

Paradigms in Music Media: The Philosophy of Social Media in Reshaping Artist Visibility, Audience Engagement, and Music Entrepreneurship

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23587216>

Article History	ABSTRACT
Original Research Article	<i>The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed the contemporary music industry, reshaping how music is discovered, promoted, distributed, and monetized. Central to this transformation is the process of platformization, through which digital platforms increasingly organize cultural production, audience participation, and entrepreneurial activity. Among the most influential of these platforms are TikTok and YouTube, both of which have become pivotal actors in contemporary music ecosystems. Adopting theoretical, conceptual and analytical approach, this research examines how these platforms are redefining artist visibility, audience engagement, and music entrepreneurship within the digital age. Drawing on contemporary scholarship on platformization, digital music industries, social media marketing, and platform economies, the research explores the opportunities and challenges associated with platform-based music media. It argues that while TikTok and YouTube have expanded opportunities for music discovery, audience participation, branding, and entrepreneurial innovation, they have simultaneously introduced new forms of algorithmic gatekeeping, creator dependence, and economic uncertainty. The analysis further demonstrates that visibility and success within contemporary music media are increasingly shaped by platform logics, engagement metrics, and recommendation systems rather than by traditional industry structures alone. It concludes that sustainable participation in platformized music environments requires a combination of creative competence, entrepreneurial adaptability, digital literacy, and strategic audience engagement. By contributing to emerging debates on platformization and cultural production, the research offers a critical understanding of how digital platforms continue to reshape the structures and future trajectories of the global music industry.</i> Keywords: Music media, platformization, artist visibility, audience engagement, digital culture.
Received: 25-08-2026	
Accepted: 29-09-2026	
Published: 23-10-2026	
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INTRODUCTION

Music industry has experienced profound changes since the inception of digital technologies and internet-based communication systems. Over the past two decades, technological innovation has transformed the ways music is produced, distributed, promoted, and consumed. In the words of Sunday-Kanu (2024), “Many musicians have turned to digital platforms to sustain their careers, leading to shifts in how music is created, shared, and consumed” (p. 86). “For instance, technology has allowed the creation of music education programs that are available online, and can be accessed by students who may likely not have access to

the traditional music education programs” (Amaegbe, 2023:111). In addition, Onyedum & Nwankpa (2024) noted succinctly that:

There are different types of musical software and apps that can provide support to the music pedagogical process, such as *Earmaster*, *Bandlab*, *Solfeg*, *Starmaker*, *Noteflight Learn*, *SmartMusic*, *Ableton Live*, *GarageBand*, *Noteworthy*, *Finale*, *Sibelius*, *Cubase*, and many more. Some features of these music technologies enable seamless collaboration between musicians, producers, and

professional audio engineers, regardless of their locations (p. 60).

Traditional institutions such as record labels, radio stations, television networks, and physical distributors once controlled access to audiences and largely determined which artists achieved public recognition. Although these institutions continue to play important roles, their influence has been challenged by digital platforms that facilitate more direct interactions between creators and consumers (Tschmuck, 2021; Wikström, 2020). One of the most significant developments associated with this transformation is *Platformization*. Geurts and Cepa (2023) describe platformization as “the growing influence of digital platforms in organizing economic, social, and cultural activities through interconnected ecosystems of users, creators, and commercial actors.” In the environment of music industry, this process has altered how artists gain visibility and how audiences discover and engage with music.

The developments of TikTok and YouTube illustrate this shift more clearly. Both platforms have become central actors among others within contemporary music media, yet they influence musical culture in different ways. TikTok has revolutionized music discovery through algorithmically curated feeds, short-form videos, and participatory trends that enable songs to circulate rapidly across global audiences.

As Bubnova (2024) and Skelton (2025) observe, the platform has become a powerful promotional environment where user-generated content, viral challenges, and influencer participation frequently determine the visibility of songs. YouTube, on the other hand, offers a broader ecosystem that supports music videos, live performances, artist interviews, documentaries, and educational content. Through its recommendation systems and monetization structures, the platform enables artists and creators to cultivate longer-term relationships with audiences while generating economic opportunities (Belkaid, 2024). Yet the growing dominance of these platforms should not be viewed uncritically. Much of the existing literature emphasizes their democratizing potential and their capacity to reduce traditional barriers to entry. While this perspective is valid, it often overlooks the new forms of dependence that accompany platform-based participation. The decline of conventional gatekeepers has not eliminated gatekeeping altogether. Rather, gatekeeping has increasingly become embedded within algorithms, recommendation systems, and engagement metrics that remain largely inaccessible to creators. Arrieta (2025) argues that the promise of visibility often conceals pressures that compel creators to adapt their practices to platform expectations, thereby raising important questions

about artistic autonomy, ipso facto, and long-term sustainability.

The implications of these developments extend beyond promotion and visibility. They have contributed to the emergence of new forms of music entrepreneurship in which artists, influencers, reviewers, and content creators operate within highly competitive platform economies. Opportunities for participation have expanded, but so too have the challenges associated with content saturation, revenue instability, copyright management, and audience fragmentation. Recent studies by Gupta and Malhi (2026) as well as Wang, Ramaprasad, and Gopal (2025) suggest that success within these environments increasingly depends on a combination of creative talent, entrepreneurial skills, digital literacy, and the ability to navigate platform logics effectively. Against this critical backdrop, this work examines how TikTok and YouTube are reshaping contemporary music media through the broader process of platformization. Particular attention is given to their influence on artist visibility, audience engagement, and music entrepreneurship.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Music Media

The meaning of music media has expanded considerably alongside broader technological changes within the music industry. Historically, the term referred primarily to communication channels through which information about music and musicians was transmitted to audiences. Newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television networks played central roles in promoting artists, reviewing musical works, reporting industry developments, and shaping public tastes. In this traditional environment, communication largely followed a one-way pattern in which media institutions produced content while audiences consumed it. The digital revolution disrupted this arrangement. As Wikström (2020) observes that, digital technologies have transformed the music industry into a highly interconnected environment where the boundaries between producers, distributors, and consumers are increasingly blurred. Contemporary music media now encompasses streaming platforms, social networking sites, podcasts, blogs, video-sharing platforms, and creator-led channels. More importantly, these technologies have altered the very nature of participation within music culture.

Consequently, music media should not be understood merely as a collection of communication channels. It is better conceived as a dynamic ecosystem through which music-related content is created, circulated, interpreted, and monetized. Within this ecosystem, artists, audiences, content creators, influencers, and platform operators all

participate in shaping musical visibility. The significance of music media therefore lies not only in its ability to distribute information but also in its capacity to structure relationships, influence discovery, and generate economic opportunities.

This shift has important implications for understanding contemporary music culture. Unlike traditional media systems that relied heavily on institutional control, digital music media is characterized by interaction, participation, and collaboration. Audiences are no longer passive recipients of information; they actively contribute to trends, discussions, recommendations, and content creation. Platforms such as TikTok and YouTube illustrate this transformation particularly well, as user-generated content frequently determines which songs gain visibility and which artists attract public attention. In this sense, modern music media functions not simply as a means of communication but as a participatory space where cultural influence is continuously negotiated among multiple actors.

Platformization

Few developments have altered the contemporary music industry as profoundly as the rise of digital platforms. What initially appeared to be technological infrastructures for distributing content have evolved into powerful institutions that influence how music is produced, promoted, discovered, and monetized. Increasingly, artists, audiences, advertisers, and content creators interact within platform-controlled environments that shape not only communication but also economic and cultural participation. This transformation is commonly described as platformization. According to Geurts and Cepa (2023), platformization refers to the “growing role of digital platforms as organizing structures within economic, social, and cultural life.” However, reducing platformization to a technological phenomenon risks overlooking its broader implications. Platforms do not simply facilitate interactions; they actively structure them. Through algorithms, recommendation systems, data collection practices, and monetization mechanisms, platforms influence what content becomes visible, who gains attention, and how value is distributed across digital ecosystems. The music industry provides a particularly compelling illustration of this process. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Music have become central intermediaries connecting artists with audiences. Their influence extends far beyond content distribution. They increasingly shape listening habits, determine patterns of music discovery, and affect the commercial trajectories of artists. As Ta et al. (2024) observe, platform-based systems have become deeply embedded within contemporary music consumption, making it difficult to separate musical success from platform performance.

The opportunities associated with platformization coexist with new forms of dependence. While digital platforms have reduced many traditional barriers to entry, they have simultaneously increased creators' reliance on platform infrastructures. Visibility is often governed by algorithmic systems whose operations remain largely opaque. Consequently, artists may gain access to global audiences while possessing limited control over the mechanisms that determine whether their content is seen. This tension represents one of the central contradictions of platformized culture: greater accessibility does not necessarily translate into greater autonomy. Understanding platformization is therefore essential for analysing contemporary music media. It provides a framework for examining how digital platforms have become influential actors within cultural production, shaping not only artistic visibility but also audience engagement and entrepreneurial opportunities within the music industry.

The Philosophical Foundations of Platformization

Platformization is often discussed as a technological or economic phenomenon; however, its foundations are deeply philosophical. At its core, platformization reflects changing assumptions about communication, knowledge, power, participation, and social organization in contemporary society. The growing influence of platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Spotify, and other digital ecosystems cannot be adequately understood without examining the philosophical ideas that underpin their operation and social significance.

Pragmatism is one of the important philosophical foundations of platformization. Classical pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey argued that the value of ideas lies in their practical consequences and usefulness within human experience (Dewey, 1929; James, 1907). Contemporary digital platforms embody this logic by emphasizing functionality and measurable outcomes. In this sense, platformization reflects a pragmatic orientation in which effectiveness becomes a central criterion of value; and as well, dictates that interactions, values and meanings associated with music media, are defined strictly by the algorithmic fruits they yield. Platformization is also closely connected to social constructivist understandings of reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that social reality is constructed through ongoing human interaction and communication. Digital platforms exemplify this process by enabling users to participate actively in the creation, circulation, and interpretation of content.

Another significant philosophical influence is network theory. Castells (2010) argues that contemporary society is increasingly organized around networks rather than hierarchical institutions. This perspective is particularly relevant to platformization because digital platforms

operate as interconnected systems linking creators, audiences, advertisers, influencers, and commercial actors. Traditional models of communication often relied on centralized structures in which information flowed from institutions to audiences. Platformized environments, by contrast, facilitate multidirectional interactions across complex networks. The philosophy of platformization also reflects important postmodern themes. Lyotard (1984) famously argued that contemporary societies exhibit increasing skepticism towards grand narratives and centralized forms of authority. Digital platforms embody this tendency by decentralizing cultural production and enabling individuals to create, distribute, and evaluate content outside traditional institutional structures. Artists no longer depend exclusively on record labels, broadcasters, or media organizations to reach audiences. Instead, visibility increasingly emerges through decentralized interactions occurring within platform ecosystems. From a phenomenological perspective, platformization influences how individuals experience and interpret reality. Husserl (1970) emphasized that human consciousness is intentional, meaning that it is always directed towards particular objects of awareness. Digital platforms shape this intentionality by directing attention through recommendation systems, algorithms, notifications, and personalized content feeds. What individuals encounter online is therefore not entirely neutral but is mediated by technological structures that influence perception and engagement. These philosophical perspectives suggest that platformization is more than a technological trend. Understanding these philosophical foundations provides deeper insight into why platforms have become such influential actors within contemporary music media.

Artiste Visibility

Visibility has always been a crucial determinant of success within the music industry. For much of the twentieth century, public recognition depended largely on access to institutional gatekeepers such as record labels, radio stations, broadcasters, music journalists, and promoters. These actors exercised considerable influence over which artists gained exposure and wider audiences. Consequently, visibility functioned as a scarce resource controlled by a relatively small number of industry institutions.

The emergence of digital technologies has significantly altered this landscape. Contemporary artists can communicate directly with audiences through social media platforms, streaming services, and content-sharing networks, reducing their dependence on traditional intermediaries. As Belkaid (2024) notes, digital platforms have expanded opportunities for exposure by providing creators with new channels through which they can

distribute content and cultivate audiences. For many independent musicians, this development represents one of the most significant advantages of the digital age. Yet the notion that digital platforms have fully democratized visibility deserves careful scrutiny.

Although access has expanded, visibility itself remains unevenly distributed. Algorithms, recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and platform policies increasingly determine which artists receive attention and which remain largely invisible. In this context, visibility is not simply a matter of artistic talent or creative quality. Rather, it is shaped by complex interactions between creators, audiences, and platform infrastructures. As a result, many artists now compete within what may be described as an attention economy, where success depends on the ability to attract and sustain audience engagement in highly competitive digital environments. TikTok provides perhaps the clearest illustration of this transformation. Through viral trends, user-generated content, influencer participation, and algorithmic amplification, songs can achieve extraordinary levels of exposure within remarkably short periods. A similar dynamic can be observed on YouTube, where recommendation systems play a significant role in shaping audience discovery. What emerges from both cases is a broader realization that visibility is no longer controlled primarily by human gatekeepers but by platform-driven systems that allocate attention according to algorithmic criteria.

Audience Engagement

This occupies a central position within contemporary music media because digital platforms thrive not merely on content production but on user participation. Unlike traditional media systems that prioritized audience reach and exposure, platform-based environments place greater emphasis on interaction, responsiveness, and relationship building. The value of a song, video, or creator is increasingly measured through indicators such as likes, comments, shares, subscriptions, watch time, and other forms of audience activity. This reflects a broader transformational shift in the role of audiences. In conventional media environments, audiences primarily consumed content produced by institutions and professional creators. Today, however, users actively participate in the production, circulation, and interpretation of cultural content. According to Salo et al. (2013), “audience participation is shaped by social, informational, and experiential motivations, as individuals engage with content not only to acquire information but also to express identities, build relationships, and participate in communities.” Engagement therefore extends beyond consumption; it has become a form of cultural participation.

Audience engagement should not be viewed solely as a cultural phenomenon. Within platformized environments, engagement also functions as an economic resource. Algorithms frequently reward content that generates high levels of interaction, thereby increasing its visibility and circulation. Consequently, audience behaviour contributes directly to content performance and commercial outcomes. What appears to be participation is simultaneously a form of value creation, illustrating how cultural interaction and economic activity have become increasingly intertwined within digital music ecosystems. The transformation of audiences from passive consumers into active contributors represents one of the defining characteristics of contemporary music media. However, it also raises important questions about power and influence. If engagement determines visibility, and visibility determines opportunity, then audience participation becomes a crucial factor in shaping artistic success.

Music Entrepreneurship

The digital transformation of the music industry has significantly expanded entrepreneurial opportunities for artists and content creators. Traditionally, music careers were organized around specialized structures in which record labels, managers, and promoters handled most commercial activities. Contemporary digital environments have disrupted this arrangement, enabling artists to participate more directly in the promotion and distribution of their work. Tschmuck (2021) observes that digital technologies have lowered barriers to entry and provided creators with access to global audiences.

Consequently, music entrepreneurship now extends beyond artistic production to include activities such as content creation, branding, digital marketing, audience management, distribution, and platform-based promotion. Independent artists increasingly operate as self-managed enterprises that combine creative practice with business strategy. Platforms such as TikTok and YouTube have accelerated this shift by creating environments where entrepreneurial success depends not only on musical talent but also on visibility, audience engagement, and platform literacy. Yet these opportunities should not be overstated. Greater accessibility has also intensified competition, making entrepreneurship within digital music ecosystems both more attainable and more demanding. Success increasingly depends on the ability to navigate rapidly changing platform environments and at the same time maintaining creative relevance and audience interest.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Platformization Theory. The Theory is derived from the works of Van Dijck (2013), Van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal (2018), and further expanded by

Poell, Nieborg, and Van Dijck (2019). This perspective views digital platforms not merely as technological infrastructures but as socio-technical systems that increasingly organize cultural production, economic exchange, and social interaction. This theory provides a useful framework for understanding the growing influence of digital platforms within contemporary music industries. Rather than viewing platforms as neutral technologies, the theory emphasizes their role as intermediaries that structure communication, visibility, participation, and value creation. As Geurts and Cepa (2023) argue, platforms actively shape interactions among users through algorithms, policies, recommendation systems, and monetization mechanisms.

Applied to music media, platformization theory helps explain why platforms such as TikTok and YouTube have become influential actors rather than mere distribution channels. These platforms shape patterns of music discovery, audience engagement, and entrepreneurial activity by determining how content circulates and how attention is allocated. It also draws attention to an important tension within platformized culture. While digital platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for visibility and growth, they simultaneously create new forms of dependence. Artists and creators often rely on algorithmic systems that they do not control and may not fully understand. Platformization Theory therefore offers a valuable lens for examining both the opportunities and constraints that characterize contemporary music media.

TIKTOK AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MUSIC DISCOVERY

TikTok is one of the few platforms that have influenced contemporary music discovery. Some decades ago, audiences typically encountered new music through radio stations, television programmes, record stores, or recommendations from friends and family. Today, millions of users discover songs through short-form videos that combine music with humour, storytelling, dance, commentary, and other forms of creative expression. This shift has fundamentally altered the pathways through which songs gain public attention and cultural relevance. At the centre of TikTok's influence is its algorithm-driven content distribution model. Unlike many social networking platforms that prioritize content from existing connections, TikTok continuously exposes users to unfamiliar creators and previously unknown content through its "For You" feed. According to Bubnova (2024), "this structure has expanded opportunities for music discovery by enabling songs to reach audiences far beyond an artist's immediate follower base. As a result, visibility is increasingly determined by content performance rather than by established popularity alone."

TikTok's significance extends beyond discovery. The platform has become an important mechanism through which music is transformed into cultural participation. Songs no longer circulate solely as listening experiences; they become raw materials for trends, challenges (such as duets, particular dance pattern, mimes etc), memes, remixes, and user-generated narratives. In many instances, audiences encounter a song first through a viral trend and only later seek out the artist or the full recording. This development represents a significant departure from traditional models of music promotion and consumption.

TikTok and the Democratization of Music Promotion

One of the most frequently cited advantages of TikTok is its apparent democratization of music promotion. Historically, promotional success depended heavily on access to financial resources, industry connections, and institutional support. Record labels, broadcasters, and marketing agencies largely determined which artists received meaningful exposure. TikTok has disrupted this arrangement by providing relatively unknown artists with opportunities to compete for audience attention alongside established performers. As Belkaid (2024) observes, digital platforms have created alternative pathways through which creators can communicate directly with audiences without relying exclusively on traditional intermediaries. Numerous artists have achieved significant recognition through viral content despite possessing limited financial or organizational backing. However, democratization should not be confused with equality. While access to promotional opportunities has expanded, outcomes remain highly uneven. Success on TikTok is influenced by factors such as timing, content design, audience behaviour, platform literacy, and algorithmic visibility. Consequently, the platform has reduced some traditional barriers to entry while simultaneously creating new forms of competition that privilege creators who understand its operational logic.

Viral Culture and Algorithmic Visibility

A defining feature of TikTok is its capacity to generate viral visibility. Songs can move from relative obscurity to global recognition within days, often through trends initiated by ordinary users rather than industry professionals. Viral culture has therefore become a powerful force within contemporary music promotion. The velocity with which trends, musical sounds, jokes, and challenges spread insanely fast because of the algorithmic value, depicts this viral culture/visibility on/of Tiktok. The mechanisms underlying this process are largely algorithmic. Rather than distributing content according to social relationships alone, TikTok evaluates engagement indicators such as watch time, shares, comments, and audience interaction. Content that performs well is more likely to be recommended to larger audiences, thereby increasing its visibility. Bubnova

(2024) argues that this system has encouraged artists and marketers to design content that invites participation and encourages replication.

Nevertheless, algorithmic visibility presents a significant paradox. The same systems that create opportunities for rapid exposure also generate uncertainty. Creators often depend on recommendation processes that they neither control nor fully understand. Recent scholarship on platformization suggests that the decline of traditional gatekeepers has not eliminated gatekeeping; it has merely relocated it within algorithmic infrastructures that govern the distribution of attention (Geurts & Cepa, 2023). Visibility, therefore, remains mediated, albeit through different mechanisms.

Audience Participation and Music Consumption

Perhaps TikTok's most distinctive contribution to contemporary music media lies in its transformation of audiences from consumers into participants. Users do not merely listen to songs; they incorporate them into dances, challenges, personal narratives, comedic performances, and creative reinterpretations. Music becomes embedded within everyday acts of digital expression. This participatory culture reflects broader shifts within social media environments. Salo et al. (2013) note that individuals engage with digital content not only for information and entertainment but also for self-expression, interaction, and community involvement. TikTok amplifies these motivations by encouraging users to contribute actively to content circulation rather than simply consume it. The implications for music promotion are substantial. Every user-generated video effectively becomes a promotional asset, extending the reach of a song beyond conventional marketing channels. In this sense, audience engagement functions as both a cultural and economic resource. Songs that inspire participation are often rewarded with greater visibility, increased streaming activity, and heightened public awareness. However, this participation also raises important questions about sustainability. Viral engagement may generate extraordinary short-term attention, but it does not always translate into lasting artist-audience relationships. This distinction is crucial because sustained careers depend not merely on visibility but on the ability to convert attention into enduring forms of audience loyalty. This tension is very essential in evaluating TikTok's long-term impact on contemporary music culture.

YOUTUBE, AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT, AND MUSIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

YouTube as a Digital Music Ecosystem

TikTok has been described as being synonymous with rapid discovery and viral visibility; on the other hand, YouTube also occupies a different but equally significant position

within contemporary music media. Rather than functioning primarily as a platform for short-form exposure, YouTube operates as a comprehensive digital ecosystem where music is distributed, discussed, interpreted, and monetized. Music videos, live performances, interviews, documentaries, tutorials, reviews, and educational content collectively contribute to its importance within global music culture.

What distinguishes YouTube from many other platforms is its capacity to support sustained audience engagement. As Wikström (2020) notes, contemporary digital platforms increasingly function as integrated ecosystems rather than isolated communication channels. YouTube exemplifies this tendency by combining content distribution, search functions, recommendation systems, audience interaction, and monetization mechanisms within a single environment. Consequently, it has become more than a repository of videos; it is a space where artistic identities are developed and maintained over time.

Long-Form Content and Artist Development

One of YouTube's most significant contributions to contemporary music media lies in its support for long-form content. Unlike TikTok's emphasis on brevity and immediacy, YouTube enables artists to communicate narratives that extend beyond individual songs. Interviews, documentaries, behind-the-scenes recordings, and performance videos provide audiences with opportunities to engage more deeply with artists and their creative journeys. This distinction is particularly important because visibility alone rarely guarantees long-term success. Audiences may encounter an artist through a viral trend, but sustained engagement often depends on opportunities for deeper connection.

Belkaid (2024) argues that contemporary audiences increasingly value authenticity, storytelling, and personal connection. YouTube's content structure supports these expectations by allowing artists to present aspects of their identities, experiences, and creative processes that cannot easily be communicated through short-form formats. This capacity for narrative construction represents a significant advantage for emerging musicians. The platform functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium through which artists cultivate credibility, authenticity, and audience trust.

Community Formation and Audience Loyalty

The success of contemporary music creators depends increasingly on community rather than visibility alone. In highly competitive digital environments, attracting attention is only the first challenge; maintaining audience interest is often far more difficult. YouTube facilitates community formation through comments, subscriptions, live streams, membership programmes, and other

interactive features. These mechanisms encourage recurring engagement and foster ongoing relationships between creators and audiences. Research by Salo et al. (2013) suggests that individuals are more likely to remain engaged when they feel connected not only to creators but also to wider communities of participants. This observation highlights an important distinction between exposure and loyalty. Viral visibility may generate temporary attention, but communities provide continuity. Audience loyalty influences streaming behaviour, concert attendance, merchandise purchases, crowdfunding participation, and long-term advocacy. For this reason, successful creators increasingly view community building as a strategic objective rather than a secondary outcome of content production.

Music Entrepreneurship in the Platform Economy

The growth of YouTube and other digital platforms has contributed to the emergence of a platform economy in which creative and entrepreneurial activities are increasingly intertwined. Music entrepreneurship now extends beyond artistic production to include branding, content creation, digital marketing, audience management, education, consulting, and platform-based promotion. According to Tschmuck (2021), digital transformation has expanded opportunities for entrepreneurial participation by lowering barriers to entry and increasing access to global audiences. Artists no longer require extensive institutional support to establish meaningful visibility within music markets.

Instead, entrepreneurial success increasingly depends on a creator's ability to combine artistic competence with strategic communication and digital literacy. Nevertheless, platform entrepreneurship remains characterized by uncertainty. Opportunities for participation have expanded, yet competition for attention has intensified. As a result, entrepreneurial success depends not only on creativity but also on the capacity to adapt to changing platform environments and audience expectations.

Monetization and New Economic Opportunities

One of the most significant consequences of platformization is the diversification of revenue opportunities available to creators. Traditional music industry models relied heavily on record sales, radio royalties, and live performances. Contemporary creators increasingly supplement these sources through platform-based monetization strategies.

YouTube's Partner Program, sponsored content, memberships, crowdfunding initiatives, affiliate marketing, brand collaborations, and promotional services illustrate the variety of economic opportunities available within digital ecosystems. As Bodde (2023) observes, successful

monetization is closely linked to audience engagement and value creation. Audiences are more likely to support creators who consistently provide meaningful, informative, or entertaining content. However, the growth of digital monetization should not obscure persistent inequalities within platform economies. While some creators generate substantial revenue, many struggle to achieve financial sustainability despite significant effort and audience engagement. This reality reminds us that platformization has expanded opportunities without eliminating structural disparities. Contemporary music media therefore functions simultaneously as a cultural space, an entrepreneurial environment, and an increasingly important site of economic competition.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The conceptual analysis reveals five core structural challenges emerging from platformization in the contemporary music media:

1. Algorithmic Dependence and the New Gatekeepers

The rise of digital platforms has expanded opportunities for artists, creators, and music entrepreneurs, but it has also introduced new forms of dependence. One of the most significant challenges concerns the growing influence of algorithms in determining visibility, audience reach, and content circulation. Songs, videos, and promotional materials increasingly compete for attention within systems that evaluate engagement metrics such as watch time, shares, comments, and user interactions. This development raises an important paradox.

Digital platforms were initially celebrated for reducing the influence of traditional gatekeepers such as record labels, broadcasters, and media institutions. Yet, as Geurts and Cepa (2023) suggest, gatekeeping has not disappeared; it has simply taken a different form. Algorithmic systems now influence which creators receive attention and which remain largely invisible. Because these systems are frequently modified without public transparency, creators often find themselves dependent on mechanisms they neither control nor fully understand. This means that success within platformized environments requires continuous adaptation. Strategies that generate visibility today may become ineffective tomorrow, making long-term planning increasingly difficult for artists and entrepreneurs.

2. Content Saturation and the Attention Economy

Another consequence of platformization is the growing saturation of digital content. The accessibility of platforms such as TikTok and YouTube has enabled millions of individuals to participate in music promotion, content creation, and digital entrepreneurship. While this expansion has democratized access, it has simultaneously intensified

competition for audience attention. In highly saturated environments, visibility becomes a scarce resource. Every day, creators upload songs, reviews, interviews, tutorials, commentaries, and promotional materials, all competing for limited audience attention. Belkaid (2024) notes that digital media has increased both competition and audience expectations, forcing creators to innovate continuously in order to remain relevant. Within what scholars increasingly describe as the *attention economy*, artistic quality alone rarely guarantees visibility. For emerging artists, this reality can be particularly challenging. Limited resources often restrict promotional capacity, making it difficult to compete with established creators and well-funded campaigns. As a result, success depends not only on creativity but also on strategic positioning and sustained audience engagement.

3. Copyright and Intellectual Property in Digital Environments

The ease with which digital content can be copied, shared, modified, and redistributed has complicated traditional approaches to intellectual property protection. Music media creators frequently engage with copyrighted materials while producing reviews, reaction videos, documentaries, interviews, educational content, and promotional campaigns. Consequently, copyright literacy has become an increasingly important aspect of professional practice. Platforms such as YouTube employ automated content-identification systems designed to protect intellectual property rights. While these mechanisms serve important legal functions, they may also generate disputes, restrictions, and monetization challenges. Content can be flagged, demonetized, or removed even when creators believe their usage falls within acceptable legal boundaries. Passman (2024) argues that contemporary music professionals must navigate an increasingly complex intersection of creativity, technology, and regulation. The challenge is therefore not simply legal compliance but achieving an appropriate balance between artistic expression, audience engagement, and copyright protection.

4. Monetization Inequality and Economic Uncertainty

Although platformization has expanded opportunities for revenue generation, financial rewards remain unevenly distributed. A relatively small number of creators often capture a disproportionate share of available income, while many others struggle to achieve sustainable earnings despite significant effort and audience engagement. This inequality reflects broader characteristics of digital economies. Visibility, engagement levels, audience size, platform support, and advertiser interest all influence financial outcomes. Tschmuck (2021) notes that digital transformation has created new entrepreneurial

opportunities while simultaneously intensifying competition for economic resources.

Consequently, participation does not automatically translate into profitability. For music entrepreneurs, reliance on a single source of revenue can be particularly risky. Changes in platform policies, advertising markets, or audience behaviour can significantly affect earnings. Diversification through sponsorships, memberships, merchandise, consulting services, educational content, and affiliate marketing therefore becomes increasingly important for long-term sustainability.

5. Authenticity, Commercialization, and Creative Tensions

Perhaps the subtlest challenge associated with platformization concerns the tension between authenticity and commercial success. Digital platforms often reward content that generates strong emotional reactions, high engagement rates, and frequent sharing. In response, creators may feel pressured to prioritize visibility over artistic integrity or personal values. This pressure raises broader questions about the relationship between creativity and platform logic. While engagement can increase exposure and economic opportunities, excessive emphasis on algorithmic performance may encourage creators to pursue trends rather than originality. Arrieta (2025) argues that the pursuit of visibility frequently places creators in a cycle of continuous content production that may undermine both creative autonomy and long-term sustainability.

Research on digital engagement consistently suggests that audiences value authenticity, transparency, and trust (Bodde, 2023). For this reason, successful music entrepreneurs must balance commercial objectives with genuine audience relationships. Sustainable growth depends not merely on attracting attention but on maintaining credibility within increasingly competitive and algorithm-driven environments. Taken together, these challenges reveal that platformization is neither wholly empowering nor entirely restrictive. Rather, it represents a complex environment in which opportunities and constraints coexist. Understanding this duality is essential for evaluating the broader impact of TikTok, YouTube, and other digital platforms on contemporary music media.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of the music industry in the digital age cannot be understood without considering the growing influence of platform-based media. This work has argued that TikTok and YouTube have become central actors within contemporary music ecosystems, reshaping how artists achieve visibility, how audiences engage with music, and how entrepreneurial opportunities emerge. Through the broader process of platformization, these platforms have

altered not only music distribution but also the structures through which cultural and economic value are created. The analysis revealed that TikTok and YouTube perform distinct yet complementary functions within contemporary music media. TikTok has become a powerful engine of music discovery, enabling songs to circulate rapidly through algorithmic recommendation systems and participatory content cultures. YouTube, by contrast, provides an environment more conducive to sustained audience engagement, community formation, and long-term artist development.

Together, they illustrate how visibility, engagement, and entrepreneurship have become increasingly interconnected within digital music ecosystems. By and large, the significance of TikTok and YouTube lies not simply in their technological capabilities but in their ability to influence contemporary cultural participation. Success within platformized environments increasingly requires more than artistic talent alone. It demands digital literacy, entrepreneurial adaptability, strategic communication, and the capacity to cultivate meaningful audience relationships. As digital technologies continue to evolve, the future of music media will likely be shaped by ongoing negotiations between creativity, commerce, and platform power. Understanding these dynamics remains essential for artists, entrepreneurs, and scholars seeking to navigate an increasingly interconnected and platform-driven music industry.

All in all, the philosophy that informs platformization demonstrates that contemporary music media is not merely a channel of communication but a complex socio-technical ecosystem in which knowledge, creativity, visibility, audience engagement, and entrepreneurial opportunities are continuously negotiated through the interaction of human agency and digital platforms.

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