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DIY PR: How Independent Music Artists Use Online Social Networks For Public Relations Purposes

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MA in Public Relations with New Media

Cork Institute of Technology

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Declaration:

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of

Master's Degree (MA) in Public Relations with New Media

Is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose other than in partial fulfillment for that stated above.

Signed... (Student)

Date..

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Abstract

DIY PR: HOW INDEPENDENT MUSIC ARTISTS USE ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PURPOSES

Significance of the study: Independent musicians are a huge part of the Irish music industry and yet they are the part that do not have the backing of a record label. This means independent musicians need to look at cheap or even free ways to promote themselves to existing fans and potential new fans. With the emergence of social networks musicians both signed and independent have the tools necessary to engage in a new form DIY PR. The purpose of this study is to look at the different ways that social networks have helped musicians in recent years, but also to see what the musicians and their fans really think of these new changes.

Approach: The approach that has been taken with this study was done in two parts. The first part involved a detailed literature review which is based on secondary research undertaken by the researcher. The second part of this study is done using a number of qualitative research methods. These included interviews with both musicians and public relations professionals and a focus group, which consisted of music fans. This would give the researcher a greater insight into the views that all parties questioned have on the subject of using social networks as a public relations tool. A semi-structured interview was used to gather the information required from the musicians and the public relations professional.

Results: This study revealed to the researcher that each person who was questioned had a different view on the inportance and effectiveness of using social media as a public relations tool. To the musicians social networks are a great way of them to engage in free public relations. Music fans felt that using public relations, while effective, could on occasion be used in the wrong way. The public relation professionals had their own opinions on the effectiveness of using social networks. This opinion backed up the views of the musicians questioned.

List of Abbreviations:

PR -   Public Relations

DIY -   Do It Yourselve

IRMA -   Irish Recorded Music Association

RIAA -   Recording Industry Association of America

DCMS -   Department of Creative Media and Sports

SM -   Social Media

SN -   Scocial Networks

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Grandfather Redvers McGrath, how passed away on the 22nd of August 2012.

Chapter 1: Introduction

"It could be said that the term "music industry" – suggests as it does a unified homogeneous, profit driven, business – is a misnomer. A more useful view would be that the arena of music is a scaffold of tense alliances between diverse and often conflicting interests and motivations."

The music industry as we once knew it has changed rapidly over the past number of years. Web 2.0 tools have contributed largely to these changes. With the emergence of file sharing websites, like Utorrent, musicians are finding it harder and harder to reach their fans. "...obviously, the world has changed so much from a technological standpoint over the last years. And the way that's affected music and content industries in general or intellectual property has been huge." B. Downs (Manager of REM, 2006)

These changes are affecting musicians worldwide, however in this study the focus is on Irish Independent Musicians. The Irish music scene has always been a huge part of Irish culture. This is a country full of musical talent which could have in the past, unless the musician was signed to a label, meant that only the town or maybe the county would know that musician. Nowadays musicians from every corner of Ireland can become known on a national level, thanks to social media.

Up and coming musicians require a certain amount of coverage both online and off if they wish to get recognised. However, hiring someone to help you with this can be expensive, especially when a musician is just starting out. Using social media tools is a way of getting free, DIY forms of public relations. This can help the musician as long as the social media tool that is being used to its full potential.

"PR generates value far above and beyond album sales though. Once artists build an audience, they have influence. And influence, in any walk of life, is power. How many causes have consumers adopted because of the support of artists?" Jacqueline Akbarian (2010)

Throughout this study the link between social media and PR will be examined in more detail, along with the opportunities that social media gives to Independent musicians all over Ireland.

1.1   Context Overview

Technology has had a major influence on people's lives over the past number of years. This in turn has forced every industry to make changes in the way they do business. The way in which people are now communicating with one another has begun to move towards the use of these technologies and businesses of all types must become aware of how they are now communicating with their public.

"There are many ways that people engage with the internet and, naturally, they are available to practitioners too. As well PC's and laptops, devices like televisions or radio sets, mobile telephones, games machines (yes, Xbox and Play Station are included too) and static and mobile VoIP sets (let's call them SKYPE phones for ease of understanding) are all platforms for communication." Phillips & Young (2009 P.119)

Not only has technology made it easier to communicate with people no matter where in the world they may be, it has also made it easier for anyone to become "famous." Video sharing sites like You Tube have made it easier for musicians all over the world to share their music. This could result in the musician "making it big" nationally or even internationally.

"Communication scholars and practitioners historically have considered face to face interpersonal communication the most direct, powerful and preferred method of exchanging information. In contrast with mass communication, interpersonal communication involves as few as two communicators (typically in close proximity), uses many senses, and provides immediate feedback." Cutlip et al (2000 P.210)

Social media tools have become one of the best ways for any organisation to build strong, worthwhile relationships with their publics. This is one of, if not the most, important thing to a musician. Without having a relationship with fans the musician will never get off the ground. In 1970 Mitlon Friedmen expressed his opinion regarding social responsibility saying, "There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud." For a musician, building relationships with your fans is the only way that they would be able to make a profit. If the rapport between musician and fan is not there then the fans will not support the musician.

For the purpose of this study Independent Irish Musicians was the musicians the researcher wished to focus on. "In popular music, independent music, often shortened to indie music or "indie", is a term used to describe independence from major commercial record labels and an autonomous, Do-It-Yourself approach to recording and publishing." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_music. Independent musicians are musicians who do not have the backing of a record label, which means they also do not have access to the record labels PR team.

"The public relations department in the music industry is known as the publicity team. The publicity team at a record label is the tight-knit teams of smart, savvy, creative individuals who help create, and build an image of an artist." Jacqueline Akbarian (2010). Without

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having access to these people, independent musicians need to find other ways to create and build their image. This is where social media can help independent musicians.

The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has facilitated the ability for musicians to engage in two way communication with fans. Gaining feedback and comments about songs, gigs, etc can be a huge help for musicians, especially independent musicians who do not have the record label to provide feedback. Social networking sites have helped with this over the last number of years. Fans now have the ability to comment on a musician's pictures, music and art work which has become a major trend around the world.

1.2   Research Question

With the major changes that have occurred within the music industry over the past decade, along with the ongoing advances that are happening within technology industry, it was felt by the researcher that there was a great opportunity to gain a greater insight into how these two industries are using coming together to create a new form of D.I.Y. PR.

The worldwide phenomena that is social media and using it for public relations purposes has received a lot of attention from scholars and academics, however the use of social media as a PR tool for independent musicians has not been as widely researched. Due to the insufficient amount of research already done in the area, the following study looks at, *D.I.Y PR: How independent music artist use online social networks for public relations purposes?*

This lead to a number of questions being posed:

1. What advantages do social media hold for independent musicians?

2. How can independent musicians use social media as a public relations tool?

3. What impact has social media had on the PR industry?

4. What impact has social media had on the Irish music industry?

1.3   Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to look at how social media has changed how independent Irish musicians communicate with their fans. This study has looked at the way that social media/social networks are used as a way of performing Do- It- Yourself public relations. This study will look at how the Irish music industry has benefited from using social media, and what these changes means for the PR industry. The following is a list of the objectives this study plans to achieve:

1. How social media is changing to way that Independent Irish musicians communicate with fans.

2. The affect that social media has had on the PR industry.

3. The benefits to both musicians and public relations professionals of using social media.

It is the purpose of this study to combine the information which is collected during the research process with the information that is available at present. It is also hoped this research may be able to assist in future studies of the area.

This study has been divided into a number of sections:

Chapter two: This chapter will look at the music industry as a whole and see how it has changed over the last decade.

Chapter three: This chapter is a detailed literature review which looks at all the areas involved in this study, the PR industry, social media and the area of music and music 2.0.

Chapter four: This chapter looks at the research methods that were used, the reasons why these methods were chosen and the methods which were not used.

Chapter five: In this chapter the information gathered during the primary research stage is explored and analysed.

Chapter six: This chapter is where the researcher will present the conclusions that were gathered from the information analysed in chapter five.

Chapter seven: In this chapter there will be a collection of well thought out, rational recommendations for both the PR professional and the independent musician.

Chapter 2: Industry Review

2.1   The Irish Music Industry

"Many people's perception of the music industry tend to be formed by the publicity surrounding areas of high profile such as the more successful artists and bands. Images of such artists with enormous followings and high earnings can give raise to a belief that the music business is essentially glamorous, ephemeral, chaotic and suspect." (Report to the Minister of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht)

The Irish music industry is a relatively small home grown market, which can help Irish musicians showcase their talents to an international audience. Despite its small size, there is already a vibrant music scene in Ireland and we have been recognised worldwide for our large pool of creative talent, in music and other forms of art. However, the mentality that existed in Ireland hundreds of years ago with regards to music somewhat still exists today. During the times of great social divide in Ireland, it was wealthy families that produced musicians and the poorer families expressed themselves to other minor families in a traditional Irish session, where jigs and reels and sean-nós singing took place. The same can still be said today for independent artists in Ireland. With the introduction of festivals such as Electric Picnic, lesser known musicians get a chance to perform to thousands of potential fans.

"Music that now exists on radio stations for everyone to hear still belongs to the wealthy. Irish music consumers make profit for the very wealthy. Music that is born from creative musicians, regardless of wealth or status is taken and crafted by large teams of people in record companies, mostly exported abroad, and money is the agenda, to make themselves wealthy. The growth of our own musical identity in my opinion has been bottlenecked. A formula for radio has now evolved." Myles O'Reillly (2011)

There are many conflicting opinions regarding the state of the Irish music scene and what needs to be done to fix it. Questions about whether or not large multinational music companies are, in essence, stealing the best of Irish talent for their own profits is a major

concern. In a report to the Minister of Arts, Culture and the Gealtacht, it was stated, "The presence of the major multinational music corporations in the Irish market is very welcoming and provides clear opportunities for artists who must pitch their talents beyond the local to the lager international audience." While Myles O Reilly wrote in an article, "Ireland in my opinion acts as if it has been caught in a vice in between two large corporate neighbours. We are caught in a media crossfire between two powerful neighbours and like a vice, our neighbours squeeze their profits from us by incorporating their own music in to our country's culture. Since 'Top of the Pops' hit Irish television screens in the 70's it became too easy for outside record labels to target Ireland."

Ireland has always been an island full of great talent from bands such as U2 to The Script, however, the problem with being an independent artist is that you do not get the same coverage as the bigger musicians. Independent musicians have to create their own coverage, promote themselves and they have to do this without the help of a record label. This is why social media has become so important to the independent Irish music industry.

2.2   The Impact of Social Media on the Music Industry

Since the introduction of social media, Irish musicians both independent and signed have been given the same opportunity to reach out to fans. Video sharing site YouTube has been responsible for so many talented Irish musicians being heard. Take for example Irish singer and songwriter Ryan Sheridan. Sheridan was discovered by his manager doing a cover of 'Little Lion Man' by Mumford and Son on Grafton Street, Dublin in 2010. His debut single Jigsaw, which was released in September 2010, was a major hit while the video of which went viral. By December Sheridan was performing his first headlining tour in Ireland. Thanks to a chance meeting and a music video that went all over the internet, Ryan Sheridan became an international sensation in a matter of months.

Using social networks has now become a part of everyone's lives. Nowadays, social networks are the most effective way for any musician to communicate with their fans along with uploading their new music and videos for all to hear and see.

On the other hand, not all impacts that new Web 2.0 tools have had on the music industry have been good ones. Piracy has become a major problem within the music industry, not only in Ireland, but all over the world with record labels losing out every year. "RIAA [Recording Industry Association of America] has reported declining revenue in nine of the past 10 years, with album sales falling an average of 8% each year." Goldman (2010) There are now measures in place to try and stamp out the illegal downloading of music that is happening in Ireland. In 2010 Irish own company Eircom decided, along with The Irish Recorded Music Association (IRMA), to try and fight the growing problem of piracy,

"Earlier this week Eircom announced that it has started "the phased disconnection of file-sharers" on its network – colloquially known as a "three strikes" policy.

The key players in this procedure are Eircom, the Irish Recorded Music Association (IRMA) and technology firm Dtecnet. Under the procedure IRMA will provide Eircom with the IP addresses of machines that Dtecnet claims to have found to be infringing the copyright of its members. This will then trigger a disconnection procedure by Eircom starting with a letter, moving on to temporary suspension of an account, and ending with the disconnection of the account for up to a year." Digital Rights Ireland (2010)

This attempt was not effective for Ireland and so it is up to the musicians themselves to come up with new and creative ways to bring people back to downloading music legitimately. A great example of how music artists are working to regain their record sales was in January 2008 Radiohead, a non-Irish band, released their latest album *In Rainbows* exclusively as a pay-as-you-feel download from their website. Since then, we've seen very little in the way of digital music sales experimentation. Digital sales experimentation could be the answer that everyone in the music industry is looking for in order to reverse the devastating affect that piracy has had on the industry as a whole.

Piracy is not just affecting the Irish market but all over the world. In America over ten years, record sales decreased dramatically.

$15
Billion

MUSIC SALES

$14.6
Billion

$12
Billion

$9
Billion

$6.3
Billion*

$6
Billion   1999

2009*

*FORRESTER RESEARCH FORECAST; SOURCE: RECORDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
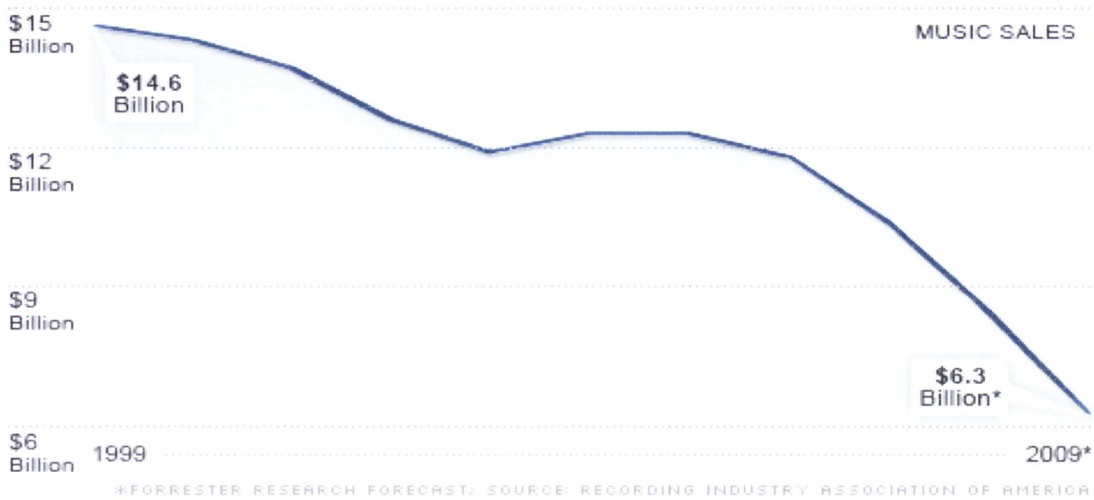
In recent years, even the sale of digital copies of music has decreased. "Digital downloads are clearly becoming a mature part of the business," says Howard Bass, a senior partner at Ernst & Young who advises entertainment companies. "The question is how quickly the music industry can adopt a new digital strategy." (2010)

This change could be down to the growing trend that is "streaming." Streaming music allows people to listen to their favourite music without the need to buy it or even download it. Eircom have recently introduced "Music Hub." This allows people to stream the music they like to listen to and save the music in a playlist giving them the option to continue listening to their music when they log in again.

All these changes in Web 2.0 tools mean that the music industry, both nationally and internationally, have had to adapt and find new and more creative ways of using the phenomena that is Social Media.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter is going to look at all the relevant literature in the area of Public Relations and Communications, and review their importance to this study. The chapter will be focusing on the areas of: Public Relations, Communication Theory, Social Media, Social Networking, PR 2.0 and Music/Celebrity PR.

3.1 Defining Public Relations

There have been many different definitions of Public Relations over the years. During the 1970's Rex Harlow, a Public Relations pioneer, collected 472 definitions of Public Relations. So what exactly is Public Relation?

After gathering hundreds of definitions, Rex Harlow came up with his own definition.

"Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools" Harlow (1976)

In 1996, White and Mazur developed a definition of Public Relations which was based on the goals of PR, "To influence the behaviour of groups of people in relation to each other. Influence should be exerted through dialogue – not monologue – with all the different corporate audience, with public relations becoming a respected function in its own right, acting as a strategic resource and helping to implement corporate strategy." This definition was based on what White and Mazur considered to be the goals of PR in the corporate setting.

Other practitioners focus their definitions on the idea of communication practices, i.e. using two way communications to help build lasting positive relationships between the organisation and its publics. These practitioners believe that communications is an important, if not the most important, aspect of Public Relations. This in turn will lead to good relationships. Cutlip et al (2000:6) takes these ideas and defines Public Relations as "The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends."

"Public Relations help organisations and its publics to adapt mutually to each other. Public Relations is an organisation's efforts to win the cooperation of groups of people. Public Relations helps organisations to effectively interact and communicate with key publics." Reddi (2009 p.3-4)

There are a number of common themes that run through all definitions of public relations,

> "Public relations is exactly that – relationships with publics." Carty

> "Public relations is the management of all communications within the organisation and between the organisation and its outside audiences." Harrison

> "Public relations (PR) is the practice of managing the flow of information between an individual or an organization and the public." Wikipedia

. Public Relations are about building up communications and relationships with anyone who is important to your organisation.

3.2   Relationship Management

One of the key aspects of Public Relations is the obtaining and maintaining relationships with key people to an organisation. Good relationships with key stakeholders in a company can be very beneficial for both parties involved.

"If we are truly to become a boardroom discipline, then we should understand the science of managing stakeholder relationships on behalf of our sponsors. It is relationships that drive outcomes... not perceptions." Toth (2007 P.443)

This statement is true for both corporate business and the music industry. Every organisation, despite what industry, needs to have strong relationships with their publics.

In order to achieve strong relationships, some key aspects must be present. In her book, Toth (2007 P. 445) speaks of past public relations theorist and their opinion on relationships. "... Huang identified indicators for evaluating relationships: trust, control mutuality, relational commitment and relational satisfaction. More recently, she developed two more relationship outcomes from a cultural perspective: face and favour."

"The notion of relationship management represents a fundamental change in the function and direction of public relations, a movement away from traditional impact measurements, such as the quantity of communication messages produced to number of sorties placed in the mass media, and towards evaluation of public relations initiatives based on their impact on the quality of the relationship between an organization and the publics with which it interacts." Botan & Hazelton (2006 P.413)

In their book, Ledingham and Bruning refer to a statement made by Broom in 1977, "...the function of public relations is to establish and maintain communication linkages between an organization and its publics in order to maintain mutually beneficial relationships. This... calls for measuring the relationships in the social systems composed of an organization and its publics. Public opinion surveys...do not provide all the information needed to adequately describe corporate- public relationships on issues of mutual concern." (P.161)

"The key to creating and maintaining beneficial and harmonious relationships, Grunig reasons, is high- quality communication process – more symmetrical than asymmetrical." Heath (2001 P.3)

Over the past decade relationship building has become one of the most important things to an organisation. "Probably with rare exceptions, corporate success in the 21st century will be based on the quality of the relationships built. Relationship building will be a strategic function directed by public relations but engaged in by key corporate leaders who

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participate in building productive relationships emphasizing communities of mutual support and cooperation." Heath (2001 P524)

"The value of public relations, therefore, can be determined by measuring the quality if the relationship it establishes with the strategic components of its institutional environment." Grunig et al (2002 P. 539)

"Relationships are not static. Organisations, serving their own interests, as well as their publics', usually face contradictions in relationships; therefore, the nature of a relationship changes." Toth (2007 P.467)

3.3   Communication Theory

Communication theory is important to this study as its main focus is how musicians engage in two way symmetrical communication. Therefore this section is going to be focusing on Grunig and Hunt's four models of communication. Grunig and Hunt (1984) have defined four key aspects of communication: the press agentry/publicity model; the public information model; the two-way asymmetrical model; and the two-way symmetrical model.

1. **The Press Agentry/Publicity Model:** This can also be known as propaganda. This model of communication is a one way form of communication. This model is primarily used to get the view of the organisation across. It usually involves little or no research and can also be a flimsy with the truth. Organisations rely a lot on media channels to get their message across. There is also no intention to start any form of dialogue with the publics the organisation wishes to send the message to.

2. **Public Information Model:** This model is used by an organisation to inform their publics, rather than trying to persuade them to do anything. Unlike the first model, well researched, accurate and true information is very important in the Public

Information Model. However like the Press Agentry Model, this model is also a form of one way communication. This way of communicating is very popular nowadays and is mostly used by public bodies and Governments.

3. **Two –Way Asymmetric Model:** This communication model has similarities with both models that are previously mentioned as it is a model for organisations trying to persuade their publics to the organisations way of thinking, but achieve it through using highly researched and accurate information. This form of communication is two way while aiming to generate a debate between the organisation and its publics. This helps the organisation receive feedback, which in turn helps them to create a message for their target audience that is accepted and suitable to all publics. In the Two –Way Asymmetric Model, all the power is put into the hands of the organisation's publics rather than the organisation itself.

4. **Two –Way Symmetric Model:** This is the most important communication model for the purpose of this study. The Two – Way Symmetric Model is based on a mutual understanding between an organisation and their publics. By using this model of communication it allows for a dialogue to take place between on organisation and its publics. Each side of the communication channel has the ability to persuade the other and change their attitudes and behaviour. This form of communication is now one of the most commonly used. It is a great way for an organisation to develop strong, worthwhile relationship with their publics.

Building relationships, as mentioned previously, is a very important aspect of an organisation, and like every other type of relationship it relies on good communication. This is particularly important in the music industry, where musicians need to communicate with their fans to let them know about upcoming gigs, singles and album releases. It is also now becoming very important for musicians to gain feedback from these fans.

However, not everyone agrees with two way communication with some people saying that "two-way symmetrical public relations is an unrealistic, utopian ideal." While others say "All

dialogue might involve two-way communication, but not all two-way communication is dialogue." Kelleher (2007 P.49)

There is also a number of Public Relations Practitioner that agree with Grunig and Hunt's models, "Butterick (2009), Theaker (2004) & Kaid (2004) all agree that the two-way symmetrical approach to PR is characterised by relationship building; engaging in real dialogue with other groups in an attempt to shape an organisation to benefit those other groups as well as the organisation itself." (americanessays.com)

3.3.1   Two Way Symmetrical Communication

"Before the 1970's, public relations scholars seldom, if ever, tried to explain the behaviour of the public relations practitioner. Until that time, scholars typically accepted the behaviour of practitioners as given and looked for ways in which to describe, evaluate, and improve whatever practitioners did in the name of public relations."Heath (2001, P. 11)

Two way communications has become very important in the area of public relations. Even though this concept has not been a part of public relations for very long, it has taken up a huge part of the industry.

"...a two - way symmetrical communication model would be impossible in a totalitarian and an authoritarian system, whose propaganda often is used to coerce people and keep the elite in power." Toth (2007 P.239)

In his book, Howard Giles explains the difference between one – way communication and two – way communication, "One - way communication disseminates information like a monologue, from sender to receiver, while two - way communication involves information exchange, more like a dialogue." (2002 P.41) He later goes on to say, "Two - way symmetric communication is often prescribed as the most effective model of external communication because both the organization and its publics benefit." (2002 P.42)

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"The models also have become a useful research tool for analyzing public relations practice in numerous setting and for explaining why public relations is practiced in these different ways." Heath (2001 P.12)

Even though two-way communication has a positive effect in public relations and for any organisation, not every PR scholar will agree that it is the best approach. L'Etang makes that argument that "the public relations practitioner is never disinterested – there is always an employer or client – and, as organisations rarely act against their own interest, the communication is still asymmetrical" (http://www.cipr.co.uk)

"...It is an idealistic model which misrepresents the reality of communications process in reality, where vested interests dictate the nature of PR practice and rarely encourage a truly balanced communication process." Tench & Yeomans (2009, P.151)

In another book Tench & Yeomans quote Ruck (2011) as saying "PR by its very nature is biased and can only work in favour of its corporate masters." (2006 P. 641)

3.3.2   Changes in Communication

The way in which organisations communicated with their publics has changed since the development of Web 2.0.

In the book, *Naked Conversations: How Blogs are Changing the Way Businesses Talk with Customers*, (2006 P.228) authors Scoble and Israel speak about how blogging has taken off in ways that no organisations could have ever imagined. "Back when we began Chapter 1, most businesspeople were still dismissing blogging as a passing fad. This was the denial phase... Today, more and more businesspeople understand that blogs are here to stay and that companies need to figure out how to incorporate them into the way they communicate."

"It is not unusual for platforms to offer capabilities they were not designed for. SMS messaging from mobile phones was added for occasional use. The extraordinary success of SMS was not anticipated and yet has become one of the most widely used of all modern communication channels. It has evolved too. It is now possible to send photos by SMS. Until very recently PCs were not designed to deliver video and television programmes but today this is one of the most common uses." Phillips & Young (2009 P.120)

"... the simple liner Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver communication process does not suffice to describe how communication works within a network."

"Two way communication was largely relegated to the telephone, while electronic media typically delivered one-way, least-objectionable materials on a rigid air-time schedule." A Carolyn et al (2007 P.5)

3.4   PR in the Online Environment

Over the past number of years PR has begun to move towards the online environment. Some say that this was an easy move.

"Almost every online technique has an offline equivalent (and, by definition, the reverse): for example, podcasts relate to VNRs. Consequently, the skills required for offline PR are transferable to the online environment." Noble & Watson (2007 P.198)

"The internet represents the most ubiquitous leading edge of the communication revolution. The digital world has changed communication within organizations and between organizations and their various publics. In public relations, to paraphrase the words of a song, it's the information superhighway or no way." Cutlip et al (2006 P.252)

However, not all agree that the internet is as great as some would have you believe.

"The internet is rapidly changing the infrastructure of information, creating a turbulent and sometimes confusing communication environment." Duhe (2007 P.285)

"The practitioner who head Fleishman – Hillard's worldwide interactive practices summarized the new context of public relations communications:
In the digital world, text, voice, photographs, videos and animation flow along a single bit-stream of information that consumer process in a 360-degree manner. A casual look at Web sites oj major U.S. newspapers today shows the degree to which one-dimensional newsprint has morphed into three-dimensional, multilevel content." Cutlip et al (2006 P.254)

3.5   PR 2.0

As technology evolves, so too must the industries that use it. The area Public Relations is no exception. The days of just being able to send out a press release to the paper is almost extinct. For Public Relations to continue to thrive, it needs to become aware of the Web 2.0 tools available to them and how they can be used as a PR tool.

In the early stages of web 2.0, Breakenridge (2008 p.xix) observed that " PR 2.0 was born through the analysis of how the web and multimedia was redefining PR and marketing communications, while also building the toolkit to reinvent how companies communicate with influencers and directly with people. It is a chance to not only work with traditional journalists, but also engage directly with a new set of accidental influencers, and, it is also our ability to talk with customers directly (through online forums, groups, communities, BBS, etc.)" This definition of what was happening to PR in the 90's is still very much relevant to it today.

Web 2.0 tools has not only made it easier for organisations to communicate with their publics, but is also a lot easier to measure the effectiveness of your PR campaign. "With PR 2.0, we can analyze, measure and amend campaigns and long term PR and relationship-

building programs in real time. Using the same tools for measuring as we do for listening, we can track and record progress – real-world effects on market behaviour. We can also respond to misperceptions or negative feedback immediately to reduce the likelihood of criticism-based flare-ups." Solis & Breakenridge (2009p. 249)

3.6   Brand PR/Marketing PR

"*Marketing Public Relations* breaks from the norm by presenting public relations using a marketing, rather than a communications studies or journalism, approach. This text recognizes the similarities between PR, word-of-mouth, and social networking media and creates a framework for constructing marketing strategies that incorporate these highly credible and cost-effective tools." Giannini (2009)

Branding and marketing can be one of the most important things for up and coming musicians. If they do not market themselves properly then they may not gain the following they would like.

"In popular culture everything and everybody seems to be referred to as a brand: pop stars, sportsmen, royalty, air lines, places, politicians - never mind the products that line the shelves in supermarkets or fill the shops on the high streets." Tench & Yeomans (2009 P.417)

"The term branding is most closely associated with marketing but in the last several years has become more and more used by people working in public relations or corporate communications." Heath (2010 P. 311)

"One of the identity challenges facing public relations is to define and defend its relationship with marketing. Some academics oppose a close relationship with marketing. Others see the survival of public relations as giving service to the marketing departments of large organisations. Others suggest that the relationship is well defined so that the integrated marketing communication movement is old hat. Still others argue that support for

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marketing is only one of many functions that are fulfilled by skilled practitioners." Heath (2001 P.184)

"Frequently PR is classified alongside advertising and promotion. This is one reason why marketing professionals and academics believe PR is or should be part of marketing and thus managed as a marketing activity." Kitchen (2002 P.240)

"... PR can play an active role in the fascinating world of Brand Development. It is necessary to understand the role and power of effective branding more fully to appreciate the benefits that PR can generate within the context of a successfully executed consumer strategy." Tench & Yeomans (2009 P.417)

"There is an inextricable link between the reputation of the company and the success of its products in the marketplace." Caywood (1997 P.91)

"Brands can be perceived quite differently depending on the viewer's social and political context. Critics perceive brands as the worst manifestation of capitalist society; others see them as something with which we have deep, emotional relationships." Tench & Yeomans, (2009 P. 505)

3.7   Social Media/ Social Networking

Social networks are becoming widely used in our day to day communications with the people around us. This trend has now progressed to the point where social networks as a form of communication is starting to become the status quo. Rob Brown started is book by stating "We are in the midst of a communication upheaval more significant than the printing press." (2009 p.1) This, even though Brown may be being a bit dramatic comparing it to the invention of the printing press, is something that is happening and PR practitioners need to be aware that social media is becoming a huge part of people's lives. This however is something that can be used to the advantage of anyone that knows how to use to its full potential.

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"Social network theory is one of the few theories in social science that can be applied to a variety of levels of analysis from small groups to entire global system... a network contains a set of objectives (in mathematical terms, nodes) and a mapped or description of relations between the objects or nodes." Kadushin (2012 P. 13)

There have been many attempts at finding a definition for social media but there is not really any recognised definition. In 2007 Robert Scoble, a former employee of Microsoft and PodTech looked at the differences between the so called 'old media' and social media saying, "When I say 'social media' or 'new media' I'm talking about the internet media that has the ability to interact with it in some way, i.e. not a press release like over on PR Newswire, but something like what we did over on Channel 9 where you can say 'Microsoft sucks' right underneath one of my videos."

This isn't really a definition, merely an opinion. Stowe Boyd came up with a far more insightful definition of social media, "Social Media... is the way that we are organizing ourselves to communicate, to learn and to understand the world and our place in it. And we just won't accept any models for that that aren't intensely social: we won't put up with large organizations telling us what it right, or true, if necessary. We will now have those conversations among ourselves, here, at the edge. Social Media has released us, freed us, and we won't go back." Cook (2008 p.8)

There are so many social networking sites available to people, but the three that have the most users worldwide are Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Using these sites is a great way for organisations to connect with key publics. It also allows for the publics, be it customer or fans, to give feedback which could be helpful to the organisations. For the area that this research question is looking at, i.e. the Irish music scene, there are social network sites that are used specifically for the purpose of promoting yourself as a musician and connecting with fans, sites such as SoundCloud and bandcamp.

"Many types of social networking sites are online; specifically, three of the most popular and widely used today will be considered: Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Social networks are a good place to connect with consumers because they are already on these sites because they want to be, and there is a large audience already collected to listen to a company's brand messages." Winn (2010)

3.7.1 Facebook

"Facebook is one of the most used social networking sites. Founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, it now has over 200 million users worldwide. With this many users it is the perfect place for any organisation to be, and offers many services to help maximise your efforts. Organisations can form "fan" pages where anyone that likes the organisation can become a fan of and have regular updates from the organisation about everything that is going on."

"Facebook knows what its members look like, think, enjoy and visit because they are the world's largest photo-sharing site, thought-sharing site, liking site, linking site." Marshall & Meloche (2011 P.2)

"Facebook is the largest marketing channel for most musicians and bands. Surprisingly, it's also the one they know least about." Kim (2012)

3.7.2 Twitter

"Twitter is an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets". It was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey and launched that July. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with over 500 million active users as of 2012, generating over 340 million tweets daily and handling over 1.6 billion search queries per day" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter

"The concept behind Twitter is a little different from sites like Facebook and MySpace. Twitter allows users to share their thoughts with others in short messages... Users submit these brief messages, called "tweets" to share their activities, thoughts, ask advice, talk about current events, or whatever else they

want to say... Many companies are embracing Twitter as a marketing outlet." Winn (2010)

3.7.3 YouTube

"YouTube is a video-sharing website, created by three former PayPal employees in February 2005, on which users can upload, view and share videos. The company is based in San Bruno, California, and uses Adobe Flash Video and HTML5 technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube

"In an age of too much of everything. YouTube has become an essential channel for every Marketer. It is a place to let your creativity shine through, engage a massive audience and build a long- term platform for your company." Jarboe (2011/2012)

"YouTube also has user channels where a company can post and share content that is its own in its own customizable page. Videos can be tagged with keywords to direct searchers when they watch the videos, rate them, and leave comments on them." Winn (2010)

3.8   PR in the Cultural/Entertainment Sector

PR in the entertainment industry is sometimes seen as a whole industry by itself. The DCMS (The Department of Creative Media and Sports) defined the creative industry as "Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property"

Entertainment covers a number of different things, such as film, TV, books, magazines, video games and music. The job of the PR Officer is to understand what the audience wants and give this information to the professional. A lot of people see the aspect of PR in the entertainment industry as Propaganda, but this is not the case. "One of the primary goals of many arts, leisure or entertainment organisation is the requirement to sell tickets to events. Public Relations campaigns provide publicity build-up to inform fans, viewers, participants, readers, listeners that the event will occur and stimulate the desire to purchase tickets and attend" Tench & Yeoman(2006 p.605-606)

3.9   The Irish Music Industry/Music 2.0

Music has always been a big part of the Irish culture and is only getting bigger. "It could be said that the term "music industry" – suggesting as it does a unified, homogeneous, profit driven, business – is a misnomer. A more useful view would be that the arena of music is a scaffold of tense alliances between diverse and often conflicting interests and motivations." (Report to the minister of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht)

The music industry isn't just recording music but has a huge range of activities which include Publishing, Retailing, Merchandising, Management, Performing and even Financial Services, and this is just a few. A lot of people tend to form their opinion about the music industry on the publicity which many high profile musicians and bands seem to be constantly absorbed in. This opinion gives the music industry its glamorous, perception, where everyone has a huge group of fans, along with a huge income. This is not always the case.

The Irish music industry is a fairly small home grown industry; even though it is a small industry Ireland is well known for having a huge amount of "creative talent." "The challenge lies in converting this seminal resource into the full range of economic and social rewards that benefit not just the musician, songwriter and composer, but all society. For the music industry enriches many aspects of our national life; from culture expression, to tourism and economic development." (Report to the minister of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht)

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With all the developments in technology over the past 5 to 10 years it is no surprise that the music industry has had to change along with most others. The introduction of Web 2.0 has meant that a lot of markets have had to adapt to remain one step ahead.

"The twentieth century recording industry was built on a model in which record labels identified, nurtured and marketed musicians; providing them with the resources to create and record their music and finding ways for them to distribute that music via radio and record stores. It was a model that proved extremely successful – not just for the many artists who achieved widespread attention, but for the industry itself – which managed to create a self-sustaining and lucrative business model." Young & Collins

However successful this business model was, it needed to change along with social changes. Today the industry seems to be going downhill, now that people can get music off the internet and illegal downloading is happening all over the world, CD sales have been falling dramatically. Keith Jopling, the Director of Market Research for the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry has been quoted saying "Record sales as we know them are in long-term decline" So what can the music industry do to stop this?

Musicians are now using this free-downloading generation to their advantage, for example, so that their fans would not illegally download their music, Coldplay released their album, *LeftRightLeftRightLeft*, free to download off their website. This was a great success for them as their "true fans" actually began to pay for the album anyway.

As it was said in the report "Towards 2.0" by Young and Collins, "the music industry is much more than just the recording industry and encompasses a far broader range of businesses. Live performances, publishing, licensing, and merchandising are

growing areas, something the record labels acknowledge with moves to capitalise on these alternative revenue streams. An example of this is the so-called "360 degree" contract, in which the labels manage not only music recording and publishing rights, but also touring and merchandising revenues."

The music industry may have hit a slight speed bump, but it is far from being over.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

4.1   Deciding on a Research Method

Deciding on a research method for this study was an easy decision because of how specific the research question was. The research methods that were decided upon were to conduct interviews with PR professionals to get an insight into how public relations works in the "real world." It was also decided to interview Irish musicians to see how they use social networks to communicate with their fans, also to see what social networks musicians think is the most effective.

Another research method that was used was focus groups. The focus group was picked to how the other side see the way that the social networks work for musicians. The focus group was held with six music lovers, who also tend to follow a lot of their favourite musicians on various social networks. The idea behind the focus group was to see if both sets of people, i.e. the musicians and the fans, have the same opinion when it comes to how effective using social networks to communicate are.

4.2   Quantitative verses Qualitative

There are two main types of research methods, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data is data which is measurable, "countable" or quantifiable, i.e. numeric information Qualitative data is typically data which is hard to measure, count, or express as numerical information, usually in textual or narrative format. Deciding on which research method to use depends on the research it is going to be used for, i.e. does the research need facts and figures to support its findings or those it require an in-depth look at the area being studied. Both having their own advantages and disadvantages.

"Qualitative approaches are often used to explore areas about which no knowledge exists yet and results are expressed in words ('qualities'); quantitative approaches are used to

deliver comparable, generalisable results, expressed in numbers ('quantities')." Tench & Yeomans (2009 P.204)

4.2.1 Quantitative Research Methods

Quantitative research is a way of gathering information using numbers, for example, using surveys and observation. There are two main advantages of using quantitative research methods. The first being the results collected using this method are statistically reliable, i.e. quantitative research has the ability to determine if one concept, product, idea, etc, is better than its alternatives.

The second advantage of using the quantitative method is any results which are achieved are projectable. This means the results can be depicted graphically, helping the researcher to explain their findings.

Despite the advantages that quantitative research has, it also has some disadvantages. The main one being the context of the study is typically ignored. "Quantitative research does not study things in a natural setting or discuss the meaning things have for different people."

Another disadvantage is a large percentage of people must be studied. The bigger the percentage of the population to more accurate the results will be. This helps to show that quantitative research is in essence evaluated rather than generated.

4.2.2 Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research is used as a research method when the researcher looks to gain a deeper understanding of the issue in question. This method is typically used if the issue being studied has little or no knowledge available prior to the research. The advantages to using qualitative methods are, firstly it gives the researcher a chance

to interact with the respondents. This can then lead to a more in-depth investigation of the issue being studied. Therefore leading to the researcher receiving greater information.

The second advantage is that this method allows the group members (in the case of a focus group or group interview) to interact with each other. This can help to stimulate debate that could potentially uncover issues which the researcher had not anticipated when developing the questions.

As is the case with quantitative, qualitative research has its disadvantages also. One of the main disadvantages is qualitative research can be somewhat unreliable. While evaluating the results the researcher could be prone to interpret their findings according to what they think it should be or what they view themselves rather than what it is.

For the purpose of this study the researcher decided that qualitative methods of research would be the most appropriate. This was decided because it was the best way to get an in-depth look at the independent music scene, and understand what musicians, PR officers and fans alike really thought of how social media is used.

4.3   Interviews

An interview is a conversation that is held between two or more people. It is started by one person for the specific purpose to gain relevant information, in this case how independent music artist use online social networks for public relations purposes. It is seen as the principal way of gathering information which has a direct connection with what the interviewer is looking for. The benefit of using interviews is it allows the interviewer to achieve a greater depth that they may not be able to gain with different methods. They also give the interviewer the chance to explain more about what they are doing, reducing the chance of somebody misunderstanding it which could happen with sending out cover letters.

Despite the positives, there are also some down sides to interviews. There are a number of factors that could differ from one interview to another, such as control or even trust. If people begin to feel threatened or if they feel offended they may "shut down" and not want to answer any more questions. This is why the interviewer must be careful at all times when phrasing a question.

"Interviews are an attractive proposition for the project researcher. At first glance, they do not involve much technical paraphernalia in order to collect the information – perhaps a notepad and a portable tape-recorded – and the basic technique draws on skills researchers already have – ability to conduct a conversations. No complex equipment and no need to spend time learning new skills: this is a particularly enticing recipe." Denscombe (2007 P.163)

4.3.1   Types of Interviews

There are four types of interviews;

Informal conversational interviews: where the interview decides on the questions on the spot, in a more natural way.

Standardised open – ended interviews: where there is a specific sequence to the interview and the questions are worded exactly, everyone that the interviewer interviews get the same questions.

Closed quantitative interviews: this is where not only the questions are decided in advance, so are the responses.

Interview guide approach/Semi-structured Interview: is where the interviewer has decided on the issue or topic that he/she wants to use and has a general idea of the questions that they want to ask but decides on how to ask it during the interview.

The interviews which will be held for this research questions will be done so using

the interview guide approach. They will be done face - to – face and there will be a list of questions that will need to be asked. These questions will be sent out in advance to the interviewees giving them a chance to do some preparation. Yet, there may also be question that could come from the answers that are given throughout the interview.

4.3.2   Proceeding with the Interviews

Interviews will be held with Irish Independent Musicians. With the musicians it will focus mostly on how these musicians get themselves out there in terms of social networking with fans. What do they use to communicate fans and what methods they feel work the best. It would be the plan to interview four musicians with various followings online to see what the most common way is to communicate with their fans and if they think that using two way symmetric communications is an advantage for them. The interview will be used to see if there is any different ways that musicians could use to get themselves more and better coverage around Ireland.

Interviews will also be held with professionals in the area of Public Relations. These interviews will be used to see what the opinion of the public relations professional is on the subject use of social networking as a two way communication tool, and what other ways the public relations professional uses to communicate with their publics which could potentially work for the music industry.

4.3.3   Semi-Structured Interviews

For the purpose of this study using semi-structured interviews was selected as the most appropriate, as semi structured give the interviewer the opportunity to ask extra questions if they come to mind during the interview.

Semi-structured interviews are a type of qualitative research method. In a semi-structured interview there is a list of questions that the interviewer has to follow, these questions must be asked and are typically asked in the same way and order. What makes semi-structured interview different from a structured interview is the interviewer has the option to ask other questions that are not on the list if an answer they receive requires an elaboration.

"Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of a survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data at the factor level." Schensul et al (1999 P.149)

4.3.4   Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews

1. **Advantages:** There are many advantages of conducting an interview.

   - During an interview the researcher can gather a greater amount of information from the interviewee, as the opportunity to ask follow up questions is available on the spot.
   - The researcher has the ability to gain a greater insight into the issue that is being questioned.
   - As interviews are typically arranged in advance the researcher can be guaranteed a higher response rate that engaging in questionnaires.
   - Less skills and equipment are required to conduct an interview. Basic conversational skills are all the interviewer needs, along with a recording device.
   - There is a more personal element to conducting interviews, which can make them more enjoyable and rewarding for both the interviewer and interviewee.

2. **Disadvantages:** Despite the number of advantages conducting an interview may have, there are also a number of disadvantages.

- Interviews can be very time consuming for all parties involved. A lot more preparation must go into conducting an interview than that of a questionnaire. Transcribing the interview can also take up a lot of the interviewers time, this can result in important information being overlooked.
- The people being interviewed can also be biased towards their own thoughts and experiences on the issue in question. This can result in the interview being unreliable.
- The danger of the interviewee/interviewer misunderstanding what is being said will always be there, this could lead to the interviewer coming across as pushy or insulting to the interviewee who in turn may decide to 'shut down' and refuse to continue with the interview.
- Cost could be something that may not be taken into consideration when arranging an interview. Time, travel and transcribing can cost the interviewer a great deal if the interviewees are geographical spread.

4.3.5   People Interviewed

For the purpose of this study it was important to interview both independent musicians and public relations professionals. In order for the researcher to get an accurate representation of both professions an equal amount of people were interviews, four bands/musicians and four public relations professionals.

Musicians:

- Michael Hopkins vocals for Planet Parade
- Michael Murphy bass guitar player Time is a Thief
- Jamie Hanrahan guitar player for FRED
- Barry Ronayne guitar player from Former Monarchs

Public Relations Professionals:

- Christine Duggan: PR Professional at DMpr, Cork.
- Eve Noone: Senior Account Executive at Heneghan PR, Dublin
- Sinead Madden: PRO & Marketing Coordinator at Cork Opera House
- Andrew Wilkinson: Digital Strategist/Music Marketing Consultant - Music Manager, Label Owner & Booking Agent at Plastic Hallway, Dublin

4.4   Focus Groups

Focus groups were chosen over group interviews because even thought there are many up sides to using group interviews such as using them to get an insight into what you could ask in an individual interview sometime in the future, there is also a number if down sides the main one being you could encounter could be the group may not react in the way that you were hoping which could lead to a lot of friction among the group. This could in turn lead to the researcher not getting the answers that they are hoping for. By using focus groups instead this gives the researcher more time to just observe the people who are taking part in the focus group. There is not as much back and forward questioning like in an interview. The researcher is only really present to keep the group focused on the issue being discussed. This is better for the researcher as the participants will interact more with each other rather than with the researcher which is better for getting more information from people.

4.4.1 Problems with Focus Groups

With any type research methods there are a number of problems the researcher may face. These include problems such as; focus groups sometimes tend to become influenced by one or two dominant people in the group. This could be a distressing way for a focus group to go as it makes the whole group a bit biased. The rest of the group may feel a bit intimated therefore simply agreeing with the "leaders" is an easier option for them. If a researcher notices this beginning to happen they are required to step in and try get the group back on track. There is also the risk of people not being completely honest in the focus group because they are afraid of what the rest of the people may think or say about their views on something. The thought of being judged could cause a person to refrain from producing a very significant point which could have been of great use to the researcher. There should be a few issues the researcher should mention before the focus group starts, i.e. the rules of the focus group, the estimated time scale and the topics the researcher wishes the group to discuss. Focus groups should only have one rule and that should be that no one person should take over, and that everyone gets to speak.

4.4.2 Using the Focus Group

The idea behind using the focus groups is to talk to music lovers and to have them talk to each other on how they view the different ways which musicians use to communicate with them. There will be discussions about the different social media sites the group thinks are the best social networks for musicians to be on. Also to be using these sites to communicate with fans about gigs, new albums, etc. It is a way to get to know which methods are effective and which methods could be having a negative effect on the musicians. The information gathered from the focus group could then be used in the interviews with the musicians themselves to help them get the most out of the methods they use. It could give them a good indication of what their fans find the best means of communicating with the musicians.

4.4.3   Choosing the Participants

The participants for the focus group were chosen by looking at a number of factors. Firstly they had to be able to travel to the desired location, without incurring any cost. The second factor which the researcher required was the people who would take part in the focus group would be avid users of social networks but also used them to communicate with musicians to whom they were fans. For the purpose of this study, both extremes needed to be looked at, for this reason there was one person in the group who did not use social networks to communicate with musicians. This gave the researcher a clear picture of the different points of view of people regarding how social media is used.

After a lot of consideration it was decided by the researcher these two where the most efficient ways to gather the information that is desired. For the specific research question being asked here it is a better idea to use research methods that involve the researcher actually talking to the people they are trying to get the information from. Research methods such as observations or surveys may have been useful but not as effective as the methods mentioned above.

4.5   Limitations of the Study

As like any type of research, there is going to be a number of limitations and problems that occur along the way.

There were a few limitations involved with using a semi-structured interview. One limitation was time. Time management is a very important characteristic of any interview. The researcher was required to give themselves enough time to conduct the interviews, transcript them and analyse the data. If the researcher does not have enough time, vital

points may be missed. In this situation adequate time was also required to hold the focus group and analyse the discuses which took place during it.

Another was the interviewee may have been prone to being biased towards their experiences or views on the issue. This can lead to issues of validity and reliability in the study. Hammersley describes reliability as the following, "Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions." (1992 P. 67) Sliverman describes validity as, "...truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (2005 P. 275) Because of these issues the interviewer should take every precaution to ask interviewees the right questions in order to receive non bias answers.

One major problem which occurred during this study was the inability of some musicians and public relations professionals to participate in the study due to busy schedules. Due to this problem, the list of potential participants had to be re- written on a number of occasions.

4.6   Ethical Issues

There are ethical issues which have to be taken into consideration when undertaking this type of study. One of the most critical points is the participants are fully aware of why they are being interviewed, and they should also be informed that they may choose to be anonymous if they would prefer and are free to withdraw at any time. This did happen during this study with a public relations professional withdrawing due to time restrictions.

The same concept should be used with regards to the focus group. The participants of the focus group should be informed regarding what they were participating in and why.

"Informed consent, confidentiality and protection of individuals are central to guidelines on research ethics, and you need to consider how you can be clear about the nature of the

agreement you have entered into with your research subjects or contacts." Blaxter et al (2010 P.164)

4.7   Methods Not Used

For this study it was obvious that qualitative research methods were going to be used, as the in-depth information required could not be achieved using quantitative research methods. However there are more ways of gaining qualitative research which were not used, such as case studies, group interviews and observation. These were not used as it was felt by the researcher using semi-structured interviews and a focus group was the optimal way to gain the information required.

In this study quantitative research methods were not used at all. The reason for this was the researcher required a level of insight into the use of social media by independent musicians which would not have been achieved by using closed questionnaires, tests, experiments or highly structured observation (where you "count" incidences of events). Questionnaires could have been used as an alternative to the focus group, however, if this was done then the researcher may not have get the answers that was required without doing follow ups which could have resulting in time constrictions.

Using methods like observation and experiments were not considered in this study as these methods of research aim to give a more numerical result, while the researcher was looking for a more opinion based result.

Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter the findings and analysis of this study will be presented. The themes in this section are used to support the research questions at hand, *"How independent music artist use online social networks for public relations purposes?"*

All the findings presented in this section are reinforced with quotes taken from interviews with both PR practitioners and Irish Musicians, also from a focus group of music lovers.

The themes that will be discussed are:

1. Public Relations/PR 2.0
2. Music Public Relations
3. Social Media and Public Relations
4. Social Media and Musicians
5. The Difference between people

5.1   Public Relations/PR 2.0

Everyone has a different view of what public relations is. The general consensus about public relations which was discovered during this study was it is an organisations way of letting the public know only what the organisation wants them to know, or their way of covering up a situation that might not be seen in a positive light if the public were to know, i.e. spin doctors.

Michael Murphy from the band Time is a Thief (From here on referred to as TIAT) said, "We had a PR officer to help us promote our last album, they are just a bunch of [robbers]," when he was asked about his view on what public relations is. Other musicians had a similar view on public relations but also say the advantages that using PR could have for them. Michael Hopkins from Planet Parade (From there on referred to as MH) said, "PR companies can be a great help for bands. It depends on the company and how well known and respected they are." For musicians having a well connected PR officer is very important, but

having a PR officer that believes in you is a much more important thing for independent musicians, as MH said during an interview, "As a band you want your PR Company to genuinely like your music rather than just paying them to promote you. They will do a far better job if they believe in what they're promoting."

Nowadays everything is online, from your daily newspaper to your bank account, it is no wonder that PR has begun to follow this trend. PR 2.0 has become a huge area of the industry, "PR 2.0 was born through the analysis of how the web and multimedia was redefining PR and marketing communicate, while also building the toolkit to reinvent how companies communicate with influencers and directly with people." Breakenridge (2008)

Not everyone in the public relations industry is a fan of PR 2.0, Christine Dugann (From here on referred to as CD) from DMpr responded with "The term annoys me," when asked her opinion on PR 2.0. While others, such as Eve Noone (From here on referred to as EN) from Heneghan PR thought that the emergence of PR 2.0 was a positive thing for the industry, "Online engagement allows clients to communicate with key audiences in a fast and cost-effective manner." With the continuous growth of on-line services organisations need to know and accept that people no longer believe everything they are told. "Long gone are the days of people solely believing the reviews of the high and mighty press. Now is a day for everyone to have a voice and ultimately it is those people that are paying for the show, product, or service," is the view of PRO and Marketing Coordinator at Cork Opera House, Sinead Madden Dunphy (From here on referred to as SMD)

"The power of an audience member's opinion can be two sided. Of course if they are offering good reviews, etc., it is more likely to be believed as the spin of us PR spin doctors. However a bad experience, bad mood, or personal issue can override any positive publicity or reviews as someone who may experience a product (or show in our case) will be influenced by their day up to that point and so report with an emotional impetus and thus damage the brand through these reviews. The power of the web can mean that reviews, both bad and good can be seen instantaneously and offer a huge support publicity wise to the brand, product or service being offered," SMD. By taking this example, it can be seen in some cases all the hard work performed by the public relations professional can be destroyed in a matter of seconds by the use of Web 2.0 tools. However, it could also help as

audiences are now able to make comments both positive and negative about their experiences. In a way this is positive for a musicians as it now removes the threat of the general public thinking that the musicians is being biased towards their own product, service, etc.

Looking at what was said by the people interviewed; it seems PR 2.0 is talked about in the same way by both practicing public relations and the academics that write about PR. In chapter 2 there was a lot of literature which refers to the use of social networks becoming a big part of Public Relations over the past number of years. "Social Media... is the way that we are organizing ourselves to communicate, to learn and to understand the world and our place in it. And we just won't accept any models for that that aren't intensely social" Cook (2008 p.8)

"With PR 2.0, we can analyze, measure and amend campaigns and long term PR and relationship-building programs in real time." Solis & Breakenridge (2009p. 249)

5.2   Music Public Relations

Public Relations in the entertainment sector is a completely different industry than that of public relations in any other sector. The idea of celebrity range from movie stars, to musicians, and PR in this area has been described as "the Cinderella specialist area of the PR service portfolio." Tench, Yeomans (2009)

"An artist's PR team can make or break them. Case in point? Look at the careers of superstars like Madonna or Britney Spears. How good are there PR machines? Look at today's hottest artists – Lady Gaga or Kanye West might come to mind. What do they all have in common? They're always in the news. Good or bad, they know how to dominate the media." Jacqueline Akbarian (2010)

"Many promoters have a public relations background within the music industry. Public relations work is a good way for promoters to curry contacts within the media," Saccone

(2003). With how competitive the industry has become it is essential for musicians to have the right people helping them out. Even with the introduction of Facebook and Twitter, etc musicians still need to be able to get the coverage which could take them from the group that practice in a rented room, to the nationally recognised musicians.

From speaking to a number of musicians, not everyone sees eye to eye when it come to how much public relations can help. "We had a PR officer to help us promote our last album, they are just a bunch of [robbers]," TIAT, this comment is, in a way, understandable for a small, unknown musician who does not yet have the funds to justify having a PR officer. For bigger musicians that can afford it, the public relations officer is a big part of their team. "They should have the contacts to get you radio play, TV appearances and interviews in magazines and newspapers." MH.

"The reality is that celebrity PR and the publicist are influential but small elements of the global 'PR' industry." Tench, Yeomans (2009) Despite the views of PR officers that are involved with musicians and celebrities, there is an argument that not everything which is done by them is necessarily a bad thing. Yes, you have the big publicist in England like Max Clifford who get their clients coverage anyway they can, but not every public relations professional will go to such lengths to get a story. Public Relations is a very important part of any industry, especially one in which the clients are in the public eye. But as mentioned not every musician can afford to have a PR officer and so have to do their own PR, which is where the use of social networks can be used to help.

Jamie from the Cork band Fred (From here on referred to as Fred) said the following "It's definitely worth it, as it's quite obvious that things are different to how they used to be. More and more people engage with music online for better or worse, and if you don't accept or acknowledge that, it can be hard to get your music to people."

Social media is a relatively new concept in the public relations area, and it is increasingly becoming very important. Musicians should be aware of what their fans are doing and looking at on these social networks. Using social networks is a great way for musicians to communicate with a larger group of people than traditional forms of media. This is not to say that traditional forms of media is out dated, "The general consensus may be that social media will take the place of traditional print and broadcast media in time but I believe that there will always be a place for non biased and factual journalism which you often do not get from blogs etc," CD.

Public relations officers will probably not always use traditional forms of communicating with their publics but for the time being it is still a big part of public relations. "There is a shift from traditional media to digital media and clients are looking for coverage not just in the traditional space (newspapers, radio etc) but online also," EN. Nowadays everything is available online from being able to keep in touch with people all over the world, to reading your daily newspaper and even listening to the radio. "Information is readily available at the touch of a button through the digital world and it is up the professionals to be abreast with these changes and improvements in the industry," SMD.

Since the emergence of these new technologies the belief that anybody can become a "journalist" has made the job of the PR professional a bit harder as they now just can't bring the news to their publics, they now have to be even more creative and original to get the attention of the general public and the journalist who produce the traditional sources of media. Whether or not you agree with the idea of social networks it is a great way to communicate with a large amount of people, "...it offers a platform to communicate informally with a large audience base, while also encouraging our audience to communicate with us also. It inspires a participatory outlook with our brand and ultimately gives an interactive platform for both us and our audiences," SMD

Nevertheless, not everyone in the industry agrees that traditional media is still an option for musicians. Online music marketer Andrew Wilkinson (From here on referred to as AW) "Radio and print are dead formats and unless you produce top40 music and have huge

investment and infrastructure then they are a waste of your resources. The same time and money spent online will prove more successful in both the short and long term,"

There were a number of differences in opinion between what was found through doing interviews with people who use these services and that of the literature discussed in chapter 2. These were not major differences, as a lot were personal preferences. However, like the literature discussed, all participants agree that there have been some very important changes happening in the area of technology and these changes have to be taken seriously by every industry.

5.4   Social Media and Musicians

The phrase Music 2.0 has been discussed in chapter 2, "Whilst the actual music forges a direct link between musicians and their fans, the reality of the industry is that a number of intermediaries interrupt that relationship, forcing musicians to communicate through their management companies and record labels... The promise of the new technologies is to reconfigure the possibilities allowing the emergence of new relationships." This is why musicians, not just independent Irish musicians, but all over the world are using social media. They want to break down the barriers which are restricting them from having a relationship with their fans.

Social media can be used by musicians as a form of 'DIY' PR. It is a great tool for up and coming musicians because, "it is effective for many businesses, it's also cost effective and if used correctly can be powerful." Fred spoke about why they find social networks useful saying, "...it allows us to communicate both directly and engagingly (i.e. it's not a mail out that people don't reply to). As only one or two of us are comfortable with Website code and so on, Social Networks give other band members the opportunity to engage with the online community."

"Facebook is the largest marketing channel for most musicians and bands. Surprisingly, it's also the one they know least about." Kim (2012) The way in which social networks can be used to help musicians promote themselves is endless, if they know and are willing to use them in the right way. AW said, "I use social media and recommend using it as a means of generating traffic to my own site. SM works best when used as part of inbound marketing. It is also good of communicating with those that already follow what you do."

With the increasing amount of people using social networks musicians can use these sites as a way of generating traffic to their own sites or to try and gain national coverage for themselves by upload videos, gigs, etc. MH speaks about how Planet Parade uses social networks,
"We use them to communicate with fans, promote new songs and gain feedback on them. It's great for keeping in touch with fans and people within the music industry." Keeping in touch with key people in your given industry is one of, if not, the most important thing to any industry. Social media sites can help musicians do this in an informal manner "...as people will only be on a social networking site until the next one comes along. Social networking sites allow bands an unprecedented amount of free promotion if they know how to use it effectively, but social networks as we know them have a limited shelf life," said Barry Ronayne from Cork band Former Monarchs (From here on referred to as BR)

Social media may not be used just as a way for musicians to promote but it can also be used to as a form of communication and feedback with fans.
"Gaining feedback from fans is crucial in understanding how you are progressing as a band. Bands can learn so much from the feedback from fans, it's refreshing to hear what people think, be it good or bad," MH.
"This form of communication is essential for bands. It's now at the stage where you can't really function as a band without embracing social media sites. They seem to be ruling the music world," BR. An important thing for any musician is to let their fans know they are human too. Communicating with fans online is a great way to do that. When asked in a focus group about communicating with musicians via Facebook, Twitter, etc, a number of fans gave their view, "from playing music with my own band.....organise gigs and stuff together on the sites...bigger bands don't really post back.....but maybe on twitter is your best bet" another participant noted that they contact musicians to "To pass on photos from

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gigs." However, not all fans believe there is a point to trying to communicate with musicians through social networks as they think, "They are not going to reply! Some use it to give away prizes and so on. I think that is a bit desperate," this opinion was expressed by one participant in the focus group.

Given the topics being discussed during this focus group a number of the participants had engaged in two-way communication with specific musicians. This is something that may not have been able to happen without the use of social networks

From this study, it has come to light that the musician, the PR professional and the fans all have different ideas of how social media can works for musicians. "Social Networks should be used to drive traffic to your mailing list. SN sites come and go and when they go they take your fans with them. You should own your fans data, not these sites. It's important that bands understand that," AW. Some musicians agree with this statement saying using social networks is good but not the best way to stay in touch with fans, "social networks as we know them have a limited shelf life," BR

Despite what different people are saying about the way that social media is used, it is still the best way for musicians to communicate with all their fans, no matter where in the world they are, in a quick, cheap way. "Fans want to hear directly from their favourite bands and musicians can cut through traditional media to let the world know what exactly it is they stand for," CD.

The internet is a platform for musicians everywhere to put what they are about out there for the world to see and there will always be people who will disagree. However, from the research undertaken during this study, it is a general consensuses that using social networks and social media is the most effective way for musicians to promote themselves and engage in two-way communication with their fans.

One of the things which became very clear throughout this process was the ways different people viewed how musicians use social networks. Everyone who was spoken to looked at using social networks as a communication tool but in a completely different light. From musicians saying "as it allows us to keeps a dialogue going," and "we do have some back and forth if someone has asked a question." To the music fans that took part in the focus group saying, "One on one communication seems impractical but it seems like a good way to let the masses know of upcoming events & such," and "They are not going to reply!"

It was evident from the research that musicians view social networks as a great way for them to keep in contact with all their fans without having to spend hours replying to emails or trying to talk to people face to face. "That [Facebook] is how we announce everything, we respond to questions and announce gigs, stuff like that," TIAT

Practitioners in the area of public relations and marketing look at social networks as a way for organisation to get the information they want people to see out there relatively cheap. They also acknowledge that using social networks alone doesn't always work, "SM works best when used as part of inbound marketing. It is also good of communicating with those that already follow what you do." "...it's also cost effective and if used correctly can be powerful," AW

Everyone has an opinion, and it was obvious that the people involved in this study would have extremely different views on a number of issues that came up. Be that as it may, everyone who was questioned agreed that using social networks had its advantages for musicians.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to give the conclusions which have come up from the analysis of the research discussed in the previous chapters. Clear conclusions will be made in how independent Irish musicians use social media as a form of DIY PR.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to look at how Independent Irish Musicians use social media as a PR tool. During which the follow conclusions materialised.

- The Irish music industry has, like every other industry, over the past number of years been hit due to advance in technologies and recession. This has lead to a great amount of independent musicians using social networks as a way to gain a following and get their music to the masses.

- Social media has had both a positive and negative effect on the Irish music industry.

- Social media is becoming a huge part of everyday life for most people and musicians are no exception. For any musician to even try and make a career in today's world they should to have an online presence, if they do not they are not doing themselves any favours in regards to gain national and even international coverage. Social media has helped to reinvent the music world, by allowing musicians from any town, in any country share their music with the world.

- Fans and musicians do not know how the other party sees the use of social media. During the process of this research it was discovered that fans think there is no point

interacting with musicians on social networks as they feel that the musician won't take the time to reply. Were as musicians see social networks as a way of letting their fans know that they are "human too," (This issue will be discussed more in the recommendations.)

- Social media is not being used to its full potential by anyone involved. Social media has the ability to help people gain the recognition they deserve for the talents they have, and it is clear from speaking to some of the musicians that social media is not being used in the best way that it could be.

- Independent musicians have a set view of PR professionals. They view PR as an expense they can do without. However the PR professional's knowledge of social media and the way it works could be a big help for any musician.

- Some music fans do not try and interact with musicians on social media sites as they feel that the music is too busy to reply to them. They also feel that when musicians do reply, the response is not actually the musicians but someone that was hired to do so.

- Independent musicians are not using social media to gain feedback and comments from fans, but merely as a tool of promoting themselves.

- None PR professional are not 100% sure of how well PR could work in their favour.

- The music industry as a whole has changed dramatically over the past number of years. Music 2.0 has become a popular term throughout the music industry. Up and coming musicians may not be aware of the importance of being able to use different forms of social media and social networks.

Chapter 7: Recommendations

Recommendations

The recommendations being made in this chapter will be for all parties involved in the social media and PR development, i.e. musicians, fans and PR professionals. These recommendations, like the conclusions, will be as a result of in dept analysis of the information gathered during this research project.

Social Media and Public Relations

- Social media is a great way to gain free PR. This should be utilised by both musicians and public relations professionals.

- Look at all forms of social media, not just the basic ones. People need to use every platform that they can get in order to get the coverage they desire. This does not necessarily always come from the well known forms of social media.

- Public Relations professionals, despite how much they may not like the idea of moving to PR 2.0, have to be aware that this is the way the industry is going, and in order to keep up with a changing society and industry.

- In order for a PR campaign to succeed on social networks it needs to be creative. PR professional now have to start thinking outside the box when developing an online campaign.

- Musicians should take the time to become aware of the best and most effective way of using the social media of their choice.

- Social media is a great way for musicians to gain feedback from fans regarding new songs, art work or concerts. Musicians need to know if what they are producing is going to be liked. Fans know what they like when it comes to music and so their feedback could have the potential to assist the musician when releasing tracks.

- Use every platform that can be used to get your music out there. Whether it is a well known site of not. Not all fans use the main social networks.

- Using social media as a promote tool is a great idea, however, the promotional video, picture, etc needs to be creative enough for people to want to share it with their friends. An example of this would be musician Justin Bieber; he shot to fame after his YouTube videos of himself singing went viral.

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Appendix A: Sample of First Contact Email to PR Professionals

To:

From:

Subject: Thesis Interviews

My name is Martina Lawless and I am currently doing a Masters in PR with New Media. I am currently in the process of writing my thesis, which is based on musicians and how they use social networks.

I am very interested in the opinions of different PR firms on how effective social networking is for. And so I am emailing you to ask if you would be willing to take part in a short interview.

Despite the fact my thesis is on musicians I am also very interested in how PR professionals view using social networks as a PR tool.

I realise that you may have a busy schedule, but your feedback would be very much appreciated. Please find attached the list of questions.

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If you are available to take part you can email me back on marti.law@gmail.com to arrange a time.

Kind Regards,

Martina Lawless,

0857127847

To:

From:

Subject: Thesis Interviews

My name is Martina Lawless and I am currently doing a Masters in PR with New Media. I am currenlty in the process of writing my thesis, which is based on Irish musicians and how they use social networks.

I am very interested in talking to different bands from all over Ireland about how they use social networks and so I am emailing you to ask if you would be willing to take part in a short interview.

I am based in Cork and so I am aware that you may be very busy with more important things, however, if you are interested in taking part I have attached to this email you on a list of the questions.

I would be looking to do these interviews over the next two weeks. If you are available to take part you can email me at marti.law@gmail.com to arrange a time.

Kind Regards,

Martina Lawless,

0857127847

Name	Band	Type of Interview
Michael Hopkins	Planet Parade	Face to Face Interview
Michael Murphy	Time is a Thief	Face to Face Interview
Jamie Hanrahan	Fred	Online Interview
Barry Ronayne	Cork Musician	Face to Face Interview
Name	Company	Type of Interview
Andrew Wilkinson	Plastic Hallway	Online Interview
Christine Duggan	DMpr	Online Interview
Eve Noone	Heneghan PR	Online Interview
Sinead Madden	Cork Opera House	Online Interview

Appendix D: Information on Participants

1. Michael Hopkins: the vocalist/guitarist from Maynooth, Michael is the front man for the three person indie band Planet Parade. The band played their first live gig in 2008 and since then has opened for the likes of Ellie Goulding and Bell XI. They are an energetic, indie/rock/pop band whose strength lies in their live performances. Planet Parade was chosen for an interview because for their online presence. With over one thousand Facebook fans and 561 twitter followers.

2. Michael Murphy: From Midelton in Cork, Michael plays bass in the four man band Time is a Thief. The band of four mates from the local scene who participated in various other careers before coming together to form a new band. Having formed in 2007, the band released the 'Conversations' EP in 2009 and followed it up a year later with the slicker 'Identity' EP. Like Planet Parade, Time is a Thief was chosen because of their large online following, over 2500 Facebook fans and 532 followers on twitter.

3. Jamie Hanrahan: Jamie is the guitarist for one of Corks biggest bands Fred. The band has been together since 1998. When their first album was released in 2000 Fred were an unsigned group but as the years went on and the band became a success national, they were offered a contract with record label RCM Music. Fred was one of the bands that the researcher wished to interview from the start of this study as they are a huge music act all over the country and have a very large online presence. Not only do they have a website, www.fredtheband.com. They also have over 7500 Facebook fans and nearly two thousand twitter followers.

4. Barry Ronayne: Guitarist for Cork band Former Monarchs. Former Monarchs are an alternative rock band based in Cork, Ireland. Their sound interweaves edgy guitar lines and thumping rhythm section, with strong emphasis on vocal and instrumental harmonies. In their relatively brief lifespan, Former Monarchs have developed into a powerful live act having toured both the UK and Ireland receiving positive reactions in both countries. Former Monarchs were chosen as they are a relatively new band; this helped to give the researcher a wider range of musicians, which would results in more reliable data.

5. Andrew Wilkinson: Creator of Plastic Hallways. Andrew manages acts and runs an online marketing "direct to fans" consulting service. Andrew set up Plastic Hallway in 2011 to help artists and managers understand how people use the internet and how

to use the internet to grow and manage a strong fan base. A director of the Music Managers Forum (Ireland), Andrew has years of music industry experience as a manager and label owner. His background includes artist booking, festival promoting, mobile and digital marketing and film production. Even though Andrew is not a public relations professional, he was chosen for this study because of his background in the music industry and with social media.

6. Christine Duggan: PR Professional. DMpr, Cork. DMpr is a Creative Public Relations agency in Cork offering a full range of PR services including Creative PR, Media Relations, Social Media, PR Training, Press Release Development and Strategic Public Relations Planning. Christine was chosen for her experience in dealing with social media and media relations. Christine has worked with some of the country's best known brands and her PR work has been nationally recognised and awarded.

7. Eve Noone: Senior Account Executive at Heneghan PR, Dublin. Heneghan PR is an independent Irish-owned Public Relations Company which represents some of the leading names in Irish and international business. Eve has made her way up through the company by starting as a Junior Account Executive. Even though Heneghan PR would not deal with musicians, the researcher decided to use Eve to get an idea of how public relations professionals feel about and use social media.

8. Sinead Madden: PRO & Marketing Coordinator at Cork Opera House. Sinead has working with Cork Opera House for a number of years dealing with the publicity and public relations of Cork Opera House. Along with organising membership programme, together with looking after revenue streams through advertising & corporate hospitality. Sinead was chosen to interview because of her background in the arts.

Interviewer (from here on indicated with the letter I): Hi Michael, thank you for coming in to meet me.

Michael (from here on indicated with the letter M): No problem, sorry it took so long to get in, traffic was unreal.

I: That's fine, should we get started?

M: Go for it.

I: Do you use social networks?

M: Ya we use all of them

I: How do you use these networks?

M: Our Facebook would be our main page, we have a website but that is mostly for our emails, but we would mainly use facebook. That is how we announce everything; we respond to questions and announce gigs, stuff like that.

I: Which social networks do you use?

M: We use Facebook, Twitter, Myspace. Then we use other ones that are specific to bands like Reverbnation. Bandcamp isn't really social, I guess there are some social aspects to Sound Cloud as well, but ya they are the ones we use.

I: Do you use these social networks to communicate with fans?

M: Not really, at the start we did in the early years, when it was less professional, it was more of a hobby for us back then. But as we evolved into a more professional band we had

to try and present ourselves in that way. So having a conversation, like we do have some back and forth if someone has asked a question but we would really have a full blown conversation about gigs or stuff.

I: Do you use or would you ever use social media to gain feedback from fans?

M: Ya we would always do that, new videos and stuff, like that would be the main platform for getting out stuff, a new video or song, and we would always take into account the feedback we get, we have a youtube channel as well but we don't really use the social aspect of youtube just to put up a video and then plug it through Facebook.

I: Do you feel that this form of communication is useful for you?

M: Ya, I think it's the best way, the best way currently anyway. To gage fans reactions and the see how you are progressing as a band, and how you are getting on. Ya it would definitely be the best way, I can't see another way, outside face to face after a gig but that's rare. You might get one or two people come up to you after a gig to get a picture or whatever. But on Facebook you could have six or seven comments after a gig saying that was great or whatever.

I: Do ye have a mailing list?

M: We used to have a mailing list but we never really kept up with it. Like from my own experience being on mailing lists, I never really pay attention to them, even from bands that I like. You know you just skim through it and it is very impersonal. I find alot of time it is just put into junk mail and people don't really take into account what you are trying to do. So ya we don't really use it that much

I: Which of the social networks that you use do you feel is most effective and why?

M: Facebook would be the most effective for us. Out of all the social networks Facebook would be the big one, twitter would follow closely then. Facebook is definitely the one where we get the most interaction from, the most feedback the most interaction with the band. Twitter is more, we use it for a little bit more informal, we use it to post pictures of us out on tour or back stage, it is kind of what Twitter embodies when you follow celebs and

stuff, it's a chance to see into their private lives. So ya that's why we use both, there is two different sides.

I: Would you ever consider social networks a good way of building long term, worthwhile relationships with fans?

M: We do get a lot of private messages from fans asking specific questions and we do respond to then with stuff that we mightn't want to put up on the page, things like when is such and such is happening. Ya we do try and keep assessable to them. We don't want to come across as being faceless and seem like it's not even us updating the page. It is always one of the guys in the band doing it. Fans are important to any band and it is good to keep the relationship there.

I: What is your opinion on using a PR officer to help you promote yourselves?

M: We had a PR officer to help us promote our last album. Yes it was very helpful, but they are all just a bunch of robbing c***s.

I: That covers everything that I need. Thank you very much for taking the time to meet me.

M: No bother. Thanks for picking us to interview

Interviewer (from here on indicated with the letter I): Please state your name and company.

Sinead (from here on indicated with the letter S): Sinéad Madden, Cork Opera House

I: How long have you been working in PR?

S: 10 years

I: What do you think of the changes that are taking place in the industry at the moment?

S: Information is readily available at the touch of a button through the digital world and it is up the professionals to be abreast with these changes and improvements in the industry.

Also with when dealing with media, it is important to classify and individually pitch ideas so that coverage is more classified and targeted. This in turns results in reaching the right audience and ensures that the right information is being delivered to your target audience.

I: What is your opinion on the concept of PR 2.0?

S: PR 2.0 offers an interesting insight into the power of opinion and how that is enabled through the internet and in particular we can see its power through the use of social media networks. The power of an audience member's opinion can be two sided. Of course if they are offering good reviews, etc., it is more likely to be believed that the spin of us PR spin doctors. However a bad experience, bad mood, or personal issue can override any positive publicity or reviews as someone who may experience a product (or show in our case) will be influenced by their day up to that point and so report with an emotional impetus and thus damage the brand through these reviews. The power of the web can mean that reviews, both bad and good can be seen instantaneously and offer a huge support publicity wise to the brand, product or service being offered. Long gone are the days of people solely

believing the reviews of the high and mighty press. Now is a day for everyone to have a voice and ultimately it is those people that are paying for the show, product, or service.

I: Do use social media, for what purpose?

S: Yes, it offers a platform to communicate informally with a large audience base, while also encouraging our audience to communicate with us also. It inspires a participatory outlook with our brand and ultimately gives an interactive platform for both us and our audiences.

I: Do you feel that this form of communication is an effective form of communication?

S: Absolutely, people feel that they are communicating with a voice/a personality rather than a cold stone building or brand. It offers the audience a chance to engage with the brand while not being intimidated by the bureaucracy usually associated with dealing with companies.

I: Which of the social networks that you use do you feel is most effective?

S: Twitter and Facebook would be our main social networks and have been successful in accommodating our needs for an interactive platform with our audience and of course potential audiences.

I: Would you ever consider social networks a good way of building long term, worthwhile relationships with fans?

S: Yes as aforementioned, the networks offer an informal platform whereby audience members can interact with our company. We have seen a loyalty build through these interactions and increased audience attendances along with a surge of new (never before) attendees in the last number of years due to the use of these media. It would be something I'd highly recommend to everyone with a strong brand and message wishing to be delivered.

I: Thank you very much for taking the time to do this. Your answers are greatly appreciated.

S: You are welcome.

Appendix 3

This Focus group took place on the 8th of August 2012 at 16 Seanna Mhuileann Cork.

The participants who attended the focus group were people with an interest in music and also took part in communicating with musicians via social networks. The people who attended were:

1. Stephen O' Donovan,

2. Eleanor O' Brien,

3. Gregory Rodgers,

4. Tara Cunningham,

5. Jane Jackson.

The purpose of the focus group was:

1. To find out if fans of music and musicians feel the same way about social media

2. To see how effective using social media is for musicians

3. To find out the opinions of the participants with regards to promotion through social media.

The main topics that were discussed were:

1. Social Networks

2. The use of social networks by independent Irish musicians

Social Networks

The researcher started off the focus group by asking everybody involved if they used social networks. This was important to get the most accurate results. After a bit of discussion amongst the participants it was discovered the most popular sites to use were:

- Facebook

- Twitter

- MySpace

The discussion continued on from there to the reasons why people use social networks. After a debate began to happen among the participants, the researcher stepped in to ask if people used social networks to follow any musicians. The question sparked a huge discussion within the group and eventually had to be refrained to asking if people used social networks to communicate with Irish musicians and why. The discussion proceeded to enlighten to researcher as to the reasons why fans communicate with musicians online.

- To pass on photographs from gigs

- To comment on stage time and venue information

- To let them know if a gig was good or not

While other members of the group had a different opinion:

- Bigger bands don't really post back

- I doubt they would reply they have more important things to do.

The difference in opinions caused different members in the group to start to defend musicians and so the researcher decided to change the flow of conversation. Asking the participants had they ever received any correspondence back from musicians would help the researcher to see if the musicians who had been interviewed and their fans had the same view on how they use social networks. Two members of the group had on previous occasions been in contact with Irish independent musicians (some of which were the musicians interviewed). This gave the fans a sense of the musicians being "down to earth" and could talk to their fans like a friend. However, there were still some members in the group that were determined that musicians were "on their pedestal" and would not reply to fans at all.

The Use of Social Networks by Independent Irish Musicians

To stare the discussion away from the view that musicians did not want to talk with their fans the researcher decided to go down another route and asked the question does the group think that social networks are a good tool musicians could use to promote themselves. As there were members of the group who were in small time bands, they felt using social networks was a "great, free way to promote yourself." The group as a whole felt it was a great way to reach a mass audience without the expense of using traditional forms of media. There was also the discussion about musicians using social networks too much and beginning to seem "a bit desperate for fans" by continuously running competitions on their page.

The final question the research put to the group was what they felt was the most effective form of social media for a musician. This discussion continued among the group until they all agreed on a list of the most effective forms of social media:

- Twitter

- Facebook

- YouTube

- MySpace

The researcher concluded the focus group by thanking all participants for taking the time to come and take part in the research.