

Semester wrap up essay – Product I hate

Improving the Amazon music as Product Manager

The product I hate and would want to upgrade is the Amazon Music application, a music streaming platform launched by Amazon in 2007 as an MP3 music platform and later in 2014 as Prime Music, allowing users to stream over 2 million songs via a mobile application. I dislike the product due to its poor recommendation algorithm, lack of video and lyrics options, and subpar efforts in promoting local artists.

Amazon Music is currently behind Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube Music in the list of market leaders in the music streaming market. Depending on the country, Amazon Music holds a market share of 12% to 22%. This indicates that the current product portfolio is insufficient for Amazon Music to break into the top three, let alone become the market leader in the industry. As a product manager, I would recommend considerable investment in market research and product development to help Amazon fight for the top spot in the music streaming market.

Discover phase:

In the discover phase, I would start by doing a macro level competitive analysis using Porter's five forces. Next, I would pick Amazon's 2 biggest competitors, Spotify and YouTube music, and conduct a SWOT analysis to pinpoint weaknesses and understand opportunities for Amazon Music. The competitive analysis would start with **identifying the threat of new entrants** – there is always a threat of new companies and technologies however, with our deep pockets and R&D team we can maintain our position in the market. **Bargaining power of the suppliers** – Although we have a substantial negotiating power, licensing agreements are restrictive and therefore we must look to renegotiate contracts with music labels to gain exclusive rights for certain albums/artists. **Threat from substitutes** – YouTube as a platform is a threat, but the music streaming platform is still a more useful resource for travelers or audio lovers. **Bargaining power of Buyers and Threat from existing competitors** are the most important factors to be considered during research. Consumers have multiple options for music services and current industry rivals have larger market shares. Hence, we, as Amazon, must focus on utilizing our Amazon (Alexa, delivery) ecosystem to uplift the application. Price wars, aggressive marketing, and creating a USP are vital to regain market share. The strategy for Amazon music must be in accordance with the above analysis combined with the large and constantly growing database at Amazon. Identifying differentiating points by analyzing the competitors and the market can help gain a larger market share.

Define phase:

In the Define phase, I would carry the research from the discover phase and focus on building a User journey map. Tracking each step in a user's journey helps us understand what a user goes through in status quo and should go through with our change/development. This would be implemented alongside the design thinking infinity curve which is a continuous cycle of designing, prototyping, and testing. The problems in Amazon music that stand out are poor recommendation algorithm, lack of video and lyrics alternatives, and its subpar efforts in promoting local artists, so creating a better experience for the user with respect to these aspects is the primary goal for the product. During this phase, I also plan to create and define specific targets and changes in the application that make the user prefer Amazon music over its competitors. Creating a persona for an average user would help in understanding the nuances of the user experience and building a rewarding experience.

An average Amazon prime music user should be able to login to the application and do the following:

1. See videos and lyrics of their favorite songs. (This is possible with tie-ups with record labels and artists, both famous and upcoming. Videos rights can be leveraged from the movies/videos on amazon video or from contracts with businesses and influencers.)
 2. Explore local artists and upcoming podcasts artists on a weekly basis. (This is possible by strong marketing and negotiating tactics.)
 3. Get a customized playlist based on their interest, mood, vibe, and trends. Customers prefer an autogenerated playlist that AI can dynamically modify based on the above-mentioned factors.
- These 3 updates to the product would help elevate the overall experience as well as offer exclusive features that are currently not offered by the competitors.

Develop:

For a product manager, the development phase is an important step in the product lifecycle that involves constant overseeing, facilitating, and risk mitigating. Creating a timeline for the updates in the product features, ensuring team meetings and deadlines are met, and managing scope and trade-offs with respect to the product features and upgrades are three significant parts of this phase. I would also follow a system of checkpoints for each feature and each iteration, followed by testing and risk mitigation to ensure that a feature is not only good to use but is also free of glitches, issues, and risks. Ensuring synchronization among the teams and the org will also help in driving meaningful discussions and timely communication. Additionally, during this phase, I also plan to maintain an environment of curiosity where the right questions are asked to maintain the timelines, receive feedback, and uplift the quality of work. Lastly, I would ensure a documented checklist is created for each step along the way that helps in keeping track of every effort as well as streamlines the process of implementation. Documentation helps measure every task and that preemptively assures the leadership that work is being done. The next step would be to test every and every code/software completed in every scenario and test case. I would push the team to try to include all layers of testing – Functional testing, field testing, customer/UI testing, stress testing, structural or material testing. Only when all tests have been completed and customer feedback or UI feedback have been integrated would a feature be integrated in the application.

Launch:

For the launch phase I plan to collaborate with the marketing team to share the thought process and idea behind the feature that can help with an impactful launch to the targeted market segment. Launching in the arenas and with the right vehicles would also be key to a successful launch.

Manage:

Post-launch, I would oversee the product's progress and analyse consumer responses. Feedback would inform further improvements or adjustments to the application. Trends would be closely monitored to address potential negative responses or drastic dips, and features may be recalled if necessary.

Implementing AI in Amazon Music:

AI would be a core component of the application, enabling:

1. **Onboarding and Playlist Creation:** AI would generate playlists based on users' favorite genres and artists.
2. **User Pattern Analysis:** AI would analyze song patterns, preferences, and moods to create personalized playlists, notifications, and suggestions which podcasts, songs, and shows.
3. **Generative AI for Chatbots and Alexa:** AI would enhance customer support and user interactions.

AI bridges the gap between a user's current experience and their ideal experience, making Amazon Music more competitive in the streaming market. Additionally, constant research & development and testing will help the app keep up with market trends.