

UNSIGNEDPH Music Lounge: Promoting Unsigned Artist Thru Online Music Distribution Portal

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Abstract— The unsigned artist is in need of a platform where they can upload music and earn a royalty reasonably. The current situation of Unsigned cannot satisfy by the present channel because royalty is not given entirely to the artist. A needs analysis was summarized to determine the need of the Unsigned Artist where 94 percent of the respondents of the majority of them earn money thru Music Play and Gigs, while only 6 percent of the respondents earn thru CD sales and Merchandise Sales. This paper satisfies the need of the Unsigned Artist by discussing the development of the proposed portal and discussion of the web architectural model that shall be adopted in designing the proposed portal; it also includes the features of the proposed portal and lastly the extent of usability of the proposed portal. A business model was also added to determine the sustainability of the portal. This is developmental and descriptive research where it identifies that the proposed portal provides an accessible way to earn royalty in music while satisfying the need of the unsigned artist. In the extent of usability, Unsigned artists were invited actually to test the portal and find it usable. This concludes that technology intervention was excellent for both the artist and listeners. The portal UnsignedPH provided the need of the unsigned artist in distributing music and will help the unsigned artist to earn a high royalty, and this also helps the cultural promotion of the country. It is recommended that a business feasibility study should be conducted to determine the sustainability of the system.

Keywords—UnsignedPH. Music distribution, culture, and arts

I. INTRODUCTION

Because of the generation of computers, the trend in the music is Streaming [1]. Technology shaped the current industry of music and music producers and artist upload music online for a cost to continue doing business. While technology plays a significant role in the development of the current music industry, music is now accessible. If we started our hobby in music from the 80s, we could see that Vinyl quickly went to tape which slowly transferred into compact discs, and now we have Spotify and other streaming services [2], [3]. Before the start of the streaming licenses, there is Napster which is founded in 1999 by Sean Parker, John Fanning, and Shawn Fanning, where it is as a P2P file sharing service where users could share their MP3 softcopy music files with others.

While during the time of Napster, recording company doesn't appreciate streaming services because of losing profit, the company Napster folded under the litigation, and the company was purchased in a fire sale with the name finally landing with the streaming service, Rhapsody [4]. It was the time when recording companies and musicians who are signed with them embrace streaming services. In reality, in the last 4 years, which is 2014, the revenues for streaming took over the #1 spot from the CDs accounting for \$1.87 billion in revenue, with slightly overtaking CDs sales at \$1.85 billion[5]–[7].

For this time, artists and record labels no longer do they rely on album and ticket sales, they also obtain money from ad revenue with streaming services such as Spotify is helping artists earn more from their music. The old style of recording music with the use of expensive audio equipment has passed. The music industry is also adapt to new recording technologies. Now, computer software such as Mixcraft can digitally mix music without people being in the studio. Cost of music production also decreases. The future of music relies on the use of modern technology. Since not all music is uploaded online, there are several Filipino Unsigned artist that aims to distribute music in the world. While uploading music on Youtube and Facebook could be a good starting ground, there is no current formal location where the unsigned artist is accommodated.

A. Statement of the Problem

Aside from determining the need of a platform for Unsigned Artist, this paper will answer the following question: (1) What is the web architectural model that shall be adopted in designing the proposed portal? (2) What are the features of the proposed portal? (3) What is the extent of the usability of the proposed portal? (4) What is the Business Model of UnsignedPH Distribution Portal?

B. The objective of the Study

While Youtube and other streaming services are available online, the total revenue doesn't go to the artist itself. Instead, it was obtained by this providers. The primary objective of the study is to help the Unsigned Artist to distribute music with the help of technology. In the architectural model of the portal, a flowchart and a data flow diagram were used in order to

determine the flow of the system. The features were identified by using screenshots of the system, and lastly, a System Usability Scale (SUS) [8], [9] was used to determine the usability of the proposed portal if it meets the required number of respondents.

C. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study illustrating the flow of the proposed system. The significant input is the details of the Unsigned Artist which includes necessary information. Another input is the Softcopy of music and the Lyrics of the song.

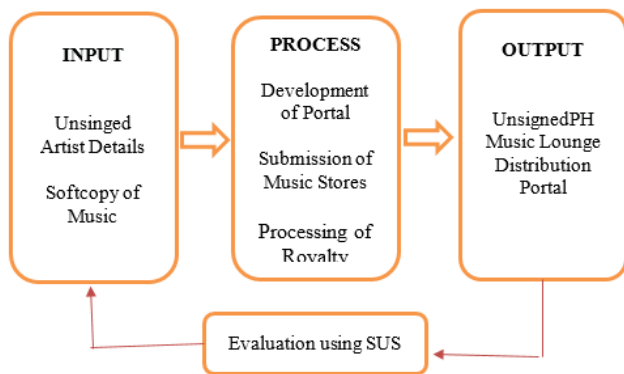


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The information of the artist such as the music and the necessary information such as the screen names will be submitted to leading music stores that will help the artist to earn royalty from stores.

The system was evaluated using the SUS or interview that served as the basis for further development and improvement of the system.

D. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This is a developmental research study which aims to discuss the steps in developing a portal for the Unsigned Artist and its usability. It was limited in the development process and overview of the system. This study doesn't go over a comprehensive view of uploading music in online stores and the financial aspect for the sustainability.

E. The significance of the Study

It is significant to know the data of unsigned artist who's online and who's not. This study is a wake-up call because based on the observation, most of the unsigned artist is left behind[10]. This study will benefit the unsigned artist because the development of the portal can provide them a ground to disseminate music. It will also benefit the listeners to discover the music of unsigned. For the other band, this is a ground for collaboration to improve the music industry. This would also help the country to promote music worldwide from an unsigned artist.

As for the business part of this study, this will help the proprietor and owner of the business to gain profit; it discusses the sustainability plan of the business and ground for

expansion. It is also a promotion ground for the Original Pilipino Music to the world.

II. NEED ANALYSIS AND CURRENT TRENDS IN MUSIC

A. The need for a platform for Unsigned Artist

To determine the needs of a platform, a current situation and sentiment of the unsigned artist were investigated. A total of 18 unsigned artist which includes 12 bands, 3 solo singer, and 3 one-man bands was interviewed. Majority of the respondents are finding a way to promote music since most of them don't have the publication of music.



Figure 2. Publication Status of Unsigned Artist

The 94 percent of the respondents of the majority of them earn money thru Music Play and Gigs, while only 6 percent of the respondents earn thru CD sales and Merchandise Sales. This concludes that social media and other publication platform doesn't help the artist to earn revenue. Based on the result of this study, there is a technological advantage that technology may bridge the gap between unsigned artist and music distribution. The proposed portal will help the unsigned artist not only to earn revenue from the music but also increase the popularity of the Philippine music industry and also promote the culture of the Philippines.[11]

B. Internet Marketing Trends and Publishing of music

The Internet has revolutionized marketing as a whole, not just the marketing and publishing of music. The traditional model of publishing has been transformed, and advertisers are continually using new ways to reach the public [12], [13]. Historically, the media has been the best source of publishing, with advertising companies using newspapers, radio stations, television, movies, flyers, and other such media tools to reach the consumers. These marketing methods were domestically based and published in the media that was viewed by every demographic group in the community. Specialized advertisements that reach the intended demography were hard to implement, the best way of doing so was to advertise in media programs that were already specialized, such as TV shows or magazines that specialized in specific topics. Today, marketing is an entirely different concept. With the touch of a button, a marketing strategy can be viewed by every computer in the world and reach millions of people within seconds. The Internet changed the face of marketing by allowing marketers to access the entire globe, but the most significant change has been the collection of information. What customers do on the Internet is increasingly documented, and web companies like Google, Twitter, and Facebook, for example, are sitting on a

mountain of information regarding every single user. This has created an exceptional marketing tool called “behavioral targeting” which is commonly used today. Behavioral targeting has good and bad qualities for consumers. The evil qualities involve the privacy of individuals and the ownership of the information people put online. These changes in marketing have had tremendous effects on the music industry. In the 21st-century recording, companies have created specialized divisions that are continually searching for new areas to advertise. Most musicians today also have a Facebook page, Instagram account, and a Twitter account that they use to post pictures of their everyday lives, advertisements for live shows, new albums, new singles and everything related to them that the fans can then follow and see every day[14].

C. Piracy Effects on Unsigned Artist

Due to the present technological advancement, it is easier to access music without paying the royalty. Several Studies conducted show that respondents who are frequent users of music streaming are also more likely to download music illegally [15]–[17], in this way government agencies should implement policies in order to protect the music industry. As shown in a case study, there is a decreased Internet traffic by 16% and increased music sales by 36% during the first six months after the implementation of a copyright protection reform[18].

This study shows that music is not only for listening pleasure but could also be utilized as a source of income. One of the goals of this study is to help the unsigned artist find a way to earn money and to promote the music of the country.

III. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive Developmental Research method is a fast finding method with an adequate interpretation. The developer also previous data such as the sentiment of the Unsigned Artist which gather the opinion of the stakeholders. Development of a portal is needed in order to satisfy the need of the unsigned artist. Lastly, a validated SUS questionnaire on the usability evaluation was floated to determine the usability of the portal.

A. Web Portal Development

There are four phases in the development of the portal. The first Phase is Analysis. It is concern about the development of the web strategy and analysis on how the website may achieve this strategy. There is a saying that If you fail to plan, you plan to fail, this is true because some of the reason for project failure is the lack of top management commitment to a project and misunderstanding about the needed requirements. In this phase, a flowchart and flow diagram used in order to determine how the system works. Phase Two is Design. Once the analysis phase has been completed, the process of development can move on to the design phase where it is driven by the objectives document. In this phase, the developer utilized web hosting to host the website. Phase Three is Generation. Phase Three of the methodology is focused on the generation of the Website and is driven by the Design Document. Phase Four: Implementation. The

Implementation Phase is ongoing and runs throughout the lifecycle of the Website.

B. Instrumentation and Data Collection

In order to familiarize the functionalities regarding the proposed portal, the developer will use data gathering techniques to create conclusions and formulate solutions regarding portal difficulties such as personal observation, interview, document analysis and lastly the usability questionnaire. Usability Questionnaire is one of the primary information of this study. It is a test that will be performed by the end user to determine if the portal is working according to the specification and need of the stakeholder. It helped the researcher in testing the proposed portal.

C. Business Model

In order to determine the feasibility criteria of the project for the possibility of adopting as a start-up business, the lean canvass was adopted. It is an adaptation of Business Model Canvas by Alexander Osterwalder which Ash Maurya created in the Lean Startup spirit. The lean canvass is simple and promises an actionable and entrepreneur-focused business plan. The canvass focuses on problems, solutions, key metrics and competitive advantages[19], [20].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Systems Architecture and System flow

The system consists of a computer that runs on a web server in a hosting service using Amazon Web Services under the Lightsail Plan. AWS is confidently the most reliable hosting provider in the world with no downtime [21][22].

Typical web architecture using Linux Hosting with the Unsigned Artist as the site users, the administrators need internet in order to access the Server. A Linux Server with installed server management operating system for the website that consists of Apache, PHP, and database.



Figure 3. Systems Flow

The system flow starts with account registration and verification. Under the User Menu, the Unsigned Artist Upload music, check account balance and request for pay-out. The system has two-way verification using CAPTCHA in order to avoid bots and attackers to unauthorized access to the portal.

In the payout and account balance section, the Artist can add Paypal Account in order to be paid, funds from the PayPal account can also be withdrawn with any bank accounts locally. A minimal amount of 10% will be deducted from the royalty for the sustainability of the portal.

Lastly, in the upload section, the Unsigned Artist, can upload the music and verified by the site administrators. Site

administrators will review the submission before submitting to the site partners, and the site partners will report royalty back to the site administrators for payout to the artist.

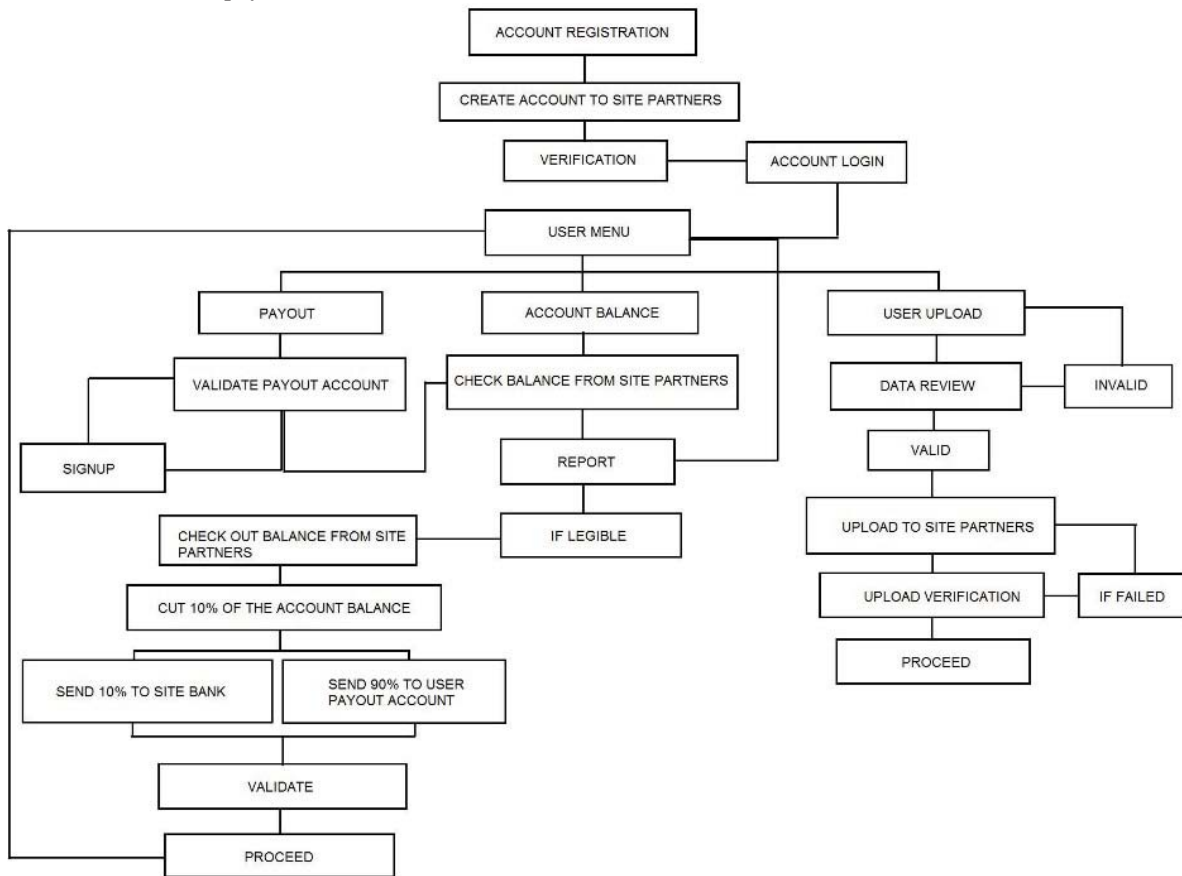


Figure 4. The Systems Model and Flow

B. Features of the Portal

First is the sign-up button, where an artist can provide information. In the login page of the artist, it asked several necessary information such as the email address as the username, email, and password. After verifying the email address, the signup continues, and the artist provides necessary information such as the Artist Name, Artist Cover Photo, Contact Name, and biography. The new artist will undergo validation from the UnsignedPH to determine the eligibility of the artist for signing up.

Next, the artist can upload music to the portal; it requires MP3 format with 192kbps for the quality of the music. The user should also upload the cover photo for the music and the lyrics for documentation purposes. If the user is uploading an album, an album cover with JPEG format is required with 1:1 ratio with a 1980x1980px for a high-quality image. All of the information will be subject to the review of the Site Administrator. Once approved, all the information uploaded by the artist will be sent out to the major music stores such as Spotify, iTunes, and other popular music streaming provider.



Figure 5. The Homepage of the Proposed Portal

The streaming provider will report statistics back to the portal, and the portal will compute the royalty of the artist deducting the 10 percent maintenance fee of the portal. Lastly, the artist has an option to request for payout once a \$100 threshold was reached. An artist can add PayPal account for payout.

Upon approval, the artist will be directed to the dashboard upon signing in. In the dashboard, there is an option to Upload music and Check Balances. Under uploading music, the artist can upload music in Mp3 format. All the uploaded Mp3 files will undergo verification. After verification, all the Music will

be submitted by the UnsignedPH into major music stores worldwide. The artist may always check for balances and may request payout thru PayPal. As for the maintenance of the website and sustainability, 10 percent of the total sales will be deducted from the total payout of the artist for sustainability.

C. Extent of Usability

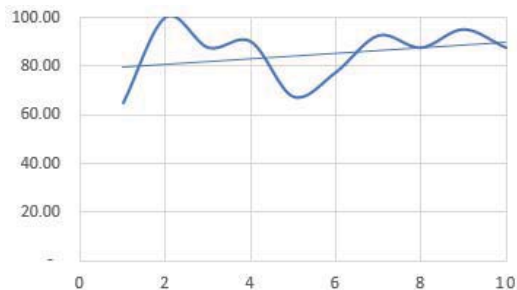


Figure 6. SUS Distribution

In order to determine the usability of the portal, The System Usability Scale (SUS) was adopted as a tool for measuring usability. It consists of a 10 item questionnaire with five response options for respondents. Based on the result of the 10

respondents who were previously interviewed, the average SUS score of the system is 85.

This study doesn't limit the possibility and the future of the Unsigned Artist. Based on the functionality of the portal, it technically solves the problem of the Unsigned Artist in proper music distribution and royalty payout. This portal could help the Unsigned Artist to sustain the creation of music, and this will also help the country promoting Philippine culture to the world. Thus, the extent of usability was only perceived by the artist, it is recommended that standard procedures of testing the web portal should be used in the future to validate test results not only through a subjective survey.

D. Business Model thru Lean Canvass

After the needs assessment and development of the portal, implementation would not be enforced without understanding the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed project. Feasibility Study is essential in order to determine different criteria in establishing the project. A lean canvass provides concise information about the overall outline of the project.

PROBLEM Independent Artist doesnt have any budget to get signed and submit music to major stores. Independent Artist and Music are unheard from the mainstream. Based from initial interview of local bands, they have no idea how put music online	SOLUTION Submission of Music will be at a good budget for Indie Artist. Music will be heard in different online stores, such as iTunes, and will be stream in major online streaming provider such as Spotify. Unsigned.PH will handle all the basic from recording to submission	UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION If you are a music player, a frustrated singer, lets get your music online in spotify and apple iTunes for a little cost. Its very cool to get your music to be heard over Spotify in just a few days of joining us!	UNFAIR ADVANTAGE Easy and Minimal Cost to get signed! Some recording company get most of the premiums of the artist	CUSTOMER SEGMENTS Independent Filipino Music Artist and band will be primary target client Existing Filipino Artist who are signed, and will apply for new album is another prospect
	EXISTING ALTERNATIVES Social Media can be a platform for indie artist to showcase talent		KEY METRICS Number of Artist to get signed Number of Music Played online Number of Album and Singles purchased	
COST STRUCTURE Musical Equipment that will be use for recording. Subscription and Partnership with Leading Music Store Submission. Operating Expenses of the Office, that includes Salary and Wages		REVENUE STREAMS Unsigned.PH (an start up business) will help the unsigned artist to get signed and upload music in major online stores 5 percent of the sales from iTunes and other online stores will be going to the Record Label. The company will help the artist for promotion such as Website presence, concert promotion and social media management.		

Figure 7. Business Model thru Lean Canvass

Based on the lean canvass, UnsignedPH technically solves the problem of the independent artist, and it is feasible. If implemented and executed, UnsignedPH will be one of the startup organization in the Philippines that will rock the world in terms of music distribution. It is recommended that full

documentation of a business feasibility study should be conducted.

V. CONCLUSION AN RECOMMENDATION

Technology plays an excellent role for both artist and listeners [23]. UnsignedPH provided the need of the unsigned artist in distributing music. Unlike posting in free hosting services like Youtube, Soundcloud and alike, the royalty of artist doesn't directly pay. Based on the result of the study, the portal functionality satisfies the need of the artist in uploading music and requesting a payout. Based on the evaluation of the Unsigned Artist who tested the portal, it shows the all the needs were satisfied. Thus, the portal helped the unsigned artist to distribute music, and this also helps the cultural promotion of the country. It is recommended that the portal should be implemented by documenting another study such as the creation of the feasibility study in order to determine the sustainability of the portal. In the future study, it is recommended to discuss the overall projected financial statements such as the projected Income Statement, balance sheet and cash flows for decision-making purposes. While technical requirements are fulfilled, sustainability business feasibility is needed.

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