

USER-CENTERED VS MUSICIAN-CENTERED: THE TRANSLATION PROCESS ON THE STORE FRONT DIGITAL PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT

The presence of digital streaming platforms made an impact on music consumption patterns. Many people chose to consume music through digital platforms due to the easy access, low cost, the absence of illegal music, and a large amount of music catalog. From that perspective, it can be concluded that digital streaming platforms are indulging users. However, digital platforms also turn out to make a negative impact on musicians creating discrepancies among them. Therefore, there's a necessity for a discussion on digital platform design which is oriented to the needs of musicians. The method used in this study is qualitative with the approach of the case study. The object of study discussion is The Store Front which is a digital platform that aims to support the equity and transparency of musicians. The data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and literature study. The observation was carried out at <https://www.the-storefront.com/>, the interview was conducted with the co-founder of The Store Front Argia Adhidanendra, and a literature study was carried out about digital platforms and their relation with users. The result of this study is the digital platform design of The Store Front through the analysis process of actor-networks of human actors and non-human actors. The process of digital platform design is not undergone through the mere perspective of information technology, but the design is influenced by socio-technical relations.

Keywords: *digital platform, the musician-centered, translation process, user-centered*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era, the presence of digital technology changed the music consumption pattern influenced by the emergence of various digital music platforms such as web-based digital shops, store-based mobile digital, and web-based digital shops and mobiles (Dellyana et al., 2017). The presence of digital streaming platforms (DSP) in the past few years has made music consumption activity easier by creating easy access to search for desired music, a safer place from virus attacks due to the absence of necessity to download the music file from the risks websites, more space in memory, and fast update on new music catalog (Dewatara & Agustin, 2019). According to the data from *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII)*, in 2017 there were 46,9 million Indonesian listening to music online through the digital streaming platform. Several prominent examples of local and international music streaming providers are Spotify, Youtube Music, Joox, Soundcloud, and Langit Musik (*technobusiness.id.*, 16 February 2022). Every year, digital streaming music services in Indonesia have increased significantly. During the pandemic, the market value of streaming music in Indonesia is estimated to reach US\$148 million, or around 2.1 trillion rupiahs. The penetration of streaming music users in Indonesia in 2020 is estimated to be only 4.08 percent and puts Indonesia in 144th position in the world (*medcom.id*, 19 Juli 2022)

Digital streaming platforms such as Spotify, Joox, and Applemusic certainly indulge the users by creating easy access to search for desired music, therefore it

can't be separated from the practice of consumption (Arditi, 2021). One of the attractions of digital streaming like Spotify is the availability of a large number of music catalogs with millions of songs and playlists based on artist, genre, and mood generated by an algorithm or by a professional editor/curator. They also allow users to create their playlists and share them with other users (Fadryona, 2021). Users always look for a large number of album catalogs. In this context, the presence of a digital streaming platform (DSP) is really important in the aspect of user consumption. The matter of music access becomes important. For users, the digital streaming platform (DSP) is appealing because it offers a music exploration experience and a wide array of music catalogs (Bauman & Rasor, 2019).

Besides easy access and a large number of music catalogs, the presence of a playlist creation feature is also the attraction of the digital streaming platform. Streaming media is not only considered a mere technical transmission of music but has also become a stream of information in the digital era where users can share playlists. Music consumption through the digital streaming platform can be considered a form of new infrastructure in data-driven music consumption (Magaudda, 2021). Spotify playlist is considered as "container technology" because playlist can attract the attention of users and observe users in their practice of music listening on a digital streaming platform. Therefore, the playlist is an endeavor carried out by Spotify to drive users (Jansson, 2021).

The Digital streaming platform (DSP) has an important role as a place for the act of exhibiting, exploring, searching, and consuming music through search bars and digital databases. Digital streaming platforms are also considered "the optimization of culture", it's an endeavor and strategy so that cultural products like music can be easily directed to create a more "playlist-friendly" exploration and circulation in a certain platform (Morris, 2020). Another previous study concluded that digital music consumption on digital streaming platforms (DSP) is dominated by millennials and generation Z because they prioritize music consumption and the type of music based on their demeanor which prefers social media to facilitate them in accessing music services (Noviani et al., 2020). Because users are only looking for indulgence and contentment in consuming through the digital streaming platform (DSP) (Pal & Triyason, 2018).

Several other research highlights the relationship between digital streaming platforms and users such as recommendation algorithm driven by users based on age, gender, country, and music genre preference. User characteristics have a very big influence in determining the algorithm of recommendations on digital streaming platforms (DSP). (Schedl et al., 2015). This study also mentioned that the music listening inurement of users in Last FM can be predicted by their age, gender, and country. The digital trace of users can be predicted especially through their inurement of music consumption on digital platforms (Krismayer et al., 2017).

From these studies, the discussion of digital platforms is inclined to highlight the needs and desires of users, because they see digital music from the aspect of consumption. However, not much research highlights the presence of digital platforms from the aspect of musicians as one of the important stakeholders in the digital music industry. Because for musicians, there are still economic discrepancies between them, especially in digital management which is still dominated by "big musicians", "major labels" or "big companies" (Hesmondhalgh, 2021). The orientation of the digital streaming platform is like a broker between an advertising agency, consumer, and music industry players, instead of giving the musician's needs and wants (Fadryona, 2021). There is a term called "producer-oriented" to refer to a digital platform designed for producers/musician to upload their works autonomously, instead of consumption-oriented digital streaming platforms such as Spotify (Fadryona, 2021). One digital platform model such as Soundcloud allows musicians to be more autonomous because they give the possibility to release musical works without having to entangle them to a record company or aggregator. Therefore, digital platforms like Soundcloud is more oriented toward the needs of producer/musicians.

This paper aims to discuss The Store Front (<https://www.the-storefront.com/>) as one digital platform which focused on “producer-oriented” and supports the needs of musicians in the era of digital governance instead of focusing on the users. The novelty to be discussed in this paper is to see the process of designing The Store Front website through a sociotechnical perspective where the design process of a digital platform cannot be separated from human actors and non-human actors who build one mutual network through the translation process (Yuliar, 2009).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of this study is qualitative that seeks to elucidate or interpret phenomena. The qualitative approach used in this study is a case study base on exploring real-life cases which includes contemporary finite systems (single case) or multiple finite systems (multi-case) with rigorous and in-depth data collecting through validation from various primary or secondary sources such as observation, interviews, audiovisual materials, and various reports documents. the case descriptions will be reported in the form of single-cases or multi-cases. (Creswell, 2015). The qualitative method in this study used the actor-network theory to trace the network relation of human actors and non-human actors in The Store Front case study. The Store Front is a music platform from Jakarta, Indonesia. The actor-network theory will trace the relation of human actors and non-human actors through translation which includes problematization, interresment, enrolment, and mobilization (Yuliar, 2009). Data collection was carried out through observation and interviews with The Store Front representative, Argia Adhidanendra (co-founder). The secondary data was obtained through literature studies on digital streaming platforms.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main concept in translation is discussing the relationship between human actors and non-human actors through problematization, interresment, enrollment, and mobilization (Priyatma, 2013; Yuliar, 2009). Before the network was formed, human actors and non-human actors are undergoing negotiation in the translation process. Through the translation process, we will know the design concept of The Store Front platform as an antithesis of the presence of a streaming platform in Indonesia.



Figure 1. Manifesto of The Store Front
Source: <https://www.the-storefront.com/manifesto/>, 2022

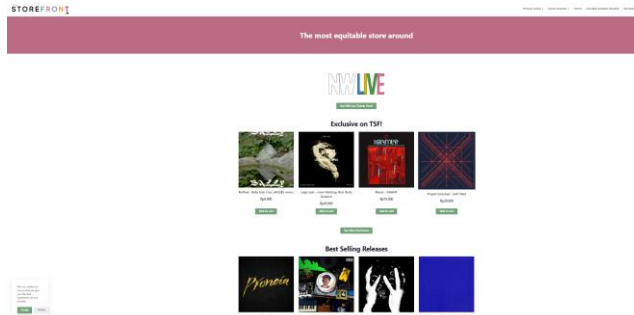


Figure 2. The Store Front Website
Source: <https://www.the-storefront.com/>, 2022

Problematization

In the problematization stage, actors began to formulate the problem and define the role of other actors in overcoming the proposed problem. At the initial stage, a problem emerged caused by the lack of support for independent musicians from the digital streaming platform (DSP) such as Spotify, Joox, and Apple Music. This caused independent musicians very vulnerable to relying on these big platforms. Because these platforms control the music industry with their capability to indulge users to consume music. In addition to that, other problems began to emerge caused by the presence of digital streaming platforms (DSP) which are oriented toward meeting users' needs through easy access, low cost, and a large number of song catalogs, as stated by Argia Adhidanendra:

"In my opinion, the music industry seems (as if) to offer democratization like (giving) people easier (access) to listen to music, consuming music, seeing music (concert), but the power relations are inclined to the big corporation (major label). So, streaming (platforms) is designed (for) "the big boys" leaving no room for middle-level musicians or small musicians here. In addition, what is served by digital streaming platforms (DSP) is more user-centric. The user interface (UI) is good, very low cost, (and gives) users access to search for songs. I want users to try more to get the music. Because for the past 6-7 years, musicians succumb (to them). We are inclined to (support) the musician," (Interview of Argia Adhidanendra, co-founder of The Store Front, 7 April 2022)

According to the interview, it can be concluded that the basic problem of The Store Front initiation is the major disappointment of independent musicians with the business model pattern of the digital streaming platform and the orientation of the digital streaming platform which is oriented towards the needs of users instead of the needs of musicians. Because most digital streaming platforms are inclined to "user-centered" systems.

Interresment

In the interresment stage, the delegation of roles to actors began to emerge so that they were interested in the offered programs or activities. In this stage, there's already an actor's interest, and a process of attracting other actors to be involved in a network is also has started. The actors subsequently conduct various identification of specific roles, so that they will involve in their specific roles. the interresment stage carried out by Argia Adhidanendra is through building informal relations through "community hangouts." Argia Adhidanendra does not have an economic capital resource for business needs such as marketing process, and big promotion to obtain various album catalogs from music communities. However, he built relationships with actors from the independent music community such as the hip-hop music community through hangout activities, intercommunications, and friendships between independent music communities. The founder of The Store

Front came from The Noise Whore, a media and event organizer who held a lot of independent music shows. Therefore, the relation came mostly from the independent music community. The interaction patterns with other music community carried out by Argia Adhidanendra is done through the curation process of the music genre and through other features which give transparency and fairness to musicians. The interestment process, in this case, is informal and utilized social capital such as transparency, fairness, and accountability. They are trying to create various features which more "fairness" and "transparent" so that independent musicians are interested to release their music on The Store Front platform.

Argia Adhidanendra developed manifestos to be oriented toward the needs of musicians which is more transparent and fair to their platform features. The first one is "The 90% Initiative", the feature to get musicians 90% royalty and the rest 10% is for platform maintenance and administration. This is considered big royalty for musicians compared to other digital platforms. The second one is "The Transparency Act", the feature to give musicians transparency of sales every month through monthly reports which can be accessed by the public. And lastly, the "Own Your Music" feature for musicians to determine freely the price of their album and not calculated based on any coefficients like digital streaming platforms. It can be concluded that the presence of these three features is the effort of Argia Adhidanendra to "attract" musicians to join and release their songs in The Store Front. The role of non-human actors such as the features of the platform to be more "fairness" and "transparent" already holds a role in this phase.

Enrollment

the enrolment stage is the success of a certain program or activity to involve actors in solving problems and in this stage commitment from actors to be involved in a certain network is already established. If the actors merge themselves into the network, it can be said that the enrolment process is a success. In the enrolment stage, there needs to be a common problem and a common interest so that the actors begin to build a common commitment. In the case of The Store Front, it can be concluded that independent musicians began to join and sell their songs on The Store Front because of the features which make it transparent and fair to the artists. It can be seen, that the presence of those various features is to attract musicians to submit their album catalog to The Store Front, for example, there is a special page feature where The Store Front collaborated with musicians/independent record labels to create a specific page to hold an exclusive campaign.

A special page is a campaign feature where The Store Front build collaboration with independent musicians or record label to sell their work. They offer one exclusive page to sell albums from the campaign. The special page feature is developed to hold an exclusive release from a musician or record label that they supported, although the royalty is not much different from the regular feature. Several musicians and record labels who had collaborated with The Store Front are Matter Mos, BAP, Gimloc Records, and Akamady Records, as stated by Harry Sutresna of Grimloc Records:

"The Store Front know the rules. Moreover, they have transparency, (it indicates) they know. There is transparency in every month" (Interview of Herry "Ucok Homicide" Sutresna, Grimloc Records, 5 April 2022).

According to the interview, it can be concluded that the features give fairness and transparency, making musicians interested to release their songs on The Store Front Platform. Therefore, the presence of features which is equitable and transparent has made music actors merge into the network.

Mobilization

The mobilization stage is the formation of networks between human and non-human actors. To put it into perspective, in this stage, not every actor needs to be visible, because they are represented by other actors. Therefore, in this stage, the network is stable whether between human actors or non-human actors and they built commitment together. The stability of the network can be seen with the presence of The Store Front website (www.the-storefront.com) which became a "representation" of the fairness for musicians in the era of the digital streaming platform. The presence of the features developed by The Store Front can emerge because of the network and commitment from the actors such as "The 90% Initiative", "The Transparency Act", "Own Your Music" and "The Special Page" features. Therefore, it can be concluded that The Store Front website, through various innovative features developed based on the needs of musicians. Musicians became interested to join The Store Front because of the value of fairness, transparency, and accountability offered by The Store Front.

Relation of actor-network is established and stable carried out by The Store Front as a platform which oriented towards the needs of musicians instead of users. The role of non-human actors such as "The 90% Initiative" feature, "The Transparency Act" feature, "Own Your Music" feature, "Special Page" feature, and Monthly Reports attracts independent music actors to submit their album catalog in The Store Front. The Store Front is the only digital platform in Indonesia that put attention to the biggest royalties for musicians. Through the mechanism of transparency of sales reports, special pages, and 90% royalty, they established trust with the musicians.

Table 1. Sociotechnogram in the Translation process in The Store Front

Human Actor	Non-Human Actor
<i>Argia Adhidanendra</i>	<i>Feature The 90% Initiative</i>
<i>The Noise Whore</i>	<i>Feature The Transparency Act</i>
<i>Independent musicians</i>	<i>Feature Own Your Music</i>
<i>Independent communities</i>	<i>Feature Special Page</i>
	<i>Monthly reports</i>

Source: author

4. CONCLUSION

The presence of digital streaming platforms such as Spotify, Joox, and Apple Music in Indonesia is oriented toward the interest of "big" music actors and users. The democratization of access to the digital streaming platform also made musicians generate less economic profit, especially for small independent musicians. The problem is most digital streaming platforms (DSP) give indulgence to the users with easy access, low cost, and a large number of music catalogs rather than giving a fair business scheme to the musicians. On the contrary, not many digital streaming platforms who oriented towards musicians especially if we look from the perspective of the economy. The translation process through the stage of problematization, interestment, enrolment, and mobilization shows the carried-out process of The Store Front digital platform in developing features oriented to the needs and wants of independent musicians. Through the translation process, the relation between human actors (Argia Adhidanendra, the Noise Whore, Independent musicians, independent communities) and non-human actors (Feature The 90% Initiative, Feature, The Transparency Act, Feature Own Your Music, Feature Special Page, Monthly reports) is elucidated and represented in the design of The Store Front's digital platform features. Instead of elucidating digital platform features from an information technology aspect, the approach of translation elucidated the construction process through a sociotechnical aspect which can be seen in the design of The Store Front website. Therefore, through actor-network theory, the process of website design can be constructed clearly through various relations between human actors and non-human actors.

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