

Determinants of Consumer Intention to Purchase Independent Artist's Work

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Abstract. Commercialization of the music industry encourages several musicians to record, promote, and distribute their works independently to a particular niche market. This study aims to explore the factors that shape consumer's purchase intention on a release of independent artist. Qualitative research design was used to collect data from consumers, independent bands, music analyst, and owner of independent label. The findings showed that purchase intention on independent artist's work was influenced by their attitude toward independent artist, price, product availability, and packaging. This study generated sixteen propositions.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Independent Artist, Purchase Intention, Music

1. Introduction

Music has become a part of human's life. With population of over 240 million people, Indonesia turns out to be an attractive market for music industry. As a business, every major recording label tends to maximize profitability by prioritizing commercialization of artists. They promote heavily to increase artists' popularity, involve in song writing process, and reject musicians that do not have commercial appeal (Costa et al., 2009; Dhar & Chang, 2007; Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004). It causes anxiety among musicians, especially those who are persistent to emphasize the artistic factors in their work, known as independent artists. Hence, they choose to record and distribute their music without any assistance from major recording labels.

Consumers' awareness of independent artists increases significantly in the last few years, yet the sales of independent artists' releases are small. Sales of major recording labels are 6 to 12 times higher than sales of independent ones (Dhar & Chang, 2007). The difference in sales volume is much higher in Indonesia. It may be due to their limited access to the market (Costa et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2004) and limited knowledge of their market characteristics.

The study of consumer purchase intention on musical work has been under-explored. According to Vaccaro and Cohn (2004), management of recording label should analyze the effect of consumers characteristics on their purchase intention. Most previous studies emphasize the relationship between consumer personality and music preference. This study aims to explore the factors being considered by consumers before purchasing a release of independent artist. The result is expected to give some insights to music industry practitioners in developing their marketing strategy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Is Music a Piece of Art Work or Product?

As a business, major recording labels stress on product marketability to maximize profitability. They require musicians to follow market trends in producing their works. Referring to Bourdieu's classification, they treat a release of their artists as commodity or large-scale cultural production (Lin, 2006).

This situation creates dilemma for musicians (Addis & Holbrook, 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2003). A number of artists who wants to gain popularity and maximize sales will follow major recording labels' requirements, while others who treat music as an autonomous artistic form decide to produce, market, and

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distribute their works independently. The works of artists that emphasize the cultural legitimacy rather than financial reward are included in the field of restricted production (Lin, 2006).

2.2. Consumer Behavior and Music Consumption

People may decide what kind of music they want to listen to, where they consume it, and how many times they listen to it. Target consumers of independent artists are different from those of mainstream artists. Thus, their purchasing behavior is probably different from consumers of mainstream artists.

Among all age groups, the adolescents and young adults between 12 and 24 years old appear to be very attracted to music (Delsing et al., 2008; Hsu, 2010; Larsen et al., 2006; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). People from diverse age groups have different needs to be fulfilled. Unlike adolescents and young adults who use music as symbolic representation of themselves and medium of socialization, older people use it to lessen the feelings of loneliness and to balance their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual life (Hays & Minichello, 2005; Larsen et al., 2006; Larsen & Lawson, 2010; North & Hargreaves, 1999; North et al., 2004).

Mostly, a person's music preference is formed when a person is between 18 and 24 years old (Larsen et al., 2006). Music preference may be influenced by gender (Schwartz & Fouts, 2003), ethnicity (Rentfrow et al., 2009), social class (Rentfrow et al., 2009), lifestyle, and personality (Delsing et al., 2008; North & Hargreaves, 1999, 2007; Rentfrow et al., 2009; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003).

Consumer purchasing behavior is also influenced by recording companies. Recording labels must select an appropriate marketing mix to attract consumers' attention, which in turns will affect their purchase intention. For instance, major recording labels only want to deal with mainstream artists who have mass appeal and do a lot of promotion to increase artists' popularity (Chakrabarti & Vanharanta, 2010; Costa et al., 2009; Hsu, 2010; Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004).

3. Research Methodology

This qualitative study used three data collection methods, namely observations, survey, and in-depth interviews. Data were collected between June and November 2010 in Jakarta, Tangerang, and Depok. Participants were consumers between 14 and 28 years old, members and managers of two independent bands, owner of an independent label, and a music analyst. Data were analyzed using method triangulation, data triangulation, and theory triangulation.

4. Results

Before purchasing a music CD, participants evaluated it based on several criteria as shown in Table 1. These could be divided into label influenced and consumers' internal factors.

Table 1 Criteria in evaluating a music CD

No.	Criteria	Explorative survey	Interview with consumers
1.	Artist popularity	89.9%	3 of 5
2.	Price	47.5%	2 of 5
3.	Music genre	35.4%	1 of 5
4.	Album design	16.2%	-
5.	Market availability	9.1%	1 of 5
6.	Quality of artist's work	-	3 of 5

All criteria in Table 1 were the components of marketing mix. They obtained information about a particular artist and new release from many sources, such as internet (93.3%), word-of-mouth (60.6%), live performances (60%), mass media (26.6%), and music stores (4.1%). In term of participants' tendency to buy an album, 50 percent preferred mainstream artists, 38.4 percent respondents chose independent artists, and the remainder had no preferences. Participants who preferred the mainstreams were likely to buy a release of mainstream artists as they were more popular and the release could be bought in many forms (e.g. album, downloaded single, ring back tone) which related to price and distribution. Their preferences were also related to their perception on the quality of artist's work. They assumed the major recording labels had screened out artists, so that the quality of mainstream artists' works was much better than the independent ones. In contrast, those who preferred independent artists prioritized the originality and uniqueness of these artists which distinguish themselves from mainstream artists.

Consumer's internal and social factors contributed to one's music preference. The study showed participants having different personalities, lifestyles, and personal values had different music preferences. Those who would buy independent artist's album had a tendency to be sociable (49.5%), imaginative (48.5%), independent (42.5%), open-minded (42.5%), logical (38.4%), and risk-taker (27.3%). Although they were receptive to new things, their friends would affect their courage in taking risk as 76 percent participants stated that peer acceptance would influence their music preference.

5. Discussion

Consumers' attitude toward independent artist's work is highly influenced by artist's popularity. Major recording labels attempt to enhance artists' popularity through media exposures and live performances. On the other hand, independent artists depend heavily on internet, live performances, and word-of-mouth to be recognized by their targeted audiences. Due to limited access to music industry and funds, internet becomes an alternative medium to promote independent artists. Not only for promotion, but independent artists also use internet to communicate directly with their audiences and fans (Brown, 2010; Chakrabarti & Vanharanta, 2010; Dhar & Chang, 2007; Rosen, 1997). Stage performances may enhance consumer awareness of these artists' presence. Live performances are useful to independent artists as a stepping stone to be known by public and to distribute their works. As music has to be experienced, people tend to consider others' opinions and reviews in mass media as indicators in estimating quality of an artistic piece (Dhar & Chang, 2007; Duan et al., 2008; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997). Unlike Bayley's (2005) finding, the appearance of independent artists in mass media in Indonesia is able to increase consumer awareness due to low internet penetration rate of Indonesian people. Based on these findings, two propositions are generated:

P1: The effectiveness of marketing communication tools influences artist's popularity

P2: Artist's popularity influences consumer's attitude toward independent artist

As argued by North and Hargreaves (1996), people are likely to have positive attitude toward an artist's work within their preferred music genre. There is a tendency that most consumers like the work of popular artists. However, even though the artist is not famous, many people are willing to listen to independent artist's good quality work and recommended by others.

There is an indication that quality of artist's work influence consumers' attitude toward independent artists. A review made by music analyst and published in mass media enables consumers to assess the quality of artist's work. They may also evaluate the quality from the uploaded singles in the internet and live performances.

Unlike consumers of mainstream artists who just follow recent music trend, consumers of independent artists emphasize artistic excellence in evaluating quality of independent artists. They may assess an artist's work from its lyrics and album content. Many independent artists convey their idealism and social issues through the lyrics. Quality of the work is also determined by artist's musical talent as it is related to innovativeness and creativity. Three propositions are offered based on these findings:

P3: The effectiveness of marketing communication tools influences consumer's perception on artist's quality

P4: Artist's creativity influences consumer's perception on artist's quality, moderated by label intervention

P5: Consumer's perception on artist's quality influences attitude toward independent artist

Every consumer has music preference that will affect their purchase decision. This study finds music preference is determined by consumer's lifestyle, personal value, and personality.

A person's lifestyle can be known from their activities, interest, and opinion. It is discovered that people with different activities and interests have a different taste in music. According to Indonesian urban lifestyles (Kasali, 2005), only 'the affluent', 'the socialite', and 'the anxious' are willing to buy an independent artist's work. The 'affluent' persons are extrovert, innovative, proactive, and risk-taker. They really enjoy the dynamics of an urban life. The 'socialite' individuals are also sociable and risk-taker, but they tend to be

reactive in accepting new ideas. The characteristics of ‘anxious’ persons are moderate risk-taker and looking for conformity from their peer group. They have a tendency to be followers.

People are likely to use music to represent self-identity as well as group identity, especially on adolescents and young adults (Hays & Minichello, 2005; Kruse, 1993; Larsen et al., 2006; Liu, 2007). The collectivism culture among Indonesians is predicted to strengthen the influence of peer group on one’s music preference. As a collectivist society, Indonesians want to blend in their group and get acceptance from others.

Generally, an individual’s values and personality affect music preference and attitude toward an independent artist’s work. For instance, this study finds imaginative participants with high degree of openness to change are inclined to like rock and jazz music, whereas those who are conservative and dominated by agreeableness personality tend to like pop music. There is a tendency that imaginative and open-minded people have positive attitude toward independent artists, while those who are rigid to change have negative attitude toward independent artists. Finally, their attitude will influence their intention to buy a release of independent artist. Five propositions are proposed based on these findings.:

P6: Lifestyle influences consumer’s music preference

P7: Individual value and personality influence consumer’s music preference

P8: Peers’ acceptance influences consumer’s music preference moderated by cultural characteristics

P9: Consumer’s music preference influences attitude towards independent artist

P10: Consumer’s attitude toward independent artist influence purchase intention

The availability of an album in the market is predicted to influence consumer intention to buy independent artist’s work. Most consumers are willing to purchase this work if it is readily available in the market, whereas several of them may want to buy it as a collectible item. Technological advancement may affect consumers’ purchase intention as it enables them to download music files for free or buy only selected songs (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007; Didrichsen, 2009; Hsu, 2010; Suki, 2011).

Price and packaging have also influenced consumers’ purchase intention on independent artist’s work. The potential consumers for music CD are those between 12 and 24 years old who generally have limited income. As rational consumers, they are inclined to consider price when evaluating the products (Vaccaro & Cohn, 2004; Suki, 2011). There is an indication that album packaging may influence consumers’ intention to purchase a music CD. A unique design attracts consumer attention, which at the end will encourage them to buy the album. We propose the followings:

P11: Technology advancement influences price

P12: Technology advancement influences market availability, moderated by internet literacy rate

P13: The effectiveness of distribution influences market availability

P14: Price influences consumer’s purchase intention, moderated by income

P15: Market availability influences consumer’s purchase intention, moderated by consumer’s motivation

P16: Packaging influences consumer’s purchase intention

6. Conclusion and Suggestion for Future Studies

This study complements the findings of previous study. It finds consumer’s purchase intention on an independent artist’s work is not only influenced by music preference and artist’s popularity, but also by the quality of artist’s work, price, market availability, and album design. Unlike mainstream artists who are targeting their releases to mass market, independent artists try to satisfy the needs of a specific consumer base. These consumers emphasize the uniqueness and idealism of independent artists presented in their works. A creative work that sells at reasonable price, packed in an attractive album cover, and distributed effectively may increase consumer’s intention to buy a release of an independent artist.

This research generates a number of concepts which result in 16 propositions that need to be further tested using quantitative research approach. Participants on this study are between 14 and 28 years old. Future study should involve participants from different age groups in different countries as they may behave differently.

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