



Listen and learn: Shazam and the culture of music sharing

SCOTT HOLECHEK, SENIOR DIRECTOR, RESEARCH, SHAZAM 30 MAR 2017

Music is a powerful emotional draw right around the world, but how people listen to it and what they do afterward can change dramatically from market to market.

Culture comes in different forms and music culture is no exception. The way people access or learn about music, listen to their favourite artists, or hear about new stars, changes from country to country, and even from region to region.

At Shazam, we help people identify the sounds around them just by listening with their phone. One hundred and twenty million people around the world use the Shazam app every month, capturing nearly 600 million searches for songs.

Using this global data, we've identified several distinct cultural behaviours which influence how music is discovered, identified and enjoyed. These elements have implications for marketers and can help inform their creative and media approach.



Driving discovery on a local level

Location obviously impacts the choices that consumers make. Where people are and what they are doing influences the music that attracts them.

This changes globally. While the same artist (Major Lazer, say) might be trending in both Rio and London in any given week, the most played songs in these places can be vastly different. James Bay's latest single might be top of the charts in Rio, but Grace Featuring G-Eazy could be blasting out of speakers all over London.

Music choices vary widely on a hyperlocal level too. Not so long ago, for example, we spotted Zedd's Beautiful Now was trending in Berkeley, California. But in Oakland, just a few miles away, La Poderosa Banda San Juan's Disculpa Corazón was at the top of everyone's playlist.

Music tastes are tribal, and often influenced by a town or district's local culture or 'scene'

This is because music tastes are tribal, and often influenced by a town or district's local culture or 'scene'. As our user data reveals, night spots like Parque De Aqua Branca in Sao Paulo, or The Barclays Sector in Brooklyn, New York, are hugely influential in shaping music tastes in those areas.

Shazams for emerging artists often spike in clubs first and then spread across surrounding areas — and further — soon after. This underlines the cultural influence that venues like this have, and just how important they are in helping bands catch on with different communities before going mainstream.

We spotted Shazam users were searching for British singer-songwriter Rag 'n' Bone Man as early as June 2016, for instance, weeks before his first single release.

With no airplay, the most obvious route to this discovery would have been through friends or at clubs. Searches grew rapidly as the artist became well known, hitting peak exposure at the Brit Awards in early 2017.

Tribal data also lets us identify demographics and group people based on their full musical diet of past Shazams. We know most Shazams for Rag 'n' Bone Man were by people aged 18-34, for example.

We can identify what other artists they like, too. To use another example, fans who Shazam The Weeknd, say, often go on to listen to tracks by Wiz Kalifa, Sam Smith, Ed Sheeran, and Mark Ronson.



Tech insights

What consumers do after identifying a song reveals a lot about how people use tech in that country and their broader digital habits. By analysing millions of Shazams across global markets, we have identified a number of key differences.

In Germany, for example, 63% will preview the song before doing anything else. The numbers are similar in Japan. In Australia, consumers are more likely to buy or stream the track in the full as soon as identifying it. Around 26% go on to reward the artist by listening more.

We can explain these differences by referring back to Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions study. According to Hofstede's research, Germany and Japan both score highly for Uncertainty Avoidance.

26% of people in Australia buy a track after Shazaming

In a marketing sense, they are more likely to be 'try before you buy' consumers. Australia, on the other hand, scores highly for Indulgence and low for Long Term Orientation. People here indulge themselves and are happy to make spontaneous decisions.

In Saudi Arabia, behaviour is different again. Two-thirds of Shazam users here regularly watch the YouTube video as opposed to using a music streaming service.

Again, this possibly reflects the country's high Uncertainty Avoidance score — people want to know everything about what they're looking for. We've seen the same Shazam behaviour in Israel (61%) and Turkey (57%) — countries that score similarly for this cultural dimension.

13% of people in India share songs with friends after Shazaming

Other interesting highlights from our research include the fact that 14% of Egypt's Shazamers are likely to read the lyrics.

Elsewhere, 13% of India's music lovers will share the song with friends, colleagues, and family. This is perhaps reflective of its score for Individualism — people here think about their family as well as themselves.



Listening and learning

For global advertisers, understanding how consumer motivations change from market to market is crucial to driving engagement with their brands and their communications. That's where music can help.

Music tells us far more than just which bands consumers like; it reveals a great deal about their emotional states too. These kinds of insights can help marketers well beyond those in the music and entertainment categories.

By understanding the *music culture* of a country (and where tracks are listened to by whom), brands can identify how to create a soundtrack that appeals to broad target audiences, for example.

By understanding how *to track* local rising stars, brands can ensure they are on the money when selecting the latest trending sounds for commercials and content aimed at hyper-local audiences.

And by understanding the *tech culture* of a country (and how consumers respond to content), brands can identify the best ways to share their messages, in terms of content formats and paid channel support.

Get insights in your inbox

Interested in the future of media and marketing?

Get actionable advice, insights and opinion from MediaCom experts every month

[Sign me up](#)

CULTURE