

# Monetizing Exposure: Music Blasting Services and Platform Power in the Caribbean

Farley Joel Joseph<sup>†</sup>

*The University of the West Indies at St Augustine, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago*

## Abstract

*This article investigates the emergence of Music Blasting Services (MBS) as entrepreneurial intermediaries in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) music industries, with Julianspromos serving as the primary case study. MBS are independent digital entities that distribute music through paid placements on platforms such as YouTube, curated email lists, and social media campaigns. Drawing on gatekeeping theory and platform capitalism, the study employs a qualitative case study approach, incorporating interviews, media coverage, and platform data to assess how MBS influence promotional power and audience access. Findings have indicated that MBS simultaneously democratize visibility for independent Caribbean artists and introduce new forms of economic gatekeeping based on pay-to-play models. Artists often lose control over audience analytics and monetization as engagement metrics are concentrated on MBS platforms rather than artist-owned channels. This raises critical implications for artist branding, digital equity, and long-term career sustainability. This study contributes to discourse on reintermediation in digital music promotion, and calls for greater attention to platform accountability, regional capacity-building, and strategic alternatives that support equitable access to global music audiences. It also offers insights for music business educators, particularly in the Global South, by identifying emerging literacies and decision-making frameworks needed in digital-era curricula.*

## Keywords

*music blasting services • Caribbean music industry • gatekeeping • platform capitalism • digital promotion • Julianspromos*

## Introduction

The Caribbean music industries have long been shaped by the power of gatekeepers such as disc jockeys (DJ), radio and television programmers, calypso tent managers, and festival promoters. These individuals and institutions have possessed the power to determine which artists were granted access to public stages, airwaves, and audiences (Jackson 2025). Hence, in addition to controlling what music was heard, they shaped cultural narratives across states in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) economic zone (Dowrich-Phillips 2012). Historically, music genres such as calypso, reggae, soca, and dancehall were reliant on national festivals, broadcast infrastructure, and limited recording studios to gain public legitimacy and commercial exposure (Nurse 2005). Artists would often spend years navigating complex and sometimes opaque pathways to recognition, negotiating with multiple layers of gatekeeping in the hopes of becoming a “breakout act” during a Carnival season, or through airplay on regional radio. However, within the last two decades, there has been a dramatic transformation in the way Caribbean music

is produced, circulated, and consumed. The spread of affordable digital recording tools, the rise of social media, and the dominance of global platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and Audiomack have enabled a new generation of independent artists to bypass some of the traditional structures of control (Joseph 2021; Joseph 2023). At the same time, these shifts have also created new forms of intermediation—digital gatekeepers that determine visibility, relevance, and cultural authority in online spaces. Among the most notable of these emergent players in the Caribbean music ecosystem are the Music Blasting Services (MBS).

MBS are digital promotional entities that, in exchange for a fee, upload and distribute an artist’s music across high-traffic YouTube channels, email subscriber lists, and social media feeds. They often curate artwork, prepare metadata, and coordinate release schedules to maximize engagement. These services serve as a bridge between artists and audiences, especially during periods of high music consumption, such

<sup>†</sup> Corresponding author: Farley Joel Joseph

E-mail: fjj210@nyu.edu

Open access. © 2025 Author, published by The Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association. 

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercialNoDerivatives 4.0 License.

as the annual Carnival seasons. In this new model, artists no longer have to wait for a radio DJ to spin their song. Instead, they pay a fee and have their music “blasted” to thousands of local, regional, and international fans.

One of the most prominent Music Blasting Services that is focused on highlighting the musical outputs of the CARICOM region is Julianspromos. Founded by Julian Hackett as a YouTube hobby project in 2011, Julianspromos has since grown into the largest Caribbean-centric music promotion platform globally. With over one million YouTube subscribers, billions of views and a growing brand presence in diasporic cities like New York, Toronto, and London, the platform plays a critical role in shaping which soca and Caribbean music tracks gain traction. Its rise marks a significant moment when music promotion in the region shifted away from national broadcasting monopolies and toward platform-based curation with fee-based access to digital audiences.

This article explores the emergence, structure, and impact of MBS in the CARICOM music ecosystem, using Julianspromos as the central case study. Drawing from gatekeeping theory, platform capitalism, and the theory of reintermediation, the paper situates MBS within broader conversations about power, access, and monetization in digital cultural economies. In doing so, it asks the following research questions:

1. How do Music Blasting Services (MBS) operate as cultural curators and gatekeepers in the digital Caribbean music economy?
2. In what ways do MBS replicate or disrupt traditional industry power structures?
3. How do platform dependencies and monetized access shape the function and cultural influence of MBS?

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a gap in the academic literature on Caribbean digital music promotion, where MBS remain under-theorized, despite their growing influence. Secondly, it contributes to broader debates on visibility and equity in digital platform ecosystems, offering a Global South perspective on how local actors adapt to and innovate within transnational infrastructures. Additionally, by focusing on the soca music genre and its transnational audiences, the paper highlights the complex interplay between regional cultural production and diasporic consumption, which is mediated by actors like Julianspromos.

## Literature Review

### *Traditional and Digital Gatekeeping*

White’s exposition of gatekeeping theory (1950) has long served as a foundational framework in understanding how individuals and institutions control the flow of information

and cultural products. In the context of music, gatekeeping traditionally referred to the role of record label executives, radio DJs, music journalists, and festival curators in determining which artists and songs reached audiences. These actors exercised both aesthetic and commercial judgment, shaping the trajectory of genres and careers through decisions about airplay, festival inclusion, and production investments (Shoemaker and Vos 2009; Thorkildsen and Rykkja 2022).

In the Caribbean, these dynamics were particularly evident in the prominence of calypso tents, national radio stations, and Carnival competitions, which operated as semi-official arbiters of musical legitimacy. Artists such as The Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco), Tarrus Riley, and Machel Montano all emerged from systems where access to major events and media exposure depended on approval by a handful of institutional gatekeepers (Jackson 2025; Williams 2024; Ramdass 2022). However, the advent of the digital age has fragmented these mechanisms. The role of gatekeeping is now distributed across a wider range of actors, including social media influencers, playlist curators, bloggers, and YouTubers (Bonini and Gandini 2019). As Baym (2018) notes, “relational labor” in the digital age often reconfigures the boundaries between promotion, consumption, and fans themselves become part of the gatekeeping process by liking, sharing, and commenting on music content.

In this new environment, MBS like Julianspromos can be seen as digital curators that assume many of the traditional roles once played by record labels or broadcasters. Their ability to shape visibility through formatting, metadata optimization and platform-specific expertise positions them as both facilitators and controllers of access (Baym 2015; Bro and Wallberg 2015). These services raise critical questions about who controls cultural flows in the digital Caribbean.

### *Platform Capitalism, Informational Power and Reintermediation*

While digital technologies initially promised disintermediation and democratized access, recent literature has challenged this optimism by exposing how platform-based ecosystems reinforce new hierarchies (Nordgård 2018; Hesmondhalgh 2022). Srnicek (2017) characterizes this era as one of platform capitalism, where companies such as YouTube, Facebook, and Spotify extract value by centralizing user activity and monetizing data. In addition to hosting content, these platforms structure how content is found, circulated, and rewarded. Platform capitalism is supported by “informational asymmetry”—a situation where stakeholders, such as artists and MBS, have little insight into how visibility is algorithmically determined (Marciano, Nicita, and Ramello 2020). For Julianspromos, which operates primarily on YouTube, this means its curatorial power is always subject to the whims of changing algorithmic logics and copyright enforcement policies.

This reality complicates the narrative of MBS as disruptors, positioning them instead as localized intermediaries within a larger platformized economy. In this way, they are impacted by elements of reintermediation, which ultimately illustrates how digital environments give rise to new types of curators, aggregators, and service providers that mediate access between creators and audiences (Jones 2002; Kjus 2016). Rather than eliminating gatekeepers, the digital age has shifted gatekeeping functions to actors like Julianspromos that specialize in adapting music for specific platforms, targeting specific diasporic audiences, and managing promotional timelines (Bro and Wallberg 2015). The scope of MBS embodies more than technical features. They are strategic in determining what gets seen, when, and by whom. While this situation has lowered some barriers for artists lacking label support, it has also commodified visibility. In this pay-to-play model, which is in itself a type of economic gatekeeping, promotional success hinges on artistic quality, cultural resonance and the artist's ability to afford distribution fees (Abell 2000). Hence, the same economic disparities that plagued traditional music-industry systems now risk being reproduced in digital form.

#### **Artist Experiences and Strategic Trade-offs**

The experiences of Caribbean artists navigating the digital music ecosystem highlight a tension between visibility and sustainability. As Hesmondhalgh and Kaye (2025) observe, many musicians feel increasingly dependent on digital platforms that offer wide exposure, irrespective of the quantum of associated financial return and control that they retain over their content. For artists in the Caribbean, who often operate without the structural support that is available in larger music markets, this dependency is even more precarious. This therefore presents intermediaries like MBS as double-edged swords—essential for access, yet symptomatic of broader systemic inequities.

Doughty (2020) demonstrates the value of MBS to artists during high-visibility periods such as Carnival, highlighting the fact that these services ensure rapid dissemination and targeted reach, particularly in diasporic markets. Some artists attempt to leverage MBS exposure to gain attention from larger platforms or industry actors, but early-stage Caribbean artists have also noted the financial pressure of accessing these services, especially navigating exchange rates for fees, which are quoted in U.S. dollars. For younger or under-resourced artists, this creates a tiered promotional economy where visibility correlates with financial capital rather than purely with talent or innovation (Morgan 2022), while some view it as a necessary expense to maintain relevance during peak cultural moments. In both cases, MBS operate as strategic tools for survival, with both empowering and limiting dimensions.

#### **Regional Parallels: Worl Blast and Jamaican Models**

The model represented by Julianspromos is not the only one of its kind that is focused on the music of the CARICOM region. In Jamaica, platforms such as Worl Blast Music offer similar services for dancehall and reggae artists. Worl Blast charges artists a fee to have their music “blasted” to curated email lists and featured on high-traffic digital platforms. These services enable Jamaican artists to reach international audiences in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada—markets that are critical to sustaining diasporic consumption (Lyew 2020).

What is notable is how these MBS models emerge in contexts where formal industry infrastructure, such as export offices, centralized marketing bodies, and public funding is limited or inconsistent. MBS therefore represent private-sector responses to structural gaps in cultural policy and regional music industry support. This indicates that MBS are not accidental innovations; rather, they respond to real market needs and are shaped by specific genre ecologies, seasonal calendars (e.g., Carnival or Reggae Sumfest), and transnational fanbases. As such, they should be regarded as central actors in contemporary Caribbean music distribution.

#### **Music Blasting in CARICOM Scholarship**

The term “Music Blasting Services” was first theorized by Joseph (2023) in *Streaming forward: Adoption Considerations for the Major Recorded Music Markets in CARICOM*. That article explored digital adoption trends in the major recorded music markets in CARICOM, identifying MBS as innovative yet informal intermediaries that help artists achieve digital visibility in the absence of structured marketing infrastructure. Joseph (2023) argued that while MBS offer a valuable promotional service, they also signify deeper inequalities in the Caribbean music economy, where access to global digital platforms is uneven and often predicated on private actors filling institutional voids.

This current paper builds upon Joseph's foundational work by moving from conceptual framing to empirical analysis. Through a deep case study of Julianspromos, the paper interrogates the operational, cultural, and economic dynamics of MBS. It also expands upon Joseph's theoretical lens by incorporating platform capitalism and gatekeeping theory to better understand how power circulates in digital Caribbean spaces.

## **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine the operations, cultural influence, and structural implications of Music Blasting Services (MBS) in the

Caribbean, with Julianspromos serving as the primary unit of analysis (Creswell and Creswell 2017). The case study method is appropriate for exploring contemporary phenomena in depth within their real-world context (Yin 2018). As Stake (1995) emphasizes, intrinsic case studies are especially useful when the researcher aims to understand the particularities of a specific case—in this instance, how Julianspromos functions as both a cultural curator and digital intermediary in the CARICOM music economy.

Julianspromos was purposely selected because of its outsized influence in the soca and wider Caribbean music scenes (Creswell and Creswell 2017). Its YouTube channel has attracted over 1.3 million subscribers and is host to over 15,000 music videos, which have collectively amassed over 1 billion views. With a decade-long operational history and a reputation as a premier promotional outlet, the platform provides a rich empirical site through which to examine MBS. Julianspromos is widely recognized across CARICOM islands and their diaspora in developed countries, and its branding has become nearly synonymous with “official” soca releases online (Doughty 2020; Charles 2020).

#### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were gathered through three primary sources. The core data source is a recorded and transcribed interview with Julian Hackett, the founder of Julianspromos, referred to here as “Julian.” The interview was conducted using a semi-structured format to allow for thematic depth while maintaining flexibility. Questions focused on the platform’s origin, services, relationships with artists and producers, platform dependencies (e.g., YouTube), pricing models, and role in the soca ecosystem. The study also draws upon five additional interviews with artists and collaborators who have worked with Julianspromos and have knowledge and experience within the MBS ecosystem.

To contextualize the interview data, this study analyzes a range of publicly available media sources, including industry blogs and regional newspaper articles. In addition to this, screenshots were made of the official website of Julianspromos (<https://Julianspromos.com>) so that in-depth study and analysis could be undertaken. A similar approach was utilized to study the service’s YouTube channel, including engagement data, such as subscriber counts, view metrics, and artist features. These artifacts were treated as textual and visual data and were included in the thematic analysis (Creswell and Creswell 2017).

Building on prior research conducted by Joseph (2023), which examined digital adoption considerations within the Caribbean music industries and first identified Music Blasting Services (MBS) as an emergent innovation, the present study extends that foundation by applying an empirical, case-based analysis. The researcher’s embedded position within

the Caribbean music education and policy landscape further informed this inquiry. This professional engagement enabled informal field observations and contextual understanding to shape the research questions and interpretive framework, consistent with qualitative traditions of positional reflexivity (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

#### **Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis was conducted across all data sources. The initial coding framework was derived from the research questions and theoretical concepts in the literature review, particularly gatekeeping theory, platform capitalism, and reintermediation. The key codes are illustrated in Figure 1. Coding was conducted manually in a spreadsheet-based matrix. The data were then grouped into thematic clusters, which informed the structure of the findings section (Maxwell 2005). In the analysis, special attention was apportioned to discursive markers of power, such as how Julian described control over content, influence on audience perception, or negotiation with platforms. Conversely, artist perspectives were analyzed to assess alignment or divergence in experience.

#### **Data Validity and Ethical Considerations**

Two techniques were used to contribute to the validity of the study. Firstly, respondent validation or member-checking was used to gain feedback about the data collected from the informants in a systematic manner. In addition to guarding against personal bias, this helped to ensure that what was understood and recorded was what the informants sought to convey (Bryman 2003). Additionally, the collection and analysis of data from three sources allowed this study to achieve triangulation, thereby reducing the risk of chance associations and systematic biases due to a specific method and allowing for a better assessment of the generality of the developed explanations (Fielding and Fielding 1986). In terms of ethics, informed consent was obtained from all interview participants, including verbal consent for the use of names where appropriate. Given the public profile of Julianspromos, pseudonymity was waived for the primary case; however, discretion was exercised in how sensitive information was presented. All data were stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes (Creswell and Creswell 2017).

## **Findings**

MBS act as intermediaries between artists and audiences by formatting and distributing music content across digital platforms. As Figure 2 illustrates, although they enable access, their gatekeeping role is shaped by financial entry points and platform dependency, especially on services like YouTube. The findings of this study are organized around five



Figure 1. Key codes derived from all data sources.

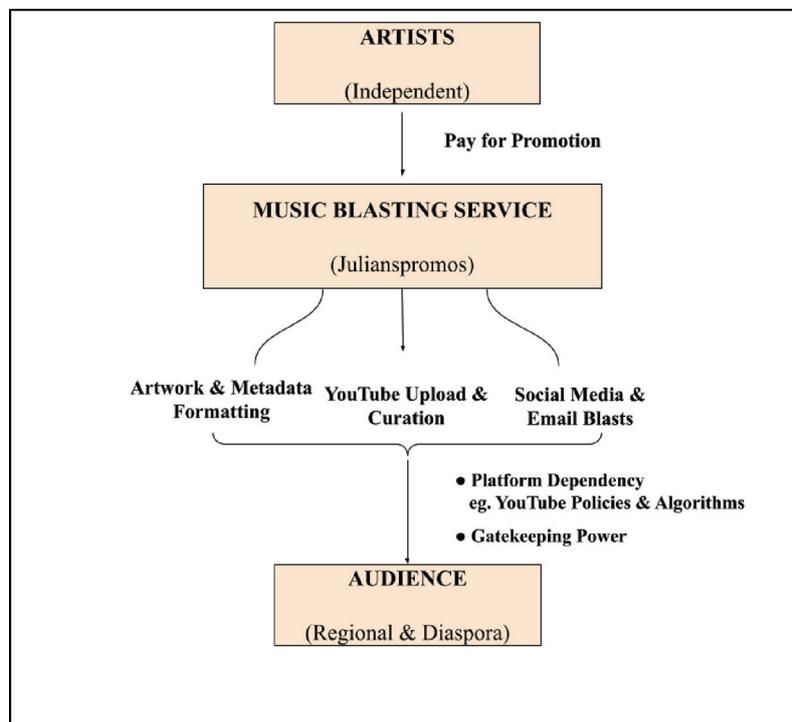


Figure 2. The structure of Music Blasting Services (MBS) in the Caribbean.

interrelated themes that emerged from interviews, platform analysis, and media sources: (1) Entrepreneurial Curation and Monetized Access; (2) Platform Dependency and Risk Management; (3) Strategic Artist Engagement and Diaspora Reach; (4) MBS as Sites of Reintermediation; and (5) Cultural Legitimacy and Regional Brand Identity.

**Entrepreneurial Curation and Monetized Access**

Julianspromos began in 2011 as a passion project of its founder, who intended to archive and share soca music. Over time, as viewership increased and artists began to request uploads, the platform evolved into a professionalized blasting service, offering formatting, metadata tagging, artwork uploads and scheduled releases in exchange for a fee. As Table 1 illustrates, the service offers structured pricing tiers, ranging from US\$99 for a basic upload to US\$250 for multitrack release projects. Julianspromos also offers campaign-level marketing that includes email list promotion, Instagram posts, shorts, and YouTube community posts (Julianspromos 2026). The fee-for-service model represents a shift in the logic of Caribbean music promotion. Instead of relying on relationships with DJs or hoping for organic virality, artists can now buy access to a large audience. According to Julian, “Artists want their song to be heard as soon as it drops, especially leading up to Carnival. We take care of the entire process. They just send the track, and we handle the rest.” This model, while efficient, also raises questions about equity. As Julian noted, not every artist can afford multiple promotional blasts. Some artists consolidate their marketing budgets around one major song per season, choosing MBS over other promotional tactics. Others may be unable to afford access at all. Thus, MBS both democratize curation and reproduce stratification, allowing new entrants to bypass radio—but only if they can afford the entry fee.

**Platform Dependency and Risk Management**

Despite its growing regional influence, Julianspromos remains structurally dependent on global platforms, most notably YouTube. The channel’s significant growth in terms of metrics is impressive, but it also introduces vulnerability. Its dependencies were illustrated in 2019, when the channel faced suspension due to evolving YouTube policies. This

situation placed the entire business at risk, but it was also pivotal in shifting Julianspromos toward rights management partnerships, including an agreement with ONErpm, a global digital distributor. This arrangement allows Julianspromos to avoid copyright strikes and comply with YouTube’s automated systems.

This dependence highlights the paradox of localized power and global precarity. Julianspromos acts as a gatekeeper for soca music, but must constantly align itself with evolving platform regulations. As Marciano et al. (2020) point out, platform capitalism thrives on informational asymmetry. Users have little knowledge of how algorithms work, and value is extracted through data and compliance. Julian summarized, “It’s like building a house on rented land. We’ve created something valuable, but YouTube still owns the roof.” The platform’s survival now depends on digital diplomacy, negotiating rights, avoiding algorithmic penalties and maintaining the visibility needed to justify the fees it charges to artists.

**Strategic Artist Engagement and Diaspora Reach**

Artists interviewed for this study, as well as those quoted in public media, described MBS as indispensable during key seasons. The Carnival cycle, in particular, drives a surge in releases; visibility during this period can determine an artist’s entire performance calendar. Julianspromos is often the first point of release, used by both emerging and established artists. Producers like Kit Israel of AdvoKit Productions rely on Julianspromos to launch soca riddims, such as the *Folklore Riddim*, which included tracks from leading acts. According to Julian, collaborations with producers like Kit are central to the brand, “We work closely with producers to make sure the riddims drop the right way. Timing, tags, visuals, it all has to be cohesive.” This level of coordination supports not just individual songs, but genre continuity, especially for soca, which is organized around riddims, seasonal energy, and communal listening. Artists use Julianspromos to reach tech-savvy, festival-loving members of the Caribbean diaspora who have migrated from countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Jamaica to developed cities such as New York, Toronto, or London. However, the cost of blasting services introduces tactical decision-making for artists. One manager noted, “If we have two songs, we might only push

**Table 1.** 2026 Marketing packages offered by Julianspromos.

Service Package	Features	Price (USD)
Singles Project and DJ Mixes	Upload to YouTube channel of a single, DJ mix, or music video project.	\$99
Riddims and EP Projects	Upload to YouTube channel of a riddim project (compilation) containing 2-4 tracks.	\$160
Singles Project and DJ Mixes	Upload to YouTube channel of a single DJ mix or music video project. Also includes a radio station and DJ blast.	\$199
Riddims and EP Projects	Upload to YouTube channel of a riddim project (compilation) containing 2-4 tracks. Also includes a radio station and DJ blast.	\$250

Source: Julianspromos 2026 Soca Marketing Services, <https://Julianspromos.com/services/soca-music-marketing/>

one with Julianspromos. That's the one we believe has the best chance." In this way, Julianspromos becomes a strategic amplifier, as opposed to a neutral distributor.

### ***MBS as Sites of Reintermediation***

One of the most significant findings is that Music Blasting Services do not eliminate gatekeeping; they just reintroduce it under a new format. Artists now rely on MBS for formatting, audience reach, and brand legitimacy. These services act as mediated pathways between the creator and consumer, filling the void once occupied by labels and radio.

Lyew (2020) described MBS as "the future of music promotion," a sentiment echoed in the interviews conducted for this study. While artists no longer need a label deal to go public, they must still navigate a cost-based ecosystem in which services like Julianspromos decide which songs get pushed through their email list, Instagram stories, and featured YouTube uploads. This shift aligns with Kjus's (2015) idea of digital reintermediation; rather than removing middlemen, digital environments produce new ones with their own rules, pricing structures, and affiliations. The difference is that access is now commodified rather than editorially curated.

### ***Cultural Legitimacy and Regional Brand Identity***

Julianspromos has developed more than just a promotional channel; it has built a cultural brand. Its logo is instantly recognizable; its uploads are seen as official releases. Interviews and media portrayals confirm that Julianspromos has achieved symbolic capital in a manner that signifies reach and audience trust, but also quality and cultural affiliation within the soca music ecosystem (Gd 2025). The platform is positioned as a digital ambassador for soca, highlighting its commitment to pushing Caribbean culture beyond regional borders. Other digital media outlets have covered the channel's milestone of one million YouTube subscribers, framing it as a moment of collective regional pride (Ebuztt 2020; Charles 2020). Artists such as Patrice Roberts, Nailah Blackman, and Voice have consistently released through the platform, reinforcing its centrality in the Caribbean music identity.

Julian himself sees the platform as part of a larger movement, "We're not just uploading songs. We're telling the story of our music. We're building the digital Carnival." This cultural positioning, paired with technical and promotional expertise, has turned Julianspromos into both a business model and cultural project, influencing how Caribbean music is consumed, understood, and remembered.

### ***Non-Monetization and Metrics Displacement***

Interview and website content data revealed that Julianspromos does not monetize the music it uploads to its YouTube channel. Instead, monetization is handled by the artist's own

aggregator or digital distributor. While this model appears to empower artists by allowing them to retain financial control, it also introduces a significant limitation: the engagement metrics—views, likes, shares, and comments—are attributed to Julianspromos, rather than the artist's official channel.

This practice leads to a fragmentation of the artist's digital footprint. Even when a song achieves significant exposure through Julianspromos, the artist's own YouTube presence may show limited activity, creating a misleading impression of their reach or popularity. Some artists have expressed concern that their own analytics on platforms like Spotify for Artists or YouTube Music do not reflect the visibility achieved through third-party uploads to sites like Julianspromos. As one artist noted, "It looks like we not doing numbers, when really we are; but it's all on their channel." In addition to a loss of royalty revenue, this situation also disrupts artists' ability to present consolidated audience data to potential sponsors, labels, or grant agencies. Furthermore, it can potentially affect algorithmic discoverability, playlist inclusion, and data-informed decision-making.

## **Discussion**

This section interprets the findings through three interrelated theoretical lenses: (1) digital gatekeeping and economic stratification; (2) platform capitalism and infrastructural dependence; and (3) reintermediation and regional cultural continuity. It also reflects upon the specific implications for CARICOM music industries and diasporic audience relationships.

### ***Digital Gatekeeping and Economic Stratification***

Gatekeeping theory helps illuminate the structural implications of Music Blasting Services (MBS) like Julianspromos. Traditionally, gatekeepers such as radio DJs and festival programmers filtered content based on taste, relationships, and perceived marketability. In the digital context, these filters remain—however, they are now tethered to economic access rather than editorial discretion. Julianspromos selects songs for blasting based on genre alignment and network ties, as well as whether the artist can afford the service. This introduces a form of economic stratification, where visibility becomes a function of financial capacity. While this model appears to democratize access by allowing any artist to pay for promotion, it subtly reproduces the inequalities of the past by making exposure a commodity. As Shoemaker and Vos (2009) note, gatekeeping is not eliminated in the digital era; it is diffused across new actors. In this case, MBS become entrepreneurial gatekeepers who wield curatorial power. They decide what to amplify, when to amplify it, and how to position it in relation to the rest of the digital soundscape.

**Platform Capitalism and Algorithmic Dependence**

The concept of platform capitalism (Srniczek 2017) is especially relevant when considering the fragility of MBS within the broader digital infrastructure. Julianspromos’ near-deletion by YouTube in 2019 underscores how even dominant regional players remain vulnerable to opaque policies and algorithmic enforcement. While MBS operate as independent businesses, they are embedded within and beholden to transnational platforms like YouTube, which extract data and shape visibility through algorithms that are not open to public scrutiny.

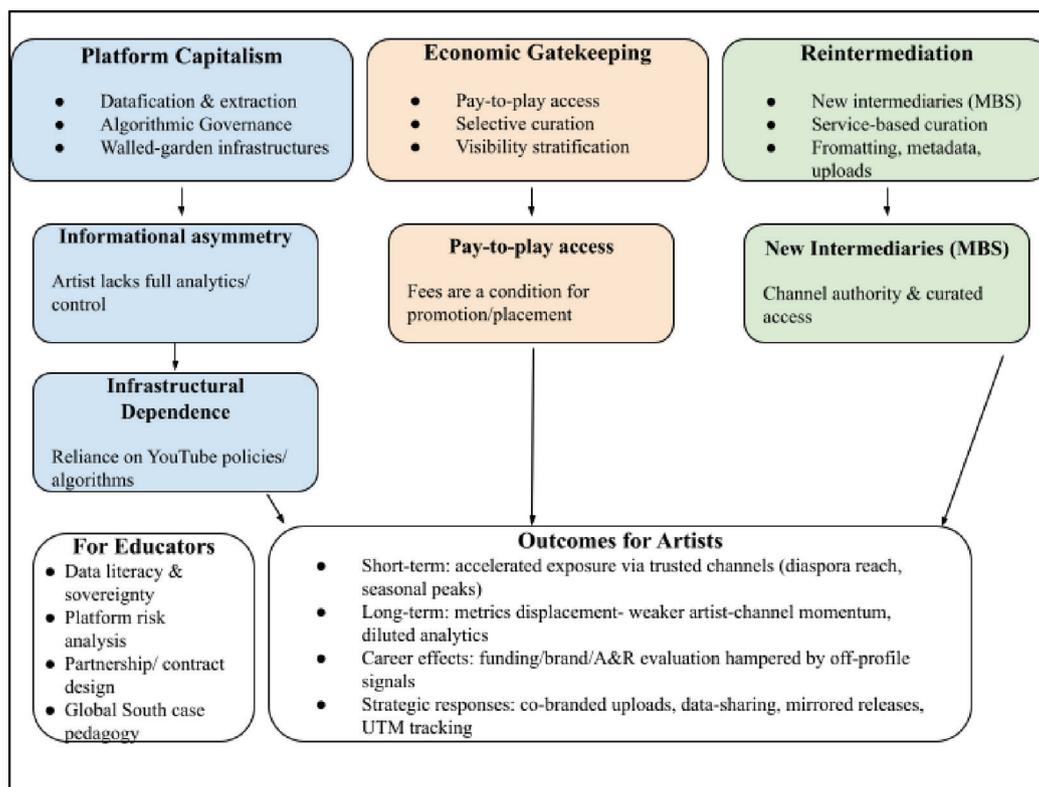
Marciano et al. (2020) argue that platform capitalism centralizes power through “informational asymmetries”; platforms know more about user behavior than users know about platforms. Julian’s challenges with YouTube illustrate how regional cultural entrepreneurs can be disempowered within global systems that do not fully recognize the nuances of regional content creation, remix culture, or seasonal music cycles, such as those linked to the Caribbean festivals like Carnival. This dependency extends beyond technical systems. Julianspromos is successful because YouTube is popular among Caribbean audiences. If audiences migrate to TikTok, Audiomack, or future platforms, Julianspromos must adapt or risk obsolescence. Thus, the platform’s success is

contingent on its internal strategy, as well as external shifts in digital attention economies.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the operational model of JulianPromos (and, by extension, other Music Blasting Services) exists at the intersection of three interrelated dynamics: platform capitalism, economic gatekeeping, and reintermediation. Platform capitalism structures the technological and informational dependencies that shape visibility and monetization; economic gatekeeping manifests through pay-to-play access and selective promotion; and reintermediation describes how new intermediaries such as JulianPromos reassert curatorial power within digital ecosystems. Together these mechanisms explain why MBS occupy a dual position, both empowering artists with audience access and simultaneously reproducing structural dependencies within YouTube’s algorithmic architecture.

**Reintermediation and Strategic Visibility**

While early digital utopianism suggested that artists could now go “direct to fan,” this study confirms that reintermediation in the form of the rise of new middlemen has replaced disintermediation. As Jones (2002) and Kjus (2015) observe, digital intermediaries now control how



**Figure 3.** Integration of platform capitalism, economic gatekeeping, and reintermediation in the Music Blasting Service (MBS) model. Arrows indicate how informational asymmetry, infrastructural dependence, pay-to-play access, and new intermediaries interact to shape artist outcomes and educational insights.

artists are discovered, validated, and circulated. In the CARICOM context, MBS are not merely distributors; they are strategic partners who influence timing, aesthetics, and genre boundaries.

Julianspromos facilitates what could be called strategic visibility. This is the ability to be seen at the right time, in the right context, by the right audience. This is especially valuable with seasonal genres like soca, where the success of a release can hinge on a narrow window of time, such as the length of Carnival. Artists understand this and treat MBS like Julianspromos as critical infrastructure in their annual release calendar. Yet, this strategy is resource intensive, since only artists with sufficient capital can consistently engage these services. As such, reintermediation does not eliminate exclusion; it instead reshapes the cost of inclusion. In this model, being visible becomes both a marketing expense and a validation mechanism. A Julianspromos upload signals that an artist has a new track and that they are worth paying attention to.

#### **Data Ownership, Metrics, and Strategic Implications**

One of the most revealing insights from the Julianspromos case study is that music uploaded to the platform is not monetized by Julianspromos, and the engagement metrics (e.g., views, likes, comments) are not directly attributed to the artist's own YouTube or DSP (Digital Service Provider) accounts. This arrangement raises critical concerns about data ownership and the long-term digital visibility of artists who rely on MBS.

From a platform-capitalism perspective (Srnicek 2017; Marciano et al. 2020), data is a primary source of value. When artists forfeit control over their analytics by using MBS platforms, they lose insight into audience demographics, retention rates, geographies, and algorithmic performance

data that could otherwise guide touring strategies, fan engagement, or DSP playlist pitching. This displacement of metadata and engagement metrics weakens artists' capacity to negotiate future deals, secure funding, or demonstrate growth over time.

To clarify these flows of revenue, data, and algorithmic momentum, Table 2 summarizes three dominant upload strategies available to artists. Each approach offers trade-offs between reach, autonomy, and long-term digital capital.

Adoption of MBS can also be viewed as reinforcing reintermediation (Jones 2002; Kjus 2015). Even as artists move beyond labels and radio DJs, they remain tethered to new forms of gatekeeping that determine who hears the music, as well as those that control the audience data tied to that listening. Moreover, YouTube's algorithm favors content hosted on artist-owned channels that show high watch-time, regular engagement, and consistent branding. By diverting views to third-party channels like Julianspromos, artists may be sacrificing algorithmic momentum, and this can undermine long-term channel development, subscriber growth, and monetization potential (Patel 2025).

From a career strategy standpoint, this creates a paradox. Artists gain short-term exposure via MBS but risk long-term digital invisibility, especially when label A&Rs, promoters, or sync agents search for performance metrics on official profiles. This also affects public-facing tools like Chartmetric, Viberate, Spotify for Artists, or YouTube Analytics, which rely on consolidated data. Figure 4 visualizes the transactional and informational relationships among the artist, aggregator, MBS channel (YouTube), and audience. The diagram highlights how artists pay both the aggregator and the MBS, while royalties return only through the aggregator, with limited data visibility from YouTube. In a Global South context, where independent artists may lack access to data analytics teams

**Table 2.** Upload strategy matrix comparing control of engagement signals, monetization, and brand/algorithmic effects.

	Strategy		
	Artist-owned upload	MBS-owned upload	Co-branded / mirrored
Where the video lives	Artist channel	MBS channel (e.g., Julianpromos)	Both artist & MBS channels
Who gets the engagement views	Artist	MBS channel (not the artist)	Split across channels (cross-link with end screens/pins)
Who gets Ad Revenue	Artist (via aggregator)	Typically, the artist (if MBS does not monetize)	Artist (via aggregator on both)
Algorithmic momentum accrues to	Artist channel (authority, watch-time)	MBS channel (not artist)	Both (if coordinated metadata/timing)
Brand equity accrues to	Artist	Mixed (MBS "official release branding" & artist web/social handles)	Both
Pros	Full data sovereignty; long-term channel growth; cleaner reporting for grants/brands	Immediate reach to niche/diaspora; seasonal amplification (Carnival)	Combines reach with retained analytics; better evidence for funding/brands
Risks	May lack initial reach without audience; requires consistent upload cadence	Metrics displacement; diluted artist analytics; weaker sponsor/A&R signals on artist profile	Requires coordination; risk of view cannibalization if poorly executed

or formal label infrastructure, this data loss can perpetuate digital underdevelopment. It becomes critical, therefore, for artists and their teams to negotiate promotional terms that include co-branded uploads, data-sharing agreements, or mirrored releases across both artist and MBS channels.

**Regional Cultural Continuity and Diasporic Mediation**

One of the unique contributions of MBS like Julianspromos is their role in sustaining regional cultural forms. In the absence of robust music export policies or coordinated digital strategy across CARICOM states, MBS have filled a critical gap. They provide infrastructure for content curation, metadata standardization, diaspora targeting, and cultural legitimacy. Julianspromos functions as a cultural anchor, ensuring that soca remains visible in digital economies dominated by international genres. It helps organize riddims, promote new subgenres and amplify collaborations between islands. Its relationship with producers like Kit Israel exemplifies this ecosystem logic, in which MBS, artists, and producers co-create moments of cultural continuity. Moreover, MBS serve as a bridge between homeland and diaspora. Their YouTube uploads, Instagram posts, and email blasts are consumed in the Caribbean islands and across Caribbean enclaves in

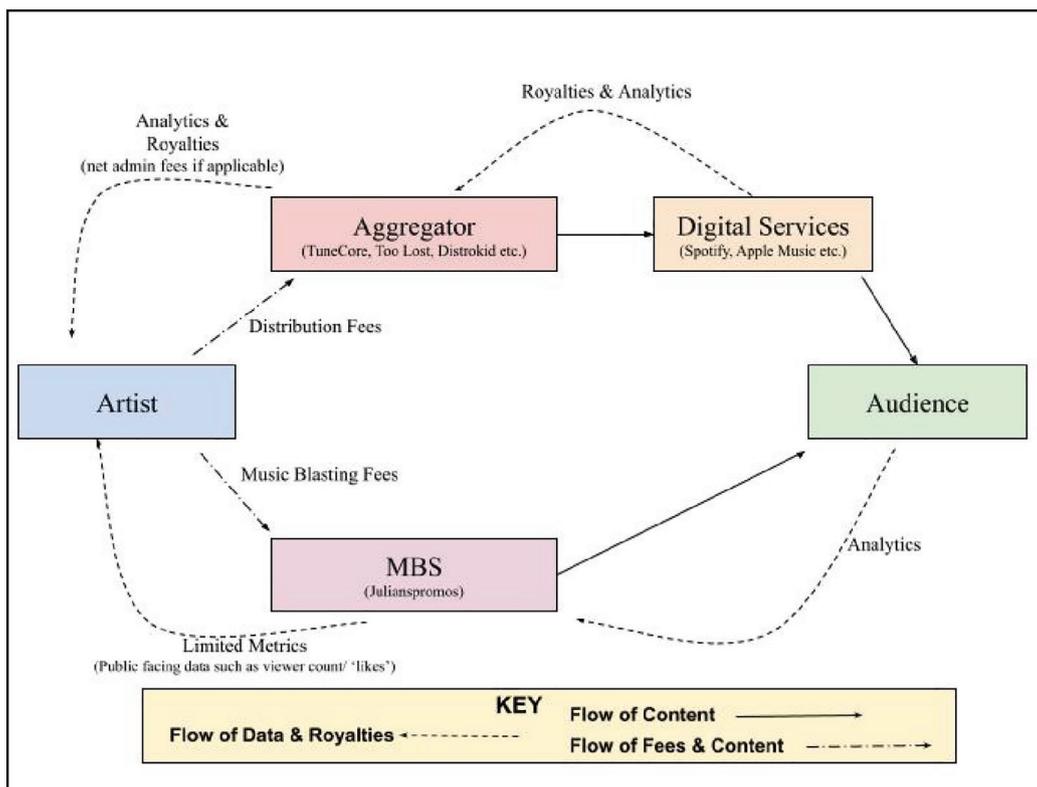
Brooklyn, Toronto, London, and Miami. In doing so, they help reproduce Caribbean identity across digital borders, offering diasporic listeners a sense of presence, participation, and sonic belonging.

**A CARICOM-Specific Model of Music Blasting**

Julianspromos and similar platforms represent an emerging CARICOM-specific adaptation of digital music marketing. They blend platform logic with local genre knowledge, regional branding, and diasporic outreach. Their operation cannot be fully understood through North American or European models of playlist pitching or influencer marketing. Instead, they represent a hybrid cultural economy, where entrepreneurial innovation meets regional cultural advocacy.

This model raises important questions for policy makers, creative industry practitioners, and researchers:

- Should MBS be recognized as cultural infrastructure eligible for support or regulation?
- How might public investment in regional music promotion support more equitable access to MBS services?
- Can Caribbean states coordinate on digital export strategies that integrate MBS into national cultural diplomacy?



**Figure 4.** Data flow and revenue map in a Music Blasting Service (MBS) release, showing artist payments to intermediaries, royalties returning via aggregators, and data asymmetries concentrated on the MBS Channel (YouTube).

These questions point to the broader significance of MBS—not just as businesses, but as cultural institutions shaping the digital future of Caribbean music.

## Conclusion

Music Blasting Services (MBS) like Julianspromos represent a distinct form of entrepreneurial adaptation within the CARICOM music ecosystem. Operating at the intersection of cultural preservation and digital commerce, MBS offer an essential visibility function for Caribbean artists navigating platform-dominated environments with limited institutional support. By curating and distributing music across diasporic and regional networks, MBS provide alternative pathways for exposure and audience engagement. However, this comes with trade-offs, including pay-based access to visibility, loss of direct audience analytics, and continued reliance on global platforms like YouTube. The implications extend beyond the Caribbean to broader contexts across the Global South, where independent artists often operate in fragmented or under-resourced creative economies. The emergence of MBS reflects a regional response to platform capitalism, but also exposes structural challenges in digital sovereignty and equitable participation.

### *Implications for Music Industry Educators*

The case of Julianspromos and the broader Music Blasting Service (MBS) model provides rich pedagogical material for educators in music business, digital media, and creative entrepreneurship, especially those working in or teaching about Global South contexts. Firstly, it demonstrates the value of examining non-developed countries' models of digital

intermediation, which challenge dominant assumptions about how music promotion, visibility, and monetization function in platform economies. Educators can use the case of MBS to invite critical analysis of how these dynamics unfold in underrepresented regions, prompting comparative insights into students' own cultural environments.

Secondly, the study highlights the strategic and structural complexities that artists face when navigating platform-based promotion. Key issues such as data displacement, where artists lose direct access to engagement metrics and monetization opportunities, as well as the algorithmic trade-offs of third-party promotion, are increasingly central to sustainable career planning. As such, music business curricula must evolve to address digital sovereignty, data literacy and analytics-informed decision-making. This includes teaching students how to assess platform risk, negotiate promotional partnerships, and design hybrid release strategies that protect long-term visibility.

Moreover, the Julianspromos case foregrounds the importance of entrepreneurial innovation in regions where formal music infrastructure or cultural policy support may be lacking. Educators can leverage this case to explore topics such as diasporic market strategies, digital branding in small states, and the informal but powerful role of community-based curators in shaping genre sustainability. Classroom activities, such as platform audits, stakeholder mapping, or contract simulations, can help students interrogate the tensions between exposure, control, and value creation in the digital music economy.

Ultimately, this case invites a rethinking of curriculum design toward more globally inclusive, critically grounded, and practice-oriented approaches. It underscores the need for music industry education to account for localized innovation,

**Table 3.** Pedagogical applications of the Music Blasting Service (MBS) model in music industry education.

Pedagogy Focus Area	Example Teaching Application	Intended Learning Outcome
Digital Intermediation & Platform Capitalism	Analyze the Julianspromos case to map out how YouTube algorithms, data policies, and monetization systems shape artist visibility.	Students understand platform dependency and informational asymmetry in digital ecosystems.
Entrepreneurial Strategy in the Global South	Develop a mock business plan for a regional Music Blasting Service, considering cultural, financial, and policy constraints.	Students gain insight into how local innovation can address gaps in cultural infrastructure.
Gatekeeping and Access Models	Compare traditional radio gatekeeping with digital "pay-to-play" promotion models using case data from JulianPromos and Worl Blast Music.	Students evaluate how gatekeeping shifts from institutions to transactional systems in digital promotion.
Data Literacy and Metrics Displacement	Conduct a workshop simulating artist release metrics on YouTube, with comparisons to aggregator dashboards to demonstrate how visibility data is fragmented.	Students develop critical data-literacy skills to interpret analytics across multiple platforms.
Cultural Policy and Creative Ecosystems	Debate how Caribbean governments could support fair digital exposure through grants or national promotion schemes.	Students connect creative entrepreneurship with policy design for sustainable industry development.
Curriculum and Global South Inclusion	Design a short module comparing MBS with influencer-driven marketing in African or Pacific contexts.	Students appreciate diverse models of digital creativity and transnational market logic.

digital intermediation, and platform dependence—not as exceptions to a global norm, but as central features of contemporary music entrepreneurship. To translate these insights into practical classroom use, Table 3 summarizes key learning areas, example activities, and intended outcomes that can guide curriculum design in music business and creative entrepreneurship programs.

### Limitations

The single case-study method, while providing rich detail, presents certain limitations in terms of generalizability. These findings are not intended to be statistically representative of all MBS in the Caribbean, but are instead meant to illuminate patterns, tensions, and dynamics that can inform broader theorizing. Additionally, while Julianspromos is a highly influential actor, a more complete picture of the MBS ecosystem could be attained through comparative case studies with other platforms such as Worl Blast Music. The absence (as yet) of interview data from artists who opted not to use MBS also limits the range of perspectives presented here. However, these gaps should be noted as areas for future research rather than as flaws in the current study.

### Future Studies

This article has used Julianspromos as a central case to explore the dynamics of gatekeeping and platformization as it relates to a unique aspect of digitalization in the Caribbean music industries. However, further research is needed, and might explore:

- Comparative cases of a wider number of MBS in various CARICOM states (e.g., Jamaica, Barbados, St. Lucia).
- The user experiences of artists who cannot afford blasting services.
- Policy mechanisms to support equitable music promotion in small states.
- The impact of MBS on gender representation and genre diversity.

As CARICOM countries continue to embrace digital transformation, understanding the role of MBS is crucial—for charting pathways to global visibility, as well as for ensuring that those pathways remain inclusive, culturally grounded, and regionally led. In a fragmented and hyper-competitive global music industry, platforms like Julianspromos demonstrate that Caribbean innovation is strategically generative, remixing global tools to amplify local sounds.

### References

- Abell, Douglas. 2000. "Pay for Play: An Old Tactic in a New Environment." *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment & Technology Law* 2, no. 1: 52.
- Baym, Nancy K. 2015. "Connect With Your Audience! The Relational Labor of Connection." *The Communication Review* 18, no. 1: 14-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2015.996401>.
- . 2018. *Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, Audiences, and the Intimate Work of Connection*. New York: NYU Press.
- Bonini, Tiziano, and Alessandro Gandini. 2019. "First Week Is Editorial, Second Week Is Algorithmic": Platform Gatekeepers and the Platformization of Music Curation." *Social Media + Society* 5, no. 4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119880006>.
- Bro, Peter, and Filip Wallberg. 2015. "Gatekeeping in a Digital Era." *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 1: 92-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.928468>.
- Bryman, Alan. 2003. *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203410028>.
- Charles, Joseph. 2020. "Julians Promos Gains One Million YouTube Subscribers." *Soca News*, November 5, 2020. <https://socanews.com/news/julians-promos-gains-one-million-youtube-subscribers/>.
- Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. 2017. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Doughty, Melissa. 2020. "Julianspromos Takes Soca to the World." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*, November 21, 2020. <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/11/21/julianspromos-takes-soca-to-the-world/>.
- Dowrich-Phillips, Laura. 2012. "Artists Call for 50% Local Content." *Trinidad Guardian Newspaper*, October 25, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.433367.ffa423038e>.
- Ebuztt. 2020. "Julian's Promos Hits One Million YouTube Subscribers." *Ebuztt*, October 21, 2020. <https://ebuztt.com/julians-promos-hits-one-million-youtube-subscribers/>.
- Fielding, Nigel G., and Jane L. Fielding. 1986. *Linking Data*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984775>.
- Gd, Lior. 2025. "The Dynamics of Symbolic Capital: Understanding and Cultivating Prestige." *Medium*, March 5, 2025. <https://liorgd.medium.com/the-dynamics-of-symbolic-capital-understanding-and-cultivating-prestige-4f1f8f843b0b>.
- Hesmondhalgh, David. 2022. *The Cultural Industries*. Sage.
- Hesmondhalgh, David, and D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye. 2025. "What Do Musicians Think of Digital Platforms?" *Popular Music* 2025, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302500025X>.
- Jackson, Kevin. 2025. "LA Benjamin Calls for an End to the Practice of Gate-Keeping." *Jamaica Observer*, June 3, 2025. <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/2025/06/03/la-benjamin-calls-end-practice-gate-keeping/>.
- Jones, Steve. 2002. "Music That Moves: Popular Music, Distribution and Network Technologies." *Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2: 213-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380110107562>.

- Joseph, Farley J. 2021. "Disruptive Potential: COVID-19 and Emerging Live Music Models in Trinidad and Tobago." *Monogram: Ibero-American Journal of Culture and Thought*, no. 9: 307-32. <https://doi.org/10.36008/monograma.2021.09.2221>.
- . 2023. "Streaming Forward: Adoption Considerations for the Major Recorded Music Markets in CARICOM." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 30, no. 3: 1236-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565231203983>.
- . 2023. "Sustaining Innovation: Digital Live Music Models in a Post-COVID-19 Trinidad and Tobago." *International Journal of Music Business Research* 12, no. 1: 25-41. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ijmbr-2023-0005>.
- Kjus, Yngvar. 2016. "Reclaiming the Music: The Power of Local and Physical Music Distribution in the Age of Global Online Services." *New Media & Society* 18, no. 9: 2116-32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815580414>.
- Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE.
- Lyew, Stephanie. 2020. "Blasting Music into the Future." *Jamaica Gleaner*, February 21, 2020. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/entertainment/20200221/blast-music-future>.
- Marciano, Alain, Antonio Nicita, and Giovanni Battista Ramello. 2020. "Big Data and Big Techs: Understanding the Value of Information in Platform Capitalism." *European Journal of Law and Economics* 50, no. 3: 345-58. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10657-020-09675-1>.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. SAGE.
- Morgan, Benjamin A. 2022. "Optimisation of Musical Distribution in Streaming Services: Third-Party Playlist Promotion and Algorithmic Logics of Distribution," in *Rethinking the Music Business: Music Contexts, Rights, Data and COVID-19*, edited by Guy Morrow, Daniel Norgard, and Peter Tschmuck. Springer, 151-69. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09532-0\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09532-0_9).
- Nordgård, Daniel. 2018. *The Music Business and Digital Impacts: Innovations and Disruptions in the Music Industries*. Springer Nature Switzerland. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91887-7>.
- Nurse, Keith. 2005. "The Caribbean Music Industry: Case Studies of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago," in *The Caribbean Economy: A Reader*, edited by Dennis Pantin. Ian Randle Publishers, 637-49.
- Patel, Neil. 2025. "How the YouTube Algorithm Works (Data-Backed Answer)." *Neil Patel by NP Digital*, July 17, 2025. <https://neilpatel.com/blog/youtube-algorithm-organic-reach/>.
- Ramdass, Rickie. 2022. "All-Female Tent Claims Discrimination by Gypsy." *Trinidad Express Newspapers*. February 20, 2022. [https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/all-female-tent-claims-discrimination-by-gypsy/article\\_f85c7e18-91f3-11ec-8c81-6fa6e57a206b.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/all-female-tent-claims-discrimination-by-gypsy/article_f85c7e18-91f3-11ec-8c81-6fa6e57a206b.html).
- Shoemaker, Pamela J., and Timothy Vos. 2009. *Gatekeeping Theory*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203931653>.
- Srnicek, Nick. 2017. *Platform Capitalism*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Stake, Robert E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Thorkildsen, Kjersti Livesdottir, and Anders Rykkja. 2022. "Showcase Festivals: Gatekeepers and Bridge Builders in the Music Industries." *International Journal of Music Business Research* 11, no. 2: 47-58. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ijmbr-2022-0006>.
- White, David Manning. 1950. "The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News." *The Journalism Quarterly* 27, no. 4: 383-90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769905002700403>.
- Williams, Sheldon. 2024. "Mr. Vegas On the Multiple Sides of Gatekeeping in Dancehall." *DancehallMag*, February 25, 2024. <https://www.dancehallmag.com/2024/02/25/news/mr-vegas-on-the-multiple-sides-of-gatekeeping-in-dancehall.html>.
- Yin, Robert K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.