

# Musipreneurship in Transition: A Review of Drivers, Challenges, and Emerging Trends in the Music Industry

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## Abstract

This review paper explores the transformative phenomenon of musipreneurship, which occurs at the intersection of music creation and entrepreneurial innovation, to critically evaluate the changing dynamics in the global music industry. Based on an extensive review of secondary data and recent theoretical debates, the research investigates the key factors driving this change, including digitalization, shifts in consumer behaviour, and the decentralization of music creation and distribution. It also looks at structural and functional barriers that the musipreneurs face, such as revenue imbalances, algorithmic gatekeeping, psychological fatigue, system inequities due to gender and race. Other emerging trends that emerge in the review and are put into perspective include incorporating blockchain technologies, using artificial intelligence, and new input modes of participatory platform governance. With this synthesis, the paper provides more nuanced evidence on what musipreneurship means as an opportunity within the context of cultural work, creative independence, and sustainable career strategies in contemporary music economics, contributing to the broader discussion of innovative entrepreneurship and digitalized cultural production.

**Keywords:** Musipreneurship, Creative Entrepreneurship, Music Industry, Digital Transformation, Streaming Platforms, Independent Musicians, Cultural Economy, Platform Economy.

## Introduction

The interplay between music production and entrepreneurship, also known as musipreneurship, has led to a total revolution in the worldwide music sector. Such a hybrid professional identity, where musicians wear multiple hats, play the role of marketers, distributors, and strategists, is becoming more common amidst massive digital disruption. The weakening of the old hegemony of the record label, along with budget-friendly production methods, has allowed performers to take more control and engage in more entrepreneurial activities (Hracs, 2012; Mulligan, 2014). However, with this power comes greater responsibility, in that musipreneurs are required to produce something creative and adjust it to branding, dissemination, and funding.

There is a traditional gatekeeping system, which has been overturned by digital platforms, allowing artists to communicate directly with fans internationally (Hracs, 2012; Mulligan, 2014). However, such democratization has stiffened the rivalry and exacerbated the income disparity: only a few artists earn significant incomes, while the rest live with financial insecurity. One concern that has been present since the rise of musipreneural artists is the precarious work, with stress and mental health complications being prevalent among musipreneural musicians owing to financial insecurity, as well as dependency on platforms (Gross & Musgrave, 2020; Loveday et al., 2023).

In addition to individual stress, musipreneurship is informed by unequal structures based on gender and race. The benefits of digital platforms, such as removing systemic barriers in funding, representation, and access, are not yet complete; women and artists of colour continue to be underrepresented in key industry positions (Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, 2021). The evidence obtained through empirical studies of hiring and programming tends to confirm ongoing inequalities along professional and creative lines (Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, 2021).

At the same time, new technologies, including blockchain-based systems and NFTs, offer new musipreneural opportunities. NFTs provide the potential for copyright protection and direct interaction with fans via smart contracts that execute royalties. However, some ethical and regulatory issues, such as the weakness of asset ownership and market volatility, remain present (Sharma et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Other governance frameworks, such as platform cooperativism, which supports fair ownership of digital music platforms and challenges existing robust corporate systems, complement these innovations (Scholz & Schneider, 2016).

This literature review is an amalgamation of secondary data and a peer review that critically analyses the impelling forces, barriers, and emerging patterns that affect musipreneurship. With an emphasis on the interrelationships among empowerment, insecurity, and technological change, the paper offers nuanced insights into the implications of musipreneurship for creative labour, policy, and cultural entrepreneurship in the digital age.

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Content and Streaming**

The fact that digital technology has increased the number of platforms through which music can be distributed (e.g., Spotify, YouTube, SoundCloud) has democratized the music-making process, making it even more accessible to businesses, while also adding new dimensions to the distribution system. Hracs (2012) revealed that the digital platforms undermine conventional intermediaries and increase the independence of artists. In the same spirit, a meta-analysis by Wall-Andrews (2023) affirmed that entrepreneurial acumen, which entails identifying and capitalizing on opportunities and effectively managing the resources at one's disposal, is itself a prerequisite for musicians to take advantage of digitalization (Wall-Andrews, 2023). Additionally, Mbhele stated that the COVID-19 pandemic was another example of how digital music was disseminated, providing a wider audience but further exacerbating unsafe conditions through precarious working contexts (Mbhele, 2021).

### **Identity and entrepreneurship in musicians**

In their recent qualitative research, Haynes and Marshall (2018) described such musicians as reluctant entrepreneurs due to their resistance to adopting an entrepreneurial identity, which is imposed de facto against their will as business entrepreneurs. Similar conflicts have been identified by Pizzolitto (2022), who states that the identity work of musicians is associated with finding a balance between artistic authenticity and business imperatives (Pizzolitto, 2022).

### **NFTs and blockchain**

Blockchain technology is considered a disruptor in the realm of music rights management. Peters and Cartwright (2023) noted that NFTs may offer copyright protection and new revenue streams, although their adoption has been relatively low and uneven (Peters & Cartwright, 2023). The article by Stockhinger (2024) employed the social-construction-of-technology theory to explain how artists perceive and derive advantages from NFTs in varying cultural contexts.

## Musical Collaboration and Technological Invention

Das et al. (2021) addressed security issues in the NFT ecosystem by warning that artists are subject to exploitation unless the blockchain architecture is sound. Adjei-Mensah et al. (2021) proposed technical yet encouraging solutions, which suggested Ethereum-based platforms enabling composers to protect their copyrights and secure automated payment of royalties.

## The Development of Skills and Social Capital

According to the studies of Wall-Andrews (2023) and Mbhele (2021), effective musipreneurs utilize both digital agility and strategic networking. Digital entrepreneurship research situates this within the context of change management capabilities and adaptability to digital environments (Mbhele, 2021; Ratten, 2022).

**Table 1: Summary & Emerging Gaps**

Theme	Insight	Research Gaps
Digital Platforms	Empower artists, but deepen income stratification	Quantitative analyses of micro-artist sustainability
Entrepreneurial Identity	Artists are often unprepared for business roles	Cross-cultural studies on identity formation
Blockchain/NFTs	Smart contracts support revenues but face legal and technical limits	Empirical evaluations of long-term utility
Technical Security	Infrastructure still developing	Case studies of real-world implementation
Skills & Networks	Digital and social capital are essential	Educational interventions on musipreneurship training

Source: Compiled by Researcher

## Main Research Question:

**RQ1:** How do digital transformation, technological innovation, and emerging business models impact the practices of musipreneurs in the modern music industry?

## Sub-Research Questions

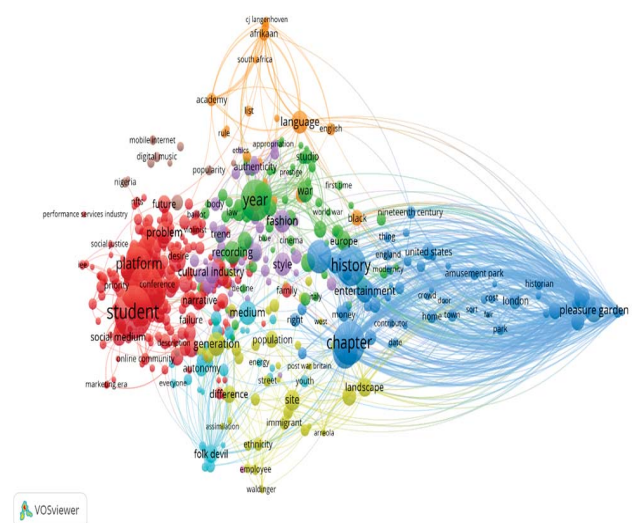
**RQ1.1:** Which are the most important technological, economic, and social forces that have influenced the development of musipreneurship in the last 20 years in the academic and industry literature?

**RQ1.2:** What do musipreneurs face the main issues that musipreneurs face about adapting to digital platforms, decentralized technologies, blockchain, and NFTs, as well as changing audience behaviours, based on peer-reviewed studies and sectoral reports?

**RQ1.3:** Which upcoming developments in flashy, distribution, and paid musicianship are expected to shape musipreneurship shortly, based on current theory and futuristic studies?

## Network Visualization of Music and Platform Studies: AVOsviewer Analysis

Figure 1 Keyword co-occurrence network of Scopus-indexed literature on music and entrepreneurship

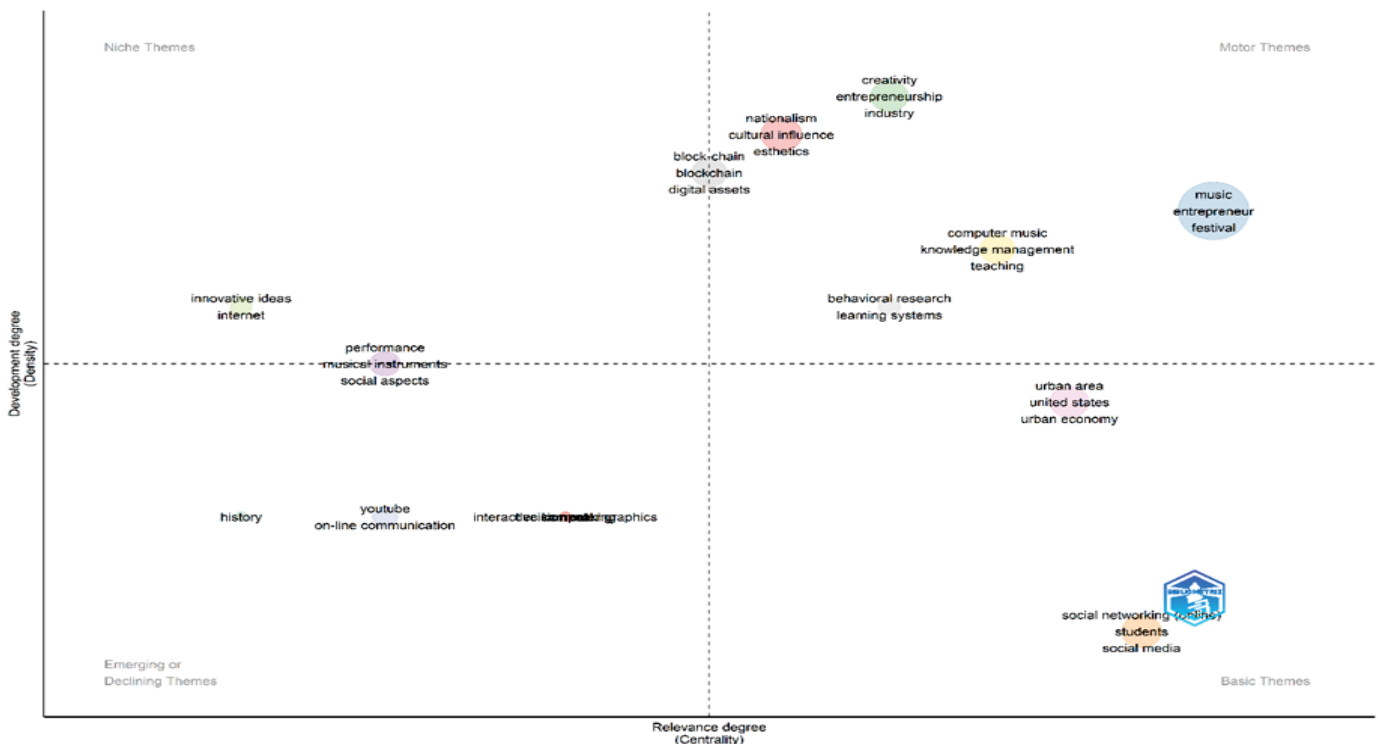


The visualization of the bibliometric network, created with the help of VOSviewer, shows the topical organization and the interactivity of the keywords provided in the literature on musicology, entrepreneurship, and digital media. Several clusters appear in the analysis and represent essential research areas. The red cluster, which revolves around the words student, platform, and social media, indicates the increasing focus of academic discourse on the nature and use of digital platforms and social media in music education and participatory learning environments. The blue cluster with such keywords as pleasure garden, history, entertainment, and London has a robust historical and cultural outlook, especially concerning the issue of the location of leisure actors and their contribution to the establishment of the tradition of music and entertainment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The purple and green clusters emphasize the intersections of fashion, style, trend, recording and cultural industry, and this indicates how the forms of media aesthetics and cultural production may impact the development of music entrepreneurship. In

the meantime, the yellow cluster discusses the topics related to demographics and identities, including keywords like a generation, population, and ethnicity, which show the orientation of multiculturalism, audience segmentation, and identity politics. The brown cluster is quite interesting as it involves new technological areas such as digital music, NFTs, and mobile internet, which indicates the direction of research focus on the digital transformation and the effects it may have on the distribution of music and its monetization. The orange cluster, composed of such words as language, Afrikaans, and authenticity, highlights the regional and linguistic aspects of the study of music. Overall, the network represents an interdisciplinary and changing network of research that has revealed historical, technological, educational, and socio-cultural directions that shape the parameters of the past and the recently developed modern music studies.

### Bibliometric Thematic Map Highlighting Central and Emerging Themes in Music Entrepreneurship

**Figure 2: Thematic map of keyword clusters in Scopus-indexed literature on music and entrepreneurship. Created using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R package).**



The strategic map of fundamental areas of concepts in the study area, which music entrepreneurship offers a thematic map by the Biblioshiny tool. The quadrant of motor themes places the cluster of music, entrepreneur, and festival in a mature central thematic place that reflects the greater number of scholars taking an interest in creative industry occurrences as new forms of entrepreneurship. Other themes like creativity, industry, and blockchain also fall within this quadrant, implying that entrepreneurship research will incorporate technological creativity and culture in the study. The four fundamental themes quadrant encompasses social media, students, and social networking, which refer to basic but emerging concepts requiring more theoretical and empirical definition. The quadrant, on the niche themes, on the other hand, has specific, well-organized yet peripheral themes such as innovative ideas and the internet, and the emerging or declining quadrant as a theme. Earlier digital communication themes, such as YouTube and online communication, show potential to decrease or transform into newer fields of enquiry. This thematic mapping successfully explains the multidimensional research development in music, media, and entrepreneurship.

### **Musipreneurship drivers**

Innovation Petri dish paving the way to musipreneurship is fed through digital transformation and new technologies. In this case, we will look at two underlying forces, namely, (1) the process of moving away from physical formats into a digital and streaming income, and (2) the disruptive nature of AI, blockchains/ NFTs, and immersive media (VR/AR).

### ***Physical to Digital and Streaming Services Transition***

The music business has experienced a paradigm shift- the shift was exerted between physical media (vinyl, CDs) and digital downloads, which was followed by contemporary streaming. This transition represents content ownership to consumption based on access (Dolata, 2020). The second decade of the digital transformation of music can thus be compared to a sociotechnical upheaval regarding rights and flows of value, as Dolata identified the modalities of consumer surveillance, algorithmic curation, and music commodification enabled by streaming platforms in their sociotechnical analysis (Dolata, 2020).

Streaming has become the main income generator, with more than 60 percent of all global recorded music market earnings in 2023 (IFPI, 2024). Yet, this money is extremely polarizing: on the one hand, a limited group of superstars gets the majority of funds, on the other hand, enormous competition and precarious incomes become common among multiple musipreneurs and independent musicians (Hracs et al., 2016). According to Hracs, Seman, and Virani (2016), the digital distribution not only provides artists with the power of these decisions in their careers, but it also increases the market competition and the necessity to develop a strategic marketing and brand development.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed this shift toward digital dependence. According to Mbhele (2021), artists have been able to increase their global reach through virtual performances and streaming, but have been confronted with further financial insecurity and inequality due to gatekeeping through algorithms. The results these studies bring to light are two-sided: on the one hand, digitalization leads to independence and accessibility, on the other hand, to inequality and an unstable metabolism of musipreneurial livelihoods (Dolata, 2020; Hracs et al., 2016; Mbhele, 2021).

### ***AI, Blockchain/NFTs, and VR/AR Role***

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

AI is being incorporated up and down the music value chain- helping to create, post-produce, analyze, and personalize. One of the most extensive scholarly reviews is provided by Anantrasirichai and Bull (2022) due to the breakdown of AI applications into generative composition, audio enhancements, listener analytics, and compression. They underline the possibility of AI to become a complementary collaboration partner to the work of artists who contribute to their creativity (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022). The article by Stahl and Stierand (2022) states that AI transforms creativity's labor structures, including older functions and control over digital musical ecosystems.

Such AI-powered features make streaming music more of a personal experience via complex recommendation engines- these can act as both visibility boosters and algorithmic filters. On the one hand, they provide increased



scope; on the other, they standardize creative performance using data-based norms that cannot be seen.

### ***NFTs and blockchain***

Blockchain technologies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) present prospects to offer a decentralized system of rights management, royalty system, and artist compensation. The early SWOT analysis of music NFTs showed programmable royalties and fan engagement as the strengths. Nevertheless, they also pointed out illustrative ongoing legal gray areas and metadata splintering and hindering limits in the user interface that block its popularization.

Peters and Cartwright (2023) discuss the possibilities of the new blockchain tools that enable artists to cut the middleman and connect with their audiences directly. However, their research warns that blockchain platforms are too complex, and policy uncertainty hinders wider adoption (Peters & Cartwright, 2023). As a complement to the analyses, Adjei-Mensah, Osei Agyemang, and Salako (2021) created and evaluated Ethereum-based systems to support the protection of rights and automatic royalty enforcement. Their results document greater transparency and de-intermediation, which is offset by an array of technical barriers to adoption, such as digital literacy deficits residing in artist cohorts (Adjei-Mensah et al., 2021).

Taken together, such technologies imply the route to artist-driven economies and a minimization of power asymmetries, but they need a strong infrastructural and legal support to achieve their potential.

### ***Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)***

VR and AR are immersive technologies that could represent new ways of attracting the audience and providing new sources of revenue. A recent scoping review by Mhlambi and Nxosi (2024) shows how virtual concerts, three sixty-degree music videos, and interactive sponsorship spaces will present new revenue streams and creative forms. Nonetheless, they warn against the underrated production costs and technical requirements that, according to them, can limit musipreneurs lacking the appropriate means and skill sets (Mhlambi & Nxosi, 2024).

## **Evolution of Business Ecosystem & Changing Consumer Behavior**

### ***Alteration in Consumer Behavior***

#### ***More Consumption through Streaming and Social Media***

In 2023, streaming services (Spotify, Apple Music, etc.) consumed more than 60% of worldwide recorded music revenues (IFPI, 2024). This is a process of transitioning ownership to access consumption, which has changed the consumption patterns of listeners with a concomitant impact on the marketplace (Dolata, 2020).

Emotion and usability have a significant influence on consumer behavior on streaming platforms. The S-O-R model was used by Hsu, Raj, and Sandy (2021) to demonstrate that subscription decisions and purchasing behavior could be predicted by their positive emotional reactions, which were triggered by design, convenience, and personalization (Hsu et al., 2021).

This fact is enhanced through social media: the quasi-natural experiment conducted by Winkler et al. (2024) showed that the monetization of Universal Music Group on TikTok was connected to a 2-3 percent rise in audio streaming consumption, which proves that exposure to social media does not substitute but supplements streaming consumption (Winkler et al., 2024).

#### ***Live events and Experiential Marketing: The importance***

Concerts are a significant factor in the promotion of music. Ternovski and Yasseri (2019) studied online data of 1.3 million subscribers to Last.FM platform concluding that people who attended concerts played one more song daily on average, and the same spread to friends who did not participate in the concert-with the extent of the spread indicating how live experience drives personal and social media interactivity (Ternovski & Yasseri, 2019).

Real-life concerts remain on top of the list in experiential appeal despite the uprising of virtual concerts, VR, and AR use. According to Mhlambi and Nxosi (2024), since virtual experiences are innovative, they require advanced production capacities and cause economic inequality among musipreneurs (Mhlambi & Nxosi, 2024).

## **Evolution of Business Ecosystem**

### ***The emergence of Digital intermediaries and platformization***

The music industry has become a platform market ruled by digital distributors such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube. According to Geurts and Cepa (2023), this tendency may be described as an envelopment of business ecosystems where platforms take over the role of traditional labels, distribution, promotion, analytics, payment, and centralize power in algorithmic infrastructures (Geurts & Cepa, 2023).

### ***Envelopment of the traditional business models***

Such a platform-based strategy has succeeded in cannibalizing old industry structures. The Wlömert & Papies (2015) research revealed that streaming subscriptions replace physical and download sales, but in sum, revenue has increased via subscription and advertising-based models of streaming platforms. Labels' infrastructure is also changing as platforms are creatively venturing into artist services, data analytics, and live-event promotion (Wlömert & Papies, 2015; Geurts & Cepa, 2023).

## **Business Model Innovation**

### ***Streaming, Social Media, and Cross-Platform Entertainment Integration***

TikTok is among social media platforms where music discovery and artist promotion have recently become the center of the industry. Songs are often moved up the charts based on viral trends as a strong form of integration of music with short-form video (Business Insider, 2024). This unified ecosystem emphasizes the need for musipreneurs to build cross-platform tactics that combine streaming playlists, social media content, and live promotion into a comprehensive interaction with the audience.

### ***The new tactics of monetization***

Musipreneurs are exploring other sources of online income besides the usual streaming royalties:

Microtransactions/ Direct-to-Fan Sales: Direct artist cash-in to fans can be performed via crowdfunding platforms, fan subscriptions, exclusive content sales (the example of

Royal.io as a rights-token player is covered by Wikipedia; third-party evidence is provided, however DOI is not available).

NFTs: Artists also provide NFTs to get paid collectibles and smart-contract royalties. Services such as Royal.io allow fans to own streaming royalties, but good research on legal and distributive considerations has yet to be produced (Peters & Cartwright, 2023).

### ***Employment of Technologies***

#### **Blockchain to Rights Administration & Royalty Progress**

Of the current applications of blockchains, where metadata quality can be enhanced and payments automated, some applications focus on decentralized rights registries such as the Open Music Initiative (Wikidata, 2016) and direct royalties mechanisms. These systems have many promising applications; however, there are adoption and governance obstacles because of the technical complexity and absence of standardization (Hardjono & Pentland, 2019; Open Music Initiative, 2016).

#### **Machine Learning in Music Recommendation & Production**

Computerized systems that use AI are changing the experience of listeners and making sounds:

Recommender systems concentrate on matching and elucidation of sentiments. Transparent AI recommendation is an idea with greater user trust value (Afchar et al., 2022), and genre-sensitive playlist recommendations are enhanced via GS-RNN and more recent models (Entertainment Computing, 2024; Afchar et al., 2022; Anand et al., 2021).

Emotion-aware systems: emotion-aware systems recognize mood in the face or through psychometrics, and provide a recommendation on a personal level (Babu et al., 2023; Rozhevskii et al., 2022). These instruments support musipreneurs in polishing audience targeting and marketing, but the issues of privacy and manipulating emotions are ethical questions.

### ***Renaissance of Live Music***

#### ***Rediscovery of Live Events & Festivals***

After the lockdown caused by COVID-19, live events have

been coming back. Studies show that more people are becoming fans and listening to more music after a show, which shows that current live performances can still help drive discovery (Ternovski & Yasseri, 2019). Examples of successful virtual-first concerts (such as the Beyond Live series by SM Entertainment) demonstrated the market size that virtual immersive concerts can capture (Wikipedia, 2025).

### ***Hybrid and Virtual Events***

Combining attending its real-life live performances with the AR environment, platforms such as Beyond Live allow a two-way model of artist-to-fan communication (Wikipedia, 2025). The trend gets further extended by VR festivals specializing in VR music listening and storytelling, such as FIVARS, proving the creative potential of new events (Wikipedia, 2025).

### **Sustainability and Social Responsibility**

#### ***Environmental Responsibility of Event Management***

Festival organizers are becoming aware of the impact fed back on the environment. According to Mackay, Julien, and Hirst (2023), waste, transport, and community impact are components of the event, referring to the sustainable planning components. The international survey did show that 64 per cent of festivals do not reflect sustainability messaging, and only 6 per cent have consistent social communication, which has opened a gap between awareness and action (Mackay et al., 2023). Initiatives such as using no single-use plastics at Coachella are important signs of change, but sustainability at the venue is still inconsistent (Vogue, 2023).

### **Discussion**

#### ***Finding Synthesis***

The landscape of musipreneurship, which is increasingly volatile but also broken into chunks because of the digital transition, is revealed in the review. Although the democratization of music production and music distribution, which is cultivated by the digital platforms, has lowered entry barriers, it has also entailed the emergence of sophisticated matters touching on visibility, remuneration, and professionalism (Hracs, 2012; Haynes & Marshall, 2018). The contemporary musipreneur must be

a highly versatile individual who balances artistic integrity and entrepreneurial capabilities in a more platform- and data-intensive environment.

Creativity and commerce have never been as complex. On the one hand, technological solutions, like AI-produced music, NFTs, and blockchain royalty schemes, offer new monetization and interaction with the audience opportunities to artists (Peters & Cartwright, 2023). Conversely, these tools increase regulatory uncertainty, ethical challenges, and high learning costs, most time devoid of supportive institutional or financial resources (Hardjono & Pentland, 2019). Moreover, the authority of the big labels to remain as oligopolies opposes the idea that online platforms tend to spread equity or diffusion in the music business (Pizzolitto, 2023).

Another theme that pops up multiple times is identity tension, namely, musicians' attitudes toward professionalization of their professions as they experience an all-too-strong resistance to being referred to as entrepreneurs internally and within cultural circles (Haynes & Marshall, 2018). Some performers see the term musipreneur as empowering, adopt the label and even some employ the term as something negative that stands against true artistry.

#### ***Threats and opportunities***

The new music ecosystem presents new opportunities that had never existed before, such as creating direct connections between an artist and a fan, getting real-time feedback, and diversifying revenue streams. Crowdfunding, direct sales, and platform analytics can provide better knowledge and independence in managing a career. Nonetheless, parallel threats are also imminent with such benefits. The excessive dependence on unstable web-based ecosystems, the lack of transparency in algorithms, and the right information heterogeneity make the issue of precarity even more serious among independent musicians.

In addition, the hybrid events, online interaction, and mental wellbeing are becoming more relevant to the industry due to the post-COVID period. As music professionals adapt to these changes, the unorganized training on becoming an entrepreneur is imminent. The



need to develop entrepreneurial identity in musicians using pedagogical innovation and institutional support is becoming prevalent (Preece & Kerrigan, 2015).

### Future Directions

#### *Gaps in the Research*

- On its part, musipreneurship has been understudied, particularly by employing an empirical longitudinal approach. In the future, research ought to determine:
- The success of various musipreneurial approaches by genres, geographies, and career stage.
- The economic viability of direct-to-fan and NFT-driven monetization systems.
- Entrepreneurial identity adoption and psychological effects of identity on musicians.
- Furthermore, few studies have been conducted on the practical implications of AI and blockchain adoption on artistic creativity, ownership of the law, and distribution of revenues.

#### *Practice and Policy*

These findings indicate that the interested stakeholders of the industry, such as music platforms, educational institutions, and policymakers, should take a proactive approach to creating a fair musipreneurial environment. Some of the crucial suggestions are:

- **Education:** Incorporate training in digital marketing, rights management, and revenue diversification in formal music training, to make music entrepreneurship part of music education.
- **Platform Responsibility:** Support more transparent algorithmic curation and equitable payout systems for independent artists.
- **Policy Intervention:** Create public grants, tax controls, and legislation favoring innovative, ethical, and sustainable artist-led business models.

By tackling these areas, the future of musipreneurship can be guided into more inclusion, flexibility, and an ability to respond to changes in technology and the economy.

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