

Computer Science Department
Economics

Bachelor's Thesis

Capstone Project

BeatRate Web Application

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TODOS

Academic Integrity Statement

I, undersigned, hereby declare that this capstone project is the result of my own work.

- All ideas, data, figures and text from other authors have been clearly cited and listed in the bibliography.
- No part of this project has been submitted previously for academic credit in this or any other institution.
- All code, diagrams, and third-party materials are either my original work or are used with permission and properly referenced.
- I have not engaged in plagiarism or any form of academic dishonesty.
- Any assistance received (e.g. from peers, tutors, or online forums) is acknowledged in the acknowledgements section.

I understand that failure to comply with these declarations constitutes academic misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action.

Place, date Kyiv, 29.05.2025

Signature _____

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Abstract	2
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Project Objectives	3
1.2 Relevance and Significance	3
1.3 Methodology	4
1.4 Structure of this paper	4
2 Domain Research and Analysis	6
2.1 Research Questions and Functional Requirements	6
2.2 Market Context and Industry Analysis	6
2.2.1 Global Music Streaming Landscape	6
2.2.2 Music Rating Platform Market Analysis	7
2.3 Competitive Analysis	8
2.3.1 Platform Categories and Architectural Approaches	8
2.3.2 Detailed Competitor Evaluation	9
2.3.3 Feature Comparison Matrix	12
2.4 Gap Analysis and Market Opportunities	13
2.4.1 Identified Market Gaps	13
2.4.2 Target User Segments and Unmet Needs	13
2.4.3 Technological Opportunities	13
2.5 Justification for BeatRate Development	14
2.5.1 Market Positioning Strategy	14
2.5.2 Requirements Validation	14
2.6 Monetization Models and Revenue Analysis	15
2.6.1 Current Market Monetization Strategies	15
2.6.2 Strategic Implications for BeatRate	15
2.7 Chapter Summary	16
3 Design	17
3.1 Section 1	18
3.2 Section 2	18
3.3 Conclusion	18
4 Implementation	19
4.1 Section 1	20
4.2 Section 2	20
4.3 Conclusion	20
5 Validation	21
5.1 Section 1	22
5.2 Section 2	22
5.3 Conclusion	22
6 Conclusion	23
6.1 Project summary	23
6.2 Comparison with the initial objectives	23

6.3 Encountered difficulties	23
6.4 Future perspectives	23
Glossary	24

Acknowledgements



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Abstract

The abstract serves as a concise summary of your entire thesis, encapsulating key elements on a single page such as:

- *General background information*
- *Objective(s)*
- *Approach and method*
- *Conclusions*

Keywords:

KSE, Software Engineering, Thesis, BeatRate, Web Application

1 | Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital music consumption, where streaming platforms have revolutionized how we discover and consume music, a critical gap exists in the space dedicated to music evaluation, critique, and meaningful social interaction around musical content. This capstone project documents the complete development of **BeatRate** - a Music Evaluation Platform designed to serve as a dedicated social space for music enthusiasts, critics, and artists to rate, review, and discover music while fostering an active community of like-minded individuals.

Unlike existing streaming platforms that prioritize consumption, BeatRate addresses the absence of a comprehensive platform that combines in-depth music evaluation with robust social features. Drawing inspiration from successful platforms like Letterboxd for films and IMDb for movies, this project represents the creation of a similar ecosystem specifically tailored for the music domain. The platform merges the elements of a social network with the depth of a sophisticated discovery and evaluation tool, enabling users to rate and review music using both traditional and innovative custom grading methods, curate personalized music lists, and engage in meaningful discussions within a diverse community.

This paper chronicles the journey of two software engineering students who, over an intensive three-month development period, transformed a conceptual solution into a fully functional web application comprising over 55,000 lines of code across multiple technologies and architectural layers. The development process encompassed detailed market research, competitor analysis, solution architecture design, and implementation of a scalable cloud-based system using modern software engineering practices.

1.1 Project Objectives

The primary objectives of this capstone project are:

1. To develop a fully functional web application that facilitates music rating, reviewing, and discovery
2. To implement a dual rating system allowing both simple and comprehensive evaluations
3. To create robust social features enabling community interaction around musical content
4. To integrate with established music services (specifically Spotify) to access comprehensive music metadata
5. To build a scalable architecture capable of supporting growth in both users and features
6. To deploy the application using modern cloud infrastructure and DevOps practices

These objectives guided our development process throughout the project lifecycle, from initial research through implementation and deployment.

1.2 Relevance and Significance

This project holds significance in several dimensions:

Technical Relevance: The development of BeatRate demonstrates the application of modern software engineering practices in creating a complex, feature-rich web application. The project showcases the implementation of microservices architecture, cloud deployment strategies, and integration with third-party APIs within a constrained time-frame.

Market Relevance: Our market research indicates significant growth potential in the music evaluation space, with global music streaming projected to reach US\$35.45 billion dollars by 2025 (Statista, 2024). The growing emphasis on personalization and community engagement in music consumption supports the need for platforms that facilitate deeper connections between listeners, critics, and artists.

Academic Relevance: This capstone project integrates knowledge from various courses in the Software Engineering and Business Analysis curriculum, including software architecture, database design, web development, user experience, market research, and DevOps. It demonstrates our ability to apply theoretical concepts to practical, real-world problems.

1.3 Methodology

Our approach to developing BeatRate followed a structured methodology combining thorough research with agile development practices:

1. **Discovery Phase:** We conducted extensive research into the domain, analyzing competitor platforms, identifying market opportunities, and defining core requirements.
2. **Iterative Development:** The implementation followed three month-long development sprints, each with specific goals and deliverables:
 - Sprint 1: Core architecture and basic functionality
 - Sprint 2: Advanced features and social components
 - Sprint 3: Refinement, optimization, and deployment
3. **Technology Selection:** We carefully selected our technology stack based on project requirements, team expertise, and industry best practices. The backend uses C# with .NET, while the frontend employs React. AWS provides our cloud infrastructure, with specific services chosen to optimize performance, scalability, and cost.

1.4 Structure of this paper

This thesis is structured to provide both a comprehensive technical reference and an engaging narrative of the development process:

Domain Research and Analysis (Chapter 3) examines the current music evaluation platform ecosystem through competitor analysis, market research, and identification of gaps that justify our solution.

System Design and Architecture (Chapter 4) details our complete solution design, including software architecture decisions, technology stack selection and justification, economic analysis of our platform's viability, and user experience design considerations.

Implementation Journey (Chapter 5) chronicles the three-month development process, documenting each sprint's objectives, challenges, achievements, and retrospective insights.

Validation and Testing (Chapter 6) demonstrates how we verified that our implementation meets initial requirements through comprehensive testing methodologies and user validation.

Conclusions and Future Perspectives (Chapter 7) reflects on the project's achievements, lessons learned, and potential directions for future development.

Throughout this paper, we aim to demonstrate not only the technical implementation of BeatRate but also the thought process behind our decisions and the evolution of the project from concept to deployment. With over 55,000 lines of code and a robust feature set, BeatRate represents the culmination of our software engineering education and our passion for creating meaningful digital experiences.

2 | Domain Research and Analysis

2.1 Research Questions and Functional Requirements

The development of BeatRate emerged from a fundamental observation: while platforms for streaming and consuming music are abundant, the music industry lacks a comprehensive platform that prioritizes evaluation, review, and meaningful social interaction around musical content. This chapter presents our systematic investigation into the music evaluation platform landscape to understand existing solutions, identify gaps, and justify the need for our proposed platform.

Our research was guided by the following key questions:

- What existing platforms currently serve the music evaluation and review market?
- How do these platforms approach core functionalities such as rating systems, social features, and music discovery?
- What are the strengths and limitations of current solutions in serving different user segments?
- Where do significant gaps exist that could be addressed by a new platform?
- How can we differentiate our solution while building upon successful patterns from other domains?
- What is the monetization model of the existing platforms? What are their potential earnings?

Through systematic analysis of these questions, we establish the functional requirements that inform BeatRate's design and development approach.

2.2 Market Context and Industry Analysis

2.2.1 Global Music Streaming Landscape

The music evaluation platform market operates within the broader context of the global music streaming industry, which demonstrates significant growth potential. According to Statista (2024), the global music streaming market is projected to reach US\$35.45 billion in 2025, with a steady compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.90% between 2025 and 2029. The United States maintains its position as the dominant market player, anticipated to generate US\$13,910 million in revenue by 2025.

User adoption metrics reveal promising expansion trajectories, with the global user base expected to reach 1.2 billion by 2029. This growth is accompanied by evolving consumer preferences, particularly evident in the increasing emphasis on personalization and curated content delivery. The industry's shift toward tailored listening experiences reflects a fundamental transformation in how consumers interact with music streaming services, suggesting opportunities for platforms that facilitate deeper engagement with musical content.

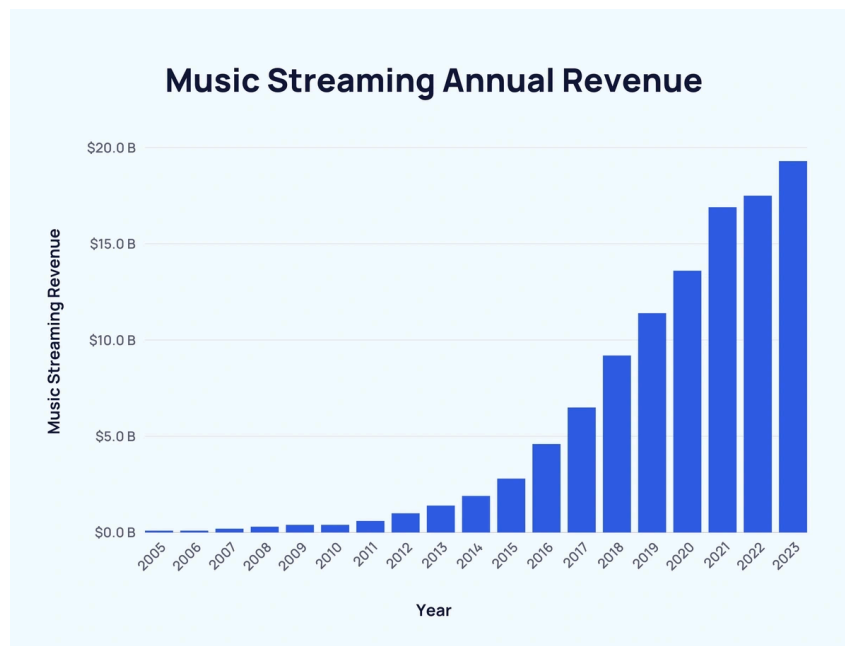


Figure 1: Global Music Streaming Market Growth and Projections

2.2.2 Music Rating Platform Market Analysis

Our analysis of the current market leaders reveals significant user engagement and growth potential in the music evaluation sector. Based on comprehensive data from SimilarWeb (2024), we identified three primary platforms that align with our core requirements: Rate Your Music (RYM), Album of the Year (AOTY), and Musicboard.

Market Leadership and User Engagement:

Rate Your Music emerges as the clear market leader with approximately 15.02 million monthly visits and 15.02 million unique visitors (SimilarWeb, 2024). The platform demonstrates remarkably strong user engagement metrics with an average of 12.40 pages per visit and a low bounce rate of 24.56%, indicating strong user retention and content engagement.

Album of the Year follows with 8.2 million monthly visits, showing similar engagement strength with 10.43 pages per visit and a 28.22% bounce rate (SimilarWeb, 2024). These metrics suggest a highly invested user base across the leading platforms.

Musicboard, as a newer entrant, attracts close to 300,000 monthly visits but represents an emerging competitor with modern design principles and social features that align closely with contemporary user expectations (SimilarWeb, 2024).

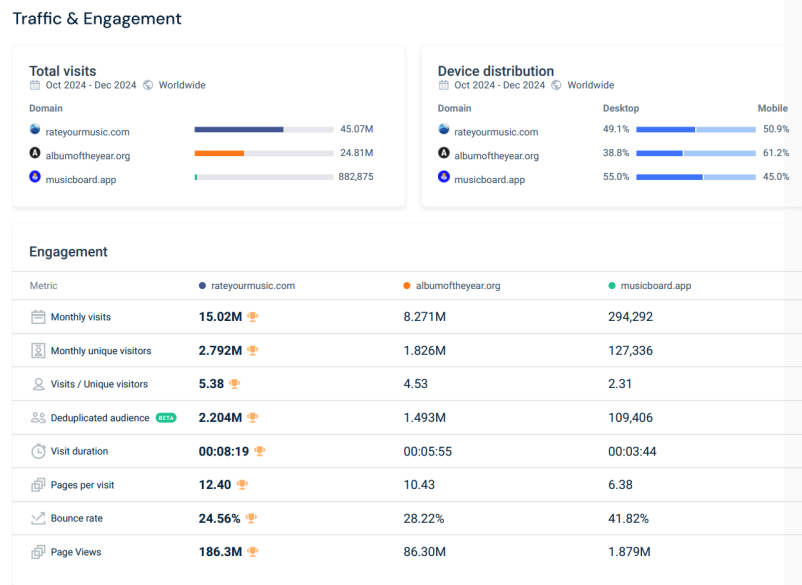


Figure 2: Market Leadership and User Engagement Metrics

Geographic Distribution and Growth Indicators:

Geographic analysis reveals strong presence in key English-speaking markets, with the United States leading at 43.26% of total traffic, followed by the United Kingdom at 8.10% (SimilarWeb, 2024). This distribution suggests both market concentration and significant opportunity for international expansion.

The platforms show robust organic growth, with Rate Your Music capturing 48.17% of traffic through organic search, indicating strong brand recognition and natural user acquisition patterns. Session durations across platforms average between 5-8 minutes, indicating meaningful user interactions and substantive content consumption (SimilarWeb, 2024).

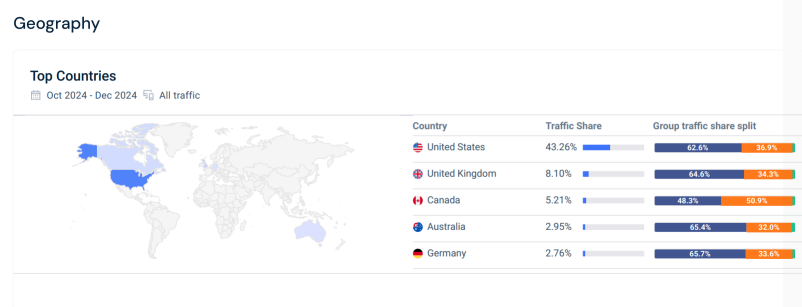


Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Platform Traffic

2.3 Competitive Analysis

2.3.1 Platform Categories and Architectural Approaches

Through our systematic analysis, we identified distinct categories of platforms based on their architectural approaches and feature focus:

Traditional Database-Driven Platforms: Platforms like Rate Your Music represent the traditional approach, focusing primarily on complex cataloging and basic rating functionality (Rate Your Music, n.d.). These platforms typically employ monolithic architectures with extensive relational databases but limited social interaction capabilities. RYM utilizes basic web technologies including Google Analytics and PayPal integration, but users frequently report query failures and timeouts, suggesting significant backend infrastructure limitations.

Aggregator-Style Platforms: Album of the Year follows an aggregator model similar to Metacritic, distinguishing between critic scores and user scores (Album of the Year, n.d.). This approach emphasizes editorial content alongside user-generated reviews but often lacks social features. AOTY employs a mixed technology stack with JavaScript/jQuery frontend and PHP backend, supplemented by Ruby-based Discourse forums, utilizing multiple web servers including LiteSpeed and Nginx for performance optimization.

Social-First Modern Platforms: Musicboard represents the emerging category of platforms that prioritize social interaction and modern user experience design, drawing inspiration from successful platforms in adjacent domains like Letterboxd for films (Musicboard, n.d.). Musicboard employs a modern modular architecture with React Native/Expo for cross-platform mobile development and FastAPI backend, enabling asynchronous capabilities and automatic API documentation generation.

2.3.2 Detailed Competitor Evaluation

Rate Your Music (RYM)

Strengths:

- Market leadership with extensive user base and high engagement
- Comprehensive music database with detailed metadata
- Robust rating system (0.5 to 5 scale) with statistical depth
- Strong community of dedicated music enthusiasts
- Advanced search and filtering capabilities
- User-generated lists and collection management

Weaknesses:

- Outdated design that feels cluttered and overwhelming
- Poor user experience with unnecessary complexity
- Minimal social interaction features
- No meaningful user following or connection system
- Lack of modern features like listening diaries or activity logging
- Mobile experience is suboptimal

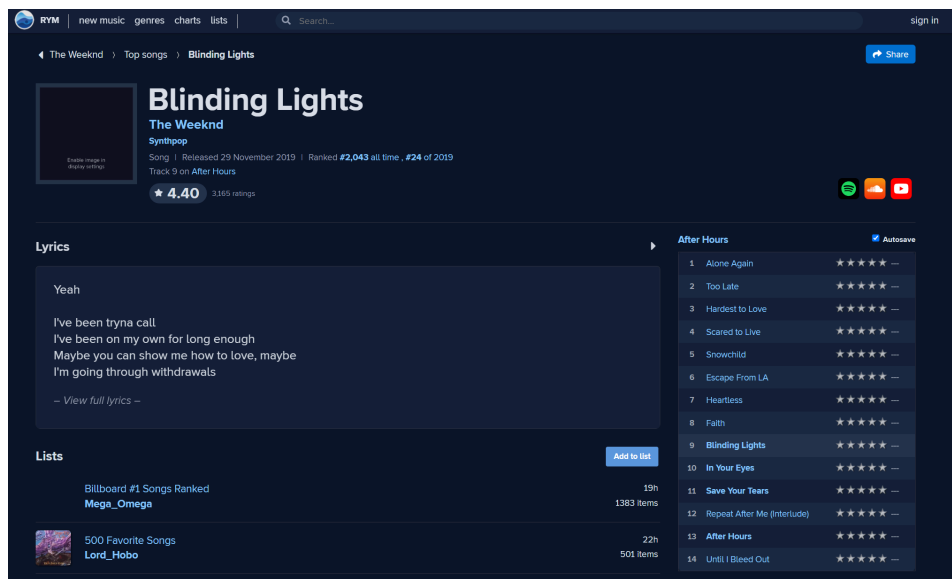


Figure 4: Rate Your Music track page interface showing cluttered design and poor visual hierarchy

Album of the Year (AOTY)

Strengths:

- Clear distinction between critic and user scores (0-100 scale)
- Focus on new releases and contemporary music
- Clean presentation of rating aggregation
- Integration with professional music criticism

Weaknesses:

- Limited social features beyond basic reviewing
- Uninspired design that lacks engagement
- No advanced personalization or discovery features
- Minimal community interaction capabilities
- Limited list creation and curation tools

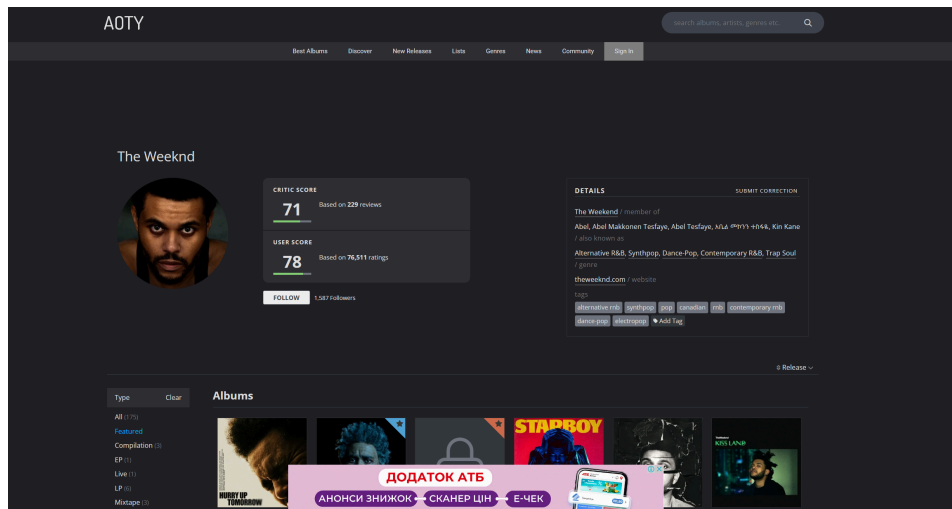


Figure 5: Album of the Year interface showing cleaner but uninspiring design with bad optimisation for desktop resulting in smaller items and empty space

Musicboard

Strengths:

- Modern, clean design inspired by successful platforms like Letterboxd
- Comprehensive social features including following, likes, and comments
- Mixed-media lists combining songs, albums, and artists
- Unique curated charts based on user statistics
- Robust logging and diary functionality
- Strong community engagement features

Weaknesses:

- Limited market penetration due to recent entry
- Frequent advertisement interruptions affecting user experience
- Smaller music database compared to established competitors
- Less sophisticated search and discovery algorithms

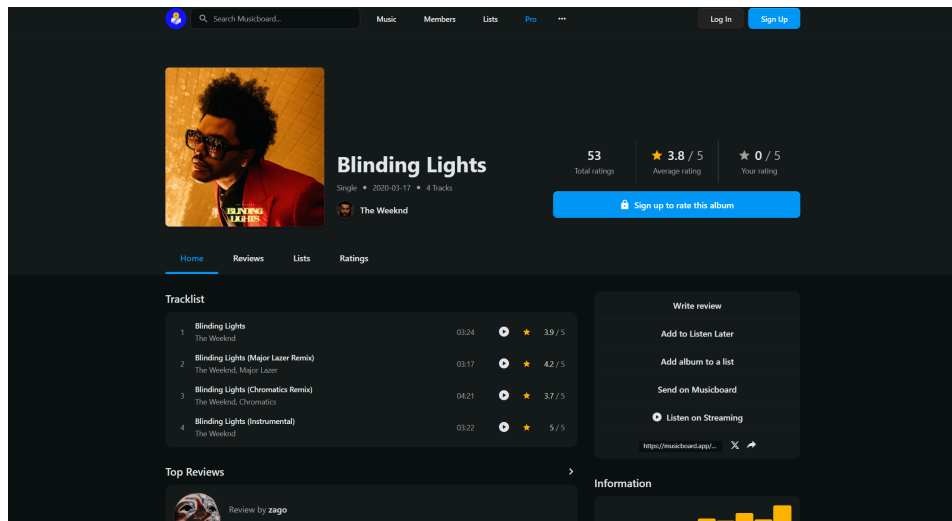


Figure 6: Musicboard interface demonstrating modern design principles but with intrusive advertisement placement that disrupts user flow

2.3.3 Feature Comparison Matrix

Feature Category	Rate Music	Your	Album of the Year	Musicboard	Market Gap
Rating Systems	✓ (0.5-5 scale)		✓ (0-100 scale)	✓ (0.5-5 scale)	Custom rating methodologies
User Reviews	✓ Basic		✓ Basic	✓ Advanced	Rich multimedia reviews
Social Features	✗ Minimal		✗ None	✓ Comprehensive	Enhanced discussion spaces
Logging/Diary	✗ None		✗ None	✓ Basic	Advanced activity tracking
User Lists	✓ Basic		✗ None	✓ Advanced	Collaborative curation
Mobile Experience	✗ Poor		✗ Basic	✓ Good	Native mobile optimization
API Integration	✓ Limited		✓ Limited	✓ Spotify	Multi-platform integration
Monetization	Free + Ads		Free + Donation	Subscription	Sustainable revenue models

Table 1: Competitive Feature Analysis Matrix

2.4 Gap Analysis and Market Opportunities

2.4.1 Identified Market Gaps

Through our comprehensive analysis, we identified several significant gaps in the current market:

1. **Customizable Rating Systems:** No existing platform offers users the ability to customize their rating methodology. All platforms impose a single rating scale, limiting users who prefer different evaluation approaches or want to rate different aspects of music separately.
2. **Enhanced Social Discovery:** While Musicboard includes social features, most platforms lack sophisticated social discovery mechanisms that help users find like-minded community members or discover music through social connections.
3. **Advanced Discussion Spaces:** Current platforms either lack discussion features entirely or provide only basic commenting. There's an opportunity for structured discussion spaces around specific topics, genres, or musical themes.
4. **Comprehensive Integration:** Most platforms offer limited integration with streaming services. A more comprehensive integration like importing music habits and history could provide seamless discovery and better user experience.
5. **Modern User Experience:** Several leading platforms suffer from outdated design and poor user experience, particularly on mobile devices. There's a significant opportunity for platforms that prioritize modern UX/UI principles.

2.4.2 Target User Segments and Unmet Needs

Our research identified three primary user segments with distinct unmet needs:

Music Enthusiasts (Casual to Dedicated Listeners)

- **Need:** Better discovery mechanisms that go beyond algorithmic recommendations
- **Gap:** Limited platforms offering community-driven discovery
- **Opportunity:** Social features that connect users with similar tastes

Critics and Reviewers (Amateur and Professional)

- **Need:** Sophisticated tools for detailed music analysis and critique
- **Gap:** Platforms lack advanced review formatting and multimedia support
- **Opportunity:** Professional-grade review tools with community engagement

Musicians and Artists

- **Need:** Direct engagement with audience and feedback collection
- **Gap:** Most platforms don't facilitate artist-audience interaction
- **Opportunity:** Features designed specifically for artist engagement and feedback

2.4.3 Technological Opportunities

Modern Architecture Requirements:

- Microservices architecture for scalability and maintainability
- API-first design enabling future integrations and mobile applications
- Cloud-native deployment for global accessibility and performance

- Real-time features for social interaction and content updates

Integration Opportunities:

- Multi-platform streaming service integration beyond Spotify
- Social media integration for content sharing and user acquisition
- Music recognition and metadata enrichment services
- Analytics and recommendation engines based on user behavior

2.5 Justification for BeatRate Development

2.5.1 Market Positioning Strategy

Based on our analysis, we identified a clear market opportunity for BeatRate that combines the strengths of existing platforms while addressing their fundamental limitations:

Differentiation Strategy:

- **Customizable Rating Systems:** Unlike any existing platform, BeatRate offers both simple and comprehensive rating methodologies, allowing users to choose their preferred evaluation approach
- **Enhanced Social Features:** Building upon Musicboard's social foundation while improving community interaction and discovery
- **Modern UI/UX:** Implementing scalable, cloud-native architecture that existing platforms lack

Competitive Advantages:

- **User Choice:** Flexible rating systems that adapt to user preferences
- **Community Focus:** Advanced social features that foster meaningful connections
- **Technical Excellence:** Modern architecture ensuring superior performance and scalability
- **User Experience:** Contemporary design principles which follows best UI/UX and are visually appealing for users

2.5.2 Requirements Validation

Our domain research validates the core requirements initially identified for BeatRate:

Validated Requirements:

- **Dual Rating System:** Market gap analysis confirms need for customizable evaluation methods
- **Social Features:** User engagement metrics from successful platforms like Musicboard demonstrate value of community features
- **Modern UX/UI:** Poor user experience of market leaders creates opportunity for superior design
- **Streaming Integration:** Limited integration in existing platforms validates need for comprehensive connectivity
- **Scalable Architecture:** Technical limitations of older platforms justify modern architectural approach

Additional Requirements Identified:

- **Advanced Discussion Spaces:** Gap in structured community interaction capabilities

- **Multi-device Optimization:** Mobile experience gaps in leading platforms
- **Artist Engagement Features:** Underserved musician and artist user segment
- **Advanced Analytics:** Opportunity for sophisticated user behavior analysis and recommendations

2.6 Monetization Models and Revenue Analysis

2.6.1 Current Market Monetization Strategies

The analysis of existing platforms reveals diverse approaches to monetization, ranging from advertising-only models to hybrid subscription services. Understanding these revenue streams provides crucial insights into the financial viability of the music evaluation platform market and informs strategic decisions for BeatRate's business model.

Rate Your Music (RYM) - Advertising-Only Model: RYM operates exclusively on advertising revenue without subscription or donation options. With 15.02 million monthly visits generating approximately 186.3 million page views per month, using industry-standard RPM rates of \$1-3 for music websites (Rosen, 2025), RYM's estimated monthly ad revenue ranges from \$186,300 to \$558,900, translating to an annual revenue estimate of \$2.2M to \$6.7M. This demonstrates the financial viability of the music evaluation market while highlighting potential limitations in revenue diversification.

Album of the Year (AOTY) - Hybrid Model: AOTY combines advertising revenue with optional donations, offering an ad-free experience for \$11.99 annually. With 8.271 million monthly visits generating 86.30 million page views, estimated monthly ad revenue ranges from \$86,300 to \$258,900. Assuming a 1% conversion rate among unique visitors, donation revenue contributes an additional \$218,937 per year, resulting in total annual revenue estimates of \$1.47M to \$3.52M.

Musicboard - Social-Enhanced Subscription Model: Musicboard offers Basic (\$1.99/month) and Premium (\$4.99/month) subscriptions, leveraging social features to drive adoption. With 127,336 unique monthly visitors and assuming a 5% conversion rate, the platform generates approximately \$18,400 monthly from subscriptions. Combined with advertising revenue from 1.879 million page views, total annual revenue estimates range from \$243K to \$288K. Despite lower absolute numbers, Musicboard's higher conversion rates demonstrate the potential of social features to drive premium subscriptions.

2.6.2 Strategic Implications for BeatRate

Market Size Validation: The combined revenue potential across leading platforms (\$4M-\$10M annually) validates a sustainable market for music evaluation platforms. The variation in subscription conversion rates (1% for AOTY vs 5% for Musicboard) highlights the importance of social engagement in driving premium adoption.

Monetization Strategy: The success of hybrid models supports BeatRate's approach of implementing advertising-supported free access with premium features. Musicboard's conversion rates demonstrate that social features and user customization drive both engagement and monetization, validating BeatRate's emphasis on community interaction and flexible rating systems.

2.7 Chapter Summary

Our systematic domain research reveals a mature but fragmented market with significant opportunities for innovation. While platforms like Rate Your Music demonstrate strong user engagement in the music evaluation space, fundamental limitations in user experience, social features, and technical architecture create clear opportunities for a new platform.

The analysis of 45+ million monthly visits across leading platforms indicates substantial market demand, while the identified gaps in customizable rating systems, enhanced social features, and modern user experience design validate our approach with BeatRate. The revenue analysis confirms market viability, with existing platforms generating millions annually despite technical limitations, suggesting significant potential for a platform addressing current gaps.

Most critically, our research demonstrates that no existing platform successfully combines comprehensive music evaluation capabilities with robust social features and modern technical architecture. This gap represents the core opportunity that BeatRate addresses, positioning it as a platform that learns from the strengths of existing solutions while fundamentally advancing the state of the art in music evaluation and community engagement.

The requirements validated through this research process directly inform our system design and implementation approach, ensuring that BeatRate addresses real market needs while offering clear differentiation from existing alternatives. This foundation provides the justification and direction for the architectural decisions and implementation strategy detailed in subsequent chapters.

3 | Design

In this section you turn your requirements into a concrete engineering blueprint. You'll justify every major architectural choice, visualize structure with C4 diagrams for the first three layers, and map out your runtime topology so that peers can understand—and you can defend—every aspect of your system.

1. Clarify how functional and non-functional requirements drive your high-level architecture
2. List each architectural decision (for example, “We chose microservices to enable independent scaling and deployment”) and explain why it best meets your goals
3. Include a C4 Context diagram showing your system in its environment (users, external systems, data sources)
4. Include a C4 Container diagram breaking the system into deployable units (APIs, web front end, background workers, databases) and annotate communication styles and protocols
5. Include a C4 Component diagram for your core container(s), illustrating key modules, services or libraries and their interactions
6. Describe your deployment topology: physical or cloud hosts, network zones, load-balancing, failover and backup strategies
7. Summarize your technology stack, mapping each tool or framework back to a specific container or component and noting any trade-offs (performance, community support, learning curve)
8. Outline how data flows through the system—including storage models, messaging patterns or API contracts—and note any schema or interface versioning plans
9. Address cross-cutting concerns (Security, Logging, Monitoring, Scalability) and show where they sit in your topology

By walking through Requirements → Decisions → Diagrams → Topology, your Design section becomes a rigorous, evidence-backed foundation for the implementation that follows.

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Contents

3.1 Section 1	18
3.2 Section 2	18
3.3 Conclusion	18

3.1 Section 1

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3.3 Conclusion

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4 | Implementation

In this section you translate your component-level designs into working code and systems. Focus on the C4 Component layer and on the details needed to show how your design was realized. Include only the most important code snippets that illustrate key patterns or algorithms, rather than full listings.

1. Describe the development methodology (for example, Agile or test-driven development) used to guide your implementation
2. Explain any prototyping or iterative strategies you applied to refine components before full-scale coding
3. Summarize coding standards, naming conventions and architectural patterns followed in your codebase
4. Present critical code snippets or configuration templates that highlight how core components were implemented (for example, key classes, interfaces or algorithms)
5. Detail your testing approach and quality assurance measures (unit tests, integration tests, coverage metrics)
6. Note any performance optimizations or profiling results for components that were bottlenecks
7. Outline your deployment and configuration management process for component artifacts (containerization, CI/CD pipelines)
8. Highlight documentation deliverables (API references, inline comments, architecture decision records) that support future maintenance

This section demonstrates how each component specification becomes actual, maintainable code—closing the loop from design to implementation.

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Contents

4.1 Section 1	20
4.2 Section 2	20
4.3 Conclusion	20

4.1 Section 1

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4.2 Section 2

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4.3 Conclusion

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5 | Validation

Validation (Requirements Verification and Testing)

In this section you demonstrate how your implementation satisfies the initial requirements through clear testing methods and concise examples—suitable for a bachelor-level project:

- 1. Restate each key functional and non-functional requirement from your Analysis and Design sections*
- 2. Describe the testing approach for each requirement (for example, unit tests, manual acceptance checks or scenario walkthroughs)*
- 3. Provide concrete test cases or usage examples that show how you verify each requirement in practice*
- 4. Summarize actual versus expected outcomes, indicating pass/fail status for each test*
- 5. Include brief snippets of test code or sample console outputs to illustrate your procedures*
- 6. Note any gaps or deviations and suggest simple fixes or areas for future improvement*
- 7. If a feature wasn't intended for specific scenarios (e.g. high-load), omit unrealistic stress tests and clearly document its current limitations*

This focused structure ties every requirement directly to validation results, using examples and methods you can realistically carry out at the bachelor level.

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Contents

5.1 Section 1	22
5.2 Section 2	22
5.3 Conclusion	22

5.1 Section 1

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5.2 Section 2

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5.3 Conclusion

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6 | Conclusion

Conclusion

In this final section you bring together your work and reflect on its impact. Keep it concise, restating key points without introducing new information:

- 1. Project Summary: Briefly recap objectives, methodology and principal results*
- 2. Alignment with Objectives: Discuss how outcomes meet initial goals, referencing requirements and design aims*
- 3. Lessons Learned and Challenges: Note any obstacles and how they informed improvements*
- 4. Limitations: Acknowledge features or scenarios beyond this scope and clearly state current system boundaries*
- 5. Future Work: Suggest practical enhancements or research directions building on your findings*

Avoid introducing new concepts here; refer readers to the Discussion for deeper analysis.

6.1 Project summary

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6.2 Comparison with the initial objectives

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6.3 Encountered difficulties

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6.4 Future perspectives

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Glossary

Bibliography