

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ARTISTS' PERCEPTIONS AND
LABEL REPRESENTATIVES'
PERSPECTIVES OF THE 360° DEAL
IN THE MALAYSIAN MUSIC
INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF
WARNER MUSIC MALAYSIA AND
ROCKETFUEL ENTERTAINMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian music industry is seeking ways to earn and sustain profitability, and one of the strategies include signing artists with the 360° deal. Artists that are signed with this deal agree to give a certain amount of percentage split for each of their revenues earned and give total rights for the record label to control and direct their music, image and self-branding. With the accessibility of the internet and the availability of other types of deals offered by independent labels, a 360° deal may not be the first choice for artists in meeting their career needs. While this model is increasingly adopted in Malaysia, it remains a subject of debate among industry stakeholders. This study explores the perceptions of both artists and label representatives toward the 360° deal in the Malaysian music industry, with a particular focus on two prominent entities: Warner Music Malaysia and Rocketfuel Entertainment. Through semi-structured interviews, this research examines how each group perceives the benefits, limitations, and implications of the agreement. Thematic analysis reveals differing viewpoints based on roles, experience, and expectations. Artists often highlight concerns about control, transparency, and creative autonomy, whereas label representatives emphasize investment, financial recoupment and artist development. This study helps ongoing discussions about fair relationships between artists and record labels, and provides a better understanding of how the 360° deal is influencing the future of the Malaysian music industry.

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Last but not least, I dedicate this thesis to every aspiring artist and music practitioner in Malaysia- may this research shed light on your path and contribute in some way to a more equitable and transparent music industry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Research Objectives	6
1.4 Research Questions	
1.5 Significance of Study	7
1.6 Limitation of Study	8
 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	 9
2.1 The Overview of the Recording Industry	
2.2 The Roles of Record Labels	11
2.3 The Malaysian Music Industry	13
2.4 360° Deal	15
2.4.1 Different Terms with Different Artists	18
2.5 Technological Innovation in Music Production	22

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The music industry structure consists of a team of industry professionals that work together in managing a profitable business of music. One of the most powerful key players in the music industry is the music record labels. Record labels act as the backbone that support and help towards building and shaping the career of their musicians and artists. They consist of a team ranging from different expertise such as marketing team, creative team, production team, A&Rs and so on. Altogether they provide support in 1) discovering and nurturing the artists, 2) producing the work of artists, and 3) promoting the artists (IFPI, 2016). With all these work, record labels invest great amounts all in refining and developing an artist, thus is crucial for them to sustain their profitability in this challenging era.

With the advent of technology, music production, distribution and promotion are possible to be done in many ways by anyone, and anywhere. Record labels are severely impacted due to digitalization and they began to search for new business opportunities which were reflected in the contract offered to the artists (Kjus, 2022). In adapting with the technological shift, a 360° deal has been introduced in the music industry where record labels take percentage cuts for other revenue streams as well. A 360° deal, or also called as a ‘multi-rights deal’ is a legal relationship between the label and the artists where it revolves around almost every aspect, that covers image rights, touring, merchandising, music publishing, product endorsements and so on (Palmeiro, 2013). The 360° deal offers the highest exploitation rate compared to the other existing deals in the music industry. This deal is becoming the common deal among major record labels in Malaysia within the last few years especially with newer acts.