Capstone Final Report – Jacob Posz

Executive Summary

Overview

With over one third of the global streaming listener market share, Spotify has become the most important tool for up and coming artists. You might not think of Spotify as a social media, but in reality that's exactly what it is. An artist's Spotify profile connects that artist with fans and uses huge quantities of user data to keep giving listeners exactly what they want. An increase in current traffic to an artist's Spotify profile results in downstream traffic to that artist's upcoming gigs, merchandise, and stream revenue. What is the best way to drive current traffic to an artist's Spotify profile though? The answer: through an artist's new single. To investigate this further, a single song campaign was run with a musician that I currently help manage and broke the campaign down into 3 stages (30 days for each stage and 90 days total) with the eventual goal of getting the single onto a Spotify editorial playlist.

Stage 1 - Pitch Stage (Days 0-30)

What is a Spotify editorial playlist and why is this step so important? Well, according to Spotify, editorial playlists are playlists that are curated by Spotify's Shows & Editorial team. This is a team of music experts and genre specialists from around the world, hired by Spotify to curate and manage Spotify's own playlists. These playlists can make or break a new artist's career by the sheer amount of listeners these playlists have. By pitching your artist's song to Spotify early on (at least 1 month prior to release day), you're giving Spotify's editors the best chance to listen and playlist your artist's song. However, you can only pitch your artist's song to Spotify's Editorial Team pre-release so it's crucial to get the timing correct. A database was used to help gather data to correctly pitch the artist's single to Spotify editorial playlist curators.

Stage 2 - Promotion Stage (Days 31-60)

This stage is crucial because according to Spotify, if your artist's song wasn't originally picked by an editorial playlist curator prior to release day, the song still has a chance to get picked for an editorial playlist based on the song's first month performance. Taking this into consideration, precautions were taken to make sure the proper tool was used (recommended by Spotify) to correctly promote the artist's single during the first month post release (days 31-60).

Stage 3 - Growth Stage Stage 3 (Days 61-90)

Lastly, the growth stage is pivotal in driving traffic to an artist's Spotify profile through an artist's new single. Regardless of whether an artist's single was selected by a Spotify editorial curator or not, it's important to keep driving traffic to your artist's single during the second month post release. Spotify just released an internal tool called 'Discovery Mode' to help artists with this very issue; Discovery Mode was used to help grow the artist's single for this campaign.

Final Results

In conclusion, the artist's single was not selected by a Spotify editorial playlist curator. However, current traffic was successfully driven to the artist's Spotify profile which will lead to many downstream benefits for him. A few examples include: reaching 1,712 more listeners, 233 more clicks to his release and 149 more converted listeners.

Pitch Stage (Stage 1)

Chartmetric Background

The first tool used to help correctly pitch the artist's single was Chartmetric. Chartmetric is a music analytics solution, which helps digital marketers, music supervisors and artist managers monitor chart performance, social key performance indicators (KPIs), albums and audience demographics to streamline decision-making processes. Anyone with a Chartmetric Pro account can track playlists' acoustic characteristics or follower counts and search for similar artists based on genre. Moreover, Chatmetric enables Pro account users to gain insights into artists' performance across multiple music streaming and social media channels including YouTube, TikTok, Spotify, Apple Music and Instagram. Chartmetric Pro users can export data tables in PNG, JPEG, SVG, CSV and XLS file or image format. Additionally, Chartmetric Pro users can utilize an artists and repertoire (A&R) dashboard to discover new talent by sorting or filtering playlists. Lastly, Chartmetric allows Chartmetric Pro users to summarize music charts data in the form of graphs based on duration, genre or age, among other categories.

Chartmetric Significance

Chartmetric is widely used by both music marketers and musicians and highly-acclaimed by music marketers and music labels. Chartmetric is essentially a database for music, but it also provides many cool features that have been gaining traction in the music industry. One of the features used pre-release and pre-pitch for this campaign was the "Playlist Journey" feature. This feature essentially tracks the "journey" of all songs on a target playlist; it visualizes the tracks' commonly occurring playlists and displays the percentage overlap between the playlists. This feature was extremely helpful in helping to find the correct Spotify curated playlists to pitch the artist's song to based on the song's micro-genre. Other features that were used during the pre-release and pre-pitch phase of the single was how long songs last in a specific playlist, how new the tracks are in a specific playlist (based on date added) and date and time of when songs are added and removed from a specific playlist.

Prior to using the "playlist journey" feature to figure out the exact micro-genre of the artist's single, the "similar playlists" feature was used to see what other artists were in the artist's micro-genre and the exact playlists that their songs were being added to. After doing some research, hours of listening to songs and using Chartmetric's "Playlist Journey" feature, it was

discovered that the artist's single fell under the micro-genre(s) of "hyperpop," "indietronica" and "bedroom pop"; all three of which myself and the artist had never heard of / did not know existed prior to using Chartmetric. Moreover, through the "Playlist Journey" feature, a few smaller Spotify curated playlists were found that fit the artist's single's micro-genres; pitching to these playlists was done prior to release day.

Chartmetric Conclusion

Overall, Chartmetric was extremely useful. The information and data was precise and up-to-date. Moreover, the UI was brilliantly designed and very well-organized. It was incredible to see how specific one could get with the filters. Overall, my main takeaway was how much it helped in finding the specific Spotify curated playlists that the artist's song was eventually pitched to. In conclusion, ***the pitch stage of the release was a success.***

Promotion Stage (Stage 2)

Spotify's 'Marquee' Tool Background

The second tool that was used to help promote the artist's single was Spotify's 'Marquee' tool. Marquee is a full-screen, sponsored recommendation of an artist's new release to Spotify Free and Premium listeners who have shown interest in an artist's music and have the potential to listen more. When a listener clicks on a Marquee, they are guided to an artist's new release—and that artist's release alone. To qualify, an artist needs at least 15K streams in the US over the past 28 days (which the artist had), or more than 2.5K US followers (which the artist also had). The way that Marquee works is that when members of an artist's "reachable audience" open the Spotify app, they're greeted with a full-screen recommendation to check out that artist's new release.

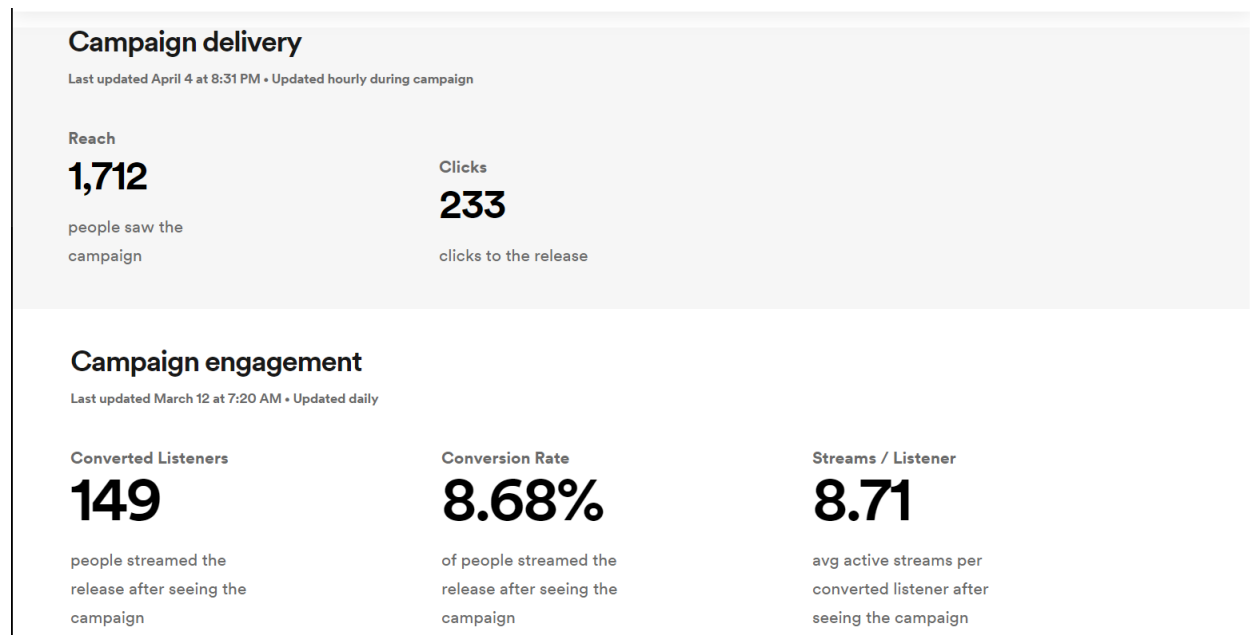**Spotify's 'Marquee' Tool Significance**

Marquee was used to drive as much traffic as possible to the artist's song during the first month, as the 1-month period post-release is when curators evaluate to see how a song performed over the month (if the song was not originally added pre-release). In short, more traffic increases the probability of a curator adding the song to their playlist, if they did not originally add it when it was pitched.

Unlike other paid marketing tools, Marquee allows artists to target listeners based on their listening history rather than broad demographics or interests. It also reaches listeners right when they're deciding what to listen to rather than when they're scrolling through their feed. Finally, Marquee's reporting measures the impact on music listening and fan engagement. It was the perfect tool to use post-release to promote the artist's single.

Marquee Results

With the goal of promoting the artist's single, Marquee yielded positive results. The campaign ended up only spending $116.50 total out of the $210.00 that had been invested. What does this mean? It means that Spotify over-estimated the artist's reachable audience (a group of listeners who have followed the artist or shown interest in his music and are likely to find the Marquee campaign relevant) / was not as efficient at promoting the artist's single as Spotify thought it would be. Nonetheless, through Marquee, 1,712 more listeners (people who saw the campaign) were reached, 233 more clicks (clicks to the release) were made, 149 more converted listeners

(people who streamed the release after seeing the campaign) were made, an increase in conversion rate of 8.68% (percentage of people streamed the release after seeing the campaign) was made, an increase of 8.71 streams / listener (average number of active streams per converted listener who streamed the song after seeing the campaign) was made, an increase in intent rate of 39.6% (number of converted listeners who saved or playlisted the song after streaming) was made, 28 additional playlists adds for the song were made and an increase in save rate of 30.2% (number of of converted listeners who saved a track) was made.

Campaign delivery
Last updated April 4 at 8:31 PM • Updated hourly during campaign

Reach
1,712
people saw the campaign

Clicks
233
clicks to the release

Campaign engagement
Last updated March 12 at 7:20 AM • Updated daily

Converted Listeners
149
people streamed the release after seeing the campaign

Conversion Rate
8.68%
of people streamed the release after seeing the campaign

Streams / Listener
8.71
avg active streams per converted listener after seeing the campaign

Moreover, 21 of the converted listeners from the Marquee campaign also streamed the artist's other releases after seeing the campaign. Furthermore, there were 9.67 average streams of the artist's other releases per converted listener, 5 total tracks of the artist's other releases added to playlists by converted listeners and 2 total tracks of the artist's other releases saved by converted listeners. The only caveat about using Marquee was that Spotify only considered people in the United States who they thought would listen to the artist; listeners in every other country where Spotify is currently available were not considered. However, Spotify has announced that they are going to make Marquee available to the rest of the world by 2024.

Marquee Conclusion

Overall, this Marquee campaign showed fantastic results. With Marquee, Spotify is trying to drive its artists/artist's marketers to promote their music through Spotify, rather than third-parties like Facebook ads and Google ads. It seems to be working for Spotify so far. The two questions that were left unanswered after using Marquee was if this specific campaign was even worth it and would it eventually pay dividends to the artist? To help answer these questions, research was done. A popular music blog, called 'Music Growth Machine,' conducted a survey and collected previous Marquee campaign results from various different artists and computed averages. Music Growth Machine stated, "Spotify Marquee not only has a reasonable price point of around $0.50 per USA listener, but the listeners engage with the music at a high rate. You can expect save rates of around 25%, playlist add rates of around 15% and a stream / listener rate of 4.56."

Comparing the artist's Marquee campaign to the reported average numbers above, the artist's campaign exceeded industry averages in every category. The artist had a save rate of 30.2% (well above the expected value of 25%), a playlist add rate of 15.44% (above the expected value of 15%), and a stream / listener rate of 8.71 (well above the expected value of 4.56). Therefore, one out of two of the questions have been answered; the campaign that was run for the artist was indeed worth it (actually well above worth it). However, as far as answering whether this campaign will end up paying the artist dividends, there is no way of actually knowing; instead, it can be assumed that this campaign will drive future traffic to the artist's Spotify page which will hopefully compound and add up over time.

In conclusion, not only did Spotify's Marquee tool help promote the artist's new single, but it showed the artist's song to new listeners which will help drive more traffic to his future releases, shows, merchandise and stream revenue. Moreover, the Marquee campaign that was run for the artist outperformed the industry average by a significant margin. Therefore, ***the promotion stage of the release was a success.***

Growth Stage (Stage 3)

Spotify's 'Discovery Mode' Tool Background

Discovery Mode is essentially a program where Spotify helps drive more listeners to a song by inserting an artist's songs into other artists' radio stations and general "autoplay" sessions – the caveat being that Spotify withholds 30% of the revenue generated from Discovery Mode streams. If an artist opts in (eligible) songs to Discovery Mode, these songs will start to appear more often in other artists' Radio playlists. Moreover an artist's songs will also autoplay more frequently after people finish listening to similar artists' albums and playlists. In short, when opting a song into Discovery Mode, Spotify will essentially test your artist's song in more Radio playlists and prioritize your artist's song within the autoplay feature.

The way Discovery Mode was used to grow the artist's single was by waiting 30 days post release then making sure that the song had at least 1 radio play (which it did). Furthermore, the song had to have at least 500 streams in the past 28 days (which it did). Lastly, the artist had to have at least 25,000 monthly listeners (which he did). After this, the song was able to be opted into Discovery Mode for the entire month of March.

Spotify's 'Discovery Mode' Tool Significance

Spotify's 'Discovery Mode' tool was used solely to grow the artist's single and to connect it to new listeners. According to Spotify, their data shows that artists with tracks in Discovery Mode find 40% more listeners on average. Moreover, Spotify stated that 44% of those new listeners had never listened to the artist before – so the Discovery Mode recommendations seem to be working (at least according to Spotify). However, there is a caveat; the Discovery Mode algorithm can be unpredictable. Spotify states, "There's no guarantee that your music will be recommended to the right listeners at the right time." This was concerning at first so a lot of thought and research was put into this before making the final decision to go through with it. It was decided that the potential benefits outweighed the potential risks. Moreover, since Discovery Mode is so new, there was also the element of the unknown which was a risk, but one that was worth taking.

Discovery Mode Results

With the goal of growing the artist's single, Discovery Mode yielded positive results. After opting the artist's song in for the entire month of March, all of the results are in and are encouraging for the most part. However, just like with the Marquee campaign, the same two questions needed to be answered: was this 'Discovery Mode' campaign even worth it and would it eventually pay dividends to the artist?

Through the Discovery Mode campaign run for the artist's song for the entire month of March, there was an increase of 4,538 listeners (total number of unique listeners streaming from Radio and Autoplay, including new listeners), an increase of 260% in listener lift (the rate at which the artist's average number of daily listeners changed during this campaign period), 3,498 new listeners, an increase of 45 saves (the number of times a song was saved by a listener reached in Radio and Autoplay), an increase of 32 playlist adds (The number of times a song was added to a playlist by a listener reached in Radio and Autoplay), an increase of 6,594 total streams (the total number of streams in Radio and Autoplay contexts), a 275% increase in stream lift (the rate at which your average number of daily streams in Radio and Autoplay changed during this campaign period) and an increase of 1.48% intent rate (the percentage of listeners who saved or playlisted the track after streaming it).
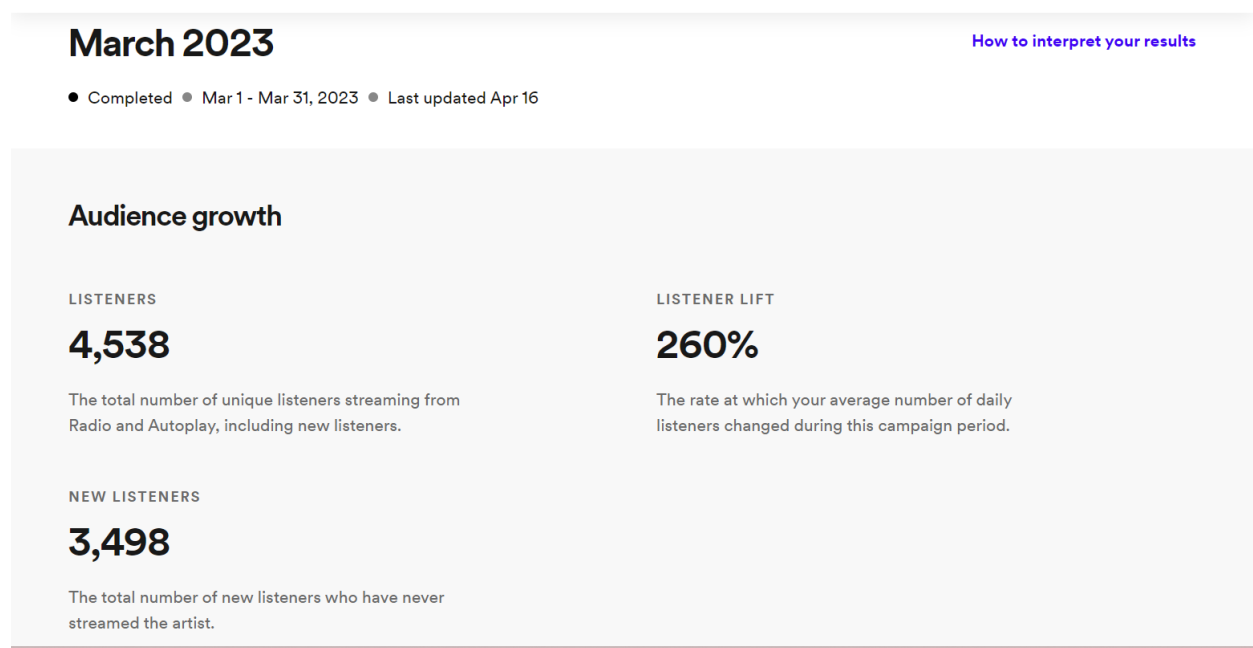
To answer the two questions about the campaign, research was done to find what the average numbers from a 'Discovery Mode' campaign actually were. Since 'Music Growth Machine's' study on 'Marquee' campaigns had been helpful in the promotion stage, research was done to see if the popular blog had a study published on 'Discovery Mode.' However, since Discovery Mode is so new, 'Music Growth Machine' stated that they haven't been able to conduct a 'Discovery Mode' survey yet. However,on Spotify's website, Spotify states, "Statistical modeling shows that, on average, artists see +50% in saves, +44% in user playlist adds, and +37% in follows during the first month of Discovery Mode." Obviously this sounded super encouraging and seemed to be the perfect tool to use in the growth stage of the campaign; but whether or not Spotify was being truthful about the potential results was still questionable.

Compared to Spotify's projections for a 'Discovery Mode' campaign, the 'Discovery Mode' campaign run for the artist's single underperformed Spotify's average projections in every category. The artist saw an increase of only 45 saves, compared to the previous month's of 35 saves (only a 29% increase compared to Spotify's projection of +50%), an increase of only 32 playlist adds, compared to the previous month's of 25 adds (only a 28% increase compared to Spotify's projection of +44%), and only an increase of 24 new followers, compared to the previous month's of 21 new followers (only a 20% increase compared to Spotify's projection of +37%).

Discovery Mode Conclusion

So, in conclusion, while the Discovery Mode campaign run for the artist's new single didn't match Spotify's projections, there was still an increase in growth in every category (saves, playlist adds, and followers); it just wasn't as high as Spotify projected. However, since Discovery Mode is so new, there's a chance that Spotify is overestimating how beneficial Discovery Mode actually is. Nonetheless, since our results didn't meet Spotify's projections, the growth stage of the release was not a success. However, it wasn't a failure either. The ***growth stage of the campaign was passable,*** as it still drove traffic to the artist's Spotify profile which will help with downstream traffic to the artist's upcoming gigs, merchandise, and stream revenue.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Did the Artist's single get onto an editorial playlist?

After using Chartmetric's 'Playlist Journey' tool to figure out what micro-genre(s) the artist fell under, the correct playlists were found and then targeted during the Spotify pitch (suggesting the exact name of the playlist one thinks the song should be on is highly recommended by Spotify). Three playlists where the song would fit perfectly in were found: 'ödev var,' 'Hits forreals,' and 'tear drop.' After submitting the pitch 30 days before release day, none of the playlist curators said anything to myself nor the artist. So, unfortunately, our final goal of landing on a Spotify editorial playlist was not met.

In conclusion, the ultimate goal of getting the artist's single onto a Spotify editorial playlist was unsuccessful. However, that doesn't make this project a complete failure; it is quite the opposite actually. According to Spotify, they receive 49,000 new song pitches per day and less than 1% of them get onto Spotify editorial playlists. In other words, it's extremely difficult to get onto a Spotify editorial playlist. Moreover, artists signed to major labels are competing to get onto these playlists as well. The major labels have marketers / managers that personally know the curators of these editorial playlists and get their artist onto them essentially automatically. Therefore, it's close to impossible to get onto one as an independent artist; however, it does happen and that is why this lofty goal was set by myself.

Although the ultimate goal of getting the artist's single onto a Spotify editorial playlist was unsuccessful, driving traffic to the artist's Spotify profile was successful; by pitching the artist's song to the right playlist (through researching and parsing through databases like Chartmetric), promoting it to 1,712 new listeners (through Spotify's 'Marquee' tool) and growing it by 6,594 streams (through Spotify's 'Discover Mode' tool). Not only was the artist's song successfully pitched, promoted, and grown to the most listeners he's ever seen in a 1 month period, but the entire campaign set him up for downstream growth and increased traffic for future releases,

shows, merchandise and stream revenue. Although the war was lost, many of the individual battles were won and that experience will help in improving future campaigns.

Lessons Learned for Next Campaign

For the next campaign that is run, only a few things need to be changed. For the most part, everything was done the right way and done as efficiently as possible, given the hand that was dealt.

For the pitch stage, there is only one thing that should've been done differently (although it's uncertain whether it'd work or not). Hours were spent parsing through Chartmetric to find the exact micro-genres, similar artists, editorial playlists, etc. Moreover, hours were spent listening to songs by similar artists and trying to determine where exactly the artist's song fit into amongst micro-genres and other artists. The only thing that should've been done differently is get a few other outside listeners to give their opinions as to what micro-genre they think the artist's song would fit into. However, the issue with this would be that most people wouldn't know the names / sounds of each individual micro-genre. Therefore, how successful this idea would be is uncertain and could possibly not work at all.

For the promotion stage, the only thing that should've been done differently is be more conservative on the Marquee budget, as only $116.50 of the total $210.00 was spent. Spotify said that they would reimburse the money that wasn't spent on the campaign; however, a refund has yet to be given and it has been almost 60 days. Nonetheless, Spotify overestimated the artist's reachable audience (a group of listeners who have followed the artist or shown interest in his music and are likely to find the Marquee campaign relevant) / was not as efficient at promoting the artist's single as Spotify thought it would be. In future campaigns, being more cautious of budget will be considered.

For the growth stage, adding another growth strategy in addition to using Spotify's Discovery Mode should've been made. For example, using Facebook ads / Google ads in addition to using Discovery Mode should've been considered. The reason is because even though the artist saw an increase in saves, adds and followers, the numbers weren't as high as Spotify projected them to be. In other words, Spotify's 'Discovery Mode' tool hasn't been perfected yet. Therefore, combining Discovery Mode with another means of growth will be much more effective for future campaigns until Spotify is able to improve Discovery Mode.

In conclusion, as previously stated, although the war was lost, many individual battles were won. The artist's single was not selected by a Spotify editorial playlist curator, but current traffic was driven to the artist's Spotify profile through a strategic pitch, successful promotion and a successful growth strategy which will drive future traffic to that artist's future releases, upcoming gigs, merchandise, and stream revenue.

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