



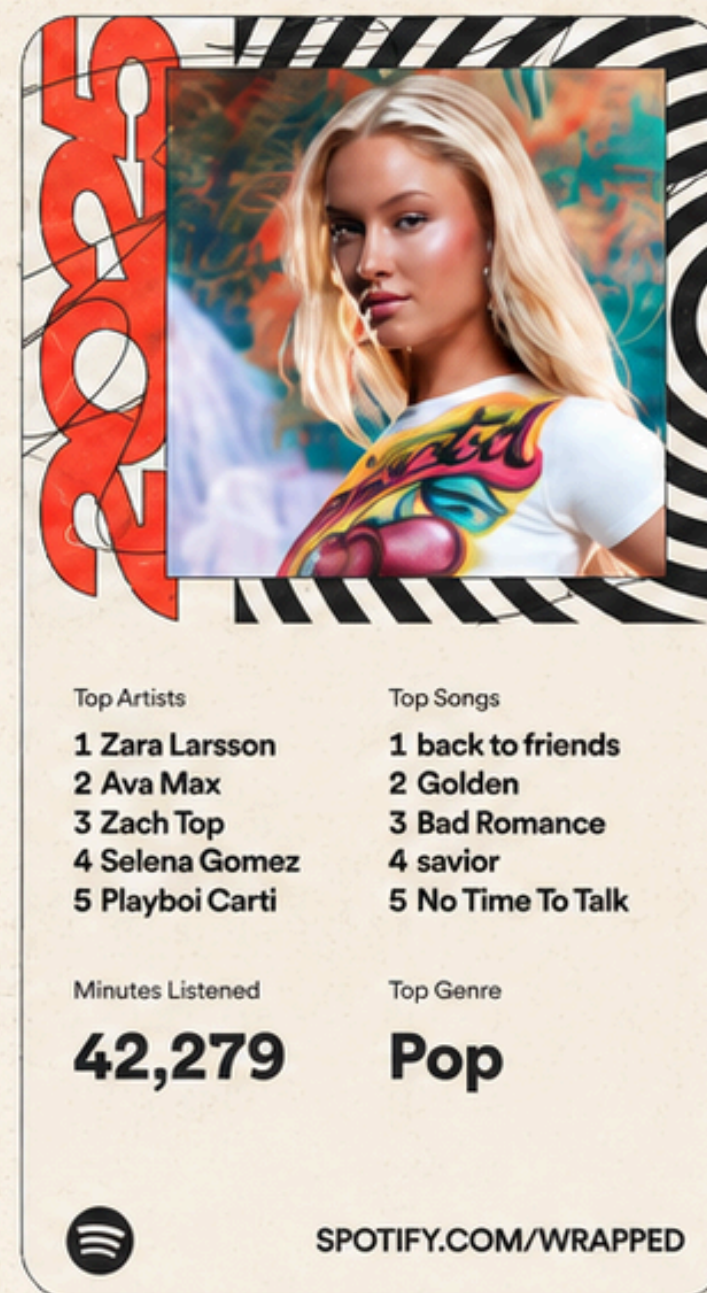
SPOTIFY WRAPPED

Turning User Data Into Identity

Independent Elijah Burgess case study
Not a launch I worked on. This is how I'd analyze it.



WHAT SPOTIFY WRAPPED LOOKS LIKE





THE PROBLEM



Same catalog. Same price. No reason to feel loyal.

3

major platforms (Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music) with nearly identical catalogs at similar prices

“Do we have better songs?”

is the wrong question — nobody can win it.

“Does this platform understand me?”

is the question a catalog can't answer.





MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Spotify had the one thing
a catalog can't copy.

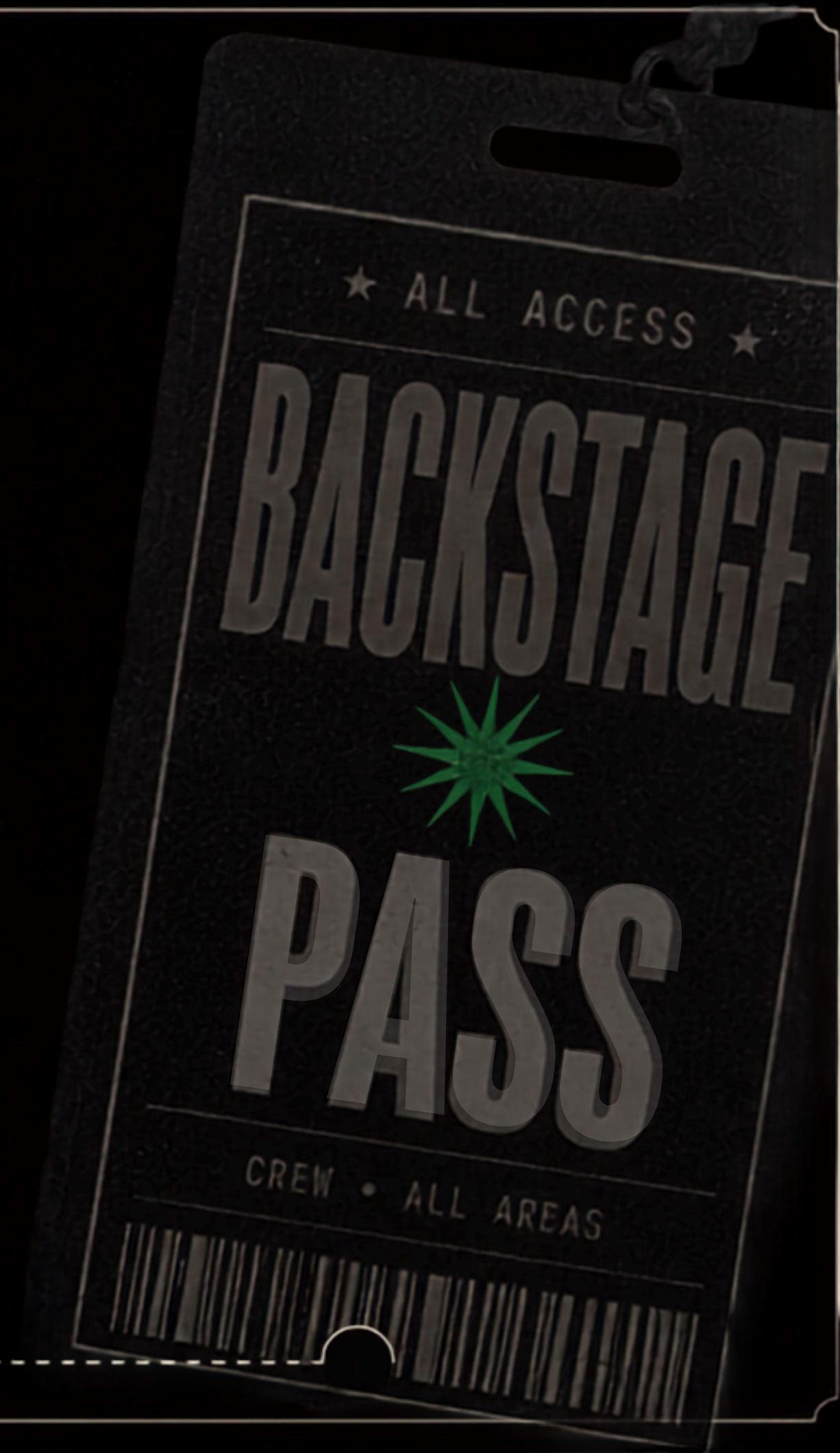
700M+

monthly listeners generating a
complete behavioral record, year-round

Source: Spotify Newsroom, 2025 Wrapped release

10 yrs

of first-mover advantage — Apple Music
Replay entered later and continues to
compete on the same year-in-review behavior



WHO WRAPPED HAS TO SERVE



Two audiences. One design has to win both.

500M+ SHARES

* The Social Sharer

Wants Wrapped as content, visual, fast, easy to post without explaining it. The 2025 redesign (Wrapped Party, Listening Age) was built for this group.

350K+ LIKES

* The Data Purist

Wants an accurate report, top genres, true minutes, correct top artists. Drive the entire 2024 backlash when the data felt unreliable.





POSITIONING

**The mirror,
not the subject.**

WHAT IT IS NOT

A usage dashboard

A loyalty program

A showcase for AI
capability for its own
sake (2024's mistake)

WHAT IT IS

An annual, personal,
social ritual

Built on real
listening data

Data as raw material
for a story, not the
product itself

WHAT IT IS NOT

WHAT IT IS



MESSAGING

“This was your
year in listening.”

Value proposition: a personalized, shareable recap that helps users see, and broadcast, who their music says they are.

Why it works when it works: Spotify frames itself as the mirror. The 2024 backlash proves the principle by negative example. AI performing personality back at users broke the goodwill in a single cycle.





THE COMPARISON



2024’s backlash vs. 2025’s record-breaking recovery.

METRIC	2024	2025
Time to 200M engaged users	62 hours	24 hours
Shares in first 24 hours	baseline	500M+ (+41% YoY)
3-day total engagements	not disclosed	250 million
Public reception	“Boring,” “flop,” “AI overkill”	“Redemption,” “biggest ever”

Sources: TechCrunch, Music Week, RouteNote, SQ Magazine, Today.com, citing Spotify-disclosed figures





READ HONESTLY

Real numbers, with the precision they deserve.

★ “Engaged” is a low bar

Spotify defines it as viewing at least one story. Impressive in absolute terms, not comparable to time-spent or completion rate, which aren't disclosed.

★ This is company messaging

Spotify chose to publicize the 2024-vs-2025 comparison. The framing (“redemption”) is theirs, the underlying numbers are independently reported across multiple outlets.



Figures referenced here are sourced on the preceding comparison slide.





What this case study doesn't gloss over.

**ADMIT
ONE**

01 Replicable, and copied

Apple Music Replay exists explicitly as an answer to Wrapped. Standing still invites a competitor to out-execute the idea.

02 AI broke the exact trust it needs

The 2024 backlash wasn't about AI in the abstract — it was AI standing in for accurate self-recognition. That's a direct hit on the core promise.

03 Methodology invites real skepticism

MIDiA Research found users spend a strikingly small share of listening time on their official "top artist" — the crown means less than it implies.

04 Novelty is getting harder to manufacture

Ten years in, "top songs" alone isn't innovative anymore. Every year needs a new mechanic, and 2024 proved the wrong one can backfire fast.



LESSONS LEARNED



Four takeaways that generalize beyond music.

- 1** | The emotional contract is more fragile than the format.
Accuracy is what holds it together.
- 2** | Recovery requires a real product reversal.
Spotify fixed the product, not just the messaging.
- 3** | Shareability and accuracy aren't substitutes.
A design that wins one while losing the other underperforms both.
- 4** | A first-mover cultural moment needs continuous
reinvention to stay defensible.





STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

**The strongest evidence
isn't the decade of success.
It's the one year it nearly broke.**

"Personalize harder" isn't the lesson. "Stay accurate, or the personalization reads as fake" is, and once it does, the whole emotional premise is at risk.

The PMM lesson: when a product turns user data into identity, accuracy isn't a backend detail --- it's the brand promise.

