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When music is platform-optimised: Investigating the relationship between music producers and streaming platforms

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Abstract

For some years now, the platformization of cultural production and consumption has been a continuing concern not only for social scientists but also for popular music scholars, as commercial streaming platforms have become the main gatekeepers of music consumption. Researchers have shown an increased interest in how cultural goods and user practices may be affected by the widespread diffusion and embeddedness in people's everyday lives of these systems, though mainly focusing on reception rather than music production.

Historically, music producers have not been indifferent to the technologies used to produce, record and disseminate their works. In fact, since the beginning of the 20th century, there has always been a tendency of music makers to adapt their artistic contents and practices to the technical devices in widespread use, thus internalizing the then-current mediascape in their creative work. Nevertheless, there is no previous empirical study that investigates whether cultural producers adjust their phonographic products in order to fit the imagined affordances and logics of music streaming platforms.

This contribution will show the preliminary results of a qualitative research, based on 15 in-depth interviews with midstream and mainstream record producers, aimed at investigating i) how cultural production practices, industrial logics and music producers' perceptions of streaming platforms intersect, ii) if and how music products are optimised to perform on music streaming platforms, iii) which platform logics and affordances are taken into account by cultural creators during their creative work.