

Study: Artistic acknowledgment depends on a signature style or the pace of outputs

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Recognition for musicians is more likely to be achieved if artists focus on a specific style or diverse styles released at a faster pace.

A new study explores ways in which musicians can achieve elite status during their career, with a model that can be used across business and the artistic spectrum.

Professor Simone Ferriani, co-author of the study, believes there are two ways which can help understand the pathways that musicians can achieve recognition—using a signature style and the pace at which outputs are released.

The research, which uses a social-sequence analytic approach—a technique originally developed in the field of biology for DNA sequencing—is based on the sound recordings of almost 1,000 Berlin based electronic music artists and close to 7,000 recordings.

The study explains that adopting a unique style can help artists be recognized by the singularity of the content, which brings consistency and stability to the genre. This allows audiences to build an expectation about the artist and their outputs, building a specialist identity. This works in the same way as those that specialize are sought after by investors and how clients appreciate focused lawyers.

For artists with a more eclectic style which spans different musical categories, the researchers found that building an identity can be achieved by producing a fast-paced volume of outputs with varied styles over a longer period. While this may confuse an audience at first, it will become recognized as synonymous with the [artist](#) over time. For example, Radiohead debuted as a [rock band](#) before experimenting with genres which combine rock, electronic music, classical instruments, and uneven metrics—and received unanimous consecration by critics, peers, and fans.

Professor Simone Ferriani, Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Business School (formerly Cass) and at the University of Bologna,

carried out the study with Professor Gino Cattani of the NYU Stern School of Business, in collaboration with Dr. Giovanni Formilan of the University of Edinburgh Business School. He believes that the research is important for understanding the best pathways to career attainment.

"Recognizing that a creative identity emerges for artists over time—whether it be through a focused [style](#) or more diverse creative outputs—should help professionals to be more deliberate in their approach to achieving consecration over a career trajectory.

"Specialism and eclecticism can both lead to exceptional career outcomes as long as they are properly paced. Our findings indicate that while successful specialism benefits from slow-paced productivity, eclectic artists achieve the highest recognition when they create a high volume of varied outputs over time. Style and rhythm of production work in tandem to differentiate those who are worthy of the highest honors from those who are not."

"Trajectories of Consecration: Signature Style and the Pace of Category Spanning," by Professor Simone Ferriani, Professor Gino Cattani and Dr. Giovanni Formilan, will be published in *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*.

More information: Giovanni Formilan et al, Trajectories of Consecration: Signature Style and the Pace of Category Spanning. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, [DOI: 10.1108/S0733-558X20210000075005](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20210000075005)

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