STRATEGIC ROADMAP PROPOSAL · 2026–2035

Widening the Spotlight

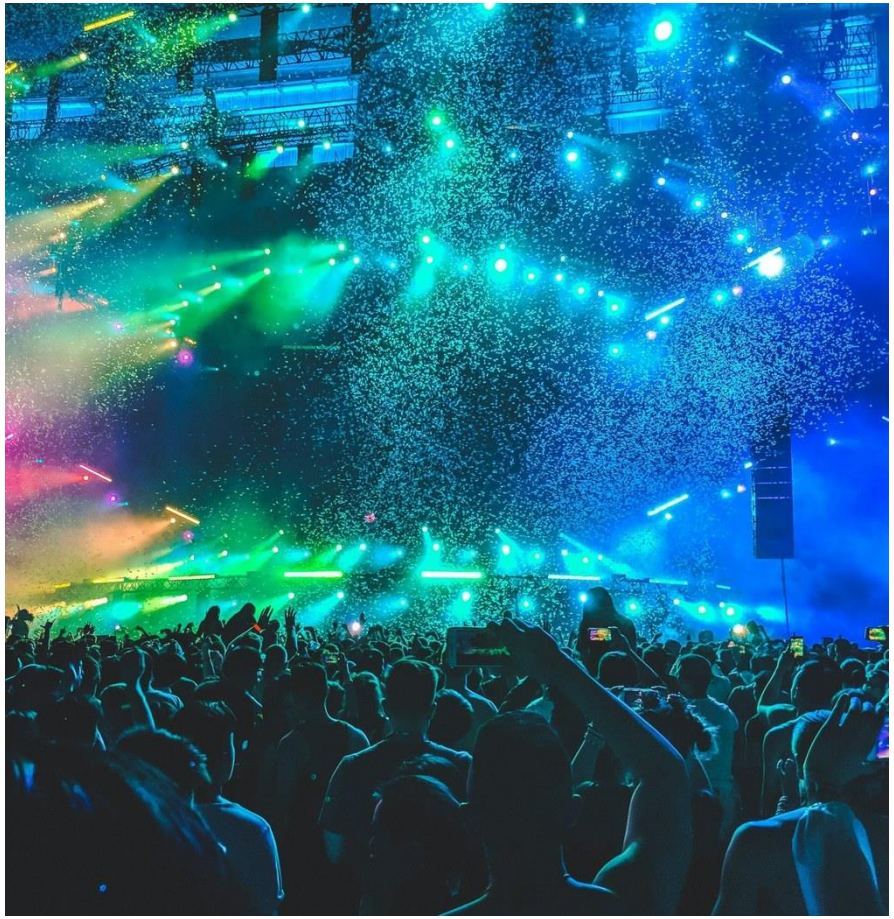
The case for serving Spotify's fastest-growing listener tastes



Prepared by Promise Chukwubueze
MBDS · Data Visualization, Individual Assignment · November 2026

Introduction

A narrow spotlight, and listeners already looking beyond it



Spotify is the world's largest music subscription service, with 751 million monthly users, 290 million paying subscribers and 31.4% of all music subscriptions worldwide at the end of 2025. For millions of listeners it is the first place they go to discover what to play next. Every day, its recommendations, playlists and home screens decide which songs and artists get heard. In effect, Spotify holds the spotlight.

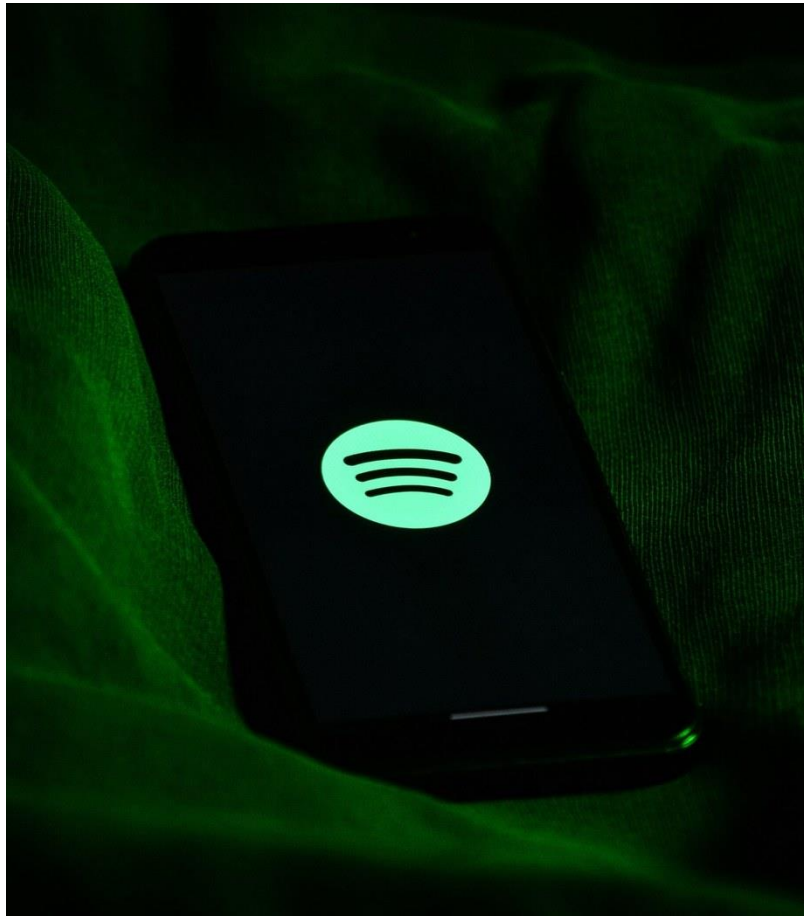
Our analysis of the Spotify dataset supplied for the course, 8,577 tracks from 2,545 artists released between 1952 and 2025, shows that this spotlight is still narrow. A small group of superstars earns most of the hits, while new artists rarely break through. At the same time, listener taste is quietly widening. Latin and K-pop have grown faster than any other genre, and their tracks are almost twice as likely to become hits as the average track.

This proposal outlines how Spotify can make the most of that shift over the next three, five and ten years, using the levers it already controls: recommendations, editorial playlists, artist programmes and partnerships.

The Brief

To develop a strategic roadmap that would…

- Give an overview of Spotify's catalogue, its largest players and the trends shaping it
- Showcase performance KPIs: popularity and hit rate stand in for financials, which the dataset does not include
- Analyse how artists and genres compete for listeners' attention
- Take a deep dive into one component: Spotify's fastest-growing listener tastes
- Recommend a Business Development & Strategy roadmap for the next 3, 5 and 10 years



Our Recommendation at a Glance

Widen the spotlight to the tastes that are growing fastest

Our overarching recommendation is for Spotify to serve the listener tastes growing fastest on its platform, Latin and K-pop, with the same discovery muscle it applies to its biggest stars, and to grow a deeper pipeline of artists within them. This is not about moving the spotlight away from the superstars. It is about widening it, so that more of what listeners want gets heard.

58%

of all hits come from 202 superstar artists, just 8% of all artists

0.6% → 14%

Latin & K-pop share of new hits, 2010–15 vs 2021–25

54% · 46%

hit rate of Latin · K-pop tracks, against 28% for all tracks

YEARS 1–3
Test and learn

YEARS 3–5
Grow the pipeline

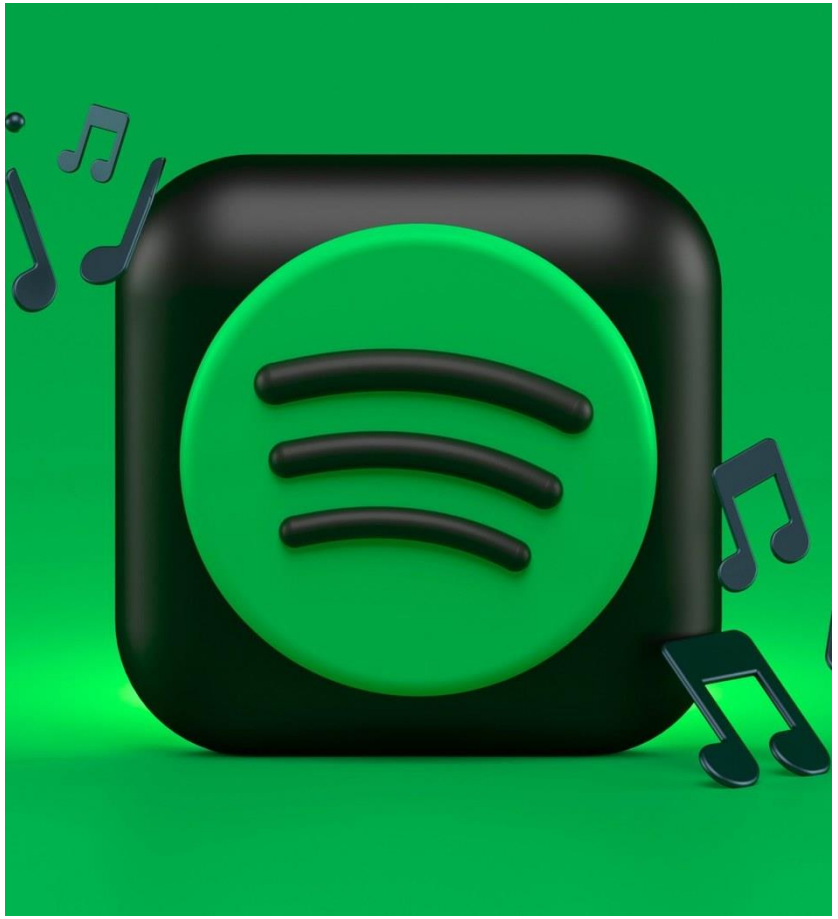
YEARS 5–10
Repeat the playbook

Widening the Spotlight

Why we chose this theme

On Spotify, the spotlight is the attention that recommendations, playlists and home-screen placement give to a song. Today it falls mostly on a few superstars. Yet the data shows listeners already reaching beyond them, towards tastes that are rising fast.

“Widening the Spotlight” describes what Spotify can do next: not move the light away from its stars, but widen it to include those rising tastes. The theme was chosen because it signals growth without disruption. It keeps the superstars central while serving more of what listeners want.



Highlights

- Serve fast-growing tastes through targeted recommendations and playlists
- Grow a pipeline of new Latin and K-pop artists, so no genre rests on one star
- Partner with labels and agencies on releases and fan experiences
- Build a quarterly “genre radar” to spot the next rising tastes early

Spotify Today

A profitable market leader whose growth now comes mostly from free listeners

€17.2bn
revenue in 2025, up from €7.9bn in 2020

€2.2bn
operating income in 2025, after years of losses

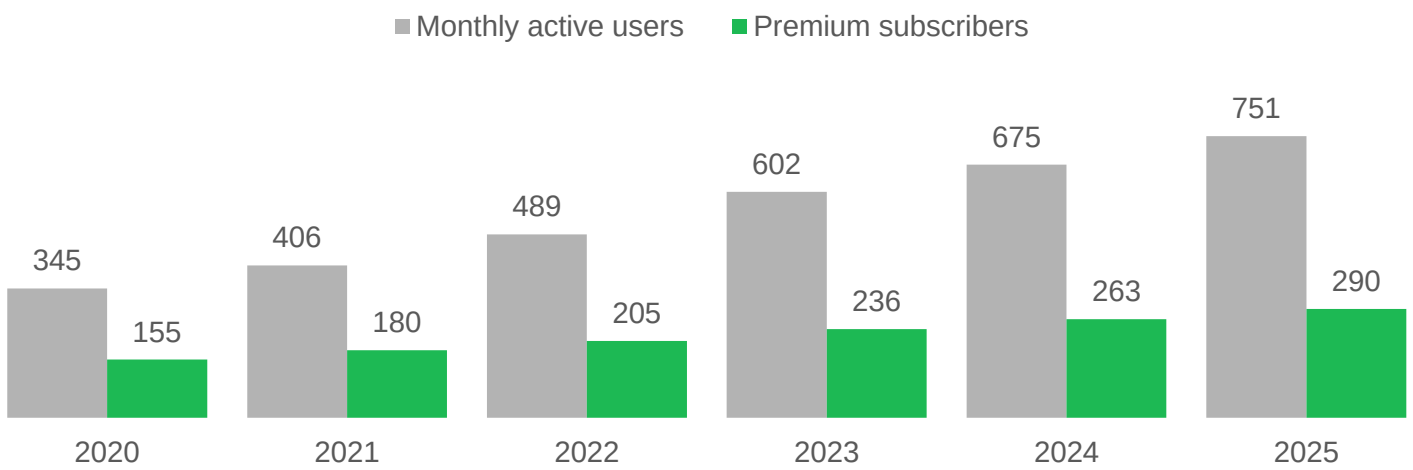
751M
monthly active users (788M by Q3 2026)

290M
Premium subscribers (306M by Q3 2026)

31.4%
of the world's 921.6M music subscribers

Users are growing faster than payers

Monthly active users vs Premium subscribers (millions), 2020–2025



Sources: Spotify quarterly results (SEC filings; Music Business Worldwide; Hypebot, Oct 2026); MIDiA Research via MBW (June 2026).

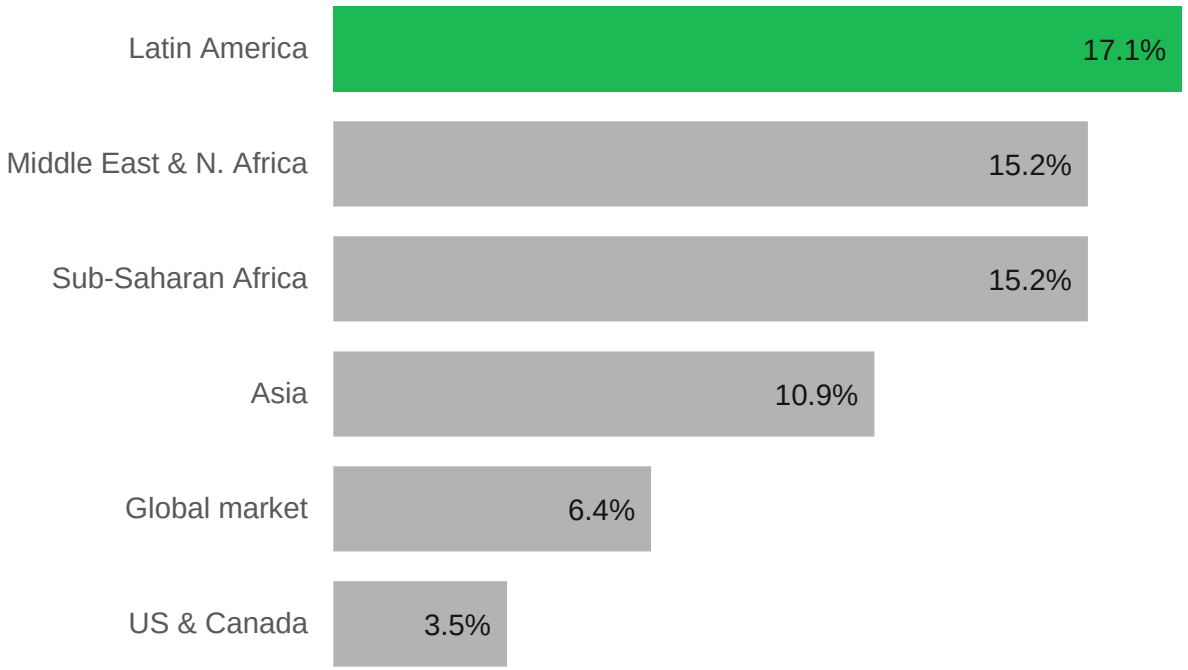
Spotify has more than doubled its revenue since 2020 and turned solidly profitable. It is the clear market leader: its 31.4% share of music subscribers is larger than Tencent Music (13.8%) and Apple Music (12.6%) combined.

The catch: the share of users who pay fell from 45% in 2020 to 39% in 2025. Growth increasingly comes from free listeners, so keeping them engaged, and converting them, matters more every year.

The World Is Listening Wider

Industry data points the same way as our analysis

Recorded music revenue growth by region, 2025 (%)
Latin America was the fastest-growing region in the world



986%

growth in Latin music listeners on Spotify since its 2013–14 launch in Latin America

362%

growth in global K-pop streams on Spotify, 2018 to 2023

#1

Bad Bunny: Spotify's most-streamed artist of 2025, with 19.8bn streams

#2

KPop Demon Hunters soundtrack: 2025's second most-streamed album

Sources: IFPI Global Music Report 2026 via MBW (Mar 2026); Spotify via MBW (Dec 2023); Spotify via Yonhap/Korea Times (Oct 2024); Spotify Wrapped 2025 via MBW (Dec 2025).

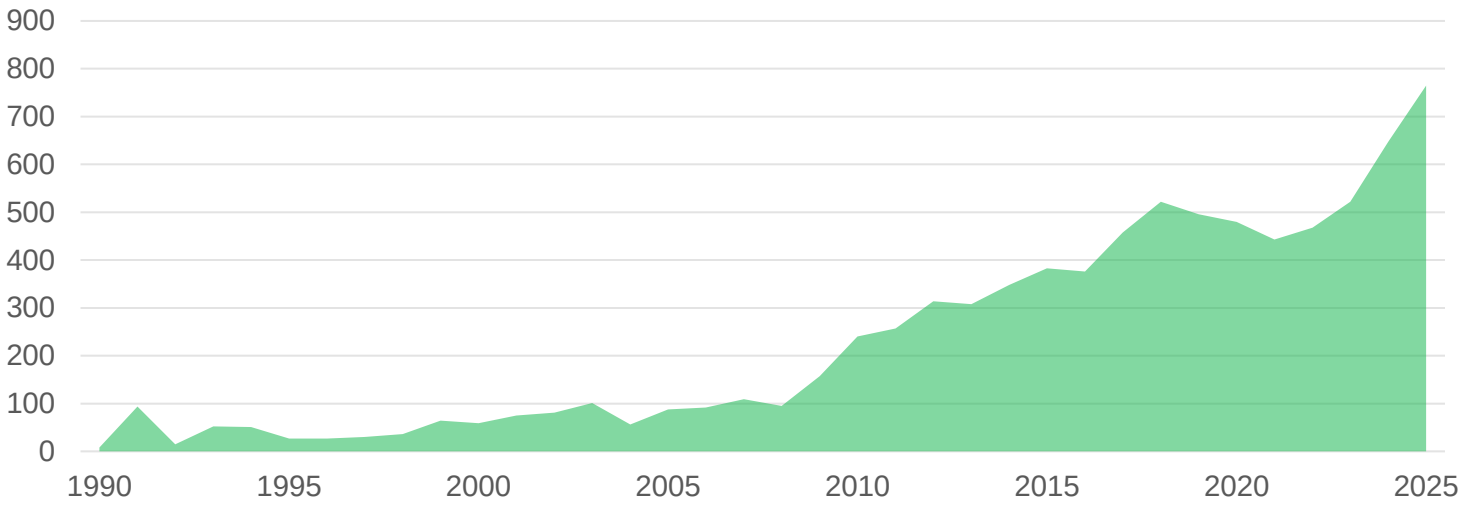
The Stage

A catalogue of 8,577 tracks, most of them recent

8,577	2,545	52	28%	25%
tracks	artists	average popularity (0–100)	of tracks are hits (popularity ≥ 70)	of tracks are explicit

Most tracks are recent: 60% were released after 2015

Tracks by album release year, 1990–2025



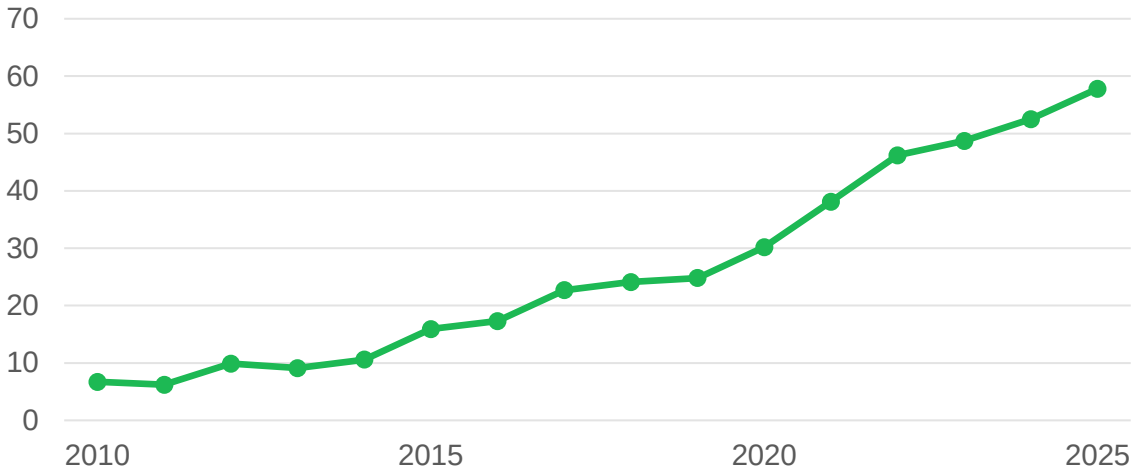
The dataset gives a broad picture of Spotify's listening, from classics released in the 1950s to tracks released in October 2025. Releases peak in the most recent years, so what we see is a catalogue shaped by today's listening.

Spotify's popularity index (0–100) is based on recent plays. Because the dataset holds no revenue figures, we use popularity and the hit rate as our performance KPIs throughout this proposal.

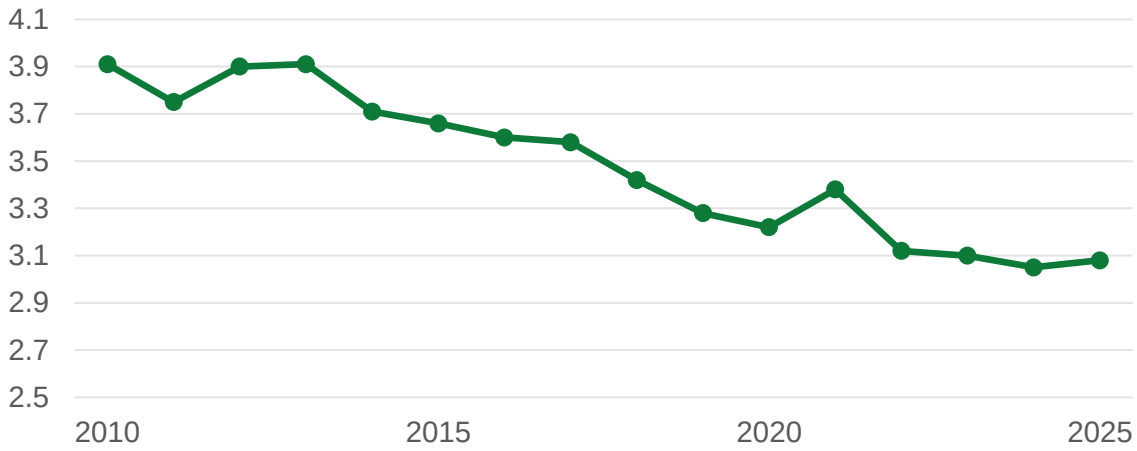
Shifting Listening Habits

Singles went from 7% of releases in 2010 to 58% in 2025

Share of tracks released as singles (%)
By release year, 2010–2025



Average track length (minutes)
By release year, 2010–2025 (axis starts at 2.5)

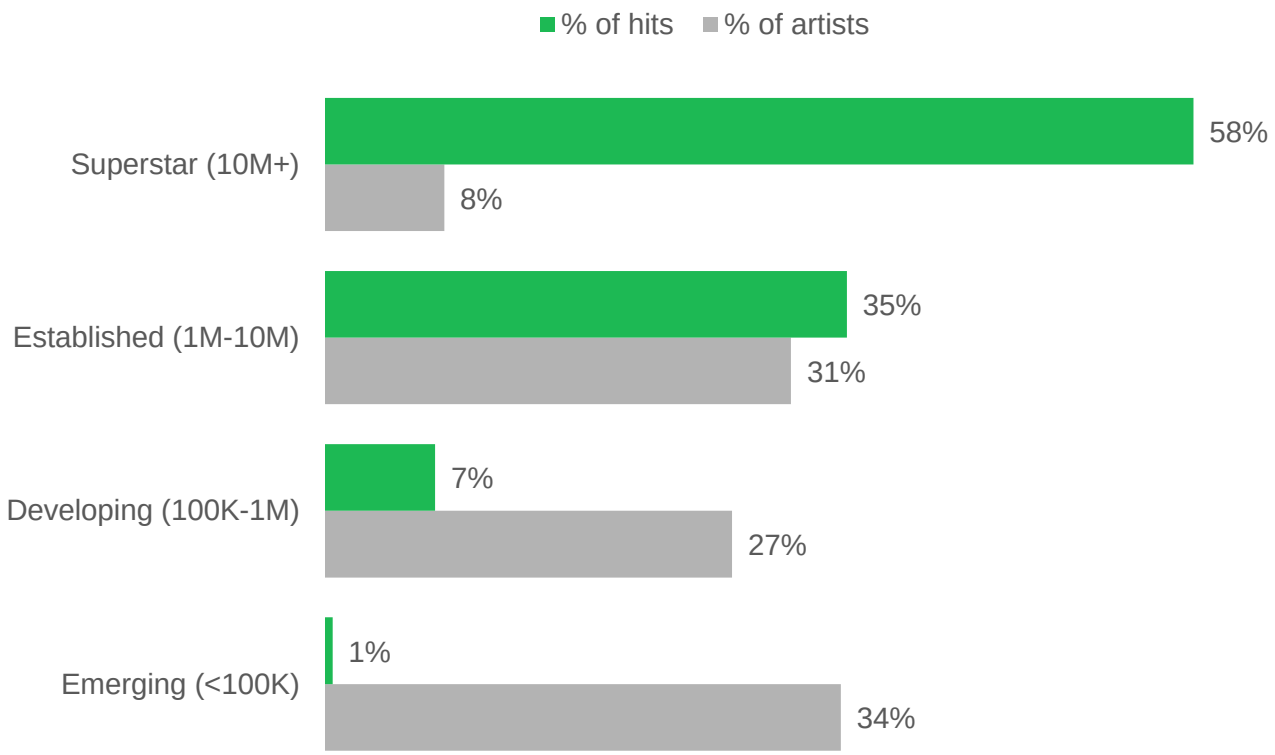


What this means for Spotify. Artists now release music in smaller, more frequent drops, and songs have become about 50 seconds shorter since 2010 (3.9 to 3.1 minutes). In a singles-led world, listeners rely more on playlists and recommendations to find new music. The discovery engine, which Spotify controls, now does much of the work that albums and radio once did.

Who Holds the Spotlight

8% of artists earn 58% of all hits

Share of artists vs share of hits, by artist tier (%)
Tier by Spotify followers · hit = popularity ≥ 70



202
superstar artists (10M+ followers)

42%
of all tracks come from them

58%
of all hits come from them

1%
hit rate of emerging artists (<100K followers)

Success on Spotify is concentrated. Emerging artists make up a third of all artists but turn only 1% of their tracks into hits. This is a risk: the labels behind a handful of stars hold strong bargaining power, and rival services offer the same stars.

The Largest Players, Head to Head

Followers do not guarantee hits

Artist	Followers	Tracks	Avg popularity	Hit rate
Taylor Swift	146M	324	60.0	32%
Ed Sheeran	123M	53	60.3	36%
Billie Eilish	119M	61	73.9	**75%**
The Weeknd	113M	141	60.8	34%
Ariana Grande	107M	94	63.9	41%
Eminem	105M	67	56.3	27%
Drake	103M	84	65.9	48%
Bad Bunny (Latin)	**103M**	**56**	**73.3**	**86%**
Justin Bieber	85M	55	66.3	44%
BTS (K-pop)	**81M**	**30**	**57.4**	**10%**

Ten largest artists by followers · hit rate = share of tracks with popularity ≥ 70



86%

Bad Bunny's hit rate, the best of the top ten and the only Latin act among them

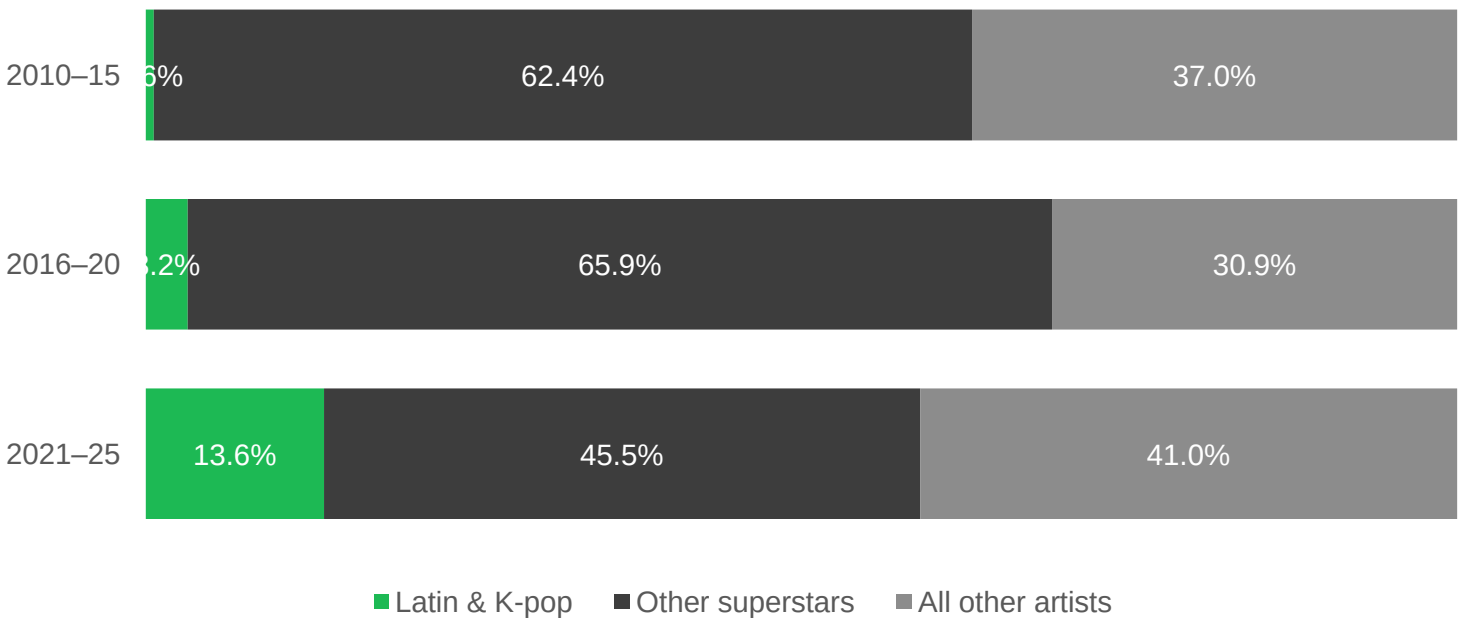
Taylor Swift has the most followers (146M) and the most tracks (324), yet converts 32% of them into hits. Bad Bunny and Billie Eilish convert three in four. BTS, the only K-pop act in the top ten, has the lowest hit rate (10%) of the group, a sign that K-pop's strength now lies in a broader set of artists.

Where Tastes Are Widening

Latin & K-pop went from under 1% to 14% of new hits

Who gets the hits (%)

Share of hit tracks by release period · superstars = 10M+ followers



2010–15: 487 hits · 2016–20: 624 · 2021–25: 774. Latin & K-pop were 0.6% of hits in 2010–15.

3 → 33

Latin & K-pop artists with a hit, 2010–15 vs 2021–25

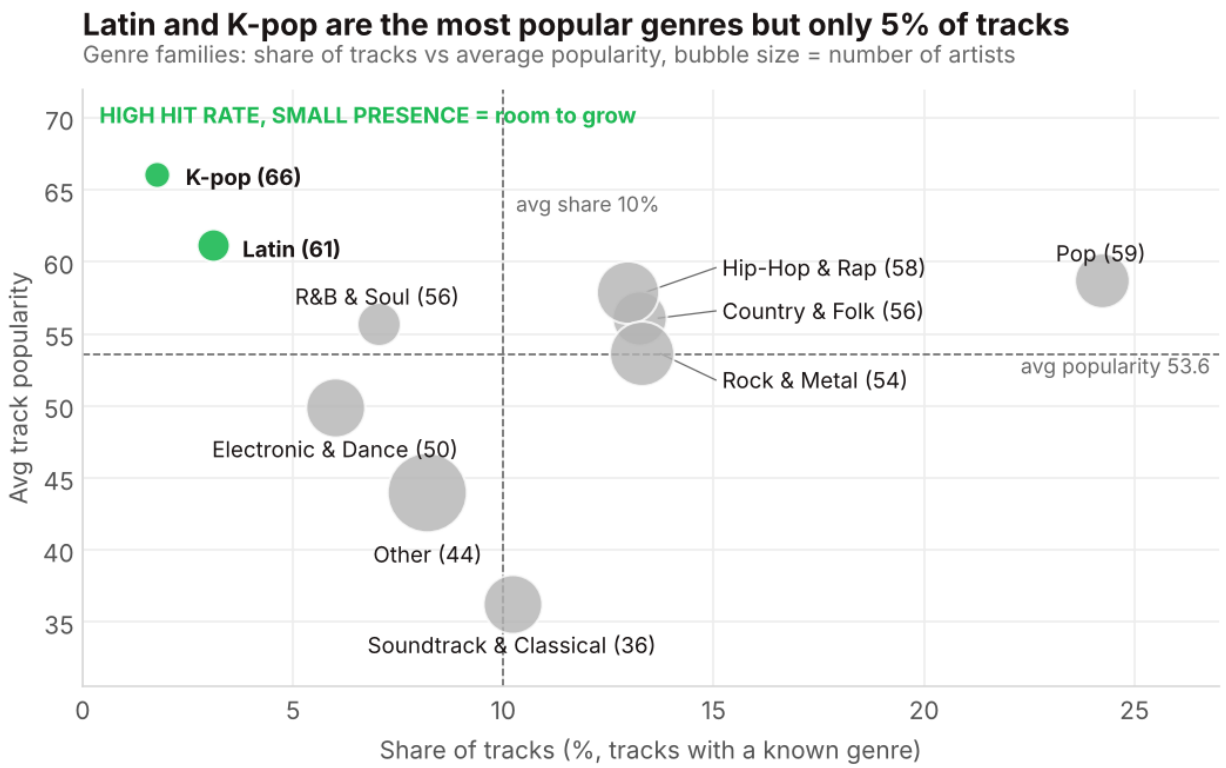
69% → 56%

superstar share of new hits, 2016–20 vs 2021–25

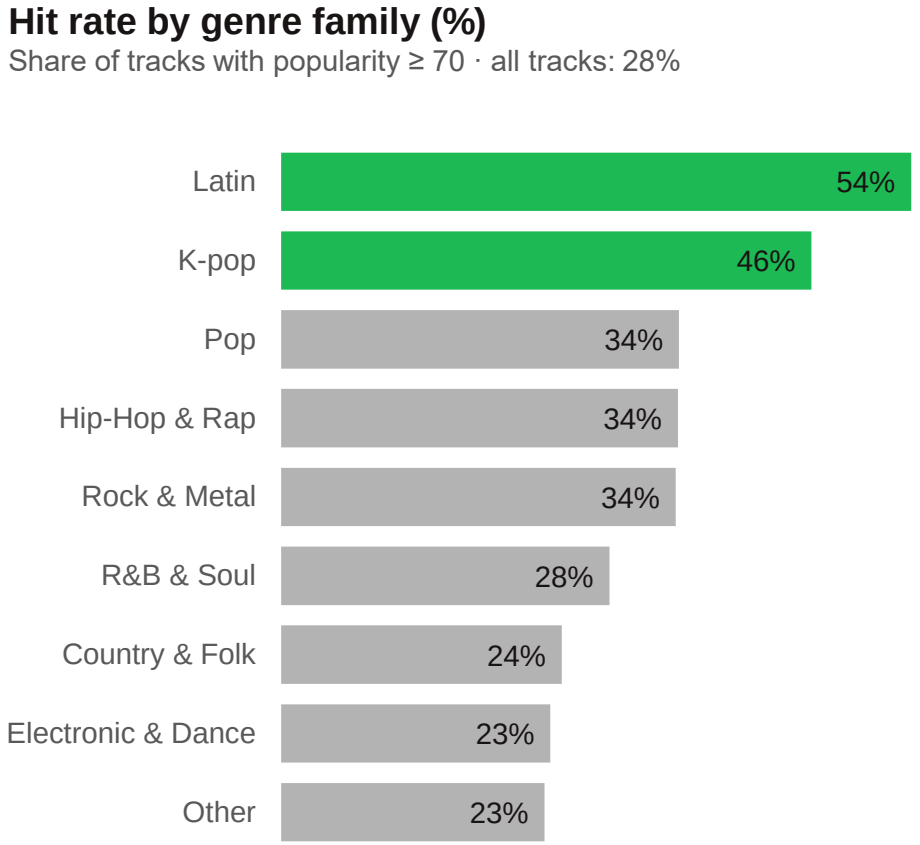
Hits are spreading. Over the last decade, Latin and K-pop grew their share of new hits more than twentyfold, faster than any other genre, while the superstar share fell. Listener taste is widening, with or without Spotify's help.

Where Hit Potential Is Highest

Latin and K-pop tracks are almost twice as likely to be hits



Genre opportunity matrix: share of tracks vs average popularity (tracks with a known genre)



Not shown: Soundtrack & Classical (0%). 39% of tracks have no genre and are left out of both charts.

The Leaders Behind the Rise

A short list of artists Spotify can build around



BTS · K-pop · 81M followers

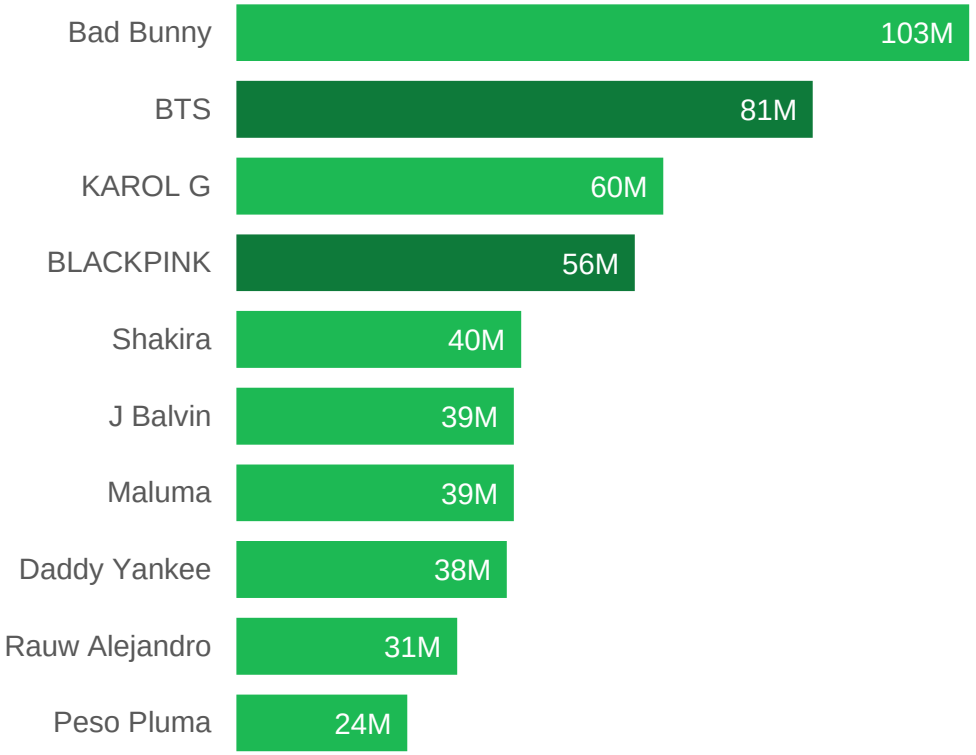


Bad Bunny · Latin · 103M followers

A note of caution. Latin still leans on one star: Bad Bunny accounts for 55% of Latin hits. Without him the Latin hit rate falls from 54% to 38%, still above the 28% average. K-pop is broader: without BTS its hit rate rises to 63%.

Top 10 Latin & K-pop artists by followers (M)

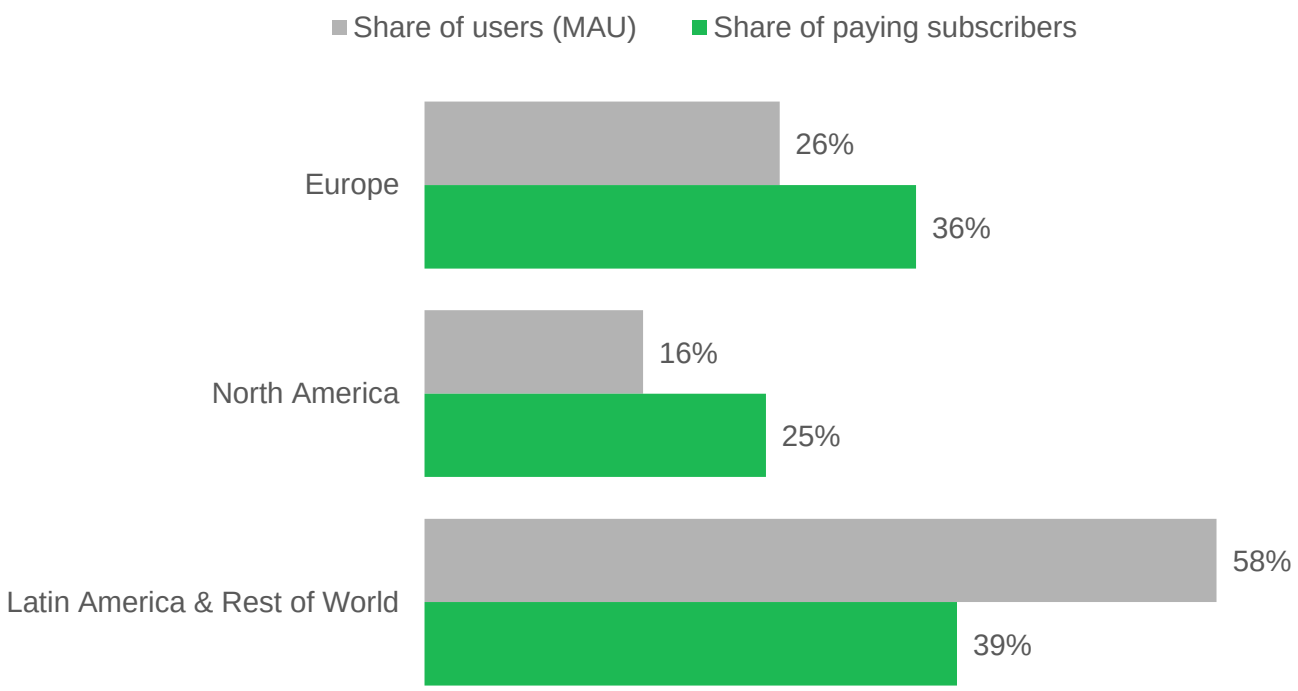
Green = Latin · dark green = K-pop



Why It Matters to the Business

Spotify's growth regions hold most of its users, but fewer of its payers

Share of Spotify users vs paying subscribers by region, Q4 2025 (%)
North America's share of users derived from the other regions



21%

of Spotify's users are in Latin America

58% · 39%

users vs payers in Latin America & Rest of World

The regions where Spotify adds most of its users are also where fewer of them pay. Latin and K-pop are rooted in, and heavily streamed across, these regions: Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia and the Philippines are all among K-pop's top ten listening countries on Spotify.

Serving the tastes these listeners love is one of the most direct ways to deepen engagement where Spotify's growth is, and to give more of them a reason to pay.

Sources: Spotify Q4 2025 results via Music Business Worldwide; Spotify via Yonhap/Korea Times (Oct 2024).

Focus Vectors

The levers already within Spotify's control

Spotify does not make music, and it cannot change what people like. But it decides much of what they hear next. Our recommendations therefore focus on four levers Spotify already owns, rather than on anything it would need to build from scratch.



Recommendations

Autoplay, personalised mixes and the home screen decide what plays next. Small, tested changes reach millions of listeners.



Editorial playlists

Curated playlists and home-screen shelves give a genre a front door, a place where new listeners can find it.



Artist programmes

Programmes such as RADAR, which has backed 1,000+ emerging artists in 180+ markets since 2020, help new artists break through.



Partnerships

Labels, agencies and fan events give listeners a reason to listen on Spotify rather than on a rival.

Roadmap of Opportunities, 2026–2035

Three horizons, each building on the last

YEARS 1–3 · 2026–2028

Test and learn

- A/B-test Latin & K-pop recommendations with listeners of nearby tastes
- Deepen editorial playlists and home-screen shelves
- Release-day features with labels and agencies

KPI TO WATCH
Latin & K-pop share of new hits: 14% → 20%

YEARS 3–5 · 2029–2031

Grow the pipeline

- Bring emerging Latin & K-pop artists into artist programmes
- Give their teams audience data and marketing tools
- Sponsor fan experiences around tours and releases

KPI TO WATCH
Emerging-artist hit rate: 1% → 5%

YEARS 5–10 · 2032–2035

Repeat the playbook

- Review the genre matrix every quarter for the next rising tastes
- Apply the same test-and-grow approach to them
- Keep superstars central while the spotlight widens

KPI TO WATCH
Overall hit rate: 28% → 35%

Test and Learn

Serve the rising tastes where listeners are most likely to love them

The first horizon is about evidence, not big bets. The timing is right, as Latin America was the fastest-growing music region in 2025 (+17.1%, IFPI). But pushing a genre to every listener would irritate as many people as it delights, so Spotify should start where the fit is most natural and let the data decide how far to go.

We recommend the following:

Adjacent-taste tests: recommend Latin and K-pop tracks to listeners of pop, hip-hop and R&B, the genres closest in sound, through A/B tests, and expand only where saves and replays rise
Deeper editorial playlists: strengthen Latin and K-pop playlists and give both genres home-screen shelves in more markets
Release-day features: work with labels and agencies on countdown pages and launch features for major Latin and K-pop releases

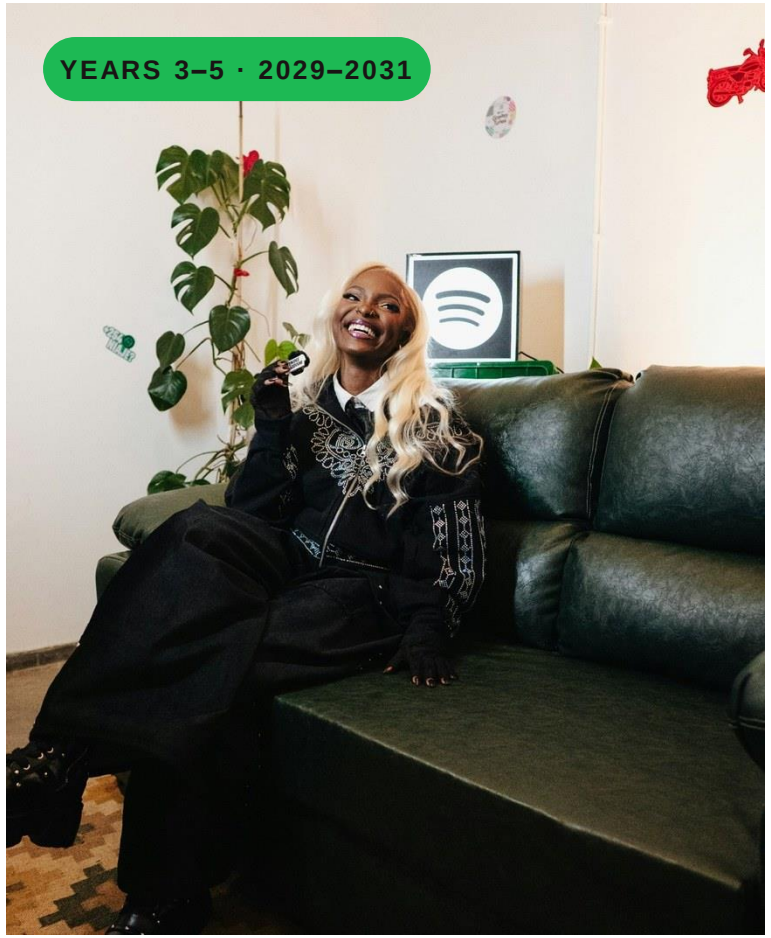


KPI to watch: Latin & K-pop share of new hits, 14% → 20%
Evidence: Latin & K-pop rose from 0.6% to 14% of new hits, with hit rates of 54% and 46% against 28% overall.

Grow the Pipeline

Turn more new artists into the next generation of stars

Demand alone will not sustain the shift if it rests on a handful of names. Today, emerging artists turn only 1% of their tracks into hits, and one artist carries more than half of all Latin hits. The second horizon builds depth.



We recommend the following:

Dedicated RADAR cohorts: create Latin and K-pop cohorts in RADAR, Spotify's emerging-artist programme (1,000+ artists in 180+ markets since 2020), so newcomers gain playlist placement and marketing support early
Audience data and tools: give artists and their teams insight into where their listeners are and which songs travel, so they can plan releases and tours
Fan experiences: sponsor fan events around tours and big releases, giving fans a reason to listen on Spotify rather than elsewhere

KPI to watch: emerging-artist hit rate, 1% → 5%; no artist above 30% of a genre's hits
Evidence: emerging artists have a 1% hit rate, and Bad Bunny alone accounts for 55% of Latin hits.

Repeat the Playbook

Make widening the spotlight a habit, not a one-off

Latin and K-pop are today's rising tastes; others will follow. The final horizon turns what Spotify learns in the first two into a repeatable process for spotting and serving the next wave early.

We recommend the following:

Genre radar: review the genre opportunity matrix every quarter to find tastes with a high hit rate and a small presence
Test and grow: apply the same approach to each new candidate: adjacent-taste tests first, then artist development
Keep the stars central: superstars remain the anchor of the catalogue while the spotlight widens around them



KPI to watch: overall hit rate, 28% → 35%; non-superstar share of hits above 40%
Evidence: the superstar share of new hits fell from 69% (2016–20) to 56% (2021–25); tastes keep widening.

Implementation Plan

Who leads what, and when

Initiative	Suggested lead team	Timeline	KPI
Adjacent-taste recommendation tests	Personalisation & Recommendations	2026–2027	Saves and replays in test groups
Latin & K-pop playlists and home-screen shelves	Editorial	2026–2028	Latin & K-pop share of new hits
Release-day features with labels and agencies	Artist & Label Partnerships	2027–2028	Hits per major release
Emerging-artist programme for Latin & K-pop	Artist Partnerships	2029–2031	Emerging-artist hit rate
Audience data and marketing tools for artists	Spotify for Artists	2029–2031	Artists with a hit per genre
Fan experiences around tours and releases	Marketing & Partnerships	2029–2031	Engagement around events
Quarterly genre radar	Data & Insights	2032–2035	Overall hit rate; non-superstar share of hits

Lead teams are suggestions based on how streaming platforms typically organise these functions.

Expected Results

What success looks like, and why it matters

KPI	Today	Target	By
Latin & K-pop share of new hits	14%	**20%**	2028
Emerging-artist hit rate	1%	**5%**	2031
Largest artist's share of a genre's hits	55% (Latin)	**below 30%**	2031
Overall hit rate	28%	**35%**	2035
Non-superstar share of new hits	44%	**above 40%**	ongoing
Paying share of users (Spotify-reported)	39%	**above 40%**	2031

Targets are proposals for discussion, based on the 2010–2025 trends in the supplied dataset and Spotify's 2025 results.

Some potential benefits

1. **Stronger retention:** listeners who keep discovering music they love keep listening, and keep paying
2. **Less concentration risk:** more hit-makers spread Spotify's dependence on a few stars and their labels
3. **A sharper edge over rivals:** every service has the same catalogue; better discovery is what Spotify can own
4. **First access to new stars:** artists who grow on Spotify are more likely to launch there
5. **Presence in rising music cultures:** a stronger position where tastes are growing fastest

Risks and Limitations

What could go wrong, and how to manage it

Listener fatigue
Pushing a genre too hard could annoy listeners. Mitigation: start with nearby tastes, test before scaling, and stop where engagement falls.

Dependence on one star
Latin leans on Bad Bunny. Mitigation: the pipeline horizon targets no artist above 30% of a genre's hits.

Cultural authenticity
Genres are tied to communities. Mitigation: local editorial teams and partnerships with the labels and agencies that know them.

Measuring the wrong thing
Popularity is a proxy. Mitigation: confirm results with Spotify's own data on saves, replays, retention and subscriptions.

Limitations of the data

- Popularity and hit rate measure listening, not revenue. The story shows where to invest; it does not prove profit.
- The dataset is a sample of about 8,600 tracks, not Spotify's full catalogue, so shares describe this sample.
- 39% of tracks have no genre in the source data and are left out of genre comparisons.
- Popularity reflects recent plays, which favours newer tracks. We compare shares within each period, not counts across periods.

The Way Forward

The spotlight is already widening



Spotify's listeners are telling a clear story, and the wider industry agrees: Latin America is music's fastest-growing region, and Spotify's most-streamed artist of 2025 was Bad Bunny. The successful implementation of this roadmap would let Spotify serve that demand early, grow the next generation of stars on its own platform, and depend less on a handful of superstars and the labels behind them.

The question is not whether the spotlight will widen. It is whether Spotify leads that shift or follows it.

CONTACT

Promise Chukwubueze

MBDS

p.chukwubueze@student.ie.edu

Appendix: Data and Method

How the dashboard and this proposal were built

Data: Spotify track dataset supplied for the course (8,577 tracks, 2,545 artists, released 1952–2025). Business and industry context comes from public sources, listed on the next slide.
Preparation: Tableau Prep Builder: removed rows with no artist, created Release Year, Content, Artist Tier, Genres, Primary Genre and Genre Family.
Hit: a track with a Spotify popularity score of 70 or more (out of 100).
Artist tiers: by Spotify followers: Emerging (<100K), Developing (100K–1M), Established (1M–10M), Superstar (10M+).
Genre families: 400+ source genres grouped into 11 families by each artist's first listed genre.
Dashboard: five pages in Tableau: Introduction, Overview & Trends, The Spotlight Today, Growing Tastes and Opportunities.



Sources

Outside data used to support the analysis

- Spotify Q4 2021 results (SEC Form 6-K)
- Spotify Q4 2023 results (SEC Form 6-K)
- Music Business Worldwide: Spotify FY2024 results (Feb 2025)
- Music Business Worldwide: Spotify FY2025 results (Feb 2026)
- Geldmarie: Spotify full-year 2025 results
- Hypebot: Spotify Q3 2026 results (Oct 2026)
- MIDiA Research via MBW: music subscriber market shares, end-2025 (Jun 2026)
- IFPI Global Music Report 2026 via MBW (Mar 2026)
- MBW: Latin music listeners on Spotify up 986% (Dec 2023)
- Korea Times: K-pop streams on Spotify up 362% over five years (Oct 2024)
- MBW: Bad Bunny Spotify's most-streamed artist of 2025 (Dec 2025)
- MBW: Spotify RADAR, 1,000+ artists in 180+ markets (Sep 2025)

Images: photographs from Unsplash; Spotify logos from Spotify's 2024 brand assets. Track-level figures come from the Spotify dataset supplied for the course.
Disclaimer: Claude AI was used ONLY to prepare and clean up the strategy roadmap. Dashboard, Idea, and Strategy/Plan is solely mine.