

The Music360 project is halfway; what we have done and where we are going

Introduction

The Horizon Europe project Music360 is a three-year Research and Innovation Action (RIA) project funded by the European Commission. The project aims to understand the value of music better. Partners are several Collective Management Societies (CMOs), a company on music identification, a company designing digital ecosystems, and two universities. CMOs are entities that collect money from professional users of music such as restaurants, shops, and festivals, and pay the obtained money to right holders such as artists, text & songwriters, and producers.

The project considers multiple types of parties who might assign value to music, namely the creators (artists, text & songwriters), the users of music (venues like shops and restaurants that use music to create a more attractive atmosphere), and policymakers (e.g. governments). Music360 recognizes that different kinds of value exist, e.g. economic, societal, cultural, and even therapeutic value.

Music360 consists of several work streams. One stream formulates an approach to value music, considering the various user types and the different kinds of values. Much attention is paid to quantitative and qualitative experiments in five EU countries. The experiments are designed in such a way that they are repeatable in other countries. Often, these experiments require the collection of a vast amount of data and hence need a sophisticated IT system that helps to collect and represent this data. Moreover, this system can present insights regarding the value of data to creators, music users, and policymakers in a fine-grained way. The latter is an achievement by itself as it is a challenge to bring together all the available data on music into one international platform. Stakeholders do not have to login at each and every portal of national CMOs, but are provided with one integrated, coherent, global, and 360-degree view of the value of their music.

Where are we now?

The experiments

The project has been running for one year and a half now and has already interesting results. We have executed experiments regarding the value of music, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in Finland, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland.

In Finland, experiments were conducted in shopping malls, bookstores, and grocery stores. One of the outcomes is that compatibility between the brand of the store and the music played is important, and potentially can drive an increase in revenue. Upbeat slightly contributes to a better customer experience.

The experiment in The Netherlands was done in a retail chain with a large number of outlets. We varied the tempo of the music, and we gave personnel of the shops the possibility to select playlists. Slower music results in increased conversion rates (buy more products) and Member Sales Participation. However, employees feel more positive if music is faster. Providing employees with the possibility of choosing a playlist can mitigate this.

In Spain, multiple experiments were done. One group of experiments was about cultural events, of which music is an intrinsic part. Music contributes positively to the intent of repeating participation in the event. The importance of music for the event differs. Also, experiments were done in supermarkets. People shop faster if the tempo of the music is increased. In general, relaxing background music is preferred by customers in comparison to no music at all.

Finally, the Irish experiments were in the hospitality sector. This was a qualitative experiment. We observed that adapting music to different times of the day is crucial for better customer experience, staff morale, and revenue. This suggests that dynamic music selection during the day can positively influence customer visit time and spending

The Music360 platform

We have produced the first version of the distributed Music360 platform that collects data such as the recording, works, their rightsholders, and the use of recordings and works by users such as shops and restaurants. This platform integrates data from Collective Management Organizations and other parties such as companies keeping track of the use of music. Given the complexity of metadata in the music sector, this is an achievement in itself. We demonstrate the platform on request, e.g. to CMOs who are not part of the Music360 project. Overall, the platform is received very positively.

Where are we going

The Music360 project is halfway, so the question is what we will do next.

The Music360 platform will be optimized and extended, and different deployment scenarios will be tested. Several analysis tools will be added to better understand how value is created, distributed, and consumed in the ecosystem. These tools require data that is sensitive, and hence we will develop methods to do these calculations without seeing the actual data (e.g. based on secure multiparty computing).

We found that executing an experiment is very time-consuming and requires in-depth knowledge about the design and (quantitative) analysis of the experiment. To lower the threshold for others to do similar experiments, we will develop the Music360 Experimentation ToolKit (ETK). The ETK comes with a complete and tested research setup, multi-lingual questionnaires, ways to collect the answers, and software to do the analysis. By making the ETK available to external parties, we hope that the experiments can be replicated in other countries, and results become comparable.

Based on the learnings from the first iteration of experiments we will run a second round of experiments. We will focus on individuals and employees, and their interaction as a result of music played. Interesting parameters to vary are the tempo of music and the variation in playlists. We also plan to do an international experiment, specifically to study the influence of (local) language used on revenue.