the idea of their money going to the artists they listen to [...], we feel, though, that on its own it won't create the optimal market for artists, just a different set of artists who gain and lose, without growing the market or embracing other dynamics which we feel are needed to achieve change'².

Consequently, we may perhaps achieve a change in the business models where there can be organized a completely new and different model, if neither pro-rata or user-centric can be suitable and optimal for the artists. At the same time, it would seem like it will take some time to see the actual change, considering that the industries may have to strategically plan and test out which model is more suitable.

Having established these economical aspects for the business models of streaming services, we see that this is an issue that affects the export strategies within the international music

² <https://www.impalamusic.org/10-steps-to-reform-streaming-models/>

export economy, which results in affecting the Norwegian music export business as well. For the next chapter, the focus will be shifted towards how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected all these aspects described and discussed during the last chapters. As we have seen, the current themes within the Norwegian music export business concerns export's cultural value, networking events, disruptive innovations involving social media platforms and streaming services. When an unpredictable pandemic led the music industries to shut down, it may be argued that this have had effects on the businesses working with export and their strategies.

5.5 The Effects of Covid-19

In Chapter 2.5 concerning the music export business in Norway, it was described how the live industry were extremely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, it was explained how artists in Norway initiated online streaming concerts from home in order to secure some feeling of performing. However, these were not economically beneficial in the broader image. In the context of music export, we may understand that areas within export have been affected by the pandemic as well. For instance, Chen et al mentions the shift of traditional business export activities going online, such as song-writing camps and business meetings.

This shift was also highlighted by the CEO of the regional music organization. Based on his thoughts, it may be possible to argue that this shift to online meetings can be beneficial to some degree. For instance, we may interpret that by doing the business meetings in a digital world instead of traveling to a destination, one would save both time and money on the travel, in addition to secure a more climate friendly solution of meeting. On the other hand, it may be argued that some business interpretations must be implemented through physical meetings. For instance, both the theoretical background established by Chen et al (2021) and the empirical findings created by the informants, conclude that international networking events are crucial meetings for the music industries in order to both build and increase the network, but also share valuable knowledge and lessons from their experiences.

Concerning the shift to digital meetings, Chen et al (2021, p. 180) highlights that in this context, digital programmes will increasingly supplement physical presences while also result with less paperwork. Today, we may argue that digitalization has led to digital tools that in practical terms can result in business actors doing much of their work online. For instance,

this may be the case in the context of music distribution of digital music. As demonstrated by the informants, approximately 100 000 songs are uploaded to Spotify every single day. In the connection of distributing, necessities such as audio file, press photos, press release, pitch among other things are things that can be developed in an online environment. This gives the impression that digitalization makes the process behind music distribution easier.

Moreover, Chen et al (2021, p. 180) finds that the decimation of national budgets wrought by the virus raises questions concerning the extent and willingness of states to continue traditional export fundings. As described especially by the artist manager and the CEO of the regional music organization, they expressed their thoughts on this topic and to which degree they were satisfied with the Norwegian state's in providing support for the music industries to continue traditional export. To illustrate, the artist manager explains that the support that has been given did not quite reached them. Therefore, he describes that they had to live on the income they had in 2019. Due to the fact that they do not solely live on income from live revenue, but also from rights the artists have, they have managed to make some income through the pandemic. The rights refer to the synchronization rights and he emphasizes the growing interest for getting your music to be played in movies or TV-programmes. Likewise, this was emphasized by artist 1 as well in Chapter 4 when he describes how the band's music were used in commercials for big companies such as Apple or games such as FIFA.

These descriptions are illustrated by artist 2 as well, who explains that their music has been used for globally known games and TV-shows. Considering that he expresses that it is not easy to survive on income from record sales since the streaming services' payouts are bad, he highlights how it is an advantage to have several sources of income. However, he emphasizes how he got the impression that many artists believe they achieve success if their music is used in a movie. But he argues that they only achieve success if people like the music. For them, he explains that it is important that their music is used in a relevant setting, so they are quite strict at where the music is used. Hence, this have been of advantage to them when it has contributed in a larger and wider audience, and giving them a push in the flow they had, he explains. As such, if the artist is lucky and enough people notice the music, he understands synch as a great opportunity. It may be possible to understand that artist 1 and artist 2 were not badly affected by the pandemic if they have managed to live of these synch rights.

Simultaneously, the artist manager reflects on how 2019 was a great year for them where they were on a good way up and towards. But during the pandemic, they were pushed back where he emphasizes that they have not managed to build the live income at all. The largest problem is that the honorarium is lower, despite the fact that they sell more tickets, he explains. But the tickets are cheaper, so there is less money to take from the income, and the travels are more expensive. He concludes that observing this issue from an international perspective, they are doing a bit better, but generating 50% less income. As a result, he expresses how he wish the Norwegian state and business sector would invest more willingness for increasing the fundings to the Norwegian music export sector. He states that the organization Innovation Norway puts in money everywhere to support business firms, and they generate profit for this, but this is something they lack in the music industry. He even reflects on how he is afraid that valuable competence and business actors will disappear if this does not happen, and that the successes will come through the typical Bergen Waves again. He wishes Norway could take them more seriously: *'The business departments in Norway should have seen us, see how much money we've made to the state. We even have the potential to reach even further'* he states. The artist manager explains how he feels that the Norwegian state does not invest enough to provide for the Norwegian music export business to grow.

Even though it would seem like there is a need for more support from the state to build Norwegian music export, the informants illustrate how they have managed to contribute in pursuing export activities and how this have resulted in both financial success in the form of revenue, but also cultural success in the form of building the Norwegian identity.

The following paragraphs will draw together the threads from the main findings in the discussion, to discuss how music export can be understood by performing this case study of Bergen.

5.6 What Can Be Learned by Studying the Music Industries in Bergen?

Music exports in this century embody an interconnected series of gatekeepers, local and national structures and a range of different music industry stakeholders, Chen et al defines (2021, p. 170). While artists and their output are the focus, they argue that export activity is useful to study for the range of behind-the-scenes players, partnerships and ambitions that broaden thinking about entrepreneurial work related to creativity. Therefore, it may be argued that the research and study performed in this thesis, can provide a practical understanding of

the factors Chen et al mentions. Based on in-depth interviews with the informants, their experiences and descriptions contribute to create an understanding of how interconnected gatekeepers, artists and local stakeholders in Bergen, is a small and close network filled with strong tied partnerships that is always interested in sharing their knowledge in order to contribute in creating even more successes from the city.

Simultaneously, in the context of ethical considerations of reliability, it may be relevant to discuss to which degree their statements are valid and credible. Their statements are subjective meanings that are connected to their experiences as either manager, artist or CEO, and represent therefore different thoughts regarding the issues demonstrated in this thesis. It may be argued that because of their central positions in the music business in Bergen, this contributes in building their credible character and strengthening their statements.

Furthermore, the artists represent the product which is in focus when concerned with music export. Based on the first artist's descriptions, he highlights how their breakthrough in their career were directly influenced by being part of the 'Bergensbølgen' or Bergen Wave, and being part of an environment of musicians where everyone represented the export readiness. In this context, the artist among other things highlighted how everyone were clear to state that they were inspired by New York club scenes, but from Bergen Norway.

It may therefore be perceived that language, creating music on English and being inspired from English-speaking places, have been an export strategy. To illustrate, the CEO of the regional music organization confirms this when he explains that many artists from Bergen choose to produce music in English where he believes this is connected with the attitude to the international and to export, to look out and look to Europe. If Kygo, Alan Walker, boy Pablo and Aurora had produced music in Norwegian, he believes that they would never have achieved the success they have had. *It's actually such a naïve and easy line of reasoning, but it's completely true. Just take a look at other bigger artists in Norway, for instance Karpe is huge within the borders, but the language restrains them. It's an image that creates itself that people that come from Bergen then produce music in English; it makes the music available and attractive for the entire world*, he argues. He illustrates how stakeholders, gatekeepers, intermediaries and artists in Bergen represent the mindset of export and that this has been a traditional mindset that the different business actors with the music industries is known with.

As a matter of fact, Bergen's local work with music export is also being more acknowledged by the national music industry. For instance, the CEO of the organization Music Norway, debates about the importance of receiving more support from the state towards music export, which was demonstrated when discussing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, she emphasizes the music environment in Bergen, and how the city has been great at securing growth for export the last years. She argues that to strengthen these environments, in other cities as well, will increase Norwegian export and contribute to having more aspiring talents to dare to follow their dream (Finnskog, 2021). Furthermore, she highlights the cities' music industrial event Vill Vill Vest where they aim to lift unknown artists and bands in the Norwegian music industries. She understands local industrial events as a networking machine where actors meet each other, and it functions as a steppingstone for local artists that wish to perform at larger scenes.

Based on the statements of the informants and the theories to Chen et al (2021) and Finnskog (2021), the networking events would seem like one of the most central and significant export strategy within the Norwegian music export business. Finnskog argues that this is crucial to increase export: the actors must know each other, know how to use each other to share competence and learn from each other. To belong to an environment where you can do these things (2021). She further argues that the local and regional infrastructure is more of importance for many artists than the large institutions, which was argued and confirmed by both the CEO and the artist manager.

On the contrary, she illustrates that she is known with the issues of Norwegian music export not achieving enough support, and that the political parties are more interested in the things that happen in the capital Oslo. She argues that politicians must listen to the music industries and understand that tomorrow's music heroes are created elsewhere than only the capital. She states that 'a good start will be to strengthen the music export work in Bergen in the state budget for 2022' (Finnskog, 2021). It truly represents great opportunities for Norwegian music export that the Covid-19 pandemic seems to be a situation the world now has managed to adapt to. With restrictions being removed and societies opening up again, time will show how networking events will happen as normal yet again, where stakeholders can share their knowledge, plan export strategies, increase their network and even the next big star perhaps may be discovered.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, the digital music industries have been in focus where digitalization particularly within the digitized recorded music market have been the field investigated to attempt an understanding of the music export business. I have explored the Norwegian music export business where I have identified in which ways the dynamics of the digitized recorded music market have been affected and influenced by digitalization. The sociological framework provided through the study, have examined the disciplinary field of music export, whereas the literature research has provided a framework of relevant issues concerning how digitalization have affected the recorded music industry. This concerns how artists, gatekeepers and other stakeholders within the music business have had to take disruptive technologies into consideration when developing export strategies. In order to attempt to provide a practical understanding of which measures have been done, methods involving a case study approach including usage of qualitative methodology have been implemented with the aim of achieving behind-the-scenes descriptions and explanations of how they have worked with music export.

This led to the establishment of one main research question: *How can the music export business be understood by studying Bergen and their promotion of Norwegian music to international markets?*

I have examined the recorded music industry in Bergen where their work with digital recorded music market and music export have been explored. Based on in-depth interviews with four different informants that work with export from different angles, the findings demonstrate how they represent a strong-tied music environment where there is a general understanding that thinking and aiming for international markets is a traditional mindset for Bergen.

To conclude, based on analysing the findings from the informants and connecting this to the theoretical foundation in order to create a discussion, it is clear music export in Norway signifies an important sector for the cultural life, for building and strengthening the nation's identity in the international marketplace. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic illustrated the state's willingness to invest in music export fundings, and found that the informants wish for the state to invest more. For instance, Bergens's work with networking events, where the intention of maintaining a strong-tied music environment and build it more in order to share essential knowledge and unique experiences, are crucial export strategies that is being more

recognized of understanding how the music export business can be understood. Therefore, it is highly relevant that the city's work with export strategies could be recognized and acknowledged by establishing a Music Norway office in Bergen to set the foundations for further successful export and provide that more stakeholders may be involved in planning for export strategies. Furthermore, the study provides a practical understanding and framework of how current issues of digitalization in the music industries affect the entrepreneurial work of artists, gatekeepers, stakeholders and other central business actors when planning for export. While digitalization provides opportunities, the different business actors get to challenge their creative competence of finding new strategies that is suitable for the global digital market of music. As we have seen, digitalization has led to difficulties on social media platforms where artists struggle to navigate and stand out in a crowded marketplace, while the introduction of streaming services has developed business models that are not suitable for generating a fair revenue for all artists. In this connection, the case study examines how models operate and how the informants in this research adapt to the issues. For instance, a good way of attempting to navigate and find a starting point for methods to stand out and plan of export, is to define the stages of export readiness and develop thorough plans concerning export activities and strategies. By doing so, you are ready to open the doors of reaching the international markets with your music and can increase a network of people from all over the world.

This thesis has provided a perspective of the digitized recorded music market field in Bergen and provided an understanding of the music export business from this perspective. As a person from Bergen and working within the music industries in the city, it has been natural for me to conduct a case study of this particular city. Even though the digitized recorded industry's work with export have been of focus, there are other parts of the industries engaged with working with export that could be interesting to do more research on, perhaps especially then the live industries handling of the pandemic. I hope this thesis can be something to look at if a similar case study were conducted of other cities in Norway or countries abroad.

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