BlogYourFavMusic.com
A case study of Nordic indie music in Taiwan

Master thesis within Economics and Management of Arts and Entertainment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to conceive how the niche music market is spurred by the user-generated content, blogs from the perspectives of music fans/blog readers and record shop managers. Also, it discusses the role of music blogs in the global independent music scene by looking into the case of Nordic indie music in Taiwan. This study tends to present a new angle to conceive the transform of music industry in the era of web 2.0. In other words, to depict the process of musical globalization stems from user-generated contents in the internet. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted to achieve the purpose. In the quantitative part, an online survey is performed to obtain the opinions on music blog from fans. Besides, to observe the viewpoint from the industry, interviews are conducted with one well-known music blogger and two music shop managers who import Nordic music to Taiwan. The study finds out that the involvement of music blogosphere has a stronger correlation to the purchase of Nordic indie music, which is considered niche, than of the mainstream music in Taiwan. However, the influence is not as great as it appears due to the facts that music blogosphere in Taiwan is still not comprehensive and people still download rather than buy the music they get to know from blogs. In the larger picture, Taiwanese music scene has been enriched by the information music blogs yield since numerous small-sized music labels are established for this emerging niche music market. These labels specialize in importing niche music. Also, at least four promoters founded in recent two years featuring in inviting foreign indie bands to Taiwan for the growing fans of niche music.
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1 Introduction

The Radio Dept., Kent, and Montt Mardié are Swedish indie bands that some Taiwanese have been familiar with far before their albums being released in Taiwan. The fact is that most fans in Taiwan firstly listened to these Nordic indie bands through the website ‘MySpace’ instead of from TV, radio or record stores. The following question then emerges: with no massive media exposures, what makes people click onto the MySpace page of ‘Radio Dept.’ in the first place? This study then assumes that the answer is the increasing number of music blogs, and thus tries to study the relationship between the rise of niche music market and the music blogs in Taiwan. In the larger picture, the study tends to depict the effect of music blogs on market fragmentation, consumer behavior and music distribution in the modern music scene.

This study aims to interpret the development of the niche music via internet. Moreover, Nordic indie music is generally seen as niche/non-mainstream music in Taiwan. Considering that mainstream music which are released by the major record companies already has established precedent marketing channels globally, this study focuses on the discussion of non-mainstream music/musicians and their marketing channels in the era of web 2.0 instead.

This article assumes that at first only a few passionate music fans share their listing experiences via music websites, forums and blogs. These user-generated contents then are infectious among fans and subsequently become powerful enough for record shops to be aware of this emerging niche market. Further, the study examines if blogosphere has a positive effect on personal CD/LP collections. As a whole, this study aims to realize how this consumer-oriented market functions with the utilization of personal blogs as a tool of communication.

1.1 Web 2.0

TIME magazine’s person of 2006 is ‘YOU’, regarding the fact that individual power is stronger than ever with the emergence of ‘web.2.0’ (Time, 2006). ‘Web 2.0’ is a concept raised by O’Reilly(2005)describing the second phase of world wide web—a more participatory and collaborative internet ecosystem. The traits of web2.0 are defined as ‘utilizing collective intelligence’, ‘providing network interactive services’ and ‘giving users control over their own data’ (Maness, 2006). Meanwhile, this user-contributed space leads to the rise of social networking tools such as blogs, website ‘YouTube’ and ‘MySpace’. Furthermore, the line between the content creators and the content consumers in web 2.0 becomes obscure. Instead of a collection of monologues, web 2.0 is a user-centered matrix of dialogues, in which each user creates and absorbs contents from each other (Maness, 2006). Individuals have a new stage to broadcast their perspectives and to be influential without supports from the mainstream media. This web 2.0 trend has been gaining in popularity. Pew Internet(2009) shows that the percentages of internet users in America in 2008 aged from 12-
17, 18-32 and 33-44, are 93%, 87% and 82% respectively, and almost 70 percent of people between 12 and 32 use social network sites.

1.2 Blogosphere

‘Blog’ is shortened from the original term ‘Weblogs’ which means ‘web pages likened to online personal journals’. It is known for being the ‘unedited, unpublished voice of the people’ (Winer, 2003). Blogging is writing thoughts into blog website (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004). People who blog are called bloggers. ‘Blogosphere’ is a term coined by William Quick on Instapundit.com in 2001, which means the ‘intellectual cyberspace’ inhabited by bloggers. With the prevalence of blogging, ‘blogosphere’ is then widely used to describe the social network which is composed of bloggers, readers and those effects and interactions among them. Bloggers write topics they are interested in and activate conversations by allowing audiences to reply to the posts. This new tool of spreading ideas and thoughts is becoming powerful and is more interactive compared to other types of media (Gill, 2004).

1.3 Fandom

Fandom is composed of the noun ‘fan’ and the affix ‘dom’ which refers to a group of people who are socially organized due to the mutual appreciation of a culture (Jenkins, 2006). With the emergence of internet use, fandom is more generally used to describe the online fan communities, activities and cultures. Among the earliest fandom of the Internet, fans of the movie ‘Star Trek’ firstly used this new mechanism to transmit and discuss topics online communally. Nowadays, with the rise of Web 2.0, the power of fans is influential because, to some extent, they manage to play the roles of publicists and critics. Fandom is a harbinger of culture. It generates collective archive as well affects its members through individual presentation and involvement. In the culture of fandom, some people become prestigious and turn out to be influential to others by constantly sharing precise perspectives in discussions (Baym, 2007).

1.4 Nordic indie music

Nordic countries consist of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. They are located in northern Europe. In terms of music industry, unlike America and Britain, who are famous for their popular music and superstars, Nordic countries are renowned for their indigenous music scene. Hauge & Hracs (2010) specify that the word ‘scenes’ are defined, when certain ‘geographic clusters’ of aesthetic expression in creative industries are distinguished and reach a critical mass. For example, Nordic signature in the music and fashion industries is distinguishable that it incubates its own style and reputation. The distinct tone among independent musicians is generally called ‘indie-pop’ or sometimes ‘twee’. The term ‘indie’ is shorten from the word ‘independent’, which was first used in late 1980s as ‘a nod to the importance of independent label’ (Aaron, 2005). The five record giants, BMG, EMI,
SONY, Universal and Warner, take charge of 70 percent of record sales around the world, and the rest of labels are seen as ‘indie label’ (Zentner, 2003).

By assuming that user-generated contents in the internet have leaded to an emerging market of niche music, this study comes up with two research questions.

1. The relationship between 'involvement of music blogosphere' and 'motivations to purchase niche music'. Does blogosphere have a positive impact on purchase of Nordic indie records in Taiwan?

2. How and to what extent do music blogs reshape the behavior of music listeners and subsequently the music industry?
2. Frame Of Reference

2.1 New music economy

The collaborations of music business with websites, magazines, clubs, and all kinds of media have created a new mechanism to promote and sell music outside the record company system (Silver, 2010). Nowadays, music could be connected with everything to produce the greatest benefit for both sides involved. Numerous music websites and blogs are sponsored by local clubs, cell phone companies, apparel companies and even the governments, rather than record companies. Ringtone download is an emerging business. This recent trend of ‘merging’ suggests an innovative business and distribution model of music without record companies being involved (Silver, 2010). The technologies of file-sharing as well as user-generated contents further diversify the musical consumption patterns as recorded music sales continue to fall. Hracs (2009) also points out that passive consumption of music no longer fits in modern lifestyles. Thus the ways to make profits out of music are not limited to album sales and airplay anymore. People now consume music by going to music festivals and playing video games such as ‘guitar hero’ licensed by musicians (Latt, 2009).

2.2 Music blog

Compared to other social media, blog is a detenderized and personalized cyberspace (Drezner & Farrell, 2004). Blog is egocentric; a technologically and substantially ‘protected space’ (Gumbrecht, 2004). Blogs are easy to generate, track and measure buzz for both individual and enterprise (Wright, 2006). Shel (2006) also writes that blogs build credibility the same way as any other information source do. Blog enjoys ‘duality’ because it is considered as a personalized territory, and at the same time, a place for public speech (Wright, 2006). Due to the characters of blogs mentioned above, blog is perceived as an independent, non-commercial but effective information source. Dewan & Ramaprasad (2009a) research shows that consumers trust experiences from other consumers (see Figure 2.1) and blogs have the strength to efficiently deliver the most up-dated opinions/experiences for information seekers.

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1 For example, Mariah Carey’s new album is sponsored by Elle Magazine so the magazine can be advertised by her album.
Active interactions between mind-liked people are shown by hyperlinks in the blogs. Bloggers read and interact with each other, especially with who uses blogroll\(^2\) to their own blogs. Bloggers are the typical ‘Power Creators’. This term was distinguished by Gumbrecht (2004) when he classified internet users into three groups: Power Creators, Older Creators, and Content Omnivores. The traits of Power Creators are youth, highly participation in internet activities including Instant Messaging (IM), online game playing, downloading music, and blogging.

As for the blog usage in Taiwan, according to a survey of ‘Market Intelligence & Consulting Institute’ in Taiwan (2009), the average age of Taiwanese bloggers is 23 years old. Around 60 percent are male and more than 70 percent of bloggers have college or above level of education. Most people have stated reading blogging over 2 years. Nearly 90 percent of blog readers have their own blogs. Almost 50 percent of bloggers own more than one blog. As for the contents, they are mainly about daily life, particular interests, amateur hobbies, and professional information.

There are diversified types of blogs on the internet. Music blog, is a type of interest-leading blog featuring introducing emerging artists, new released albums and concert-going experiences. Some music blogs may also provide music samples for readers to download. Music blogs tend to introduce musicians in the indie music scene. The motivation of providing MP3 files is to encourage readers to buy those albums or go to the concert (McCung & O'Donnell, 2008). There exists a consensus among music blogs that mainstream music is excluded. Most bloggers and readers are die-hard fans of rare-seen music that they run music blogs simply out of passion. The overall intention of this kind of bloggers is to introduce the music they love to more people rather than to gain fame or money. This trend among music blogs resonates with the idea of “Art for art’s sake”. Some small-scale indie labels have already seen this positive effect of music blogs on marketing niche music. Thus

\(^2\) A blogroll is a list of links to other blogs that the blogger likes.
they have started sending album trials to music/ mp3 blogs voluntarily, in order to reach more potential fans through being recommended on blogs (McClung & O'Donnell, 2008).

The reasons people go to music/MP3 blogs are concluded as (O'Donnell, 2006):

1. They can listen to more music with no risk purchasing an disliked album.
2. Music blog is the access to niche music otherwise they will never know.
3. They have the chance to be in part of this culture and community.

### 2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) is a way of interpersonal communication between consumers, in which information and evaluation of a product is exchanged. World of mouth is said to be the motivation in decision making of consumer behavior (Blackwell, 2001). In this context information receivers clearly benefit from the information they desire. For information providers, the rewards are obscure; they may be confirmation, satisfaction, and status (Fill, 1999). Nowadays the power of WOM is massively moving from reality to virtual world due to the blogosphere of web 2.0. This is called electronic word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler, 2004).

Music blogs are the examples of e-WOM among music lovers. Contrast to standardized goods, music is an inherently experience good, which is intangible and heterogeneous. Consumers can not evaluate the quality until they consume experience good (Andersson & Andersson 2006). Therefore, the electronic WOM among music blogosphere could be critical for further record sale by influencing potential consumers. However, nowadays music websites such as ‘MySpace’, ‘last.fm’ and file-sharing software have substantially undermined the importance of WOM by letting individual ‘experiencing’ the music directly. Therefore, the influence of e-WOM seems to be different from case to case. Dewan & Ramaprasad(2009b) have shown the preliminary result indicating that blog buzz has a significant positive relationship with album sales which is especially strong for independently released music. Also, Chang & Dhar (2007) found that future sales of albums are positively correlated to the legitimate blog posts. Average consumer rating is a more precise prediction of sales than average mainstream media rating. However, traditional factors still play vital roles in predicting sale. For example, averagely a major label released album sells about twelve times an independent label released one does. The higher the number of mainstream media reviews of an album, the greater the sale is. On the other hand, the initial results of the latest research of Chellappa& Chen (2009) manifested that user activity at online social networks does have a significant effect on music sales.

### 2.4 Uses and gratifications approach

In the history of communications research, Cantril (1942) builds an approach to speculate on certain ‘gratifications’ which hold audiences to the media and contents as well as satisfy their social and psychological needs. Ruggiero (2000) asserted that ‘uses and gratifications’
has always provided a contemporary theoretical approach with the advent of each new mass communications medium. In the era of web 2.0, the patterns of communications are dramatically diversified and personalized. Users feel more involved in the process of communication. Thus, ‘motivation and satisfaction’ become crucial components to analyze online audience (Ruggiero, 2000). Ruggiero (2000) lists three attributes of internet resonate to the uses and gratifications approach, they are:

1. Interactivity, which is ‘the degree to which participants in the communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse’ (Williams, Rice & Rogers, 1988, p. 10). Interactivity offers every participant access to develop new means of communication and results in greater user activity (Dyson, 1993).

2. Demassification, which is the ability for users to select customized medium from a wide menu. Individual and one-on-one dialogue will be the preferred mode of communication contrary to the mass media (Chamberlain, 1994).

3. Asynchronicity, which means that information senders and receivers can communicate and interact at different times at their convenience. For example, email, blog and digitized information on webpage (Chamberlain, 1994).

In terms of blog, there are seven motivations of being a blogger, which are all connected to ‘uses and gratifications theory’: self-documentation, improving writing, self-expression, medium appeal, information, passing time, and socialization (Li, 2005). In blogosphere, enthusiastic bloggers update their blogs on the regular basis, and interact with readers, care about the view counts. Therefore, they, to some extent use blogs to satisfy their own needs. The relationship between enthusiastic bloggers and their readers fits into four aspects of audience activity described by Blumler (1979):

1. Utility, which means communication is functional to people.
2. Intentionality. It means media consumption is directed by the prior motivation.
3. Selectivity, namely, the use of the media reflects personal interests and preferences.
4. Imperviousness, which suggests people are resistant to certain media.

As mentioned above, blogosphere satisfies bloggers psychologically and socially by the usage of comment, guestbook, trackbacks, view counts and hyperlinks.

2.5 The long tail of business model

![Figure 2.2 The long tail of business models (Anderson, 2004)](image)
'This is the world of scarcity. Now, with online distribution and retail, we are entering a world of abundance. And the differences are profound. Popularity no longer has a monopoly on profitability. Hit-driven economics was a creation of an age without enough room to carry everything for everybody.' (Anderson, 2004, p. 8)

As Figure 2.2 suggests, long tail model portrays an uncanny truth of online business, that is, revenue of the sum of the ‘no-hits’ is bigger than of ‘the hits’. Internet markets not only reward consumers with price transparency. Brynjolfsson, Hu, and Smith (2006) find that consumers are benefited from a far wider variety of products online than via traditional brick and mortar channels. With no rent of storefront, no manufacturing costs and barely distribution fees, the ‘information technology-enabled digital market’ is efficient and unlimited for sellers to produce, stock, promote, sell and distribute products. These strengths reward both buyers and sellers with much less costs. Take online retail giant ‘Amazon.com’ as an example: Amazon’s sales pattern in 2006 unexpectedly shown that 30-40 percentage of the sales in books were those hardly to be found in a brick-and-mortar store. Moreover, surplus created by selling the scarce books increases one billion dollars annually (Brynjolfsson, Hu, and Smith 2006). Anderson (2004) state that this was not just an exception of online booksellers. It implied an entirely new economic model for the media and entertainment industries. There are more similar examples such as non-mainstream preferences of music at online-enterprise ‘Rhapsody’ and ‘Ecast’, demand of rare seen movies at ‘Netflix’, and custom news as well as information through various blogs/online communities. These phenomena suggest that preferences have far greater depth than what one could find in a typical storefront. The potential of niche market is unearthed and confirmed by the internet retail markets.

On contrary, after Elberse (2008) examined sales patterns in the music and home-video industries, she debated on ‘the long tail’ with the following two points. First, the tail is long but extremely flat, even though online retailers are increasing their assortments. Second, compared with heavy users, light users have a far strong preference for the more popular offerings, while both groups prefer hit products more than they appreciate those in the tail.
3 Research Method

Quantitative and qualitative approaches are both adopted in order to have comprehensive answers in this study.

3.1 Research design & data collection

This study tends to understand the influence of blogosphere on music scene which may take multiple methods to get a more comprehensive picture. As for collecting data for empirical research, there are mainly two dimensions to proceed: quantitative and qualitative approaches. The line between qualitative and quantitative methods is not restrictive. Considering the fact that quantitative research fails to distinguish people and social insinuation, namely, the statistic analysis is independent of people’s live (Bell& Bryman, 2007). Two approaches are both exploited in this study. Qualitative method is for online survey to map out the behaviors of unknown amount of Nordic music listeners in Taiwan. Then quantitative approach is taken by conducting interviews with record shop managers and one well-known music blogger to gain more profound social-related factors. The subjects for this study are:

1. Indefinite Nordic music listeners in Taiwan, in order to understand the motivations and consumer behavior

2. Two import agents and one blogger of niche music and in Taiwan, to obtain more information about how music industry is changed from suppliers’ point of views.

Due to the researcher’s absence in Taiwan, web self-administered questionnaires that entail respondents to complete by themselves (Christensen, 2003) are conducted.

This study also performs computer–aided interviews with two import agents and one famous music blogger.

The samples and method of web self-administered questionnaires

Because of the unknown number of Swedish music listeners in Taiwan, it is essentially impossible to construct a sampling frame to execute a probability sampling. Therefore, a non-probability sampling is exploited by putting the URL link of the survey on the music forums and music blogs in Taiwan with introduction and background information of the research. As for questionnaire design. The first part is designed to attain demographic information of respondents, which is followed by the questions asking the number of personal CD/LP collection. This part is considered as dependent variables. The next part of the questionnaire asks the impression of Nordic music, and the last part is designed to get the involvement of music blogosphere. A pilot test is carried out before lunching actual survey.

The samples and method of electronic interviews
Due to the geographic dispersion, electronic interview is considered as the most feasible way to proceed with the research. Interviewees are selected by the researcher subjectively with the attempts to obtain representative characters and decision makers in a population (Wrenn & Stevens, 2001). Interviews with two music import agents and one well-known music blogger are undertaken with the instant messaging software MSN messenger, respectively. The interviews are conducted in interviewees’ primary language, Mandarin, and then be translated into English by the researcher. The interview questions are mainly about the marketing strategies of niche music, the market share of Nordic music and the role of music blogs, in interviewees’ opinions. Semi-constructed interview seems adequate for the interviews with import agents in this study to get the industrial perspective. By implementing key questions and sentences, it does not constrain any possible replies from interviewees and at the same time does not digress during the interviews.

3.2 Method evaluation and Limitations

The main defects of volunteer subjects are ‘representativeness’ and ‘external validity’ related to generalization. Conducting online survey is considered efficient, however, internet users are essentially a biased sample of the population. The study then tends to address this bias by conducting interviews with import agents to acquire more comprehensive insights from different informants. As for representative sample, non-probability sampling is the only alternative in this study due to the fact that the sampling frame is unavailable. However, non-probability, especially self-report data, could be misleading and undermine the representativeness of samples for the reason that some members are more likely to be involved than others (Bell & Bryman, 2007). In addition, it is possible that respondents of online survey unconsciously give answers based on wishful thinking instead of the truth. Since the whole research is conducted through the internet, the study should be careful about generalizing the result to the whole Nordic music listeners including non-internet users.
4. Nordic Indie Music in Taiwan

4.1 Taiwan

Taiwan is located in Eastern Asia, occupies a total area of 35,980 square kilometers. Taiwan's population is estimated at 23 million which makes it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Taiwan has 30 times higher population density than Sweden. The capital city, Taipei, is not only the political and economic agglomeration but also the hub of cultural production and consumption. Mandarin is the official language of Taiwan. The climate in Taiwan is between tropical monsoon climate and subtropical monsoon climate.

4.2 The emergence of Nordic indie music in Taiwan

American and British music industries have cultivated huge audiences around the world with their media and cultural domination for a long time (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Nordic Indie music, on the other hand, has just widened its market within the process of globalization. Due to the fact that residents in tropic areas are always curious about Nordic countries because of the geographic distance and climate difference, Nordic indie music is seen as an exotic and unique music genre. Moreover, ‘Nordic signature’ in creative industries such as in fashion, design and art helps strengthen its image of unique aesthetics. Among Nordic Europe, Sweden enjoys its leading position regarding the fact that it is the world's third largest exporter of popular music (Export Music Sweden, 2009). Swedish group ABBA is the first Nordic band earned its fame in Taiwan in 1970s, which was followed by the Icelandic musician Bjork in 80s’ with her whimsy sounds and uncanny music videos. Around 2000, without massive media exposures, Icelandic post rock band Sigur rós became well-known in Taiwan due to the musical discussions on the internet. Since this turning point, numerous Nordic indigenous musicians have thrived in Taiwan. Quite a few Nordic indie bands have toured in Taiwan, they are: Club 8(2004), Tribeca(2004), Caesars(2005), múm (2005), Pelle Carlberg(2006) of the band Edision, Pernilla Andersson(2007), Montt Mardié(2008), death metal band Soilwork(2008), Radio Dept.(2009), Mew(2009), Kings of Convenience(2010). Almost all of them were invented by the same independent label who imported their albums.

Nowadays, small-sized record shops start importing more diversified albums, at the same time, they invite Nordic musicians to perform in Taiwan. Apart from some Nordic artists signed to international record labels, Nordic albums normally are imported or released by two indie record labels in Taiwan, who deal with independent labels or artists around the world. The first one is ‘White rabbit record’, an agent of many foreign labels including Swedish post-rock label Tenderversion(White rabbit record,2009). The second ones is ‘Silent agreement record’ who represents Popface (Norway), Khonner (Norway), Montt Mardié (Sweden), Cake On Cake (Sweden) and Starflower (Finland) (Silent agreement record, 2009). The two record companies also invite Nordic musicians to tour in Taiwan.
As for the population of Nordic music fans, even more and more people listen to Nordic music nowadays. It is still seen as a niche market when American, British, Japanese, Korean and local popular singers dominate the market share. The Nordic music fans are considered overlapped with the internet “Power Creators” distinguished by Gumbrecht (2004), the traits of them are youth, highly participation in internet activities.
5 Research findings

5.1 Descriptive statistics of the online survey

The questionnaire was replied on the survey website page ‘esurveyspro’ (http://www.esurveyspro.com/) from October 21 to November 4 in 2009. There are 109 respondents in total and 4 of them are eliminated due to the incompleteness of reply. The 105 significant responses are analyzed in software ‘SPSS 16’ with chi-square, t-test, Pearson’s correlations and multiple regressions. Figure 5.1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of 105 respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>Minimum, Maximum</th>
<th>Std.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>27.57</td>
<td>15, 45</td>
<td>8.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Female 51, male 54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD/LP collection</td>
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<td>596.46</td>
<td>0, 2000</td>
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<td>46.52</td>
<td>0, 1500</td>
<td>165.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog-reading</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Yes 78, No 26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog-writing</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Yes 63, No 41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1 Descriptive statistics of the survey sample

The first part: background

The first two questions show that 51.43% of respondents are female and 48.57% of them are male. 48.6% of respondents are aged between 21 and 25, which is followed by the second largest group of ‘age 26-30’ with 28.6%. Teenagers and group of ‘age31-40’ count for 16.2% and 6.7%, respectively; there are no respondents under 50 years old in this web survey.

Figure 5.2 Pie chart of gender and age distribution of the samples
As shown in Figure 5.2, the respondents are equally-distributed regarding to gender. As for age, over 75% of repliers among Nordic music listeners in Taiwan are aged between 21 and 30 who are normally in college/university. This age bias may result from the different internet usage between age groups. However, it may simply suggest that young people listen to Nordic music more.

**The second part (Q3-5) of the questionnaire shows the volume of CD/ LPs each respondent has.**

Q3. Number of CDs/LPs: the number of CD/LPs collections owned by the respondents ranged from 0 to 20000 (M = 596.46, SD = 2248.566, 2 missing data). Due to the right skewness of the original data, log transformation is applied to address this problem (adjusted data: M = 4.8664, SD = 1.50285).

![Figure 5.3 Bar charts of the number of CDs/LPs collections owned by the respondents (left: original data; right: log-transformed data)](image)

Q4. Number of Nordic CDs/LPs: the number of CD/LPs owned by the respondents ranged from 0 to 1500 (M = 46.52, SD = 16.118). Same right skewed problem is as well solved by log transforming the data (M = 2.4736, SD = 1.41686).

![Figure 5.4 Bar chart of the number of Nordic CD/LPs owned by the respondents (left: original data; right: log-transformed data)](image)
By dividing each number of Q4 by the corresponding number of Q3, the average ratio of Nordic CD/LPs to overall CD/LPs for individual collection is obtained, which is 0.1259.

**Q5. Number of Nordic CD/LPs bought because of reading music blog.**

A more meaningful angle of this question is found to see Q4 altogether. The percentage of Nordic CD/LPs bought out of blog-reading is averagely 0.4814. This suggests almost half of Nordic CD/LPs purchase are out of blog-reading. There are two missing values in this question, and the responses of 103 ones range from 0 to 1500 ($M = 31.54, SD = 15.51$).

It is noticeable that people listen to Nordic music do not own many ‘Nordic’ CD/LPs even though they have large collections of overall CD/LPs. The percentage of Nordic collections to all CD/LP collection is only about 12%. On the other hand, it is crucial to find out almost half of the Nordic CD/LPs purchases result from music blog reading. This suggests that blogosphere indeed plays a vital role on Nordic music purchase.

**The third part is about music taste, consumer behavior and impression of Nordic music.**

**Q6. The tendency toward non-mainstream music**

It shows that almost 75% of Nordic music listeners in Taiwan tend to consider themselves preferring non-mainstream music to billboard hits, and only about 10% of them don’t. This indicates the emerging potential market of niche music in Taiwan.

![Figure 5.5 The tendency toward non-mainstream music of respondents.](image)

**Q7. Respondents buy CD/LPs only if which are available in Taiwan.**

In this question more than 50% of repliers would still try to buy the rarely-seen CD/LPs which they heard from music blogs but are not available in the record shops in Taiwan. This manifests that a relatively high proportion among people in favor of Nordic music might be willing to devote more money and time to get the albums they want compared to regular music listeners.

**Q8. List 3 of personally favorite Nordic bands/musicians**
This question helps to illustrate what kind of Nordic music attracts Taiwanese people most. The results are surprisingly diverse. The most-mentioned bands, as sown in Figure 5, are: Sigur Ros from Iceland, Mew from Denmark, Kent from Sweden, Radio Dept. from Sweden, Mum from Iceland. The music mentioned in this question covers a diverse range of genre from metal (Finnish band Nightwish), noise rock (Danish band The Raveonettes) to electronic music (Norwegian duo Röyksopp). However, most repliers’ favorites fall in music genres ‘post rock’ and ‘indie pop’. The high rates of Danish band ‘Mew’ might result from its tour in Taiwan three weeks before the questionnaire was released.

Figure 5.6 The most mentioned musicians in the survey (unit: the frequency of the artists being mentioned)

Q9. the attractive characteristics of Nordic music/musicians

Nordic music is mostly described as: unique indie pop tone, pure, calm, icy atmosphere, dreamy, solitude, gloomy, peaceful, cold, experimental, comfy, and electronic. Some repliers also mentioned: satanic, dark, psychedelic, whimsically romantic, world, dolce, independent, spacey and different from English. Not surprisingly, most people are attracted by the cold, pure, and calm vibe of Nordic music which is distinct from the indie music in Taiwan.

Q10 major channels to know Nordic music.

This is a multiple-choice question and there are seven options listed, which are: television, radio, magazines, music forums/ websites, electronic bulletin board, record labels’ newsletter and music blogs. There is also an ‘other option’ for respondents to specify. The result (see Figure 5.7) shows that a quarter of respondents choose ‘music blogs’, ‘music section of electronic bulletin board’ and ‘music forums/ websites’ as their major channels to know.
Nordic music. This is followed by ‘magazine’. The sum of the rates of massive media, television and radio only accounts for 6% of all rates. Also, some respondents specify other answers such as ‘YouTube’, ‘friends’, ‘movies’, ‘record shops’, and ‘reviews on website Amazon’.

Figure 5.7 The major channels of Nordic music in Taiwan.(unit:frequency)

**The fourth part is about the habits of music blog reading.**

Q10. The result shows 78(75%) respondents read blogs among 104 people.

Q11. The average time spent on reading music blogs a week.

As Figure 5.8 shows, averagely respondents spend 4.2 hours on reading music blogs per week. Half of the respondents spend less than 4 hours a week. Only 8 out of 75 repliers spend more than 8 hours on reading music blogs per week. The time pattern is the normal distribution which is reasonable considering the fact that everyone has the same amount in a week.

Figure 5.8 The bar chart of respondents’ time spent on music blog per week.
Q12 I read music blogs because I want to try different kinds of music all over the world.

The following two questions tend to obtain the characteristics and motivations of Nordic music listeners. It turns out about 90% of respondents state that trying new music is one of the motivations of reading music blogs. This shows music blog readers are more willing to find out niche music instead of accepting mainstream music from mass media.

Q13 I read music blogs because it is a good way to cultivate my music taste.

Around 85% of them agree that they want to cultivate music taste through reading blogs. This manifests that music blog is a tool of building music taste for repliers.

Q14 Most of the CDs/LPs I heard from music blogs are hard to find in record stores in Taiwan.

This question tends to discuss consumers’ opinions on the diversity of the local record shops in Taiwan. About 60% of blog readers think it is difficult to find the music they hear from music blogs. The diversity of record shops in Taiwan is apparently not enough for these consumers. To connect this result to the result of Q7: half of people might still buy the albums through other tunnels even if they are not available in Taiwan. It is clear that there is a great potential of niche music market in Taiwan.

Q15 The percentage of respondents who own personal blogs

There are 80.77% of 78 repliers having their own blogs.

Q16 The percentage of music-related post on respondents’ blogs

Figure 5.9 shows that the percentage of music related posts on personal blogs is mostly between 10% and 70%. Bloggers more and less mention the music they are currently listen to on their blogs. But there are only 4 pure music blogs among 64 respondents.

Figure 5.9 The bar chart of percentage of music-related post on respondents’ blogs

Q17 The motivations of blogging about music
The motivation of most bloggers is self-expression. They also tend to share unknown but good tunes to others. The results reveal that the motivation of blogging about music is with no monetary intention, which is similar to the concept of ‘art for art sake’.

Figure 5.10 The motivations of blogging about music

5.2 Inductive statistics

Hypothesis

H0: Blog activity is not related to CD/LP collections
Ha: Blog activity is related to CD/LP collections

This study then assumes the volume of personal CD/LP collection can be predicted by the following model:

\[(Nordic)\text{CD/LP collections} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \varepsilon\]

X1 = gender
X2 = age
X3 = read blog or not
X4 = own blog or not
X5 = time spent on reading blogs
X6 = music-related post on blog
X7 = non-mainstream tendency

Variable ‘age’ is expected to have a positive correlation with the personal CD/LP collections. The researcher assumes females might spend more time on blogs than males. Most
importantly, the involvement in blogosphere such as ‘reading music blogs’, ‘own blogs’,
time spent on reading blogs’ and ‘blogging about music’ are assumed correlated to individ-
ual (Nordic) CD/LP collection. The non-mainstream tendency is assumed to have a posi-
tive coloration with all blog activities mentioned above.

Then chi-square test, t-test, correlation matrix and regression are used to test the hypothes-
es and the relations between these variables in the model.

**A. Chi-square test**

Table 5.1 Chi-square test between variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable2</th>
<th>Non-mainstream tendency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variable1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Chi-square statistics=8.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P-value=0.032*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own blog</td>
<td>Chi-square statistics=5.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P-value=0.025*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*=significant at the 0.05 level. Non-mainstream tendency: 0=no, 1=yes

**Age* Non-mainstream tendency**

The result in Table 5.1 shows chi-square statistic=8.791, p=0.032<0.05, which means de-
mographic characteristic ‘Age’ only shows significant difference in variable ‘degree of non-
mainstream’ in Chi-square test. The distinct attitudes toward non-mainstream music be-
tween age groups can be attributed to the different habit of internet usage.

**Own blog* Non-mainstream tendency**

Chi-square statistics=5.016, P=0.025<0.05, which suggests the effect of
differences on blog usage. The attitudes toward non-mainstream music are statistically different between people who own music blogs and who don’t. It is always a dilemma of telling if it is ‘blog-reading leads to stronger non-mainstream tendency’ or the other way around. But a more likely explanation is they influence each other.
B. t-test

Table 5.2 t-test between variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable1</th>
<th>Read blog</th>
<th>Own blog</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of Nordic CD/LP</strong></td>
<td>t-value=2.385</td>
<td>t-value=-2.016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collections(log transformed)</td>
<td>p-value=0.019*</td>
<td>p-value=0.047*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of overall CD/LP</strong></td>
<td>t=-1.692</td>
<td>t=-1.254</td>
<td>t=-8.791*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collections(log transformed)</td>
<td>p-value=0.094</td>
<td>p-value=0.214</td>
<td>p-value=0.032*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*=significant at the 0.05 level.

**Read blog** (Nordic) CD/LP collection (log transformed data)

In table 5.2, for overall CD/LP collection, \( p=0.094 \), there is no statically significant difference in this case. However, for Nordic CD/LP collection, \( t=2.385, p=0.019 \), which means there is a statistically significant difference of Nordic CD/LP collections between music blog readers and non-readers.

**Own blog** (Nordic) CD/LP collection (log transformed data)

For overall CD/LP collection, \( p=0.214 \), suggesting there is no statistically significant difference between people who read blogs and who do not. However, for Nordic CD/LP collection, \( t=-2.016, p=0.047 \), there is a statistically significant difference of Nordic CD/LP collections between bloggers and non-bloggers. Again, blogging is not related to ‘overall CD/LP collection’ but ‘Nordic CD/LP collection’. This suggests a positive relationship between the Nordic music purchases and the blog activities.

**Time spent on blog** gender

The result shows that \( t-value=2.268, p=0.027 \), which means males and females spent statistically different amount of time on reading blogs.

Under the assumption ‘Nordic music is considered niche music in Taiwan’ in this study. These results testify that the niche music fans, who buy more Nordic CD/LPs, are more involved in blog activity, while overall CD/LP collectors (including all music genres) do not show this correlation to blog activity.
### C. Correlation Matrix

Table 5.3 Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable1</th>
<th>Time spent on music blog</th>
<th>Music-related post</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Overall CD/LP Collections (log)</th>
<th>Nordic CD/LP Collections (log)</th>
<th>Non-mainstream tendency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent on music blog</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music-related post</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall CD/LP Collections (log)</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>-0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic CD/LP Collections (log)</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-mainstream tendency</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>-0.096</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Correlation & P-value. *=significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5.3 shows the correlations between variables, both the sizes of overall and Nordic CD/LP collections are correlated to ‘time consumed on reading music blogs’ (p = 0.007, p = 0.015) and ‘music-related posts on blog’ (p = 0.007, p = 0.007). The variable ‘Age’ shows positive relation to overall CD/LP collections (p < 0.001), but not to Nordic ones which may suggest younger generations hold a stronger interest and passion toward Nordic music than older generations do. As for blogosphere, presumably, the volume of music related post on one’s blog is related to ‘time spent on music blogs’ (p = 0.016), and there is a strongly positive relation between ‘Nordic album bought because of music blog-reading’ and ‘time spent on music blog’, (p < 0.001).
D. Regression

In the last part, regression analysis is run to specify the variables that could predict the size of respondents’ overall and Nordic CD/LP collections. The study chooses backward method to decide which variables should be included in the model, and also test the residuals and collinearity diagnostics with tolerance.

Table 5.4 Regression model choosing ‘overall CD/LP collections’ as dependant variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model for Overall CD/LP collections</th>
<th>Included variables</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F-value</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>age, time, post, gender tendency</td>
<td>0.303</td>
<td>6.035</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>age, time, post, gender</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>7.686</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>age, time, post</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>9.975</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>age, time</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>13.397</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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</table>

*=significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For the regression model of predicting ‘overall CD/LP collections’

As shown in table 5.4, the estimates of the effect of ‘age of respondents’ and ‘the time spent on reading blogs’ are quite robust. This means that \( \beta_{\text{age}} \) varies between 2.8 and 3.0, and the \( \beta_{\text{time}} \) varies between 3.43 and 3.85 in different models estimated. Therefore, the study chooses ‘Model 4’ including these two variables, ‘age of respondents’ and ‘time spent on reading blogs’ due to the model simplicity.
Table 5.5 Regression model choosing ‘Nordic CD/LP collections’ as dependant variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model for Nordic CD/LP collections</th>
<th>Included variables</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>time, post tendency, gender, age</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>3.180</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>time, post tendency, gender</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>3.960</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>time, post tendency</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>5.278</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>time, post</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>7.851</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*=significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**For the regression model of predicting ‘Nordic CD/ LP collections’**

Shown in Table 5.5, the estimates of the effect of two variables are quite robust, which are ‘the time spent on reading blogs’ and ‘music related post on one’s blog’. The $\beta_{\text{time}}$ varies between 2.23 and 2.30, while the $\beta_{\text{post}}$ varies between 2.16 and 2.4 in different models estimated. Therefore, for the Nordic collections, Model 4 is chosen with the variables ‘time spent on reading blogs’ and ‘music related posts on personal blog’ because of the model simplicity.

Answering the hypothesis, in t-test, the size of Nordic CD/LP collections are correlated to variables ‘read blog’ while the size of overall CD/LP collections are not. In correlation test, both of the sizes of overall and Nordic CD/LP collections are related to variables ‘time consumed on music blogs’ and ‘the size of music-related posts on one’s own blog’. In the regression model part, variables ‘time spent on reading blogs’ is included to both of the models formulated to predict overall and Nordic CD/LP collections. And, the variable ‘music related post’ is included in the latter one. Therefore, considering the constant statis-
tic results as shown above, Ho is rejected. Blog activity is related to both overall and Nordic CD/LP collections. However, a more meaningful finding is, according to regression model and t-test; blog activities always have a stronger relation to Nordic CD/LP collections than to overall CD/LP collections. This suggests that Nordic music, seen as non-mainstream music in this study, is more connected to music blogosphere compared to mainstream market. In another word, music blogs may have a greater influence on spur-ring album purchases of niche than of mainstream hits. This difference could be attributed to the difference level of enthusiasm between different music, and also the ‘fandom’ effect. The statistic results overall show a constant conclusion: blog activities influence consumer behaviors one way or another. Nordic music is more sensitive to the involvement of blog activities.

5.3 Interview

The interviews are conducted with two Taiwanese record shop managers and one music blogger (See appendix 3). Both of the record shop managers write music critics for the imported albums and have their own music blogs. The other music blogger is well-known for her enthusiasm for Nordic music. It turns out that record shop managers in Taiwan are not optimistic about the influence of music blogs on sales of niche music due to the fact that music blogosphere is still narrow. Also, people are downloading even they know more niche music from blogs. The third interviewee, a well-known music blogger ‘firth’, on the other hand mentions that the way musicians might be collaterally rewarded by music blogs is from the increase of concerts invitations and sales of merchandises due to the increasing number of worldwide fans via internet.
6 Conclusions and Implications

6.1 The impact of blog on music industry in Taiwan

The results show that music lovers/consumers and record shop managers hold different expectations and opinions on the influence of music blogs in Taiwan. In terms of the result from the online survey, music bloggers and readers are optimistic about the diversity music blogs yield. On the other hand, the feasibility of turning this diversity into benefits is still not confirmed by the record shop managers according to the interviews.

RQ1.

The relationship between ‘involvement of music blogosphere’ and ‘motivations to purchase niche music’. Does blogosphere have a positive impact on purchase of Nordic indie records in Taiwan?

According to the statistics, there exists a positive correlation between blog activity and one’s album collection, in which Nordic CD/LP and overall CD/LP should be separately discussed. ‘Blog activities’ constantly show a stronger correlation to ‘the size of Nordic CD/LP collections’, which is generally considered as niche in Taiwan, than to ‘the overall CD/LP collections’. This difference could be attributed to the enthusiasm to niche music and the ‘fandom’\(^3\) effect. Nordic music listeners, compared to mainstream music ones, might show greater enthusiasms for ‘what they are listening to’ and thus are motivated to blog about it. Also, Nordic music listeners normally have troubles finding out mind liked people to discuss music with. Supposedly, the simplest way for these niche music lovers to find each other is through internet, more precisely, music blogs and forums. Moreover, these relatively small amounts of die-hard Nordic music lovers to some extent see themselves as ‘pioneers’ due to the fact that ‘they listen to something niche’. They are more likely to devote themselves to promote the music out of passion. Following this discussion, music blogosphere is therefore more connected to niche music than mainstream one. Furthermore, from the perspective of consumer behavior, the value of buying an album rather than downloading might be amplified if it is conspicuous through blogrolls\(^4\). Nowadays CD/LP are to some extent similar to luxury goods since people can just listen to music online or download if they simply prefer the music. The meaning of buying CD/LP is actually showing loyalty and music taste. Blog links to one another through blogrolls create a community for like-minded fans by posts and comments (Baym, 2007). Therefore, being able to talk about Nordic music and having greater readership on one’s blog could be motivations to purchase a record album. The same situation happens to blog readers. By reading, commenting and following music blogs, they feel involved and are encouraged to

\(^3\) Fandom means a subculture composed of fans in which they share the mutual passions and feelings to certain objects. The definition of Fandom is more specified in chapter 1.

\(^4\) A blogroll is a list of links to other blogs that the blogger likes.
purchase albums or be bloggers themselves. Especially listening to non-mainstream music is generally considered as having unique music taste.

By contrast, the record shop managers in Taiwan hold the different opinions on music blogs. They indicate that the influence of music blogs has been amplified by fans and bloggers. Blogosphere is not as significant as it appears for the following two reasons:

1. The blogosphere in Taiwan is still narrow and not comprehensive. Even though more people have started blogging music in Taiwan, they still lack of professional music blogs. Also, the contents of most blogs are somehow overlapped.

2. For record shops, the influence of blogosphere on album sales is still heavily dependent on the reactions of blog readers. Even as this survey shown before, almost half of Nordic CD/LPs purchase of respondents is out of blog-reading. It is undeniable that many readers are likely to download the music rather than to go to a record shop after finding good tunes on music blogs. Therefore, record shop managers are not that optimistic about the impact of music blogs on record sales. For them, music blog is simply another medium for readers to find rare-seen tunes. To conclude, blogosphere is more significant in spurring the purchases of non-mainstream music than of mainstream music. However, in the case of Taiwan, it takes time for the music blogosphere to become more mature and be influential on indie music sales.

RQ2.

How and to what extent does music blogs reshape the behavior of music listeners and subsequently the music industry?

These are three conclusions regarding to the online survey:

1. Almost 90 percent of respondents read music blogs because they expect to discover different music around the world.

2. People who have tendency toward non-mainstream music are more likely to be devoted to music blogs, by contrast, it could be the other way around: reading music blog strengthens the non-mainstream tendency. This result confirms the previous study stating that ‘music blogs tend to present musicians in the indie music scene (McClung & O'Donnell, 2008).

3. About 85 percent of respondents state positive attitude toward music blogs that they think reading music blogs could be helpful in cultivating music tastes. In this context readers are aware that they are learning by reading music blogs.

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5 It is also worth mentioning that even people would love to buy albums, only 20% of respondents reply it is not hard to find the albums they know from music blogs in Taiwan. This may suggest that there is potential in the niche music market.
According to these results, it is reasonable to state that music blogs change the way in which niche music is distributed, discovered, and experienced.

Music fans regard blogosphere as an easily-accessible medium to surf and try non-mainstream music all over the world. They also tend to build their own music tastes by reading music blogs. Subsequently, the increasingly diverse musical tastes that blogosphere yields, have created an emerging niche market in the music industry of Taiwan. For example, at least five tour promoters\(^6\) specializing in inviting indie bands have continually founded in two years in Taipei. A number of foreign indie bands have been invited to perform in Taiwan these years which is unlikely to happen if the promoters were not confident of the amount of potential fans existing in music blogosphere. Also, Taiwan has seen the gradual emergence of a musical fashion for non-mainstream as well as independent labels. Not only indie musicians release albums by themselves. There appear numerous small-sized record labels/ shops\(^7\) on the market specializing importing and releasing non-mainstream albums to embrace the diverse musical tastes. To continually talk about the influence of music blogs, it is necessary to recall how MP3 and file-sharing software have rewritten the music history. Boorstin (2004) pointed out that not all parts of the music industry are evenly affected by file sharing in the same way. Major releases and already successful musicians have been always well-promoted on radio and television, so they are not actually rewarded by file-sharing as a tool of promotion. However, they terribly suffer from record sale being replaced by illegal download. On the other hand, independent musicians benefit greatly from the fame and popularity delivered by file-sharing tools. Also, downloads are economically less harm for them since they would never have been heard otherwise. Therefore, in this ‘file-sharing battle’, major record companies are the ones who lose the most as they can only profit if they are manage to translates the redundant fame of famous musicians into record sales. Moreover, as Sandall(2007) pointed out “Records, CDs or downloads now have all become downgraded to the status of promotional tools - useful to sell concert tickets and fan paraphernalia. While there is still good money to be made in music, and particularly on the concert circuit.”. Revenue of live music is greater than of record sales in the UK (Performing Rights Society, 2009). Since concert tours seem to be the newly profitable way to the music industry. The ability of music blogs and websites to spread fames and cultivate audiences for musicians is more significant than ever. Following this discussion, it is reasonable to sum up that blogosphere, once again, benefits the independent musicians most for the same reason as file-sharing does: independent musicians who live on touring around

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\(^6\) They are also known as 'concert promoters', who organize music concerts or special events. Those five tour promoters are: Back 2 future, Bounce girlz, Dance Rock Taipei, Straight Music, White labels.

and merchandise sales rather than record sales are the ones being rewarded the most by the fame delivered through music blogs. More importantly, as previous studies suggest, music blogosphere is indie-music/musician friendly. Music bloggers consciously talk about the artists and tour information that cannot be found on TV and radio only. It helps connect the niche music to its fans around the world and subsequently creates an unprecedented market.

Figure 6.1 Traditional mainstream music marketing strategy model (made by author)

Figure 6.2 Emerging niche music marketing through blogosphere (made by author)

Figure 6.1 and figure 6.2 compare the traditional music marketing mechanism to the marketing model of growing niche music. The former starts from the record companies picking up musicians and promoting them to consumers through mass media. The latter is a newly emerging ‘fan-oriented market’ which is the other way around. Consumers find out musicians from blogosphere and spontaneously create buzz for them. Afterwards, the music industry notice the buzz and react by diversifying the music types and business models.

Music blogosphere has resulted in long-tailed economic in digital music sale with the recommendation system and user-generated content. Even some researches (Sean, 2008) show that long-tail theory does not hold up in the music industry. It is undeniable that, as figure 6.3 suggests, more small-scale labels survive on the market by only importing rare-seen albums because of the diversified musical tastes that blogosphere yields. Also, major record companies have started to make their musicians and music as diverse as possible.
6.2 Limitations and suggestions for further study.

Several burdens appear through the survey process. First, the sample size of the survey is considered relatively small. Also, this study could have been more completed if income and education were included as independent variables. The purpose of this thesis is to explore and analyze how user-generated contents influence the music industry. Since the findings presented in this paper are based on a relatively narrow base of informant, fans and managers from Taiwan. It would be meaningful to see if the findings are applicable to independent musicians and labels. For example, their opinions on the change of consumer behavior from buying albums to buying concert tickets. This question could be further developed into cross-sectional research to see the differences amongst nationalities. More future studies could be inspired by the following words quoted from an American music/mp3 blogger. He used to work for major labels, and now believes that music lovers can change the bias mechanism in music industry by stopping buying music from major labels, supporting artists directly, and getting political to change IP laws.

For the major labels, it’s over. It’s over. And it’s your own fault. Surely, somewhere deep inside, you had to know this day was coming, right? Your very industry is founded on an unfair business model of owning art you didn’t create in exchange for the services you provide. It’s rigged so that you win every time - even if the artist does well, you do ten times better. It was able to exist because you controlled the distribution, but now that’s back in the hands of the people, and you let the ball drop when you could have evolved. None of this is to say that there’s no way for artists to make money anymore, or even that it’s the end of record labels. It’s just the end of record labels as we know them.

http://www.demonbaby.com/blog/
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Appendix

Appendix 1. Online questionnaire

This survey is issued by a student of Jönköping University in Sweden for master thesis which aims to understand how Taiwanese get access to Nordic (Iceland Sweden Demark Finland & Norway) music/musician through internet and other media. 

Your reply is highly appreciated!

1. Gender
   - Female
   - Male

2. Age
   - 11-20
   - 21-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60

3. About how many CD/LPs do you have?

4. How many Nordic CDs/LPs do you have?

5. How many Nordic CD/LPs do you purchase because of the introductions/MP3 trails from blogs?

6. Overall, I personally prefer non-mainstream musician/bands to mainstream hits.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Undecided
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. I buy CDs/LPs only if they are available in Taiwan.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Undecided
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

8. Please list maximum 3 of your favorite Nordic bands

9. What characteristics of Nordic music/musicians attract you?

10. What are your major channels to know Nordic music?(Multiple choices)
   - Television
   - Radio
   - Magazines
   - Music Forums/Websites(e.g.MySpace)
   - BBS(ptt..ect)
   - Record label's newsletter
   - Music Blogs
   - Other (Please Specify)

11. How much time do you averagely spend on reading music blogs a week?

12. I read music blogs because I want to try different kinds of music all over the world.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Undecided
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
13. I read music blogs because it is a good way to cultivate my music taste.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly Agree

14. Most of the CDs/LPs I heard from music blogs are hard to find in record stores in Taiwan.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly Agree

15. Do you have your own blog?

(If no, this is the last question for you. please click on the Finished button below, thanks again!)

16. The percentage of music-related post on you blog

- 0%
- 10%
- 30%
- 50%
- 70%
- 90%
- 100%

17. For what reasons do you blog about music (Multiple choices)?

- Become a profession/ amateur music critic by chance
- I want to let more people know about great but not so famous music.
- Express myself
- Get to know some mind-liked people via blogs
- Other (Please Specify)

Appendix 2. Interview question for record companies

1. Please present yourself and your role in the record company.

2. How does the company bring out Nordic artist/ music news to its customers?

3. How is the market share of Nordic music according to the record sale, and the tendency?

4. Can blogosphere be a tool of shaping individual music taste?

5. Why do you run a music blog?

6. Please specify the decision process of importing foreign indie music?

7. Will you import some rare-seen albums because they are recommended by some bloggers?

8. Will you import Nordic album for individual consumer?

9. What benefits do you think blog networks can give to record companies?

10. What do you think about the relationship between Nordic record sale and music blogs?
Appendix 3. Interviewees

Sky, MSN interview 2009-11-25, duration 50 minutes

As the shop manager of ‘record company white rabbit’, Sky takes care of sale, promotion and event. As the staff of ‘label white label’, she is in charge of copyright and contacts with foreign musicians. White rabbit has built reputation among music fans with its unique style of music critic, which is easily understood and interesting. Since all of the stuffs in white rabbit record are musicians, they insist on ‘we only introduce music that we love sincerely’. Nordic musicians/music proximately accounts for 5% of all albums of white rabbit record in which most of albums are still from America. For Sky, music blog stands a crucial role in introducing music due to the fact that Taiwan has no medium, for example, professional music critic magazine, for fans to search for music they might like. Only some die-hard music lovers or professionals would be willing to make lots of efforts to search for music information. As a whole, most people just go with the flow. They listen to whatever music they hear from the major media. With the emergence of music blogs, it is much easier for music lovers to access the most updated information by simply following some mind-liked music blogs. Also, people start incubating their music tastes by reading music blogs. Supposedly, music blogs should be greatly influential in Taiwan. However, Taiwan music blogosphere still don’t function well for two reasons: 1. few influential music blogs and 2. the similar contents. Therefore, the lack of diversity in blogosphere in Taiwan hinders music blogs from functioning as a medium for promoting niche music. Only few blogs talks about unknown bands while most of bloggers blog about already famous bands such as Oasis, Sigur Ros and Radiohead. From the industrial angle, the influence of blog on record sale is limited. Music blogs purely help gain fame for bands and music itself. However, it never turns music downloaders into CD buyers. This is the reason why record shops still have a difficult time nowadays. Even though more people are interested in Nordic music, the sales of Nordic albums is still low in Taiwan. In other words, more people reading music blog and more music being known does not result in the sore of record sale. People might go to p2p website and download the music after knowing a new band from music blogs. Eventually, it still depends on what kind of person is reading music blogs. Even some bloggers blog about the music they download rather than buy from the record shops. Music blogs no doubt distribute niche music that people might never know otherwise in Taiwan. But it does not increase the record sale. After all, it is always easier to download and enjoy the music from the internet.

Da-chiang, MSN interview 2009-11-25, duration about 30 minutes

Da-chiang is the shop manager and CD/LP buyer of MPIO record, he also writes music critic for various indie music. As a manager, he is in charge of album sales and oversea buying with independent labels in Japan, United Stated, Sweden, and Britain. His marketing strategy of ‘niche music’ is simply blogging and introducing to customers in the store. His record shop imports small but diversified albums, most of the Nordic albums are sold
out in a short period of time due to the small amount. The decision of importing which
musician to Taiwan heavily depends on Da–chiang’s findings on music blogs/websites he
visits every day. For him, what makes music blogs and websites crucial these days is that
they lower the cost of marketing and building names for independent musicians. Most mu-
sicians don’t have financial support from record companies to draw attention and cultivate
fans. The prevalence of music/MP3 blogs, forums and websites then breaks the traditional
mechanism of releasing albums. Now everyone can distribute and sell music on MySpace
with little cost. As for his motivation of blogging, Da–chiang wants to present great but
not well-known music, which might otherwise never been presented to fans in Taiwan.
Nordic indie music used to be inaccessible for Taiwanese fans because of the geographic
and linguistic obstacles. Until music blogs create a platform for Nordic indie bands and
music lovers. It is not surprising that more and more people listen to indie bands and this
non-mainstream music market is getting bigger.

**Firth: MSN interview 2010-02-25, duration 40 minutes**

Firth is a well-known music blogger who specializes in blogging Nordic music in Taiwan.
She started blogging music on a regular basis in 2005. The reason she blogs about Nordic
music is, according to her, at that time there were already plenty of discussions on British
or American indie bands, but few information about Nordic. Since Firth happened to be
found of many Swedish bands, she started introduced Swedish music on her blog. As
more readers follow her blogs, she gets renowned and has been invited to write critics for
Nordic music. Like most of music bloggers, Firth never writes negative review on her blog
due to the fact that averagely each blog post takes her at least two hours to complete.
Therefore, she feels reluctant to spend time on something she is not really passionate
about. Talking about the other bloggers in Taiwan, she points out that the music blogosphere in Taiwan is relatively new and there aren’t as many music bloggers as it appears in
Taiwan. Also, bloggers normally know and exchange information to each other. Thus the
contents on music blogs are often overlapped, which is why Firth particularly chooses
something different to write about. Her motivation to write music blog is simply the en-
thusiasm for her favorite musicians and music. Firth would love more people to know
about those bands and hopefully her blog is able to benefits the bands in some practical
ways. In her opinion, it is unlikely that the record sales would soar because of music blogs.
The way musicians might be collaterally rewarded by blogs is the increase of concerts invi-
tations and sales of merchandises due to the increasing number of worldwide fans via in-
ternet. Take Taiwan as an example, especially for rock music lovers, blogosphere has
created numerous blogrolls in which fans follow and share worldwide information with
each other. This growing number of fans of niche music has resulted in record shop im-
porting more indie music and tour agents inviting non-mainstream musicians to perform in
Taiwan.