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“Take Those Old Records Off the Shelf” A Uses & Gratifications Study of Different Music Platforms

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Abstract

The platforms people use to listen to music have evolved rapidly in the last fifty years. Digital streaming and digital downloads are the most popular platforms to consume music, but physical platforms like CDs and vinyl are still common or, in the case of vinyl, even growing in use. This study investigated the needs being met and the reasons behind listening to music on these different platforms. This study also compared the differences in gratifications sought between physical music platforms and non-physical music platforms. A survey shared via email, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, as well as via Amazon's Mechanical Turk service, used a snowball sampling method to recruit participants who listened to at least two hours of music a week ($N = 594$). Factor analysis revealed four gratifications for listening to music: personal identity, mood management, diversion, and personal relationships. Physical platforms were found to be preferred by users to satisfy personal relationship needs while non-physical platforms were found to be used by users to satisfy mood management needs, with no significant difference between platform types used to satisfy the needs of personal identity or diversion.

Keywords: music, uses and gratification theory, digital streaming, digital download, CDs, vinyl

"Take Those Old Records Off the Shelf"

A Uses & Gratifications Study of Different Music Platforms

Music has been an artistic expression among humans for our entire history and has continued into the modern day as an intrinsic part of the human experience, as well as growing into a sprawling and powerful business industry. Because of its prominence and influence, music should not be discounted as a form of communication. Music is, in fact, one of the more powerful forms of communication that can influence masses and connect groups of people in a common experience. Examining music consumption, therefore, can be helpful in understanding the motivations of groups of people behind their music choices.

General music consumption is rising across the United States. According to the Nielsen Music's 2019 Mid-Year Report, total album equivalent consumption rose almost 16% in the first six months of 2019 alone (Nielsen Music, 2019). More and more people are consuming music, especially as smart phones and other mobile technologies have allowed music to become an almost constant part of people's daily lives. As well, people have more options in how they consume music than ever before. Digital music consumption has become dominant. However, the number of music platforms available is larger than ever before, due to the fact that old music platform technologies did not become fully obsolete as digital music platforms gained prominence.

Music consumption has changed dramatically over the last 50 years, with the most obvious indicator being the switch from physical music platforms to non-physical music platforms. In this study, music platforms are analyzed as media forms, that is, the socially realized structures of communication for music. Physical music platforms, therefore, include CDs, cassettes, vinyl records, and so forth, as they require an actual physical object devoted

solely for the purpose of hosting the music (in this case a CD or record), while non-physical music platforms include digital downloads and digital music streaming and do not require a physical object to host the music. To further differentiate between physical and non-physical music platforms, music for non-physical platforms is hosted via non-tangible digital files on devices that are not devoted solely to playing music, such as smart phones or computers. This dichotomy between physical and non-physical does not perfectly categorize all music platforms; radio, for example, requires a specific physical device (a radio receiver) to play music but the music heard over radio is hosted on non-tangible radio waves. However, for the purpose of this study, music platforms will be categorized as physical or non-physical on a best fit scenario, with an "other" category existing for platforms like radio.

In 2018, 75% of revenue in the music industry came from some form of digital music consumption (Recording Industry Association of America, 2018). However, as digital music consumption continues to dominate the music industry, there has been an interesting trend in the growth of vinyl album sales and consumption. In 2005, vinyl LP/EP revenues represented only 0.1% of annual music revenue. In 2018, vinyl represented 4% of annual music revenue (Recording Industry Association of America, 2018).

In light of these music consumption trends across platforms, this study examined how people consume music and the uses and gratifications sought regarding music platform selection. It further explored the differences between people's gratifications for choosing digital music platforms versus physical music platforms, such as vinyl.

This study provides additional information and new perspectives on the uses made and gratifications discovered through media, specifically Internet-based platforms. These environments have changed so dramatically that a firmer understanding of why people choose

the platforms from which they consume music is necessary, as the uses and gratifications different groups are seeking from music consumption may have changed. Understanding people's changing gratifications related to music platforms could also shed light on the more general changing gratifications people are seeking when it comes to media consumption, especially as media platforms change rapidly. The rapid shift to digital as the primary media platform for not just music, but television, film, and even books as well, may have a large effect on the typical gratifications sought by users. A comparison of physical versus non-physical music platforms is a small part of this larger industry shift but may help illuminate some trends in the gratifications sought by users in light of this shift. Therefore, using a survey methodology, participants who listen regularly to music were recruited to complete an online questionnaire (see Appendix) in an effort to gain this firmer understanding.

Literature Review

Understanding why people use the music platforms they do comes from an intersection of many different factors. Music platforms themselves are the product of innovations in music technologies, which have been rapidly changing since the introduction of the phonograph in the early 20th century (Sinclair & Tinson, 2016). New music technologies then will affect the music listening experience, as different technologies provide different environments for music consumption. Finally, there is the ever-present overarching question of "why do people listen to music." In addition, the uses and gratifications theory needs to be understood as well before applying it within this study.

Music Technology Changes and Evolution

Music consumption technology has developed rapidly since the early 20th century, from the phonograph, to radio, to record players, to cassette tapes, to CDs, and finally to Internet-

based music consumption such as digital downloads and streaming (Sinclair & Tinson, 2016). As new technologies become available, they disrupt the status quo of current music consumption practices, which in turn disrupts the listening practices of music consumers (Hudson, 2011). Music consumers, therefore, need to actively choose which platforms, from the many available, that they will use to consume their music. It is also important to note that platforms available for music consumption have always been shaped, and defined by the users of these platforms. A great example of that is Gitelman's exploration of how the amusement phonograph was advertised, originally as a business tool, but rapidly developed into a social experience that became a domestic touchpoint (2003). The users of the phonograph took the platform and rapidly shifted it to suit their desires as users, not the desires of the manufacturers. Therefore, music consumption has long been driven by the users of music platforms, and shaped by their choices and needs.

Music consumption has been especially affected by the development of the Internet, which gave birth first to peer-to-peer file sharing, next to paid digital file download systems, and finally, to music streaming services that do not require file downloading or special playing devices besides a computer or smartphone. This has also added a physical product as well as a non-physical dynamic to the consumption of music (Magudda, 2011). Researchers have found that there is a contradictory relationship between online music consumption and behavior related to conventional music consumption. Online music consumption has evolved from a history of "unrestricted and free" music ownership, while physical music consumption has a past rooted in capitalism and business pressure (Molteni & Ordanini, 2003).

While there has been an ecologically favorable trend of music consumption moving from physical to non-physical, there is still a healthy appetite for material music objects (Magudda,

2011). Magudda (2011) writes that "music digitalization and the dematerialization of musical goods do not mean less materiality and do not imply a less relevant social role for material objects within consumption processes" (p. 16). Essentially, even as technology moves consumption towards the non-physical, people still feel a need for material objects connected to their music consumption.

Music streaming has increasingly become the preferred music consumption platform (Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2018), leaving physical music consumption to a more niche market. Streaming has pulled the music industry out of the slump caused by the Internet and music piracy. Aguiar and Waldfogel's (2018) study found that although music streaming services reduced music piracy, streaming revenues have made up for lost revenue: "the sales displacement estimates show that the losses from displaced sales are roughly outweighed by the gains in streaming revenue" (p. 279).

One of the niche markets of physical music consumption that still exists is the use of vinyl records. Vinyl was challenged by cassette tapes and replaced by CDs as the primary technology for media consumption in the United States in the 1980s (Recording Industry Association of America, 2018), but has managed to never go fully obsolete as a technology, mainly due to a dedicated collecting culture (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). However, vinyl has been slowly increasing in popularity for music consumption in recent years (Recording Industry Association of America, 2018). Sarpong et al. (2016) found that the re-diffusion of vinyl was not simple and instead required a collective effort and a number of allies to bring the platform back to a certain level of popularity, as opposed to the more passive growth of music streaming services. Palm (2019) argues that vinyl consumption does not seem to follow the same rules as the rest of the music industry:

> The pressing question about the future of vinyl is not, will there continue to be a place for analog formats in a post-digital world; but rather, to what extent can physical media circulate independently of the same corporate interests that have come to dominate popular culture in its digital form. (p. 653)

While some have pointed to an underlying need for physical objects (such as vinyl) when consuming music (Magudda, 2011), others have found that having a physical object is not necessarily required to have a sense of ownership over one's music collection. Sinclair and Tinson (2016) report that while participants found physical products to be more personal, streaming was the most popular music platform used. As well, they found that both streaming and physical platforms were used for similar reasons, namely that of loyalty, empowerment, and social rewards, which reflect both platforms meeting the needs of psychological ownership of the participants' music.

Hagen (2015) found that users of music streaming services curated a variety of personal playlists across genre, age, and other musical categories. The author argues that these playlists fit the need of users to "collect" music, allowing them to have a curated and personal music library that was completely digital, and giving them the same satisfaction of collection that physical music platforms can provide. The differences between physical versus non-physical music consumption are therefore not as cut and dry as some may believe. Instead, it is up to the music consumers to choose which platform(s) best suit their needs.

Uses and Gratifications

The uses and gratifications theory can be traced back to the early 1940s with studies on radio. Specifically, Herzog's (1941) study into listeners of radio soap operas was one of the first to find gratifications listeners got from using the medium. In the 1960s and 1970s, more

researchers started to solidify the uses and gratifications theory. In their study from that era, McQuail et al. (1972) identified four general types of gratifications from media consumption: (a) entertainment, (b) information, (c) personal identity, and (d) integration and social interaction.

Uses and gratifications was outlined as a theory, including its basic concepts by Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973). The theory was then further expanded upon by Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch (1973) and outlined existing uses and gratifications studies on print, radio, and television media at the time, and argued that media research should study human needs to then discover how much "media do or do not contribute to their creation and satisfaction" (p. 521). These studies set up the fundamental concepts and outline of the uses and gratifications theory.

More recently, as more technologies have given birth to new forms of media, uses and gratifications studies have expanded beyond print, radio, and television mediums. Specifically, these new uses and gratifications studies have focused on the Internet and the many media platforms the creation of the Internet has supported. Understanding these new studies helps provide context for the differences in uses and gratifications between physical and non-physical platforms, as the Internet revolutionized many forms of media in addition to music. Ko et al. (2005) looked into Internet uses and gratifications from a psychological point of view by looking at motivators among specific media usage. Smock et al. (2011) used uses and gratifications to study social media and the Internet, with the theory acting as a framework focused on how people use different platforms to fulfil needs. Whiting and Williams (2013) studied consumers across social media platforms and found multiple main uses and gratifications: (a) information sharing, (b) as an entertainment source, (c) social interaction, (d) relaxation, (e) to pass time, and (d) information seeking.

There have also been uses and gratifications studies into specific portions of the Internet. Chen et al. (2010) performed a uses and gratifications study into online gaming and found that people used online gaming most often as a diversion, a positive aesthetic experience, or to find a sense of community. Hicks et al. (2012) performed a uses and gratifications study on the website Yelp.com (a community business reviewing website) and found that it was used for information seeking, convenience, to pass time, and for entertainment. Malik et al. (2016) performed a uses and gratifications study specifically on photo sharing on Facebook and found a positive correlation between media exposure and social influence, with gratifications related to the photo and information sharing.

Uses and gratifications studies also continue in more traditional media areas, such as Kim et al.'s (2015) study into print magazine reading, which found that emotional needs drive magazine reading while personal experiences drive magazine ad engagement. Music, in general, can also be considered a more traditional medium when looking at music as one single medium instead of the many different platforms that support people's ability to listen to music.

A uses and gratifications examination by Lonsdale and North (2011) looked into why people listen to music. They performed four different studies within their examination. The first study, a survey, found six important factors for listening to music: (a) negative mood management, (b) personal identity, (c) surveillance, (d) positive mood management, (e) interpersonal relations, and (f) diversion. Their second study built on these findings by qualitatively comparing these factors to other media and leisure activities outside of listening to music. Their third study was a qualitative analysis of why people listen to music consisting of open-ended questions for participants, instead of ratings of reasons, and the fourth study looked at age groups outside of adolescents and young adults. The last three studies confirmed the

factors found in the first study, with mood management being the most common and prevalent factor for why people listened to music.

De la Rosa Herrera and Pugliese's (2017) study examined young adults' use of music, the needs it addresses, as well as looking into the role of specific music genres within these needs. The results of the survey performed found seven factors for listening to music: (a) identity, (b) behavior, (c) interaction, (d) knowledge and information, (e) needs, (f) negative moods, and (g) positive moods. The study also found many connections between these factors and musical genres, including that the genre of rock was significantly related to the factor of identity, while the dance and hip-hop genres were strongly tied to the factor of behavior.

A few uses and gratifications studies have looked into specific aspects of music consumption. A recent uses and gratifications study into the genre of house music was conducted by Sarovic in 2016. Using McQuail's outline of the gratifications of diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance, house music was most connected to the gratifications of diversion. The study highlights the fact that house music is used mostly by listeners as escapism, matching the genre's reputation for listeners getting "lost" in the music instead of simply "experiencing" the music. Lantigua (2019) investigated music consumption in the Dominican Republic and found that pleasure, relaxation, and diversion were the most common gratifications of music use among Dominicans. Aside from the uses and gratifications of music consumption by Dominicans, this study also found that the most common platforms of music consumption used by Dominicans were digital streaming platforms, primarily Spotify.

The uses and gratifications theory has been shown to be an effective way of understanding the motivations of people when it comes to using media, with music being no exception. Using the uses and gratifications theory to understand why people use the specific

music platforms that they do, therefore, is a logical extension of the existing uses and gratifications studies.

Why People Listen to Music

The question of why people listen to music has been examined by many scholars over the years, from many different perspectives in addition to the uses and gratifications theory. The answer to the question of why people listen to music is as varied as the approaches taken to studying that question. North et al. (2004) found that people use music to produce psychological states, which causes a large range of types of engagement with music. These psychological states lead into one of the more important reasons why people listen to music: mood management.

Thayer et al. (1994) found in their psychological study that listening to music can change a bad mood, raise energy, and reduce tension. Sarrikallio and Erkkilä (2007) found that music improved moods effectively among adolescents. Building on the base of that study, Saarikallio (2010) created a psychometric scale to measure music and mood regulation, known as the B-MMR, and found that music improves moods in a wide range of adults (2010). Balkwill and Thompson (1999) conducted a cross-cultural study about music and emotion and found that music can effectively produce specific emotions in listeners. Overall, these studies have shown music to be an effective mood management tool across a wide range of people.

Outside of mood management, music is also used by people to fulfil mental health needs. Carlson et al. (2015) found through a behavioral and neuroimaging study a strong relationship between mental health and music. DeNora (1999) found that music is a useful means of self-therapy that provides support for the use of music therapy professionally. Pelletier (2004) found that music helps to reduce stress, and is regularly used by people to do just that. Tarrant et al.'s

(2000) study into English and American teens found that listening to music fulfilled self-actualization, as well as social and emotional needs.

This is merely a sample of the many studies into why people listen to music. As Witchel (2010) wrote, "humans have music to establish and reinforce social territory" (p. 5). Understanding an individual's social territory helps that individual gain a sense of belonging within their community, as well as a deeper understanding of themselves in order to fit better within this community (Witchel, 2010, p. 8). A need for establishing and reinforcing social territory, therefore, essentially defines humanity's largest reason for listening to music, encompassing the reasons listed above and more. These studies show that music is an intrinsic part of many people's lives for a variety of reasons. Using the results from these previously mentioned studies, this project explores the gratifications people seek and the needs they are looking to meet by using different music platforms.

Research Questions

This study draws on the uses and gratifications theory, which focuses on the consumer of media and imagines audience members as independent actors who actively choose their media content to achieve their own goals (Littlejohn et al., 2017). There are many variables capable of influencing the uses and gratifications that people seek through media consumption, researchers have found. Given this, this study investigated the following questions regarding the uses and gratifications people seek from different music platforms:

RQ1: What platform(s) do people prefer to use to consume music?

RQ2: What needs are people satisfying through the different music platforms they use?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in the gratifications people seek from physical music platforms versus non-physical music platforms?

Method

The purpose of this survey research was to investigate what platforms people are using to listen to music and the different needs they are satisfying through these platforms. Survey research was an appropriate method for this study as it has the potential to reach a large number of participants, which can then be interpreted to generalize the larger active music listening population (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). The survey method is also appropriate for testing the uses and gratifications theory as it allows for participants to express their opinions on how they use different music platforms to meet their various needs.

Several demographic variables were collected, including age, gender, and ethnicity. Participation in this study was limited to participants who were 18 years of age or older and listened to at least two hours of music a week, which was chosen as a lower limit of music listening to ensure that the results did not include those who did not listen to music regularly. Participants were also asked to choose all of the music platforms they used from a list that included the following: (a) digital streaming, (b) digital download, (c) CDs, (d) vinyl, and (e) other. These platform options were chosen as the four largest selling platforms of music in the United States during 2018 (Recording Industry Association of America, 2018).

The sample for this study was recruited using snowball sampling through sharing the questionnaire through three separate email lists and by posting the questionnaire link on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Snowball sampling allows research participants to connect new participants to the questionnaire, who can then in turn connect even more participants to the questionnaire, and so on (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). Additionally, Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk) research service was used as a recruiting tool. In the context of this study, the researcher shared the link for the questionnaire via email, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and mTurk, and

asked participants to pass the link on to further potential participants. Snowball sampling allowed for more randomized subjects and was able to allow the questionnaire to reach a variety of demographics.

This study was approved by the Rochester Institute of Technology's Institutional Review Board, and the questionnaire remained optional, consensual, and confidential. The questionnaire consisted of five questions, including one where participants indicated what music platforms they used, followed by 24 Likert scale statements (see Table 2 for statements) for each music platform selected (i.e., if the participant indicated they used two music platforms, the 24 statements would be presented twice for a total of 48 statements, etc.). The initial sample consisted of 649 respondents who fully completed the online questionnaire, with 55 participants admitting they did not listen to more than 2 hours of music a week, leaving a total of 594 participants.

The four gratifications adapted for this study were taken from the scale and themes identified by Lonsdale and North's (2011) uses and gratifications study into why people listened to music. Lonsdale and North focused on five themes: (a) Diversion, (b) Mood Management, (c) Personal Identity, (d) Personal Relationships, and (e) Surveillance. For this study, the researcher chose to drop the theme of Surveillance, as it was deemed less relevant than the other four themes, and would allow the questionnaire to be shortened slightly with the goal of increasing the response rate. Surveillance was deemed less relevant because the activities related to this theme, such as keeping up with current events or obtaining useful information for daily life, were deemed less relevant to listening to music. The Likert scale statements for the four remaining themes were derived from Lonsdale and North's 2011 study, with a five-point Likert scale accompanying these statements.

For this study, the four themes follow the definitions laid out in Lonsdale and North's 2011 study:

- *Diversion*: the need for escapism, entertainment, and relaxation.
- *Mood Management*: the need to consciously adjust one's mood.
- *Personal Identity*: the need to find out who we are.
- *Personal Relationships*: the need to interact with others.

Data Analysis

The survey (see Appendix) was available on Qualtrics for two weeks, after which it closed, and the results were exported to Excel, where the data was cleaned up by deleting incomplete entries. Some participants who chose "Other" as their music platform of choice but listed platforms that fit one of the four listed platforms were recoded to show their results under those platforms. This left the Other category representing mainly Radio listeners and those that used YouTube (not the paid YouTube music streaming service) as their primary platforms. YouTube was deemed to not fit the Digital Streaming platform category, as the platform is video based, and its main function is not music consumption.

Data analysis was conducted through mean comparison, factor analysis, scale reliability test, independent *t*-test, and one-way ANOVA tests using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. A single variable representing each gratification identified by the factor analysis was created by compiling and averaging the corresponding Likert scale items. These new gratification variables were tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha (see Table 1).

Table 1

Reliability of Representative Gratification Variables

Gratification Variable	Reliability
Personal identity	.923
Mood management	.906
Diversion	.744
Personal relationships	.755

Factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to identify the underlying gratifications. A total of four dimensions with eigenvalues greater than 1 were obtained, and these dimensions explained 64.9% of the total variance (see Table 2). One item ("To alleviate feelings of loneliness") was evenly split between two factors, and was excluded from the single variables created for each dimension.

Table 2

Factor Analysis (N = 594) Results of Survey Gratifications

Gratification Item	1	2	3	4
Personal identity				
To create an image for myself	**.818**	.124	.112	.140
To explore possible identities	**.792**	.131	.103	.159
To discover who I really am	**.790**	.143	.053	.146
To construct a sense of identity for myself	**.783**	.266	.155	.071
To portray a particular image to others	**.770**	.002	.076	.305
To display my membership of social groups/subcultures	**.752**	.022	.051	.315
To express my identity	**.741**	.300	.031	.064
To alleviate feelings of loneliness	.470	.466	.299	-.013
Mood management				
To relieve tension/stress	.101	**.802**	.096	.056
To make me feel better	.102	**.794**	.181	.100
To relieve anxiety	.243	**.763**	.111	.014
To help get through difficult times	.303	**.751**	.082	-.005
To take my mind off things	.168	**.723**	.285	.059
To relax	-.096	**.719**	.203	.174
To set the “right mood”	.222	**.630**	.075	.209
To express my feelings and emotions	.433	**.624**	.052	.082
To be entertained	-.185	**.583**	.328	.175
To escape the reality of everyday life	.452	**.528**	.254	.019
Diversion				
To pass the time	.101	.299	**.824**	.107
To relieve boredom	.113	.393	**.781**	.070
To “fill” uncomfortable silences	.417	.154	**.549**	.080
Personal relationships				
To spend time with family	.229	.134	.010	**.804**
To spend time with friends	.367	.228	.130	**.752**
To have something to talk about with others	.500	.111	.238	**.586**
Eigenvalue	**9.639**	**3.474**	**1.305**	**1.159**
% of variance	**40.16**	**14.48**	**5.43**	**4.83**
Cumulative %	**40.16**	**54.64**	**60.07**	**64.90**

An independent *t*-test was conducted to compare gratification levels with non-physical versus physical music platforms (see Table 3).

Table 3

Number, Means, and Standard Deviations Comparison of Gratification Levels

Gratification	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Personal identity			
Non-physical	653	2.94	1.070
Physical	112	3.01	1.181
Mood management			
Non-physical	642	4.13	.756
Physical	114	3.94	.891
Diversion			
Non-physical	658	3.75	.941
Physical	116	3.75	1.006
Personal relationships			
Non-physical	661	3.13	1.105
Physical	116	3.44	1.091

Results

Of the 594 participants ($N = 594$), 39.7% identified as male, 50.5% identified as female, 1.1% identified as other, and 8.8% preferred not to say. The majority of participants identified themselves as White (75.4%), 6.9% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 4.6% identified as Black/African American, 3.4% identified as Asian, 0.6% identified as Other, and 9.1% preferred not to say. In terms of participants' ages, 18.46% preferred not to list an age (listing an age was not required to complete the questionnaire). Of the remaining participants, 17.08% were between

the ages of 18-24, 30.31% were between 25-34, 13.08% were between 35-44, and 21.08% were above the age of 45.

In regard to RQ1, the platforms that participants indicated they used regularly were compared. When selecting which music platform they utilized, participants were allowed to choose more than one platform. Digital Streaming platforms were used by 493 participants, Digital Download platforms were used by 171 participants, CDs were used by 74 participants, Vinyl was used by 43 participants, and 96 participants used Other music platforms which mainly included radio and YouTube.

To answer RQ2, the four dimensions, or gratifications for listening to music, obtained from the factor analysis were labeled as follows:

Dimension 1 – Personal Identity

Dimension 2 – Mood Management

Dimension 3 – Diversion

Dimension 4 – Personal Relationships

The Personal Identity dimension was comprised of seven items, all pertaining to creating an image of one's self, for both internal personal understanding and external presentation. This includes items such as "to explore possible identities," "to discover who I really am," and "to portray a particular image to others."

The Mood Management dimension consisted of 10 items, having the most related items, all connected to using music as a tool to control one's mood and emotions. This dimension includes items such as "to make me feel better," "to relax," and "to relieve tension/stress."

The three items in the Diversion dimension related to using music as a distraction or passive activity, including the items "to pass the time," "to relieve boredom," and "to 'fill' uncomfortable silences."

The three items in the Personal Relationships dimension connected to one's social relationships with others, including the items "to spend time with family," "to spend time with friends," and "to have something to talk about with others."

When comparing means, mood management ($M = 4.08$) and diversion ($M = 3.75$) had the highest means among all participants, indicating that these are the two significantly sought gratifications from listening to music across all platforms.

To examine RQ3, an independent *t*-test was conducted comparing the gratifications of participants using physical music platforms versus those using non-physical platforms. The independent *t*-test found a significant difference between those using physical platforms for mood management ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.89$) and those using non-physical platforms for mood management ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.76$). The Levene's test for equality of variances, however, was significant ($F = 6.92$, $p = .009$) so equality of variances was not assumed, conditions $t(143) = 2.095$, $p = 0.038$. These results suggest that music listeners prefer using non-physical platforms over physical platforms when looking to address their mood management needs.

The independent *t*-test also found a significant difference between those using physical platforms for personal relationship needs ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.09$) and those using non-physical platforms for personal relationship needs ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.11$). The Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($F = .054$, $p = .816$) so equality of variances was assumed, conditions $t(775) = -2.856$, $p = 0.04$. These results suggest that music listeners prefer using

physical platforms over non-physical platforms when using music listening to address personal relationship needs.

The independent *t*-test found that there was no significant difference between those using physical platforms to meet personal identity needs ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.18$) and those using non-physical platforms to meet personal identity needs ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.07$). The Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($F = 2.631$, $p = .105$) so equality of variances was assumed, conditions $t(763) = -.651$, $p = .515$.

There was also no significant difference between those using physical platforms for diversion ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.01$) and those using non-physical platforms for diversion ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.94$). The Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($F = 1.044$, $p = .307$) so equality of variances was assumed, conditions $t(772) = -.027$, $p = .978$.

One-way ANOVA tests were then conducted on the two gratifications that had significant differences between physical and non-physical platforms per the independent *t*-test, mood management and personal relationships. These ANOVA tests were run to determine if one of the specific platform options within the physical and non-physical platform groups was used in a significantly different way to meet these two gratifications.

While a significant difference among all platforms was found within the mood management gratification, $F(4, 839) = 4.942$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .023$, the Scheffe post hoc test found no significant difference between Digital Streaming ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.75$) and Digital Download ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.77$) within the mood management gratification, $p = .200$. The Scheffe post hoc test also found no significant difference between CDs ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.88$) and Vinyl ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.91$) within the mood management gratification, $p = .785$.

A significant difference was also found among all platforms within the personal relationships gratification, $F(4, 860) = 6.412$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .029$, however the Scheffe post hoc test again found no significant difference between Digital Streaming ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.09$) and Digital Download ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.14$) within the personal relationships gratification, $p = 1.000$. The Scheffe post hoc test also found no significant difference between CDs ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.09$) and Vinyl ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.08$) within the personal relationships gratification, $p = .721$.

Both of these results suggest that the physicality of the music platform is the cause of the significant difference within the mood management and personal relationship gratifications, and not the result of one specific platform type within the physical and non-physical platform categories.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate why people choose to listen to music on different platforms and if there are specific gratifications they are seeking from different music platform types. The results of the study support previously discovered gratifications for listening to music: (a) personal identity, (b) mood management, (c) diversion, and (d) personal relationships (Lonsdale & North, 2011). The gratifications found from this study also support previous research on the connection between personal identity and music listening (Tarrant et al., 2000), as well as the effects of music on mood (Thayer et al., 1994).

The findings of this study indicate that non-physical music platforms are used over physical music platforms when listeners are seeking mood management through music. Participants responding for non-physical platforms selected higher levels of agreement with statements such as “to make me feel better” and “to relieve tension/stress.” A strong connection between mood management and non-physical platforms therefore makes sense, as using music to

manage one's mood is a deeply personal choice by the user and, therefore, the sense of privacy that a user might feel when using a non-physical music platform is more important. As well, listeners using music for mood management would more likely want quickly accessible and easy to use music platforms to address their mood as quickly as possible. Thayer et al. (1994) found that listening to music is one of the more effective behaviors for changing one's mood and was the second highest activity participants chose for mood management – ease of use of a music platform only makes this activity more appealing.

Further, most digital music libraries (whether they are via streaming or download) are larger and have preset playlists catering specifically to mood management, making these platforms preferential for many for mood management. This most likely is not a coincidence; studies showed that music was used for mood management before streaming platforms were started (Balkwill & Thompson, 1999). These platforms most likely saw this trend and created "mood" playlists to further entice users to their platforms over others; these playlists serve as a built-in benefit to using digital streaming platforms.

The results from this study also indicate that physical music platforms are used over non-physical music platforms when listeners are seeking personal relationship needs via music. Participants responding for physical platforms selected higher levels of agreement with statements such as "to spend time with friends" and "to have something to talk about with others." This finding makes sense when one is using active music listening for socializing or impressing friends and family. A physical collection of items is more social, and it might seem more impressive than a non-physical music library. For example, a collection of vinyl records or CDs specifically collected and curated by one person allows people they have relationships with to browse their library and socialize over music easily. As well, consumers still give more

importance to physical possessions over non-physical ones (Magudda, 2011), so physical music platforms are seen as more of a status symbol than non-physical platforms and therefore are more likely to be shown off by a user.

Likewise, while research has shown that it is impossible to definitively state if analog or digital has better sound quality (Morgan, 2017), many listeners firmly believe that analog, or physical, music platforms sound much better. To these listeners, the different listening aesthetic that comes from scratches and analog playback in some physical platforms makes the experience much more interesting. This opens up another possible reason why listeners are seeking personal relationship needs via physical music platforms: By using, subjectively, better sounding platforms when listening to music with friends or family, they are more likely to impress others and show the effort that they have put into the social activity they are sharing, namely actively listening to music together. There could be other factors at play as well, such as nostalgia for a past moment in a personal relationship that revolved around a physical music item, like a shared trip to a record store or an impromptu dance around a stereo. Physical music platforms may also become keepsakes within families, making them more precious due to their connections to loved ones.

Furthermore, the study indicated a lack of a significant difference in the type of music platform listeners utilize to meet their diversion and personal identity needs. Participants responded equally across platform types to statements related to diversion (e.g., “to pass the time,” “to relieve boredom”) and personal identity (e.g., “to create an image for myself,” “to discover who I really am”). This is understandable for both gratification categories. In the case of diversion, using music purely for entertainment, distraction, or combating boredom is extremely common. Listeners most likely gravitate towards whatever platform is easiest to reach at that

given moment, or chose a platform based on a preference for the technology or the sound quality they perceive that platform provides.

Personal identity also connects to this, as listeners will use whichever music platform speaks to their identity at any given moment. Ease of access to a platform and a stated preference for a platform's sound quality or technologic qualities can easily be absorbed as part of one's personal identity. People tend to feel strongly about if physical or non-physical platforms are "better," to the point that both platform types could easily be connected to someone's personal identity, especially if they are an avid music listener and already connect strongly to music in general on a personal level.

The findings from this study also show that while the participants certainly used non-physical platforms much more than physical platforms, the use of physical music platforms is not fully disappearing. The trend towards digital entertainment in visual media (e.g., television, film, magazines, books, etc.) is also seen in the trend toward digital music platforms, but this study does show that the physical music platform is not fully obsolete.

In fact, the use of physical music platforms over non-physical music platforms for meeting the personal relationships gratification could imply that physical music platforms may never fully become obsolete, as that platform seems to be meeting this gratification more than non-physical platforms. Compare, for example, the gift of a playlist on a streaming service versus the gift of a mixtape cassette or mixed CD. While all are thoughtful gifts, the physicality of the mixtape or CD is seen by most as a representation of a stronger and more thoughtful relationship than the gift of a playlist. The contributions of physicality towards personal relationships is something many people are especially aware of currently, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, as personal relationships have had to be supported through virtual platforms.

While there are no academic studies into this phenomenon yet, anecdotal evidence has shown that using non-physical media platforms to support personal relationships does not quite meet the needs of many people as they seek new ways to connect to each other.

This study found that the music platform type used matters for certain, but not all, gratifications listeners are seeking. For musicians looking to target audiences based on their music listening needs, this study might show which platforms could work for targeting these audiences. However, musicians tend to try to reach the widest audience possible, so choosing to release music only on certain platforms most likely would not make sense. The findings of this study also reinforce the need to release music on all platforms. This not only allows musicians to reach the widest audience they can, it also allows listeners to choose actively which platforms they will use to meet their needs.

Listeners can actively choose to change between music platforms, if possible, while seeking gratification through music listening. By making music available across all platforms, the music will cover the broadest spectrum of listeners and the gratifications that they are seeking. While some listeners may think that consuming music on only one platform type is sufficient, they could be missing out on opportunities to have a strongly emotionally connection with a song or album. For example, physical music platforms were found to meet personal relationship needs over non-physical platforms. If a listener only uses non-physical music platforms, they may be missing out on the chance to emotionally connect with a specific song or album during a pivotal moment in their personal relationships, such as a first date, or the introduction of a type of music from father to son, or any other moment similar to these.

In terms of listening to music on different platform types, this study revealed that users choose to utilize different platforms when trying to meet their mood management and personal

relationship needs, but not when trying to meet their diversion or personal identity needs. The uses and gratifications theory states that users actively seek out media types to meet specific needs, as seen in this study. The lack of significant difference between platform types when it comes to participants meeting their diversion or personal identity needs shows that specific needs can be met with multiple platform types. However, the significant differences between platform types when it comes to participants meeting their mood management and personal relationship needs shows that different platform types can work better to meet the needs of listeners. This somewhat contradictory relationship found between users and platform physicality supports both the studies by Magudda (2011), who found that consumers have an underlying need for physical objects when consuming music, and Hagen (2015), who found that curated and personal music libraries within digital streaming platforms allowed users to feel as if they were "collecting" music in the same ways of physical music platforms. Which music platform type used truly seems to depend on the specific needs of the listener whether or not the physicality of the platform is truly important or not when satisfying their needs.

It is important to note that, while non-physical music platforms were used much more by participants than physical music platforms, physical music platforms still have a place in meeting the gratifications listeners are seeking. These findings also reinforce the uses and gratifications framework when it comes to listening to music, no matter the platform type used. Per the basis of the uses and gratifications theory, this study found that listeners are actively choosing their preferred music platform to meet a variety of needs. However, the reasons for choosing between physical or non-physical platforms may not always be due to the specific gratifications they are actively seeking by listening to music.

Limitations

There are a few limitations of this study. Firstly, the questionnaire was not widely dispersed. While it did reach a large number of people, the downside of using a snowball sampling method is that the respondents can be more homogenous than the actual population that, in this study, was focused on all adults in the United States. The sample of this study tended to be younger adults, and weighted more heavily with White participants compared to the general population of the United States. The questionnaire also did not have any warning for those outside of the United States to not respond to the survey, nor did it ask for location or respondent's nationality, so international responses may have been recorded alongside responses from U.S. residents.

Another specific and interesting limitation of this study is that it was conducted during the COVID-19 global pandemic. There are multiple implications from conducting this study because of this, the first being that the response rate may have been inflated due to respondents using the questionnaire as a distraction from the pandemic and related lockdowns. The second implication is that respondents' music listening habits may have dramatically changed in light of pandemic related lockdowns. Some respondents may have been listening to music more, or less, often due to being stuck in their homes, as well as utilizing music platforms for wildly different needs than they would have pre-lockdown.

This also adds confusion into what respondents were thinking about: Some respondents might have answered the questionnaire with regard to their pre-pandemic habits while others might have answered the questionnaire with how they were currently utilizing different music platforms. It would be interesting to see this same study performed after the global pandemic has passed and compare the results of these studies. Unfortunately, such a repeat study will have to

wait for the global pandemic to pass and possibly even until the global economy has recovered, allowing people to have more dispensable income to spend on music platforms.

Future Studies

As mentioned earlier, future studies could recreate this study after the COVID-19 global pandemic has passed and then compare the results to this study. Ideally, the same sample would be used to have direct comparison over time, but the logistic difficulty of recreating this study's sample might prove to be too much. However, a study post-pandemic might show a significant difference in music listening habits as users return to everyday life.

Future studies may also want to recruit a more diverse and representative sample for the study, specifically one that reaches older adults and more minority populations. The study could also be adjusted to include a wider range of platform types within the categories of physical and non-physical, as some participants used the Other category to answer while listing platforms that this study considered either physical or non-physical. Additionally, a qualitative study based on these findings could be performed to gain more insight into listeners' personal reasons for using specific music platforms. This would allow for more nuance than this study's questionnaire provided.

Conclusion

This study examined the motivations behind listening to music on both physical and non-physical music platforms. As different media continue to transfer from physical platforms to non-physical platforms, understanding what motivates users to choose between those platforms is important. While ease of access and cost may affect which platforms users gravitate towards using, the gratifications that they are seeking may also affect the platform they choose to use to listen to music. There seems to be an intangible connection between users and certain music

platforms, both physical and non-physical, when it comes to specific reasons for using those platforms. A physical object can gain a stronger attachment from a user than a non-physical due to its physical presence around a user. At the same time, a digital platform allows users a wider library and more options in terms of music available. As well, non-physical platforms tend to offer more privacy and individuality in their use when compared to physical platforms.

Music has been part of human culture since before recorded history and will most likely continue to be part of human culture for centuries to come. While the technology for recorded music has only been available for approximately a century, this technology has evolved rapidly, culminating in the shift to digital platforms in the early 2000s and the introduction of digital streaming in the 2010s. Music listeners now seem to gravitate more towards non-physical music platforms over physical music platforms, however physical music platforms have been found in this study to be preferred for meeting certain gratifications. The shift to listening to music digitally has allowed for listeners to discover wider varieties of music and for musicians to reach audiences that they had not been able to reach previously. However, physical platforms will continue to be used, as they meet certain needs for users that non-physical platforms have yet to be able to meet. As technology evolves, this may change, but for now both physical music platforms will continue to have a noticeable presence among music listening platforms.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Principle Investigator: Emily Hawk

"Take Those Old Records off the Shelf": A Uses & Gratifications Study of Different Music Platforms

You are invited to participate in a research study about listening to music on different music platforms. The purpose of this study is to understand why someone may choose to listen to music on a particular platform. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before completing the questionnaire.

This study is being conducted by Emily Hawk from Rochester Institute of Technology, School of Communication.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to understand why someone may choose to listen to music on a particular platform.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

If you agree to this study, you will complete an online questionnaire about your music listening habits for different music platforms, which should take 5 - 10 minutes of your time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The online survey instrument will assign you a unique id and your demographic information collected in this study will be used for data analysis purposes only.

RISK

We anticipate no risks to you if you choose to participate.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study, contact the researcher: **Emily Hawk** at eeh3918@rit.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the **Rochester Institute of Technology, Institutional Review Board**, Dawn Severson, Engineering Hall, Room #2115, Rochester, NY 14623, (585) 475-2167, or by email at hsro@rit.edu.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with the investigator.

I confirm that I am 18 years or older and that I consent to taking this questionnaire.

- Yes
- No

[If "no" is chosen, the respondent is taken straight to the survey termination screen and their response will not be included.]

Screening Questions

1. Do you listen to more than 2 hours of music a week?
    - Yes
    - No

[If "no" is chosen, the respondent is taken straight to the survey termination screen.]

2. Of the options below, please select which type of music platform(s) you regularly use.

    [respondents are allowed to choose multiple options]

    - Digital Streaming (ex. Spotify, Apple Music, etc.)
    - Digital Download (ex. iTunes, Bandcamp, other paid MP3 downloading services)
    - CDs
    - Vinyl
    - Other *[enter text to describe other]*

Music Platform Use

[Question #3 only displays if "Digital Streaming" was selected in question #2]

3. Please select how much you agree or disagree about each statement below when you use Digital Streaming platforms.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
To escape the reality of everyday life					
To be entertained					
To relax					
To take my mind off things					
To pass the time					
To relieve boredom					
To help get through difficult times					
To relieve anxiety					
To relieve tension/stress					

To express my feelings and emotions					
To make me feel better					
To set the "right" mood					
To alleviate feelings of loneliness					
To construct a sense of identity for myself					
To explore possible identities					
To express my identity					
To create an image for myself					
To discover who I really am					
To portray a particular image to others					
To display my membership of social groups/subcultures					
To spend time with family					
To have something to talk about with others					
To spend time with friends					
To "fill" uncomfortable silences					

[Question #4 only displays if "Digital Download" was selected in question #2]

4. Please select how much you agree or disagree about each statement below when you use Digital Download platforms.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
To escape the reality of everyday life					
To be entertained					
To relax					
To take my mind off things					
To pass the time					
To relieve boredom					
To help get through difficult times					
To relieve anxiety					
To relieve tension/stress					

To express my feelings and emotions					
To make me feel better					
To set the “right” mood					
To alleviate feelings of loneliness					
To construct a sense of identity for myself					
To explore possible identities					
To express my identity					
To create an image for myself					
To discover who I really am					
To portray a particular image to others					
To display my membership of social groups/subcultures					
To spend time with family					
To have something to talk about with others					
To spend time with friends					
To “fill” uncomfortable silences					

[Question #5 only displays if “CDs” was selected in question #2]

5. Please select how much you agree or disagree about each statement below when you use CDs.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
To escape the reality of everyday life					
To be entertained					
To relax					
To take my mind off things					
To pass the time					
To relieve boredom					
To help get through difficult times					
To relieve anxiety					
To relieve tension/stress					

To express my feelings and emotions					
To make me feel better					
To set the “right” mood					
To alleviate feelings of loneliness					
To construct a sense of identity for myself					
To explore possible identities					
To express my identity					
To create an image for myself					
To discover who I really am					
To portray a particular image to others					
To display my membership of social groups/subcultures					
To spend time with family					
To have something to talk about with others					
To spend time with friends					
To “fill” uncomfortable silences					

[Question #6 only displays if “Vinyl” was selected in question #2]

6. Please select how much you agree or disagree about each statement below when you use Vinyl.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
To escape the reality of everyday life					
To be entertained					
To relax					
To take my mind off things					
To pass the time					
To relieve boredom					
To help get through difficult times					
To relieve anxiety					
To relieve tension/stress					

To express my feelings and emotions					
To make me feel better					
To set the “right” mood					
To alleviate feelings of loneliness					
To construct a sense of identity for myself					
To explore possible identities					
To express my identity					
To create an image for myself					
To discover who I really am					
To portray a particular image to others					
To display my membership of social groups/subcultures					
To spend time with family					
To have something to talk about with others					
To spend time with friends					
To “fill” uncomfortable silences					

[Question #7 only displays if “Other” was selected in question #2]

7. Please select how much you agree or disagree about each statement below when you use [*piped text from “Other” text entry box in question #2*] music platforms.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
To escape the reality of everyday life					
To be entertained					
To relax					
To take my mind off things					
To pass the time					
To relieve boredom					
To help get through difficult times					
To relieve anxiety					
To relieve tension/stress					

To express my feelings and emotions					
To make me feel better					
To set the “right” mood					
To alleviate feelings of loneliness					
To construct a sense of identity for myself					
To explore possible identities					
To express my identity					
To create an image for myself					
To discover who I really am					
To portray a particular image to others					
To display my membership of social groups/subcultures					
To spend time with family					
To have something to talk about with others					
To spend time with friends					
To “fill” uncomfortable silences					

Demographics

8. How old are you? _____
9. What gender do you most identify with?
    - Male
    - Female
    - Other
    - Prefer not to say
10. What is your ethnicity?
    - White
    - Black or African American
    - American Indian or Alaska Native

- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other
- Prefer not to say