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Investigating Music Consumption 'Circuits of Practice'

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MSc in Media and Communications

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Eva Tkavc Dubokovic

ABSTRACT

The digital era of music technologies is a crucial issue in media and consumer studies, especially considering the ongoing changes these cultural goods brought in music consumption. Adopting a practice theoretical approach, this research project explores the integration of music technologies into individuals' music consumption practices. Empirically, the research is based on twelve semi-structured, in-depth interviews with young, London-based, digital music consumers. In order to grasp the complexity of changes propelled by the advent of digital artefacts, the project adopts Magaudda's (2011) 'circuit of practice', an explicative scheme that facilitates empirical analysis and that aims to unpack the shape and formation of consumers' practices. The analysis shows that practices are heterogeneous, that they, in the case of digital music consumption, involve both tangible and digital music objects, and that the latter's mobilisation is performed in relation to consumers' music preferences, marking contemporary music consumption 'circuits of practice' as diversified and entrenched within the materiality of music technologies. As such, the project addresses and remedies the literature's neglect of the relationships between cultural practices and materiality, highlights the importance of music taste in the 'circuits of practice', and aims to stimulate an interdisciplinary conversation about the configurations of designed musical artefacts in the social situations of which they are part.

INTRODUCTION

Magaudda (2011: 17) writes that 'during the last ten years the music market has undergone a period of deep transition as a direct consequence of the flourishing of digital music and the development of Internet based services such as mp3, peer-to-peer networks and online music stores'. The process of digitisation, characterised by the shift from the fixity of material music formats like compact discs (CDs) to a fluid intangibility of music consumed, profoundly changed the field of music consumption. The advent of the mp3 format clearly increased music distribution, as seen in the enormous success of Apple's online music store and application iTunes. According to commentator Estes (2015, para.2), 'most people know iTunes from its

lengthy and celebrated tenure as the best music app in existence'. Streaming technology represents the latest development in the domain. Using buffered play, these cloud-based services allow the user to access music from multiple devices without the need to download music files (Fox, 2005). At the time of writing, streaming platforms like SoundCloud and Spotify are increasingly used, rivalling iTunes and portable music players such as the iPod (Dang-Nguyen, Dejean, & Moreau, 2012).

While the advent of digital technologies in music consumption has been investigated across disciplines, the actual everyday musical practices have been given insufficient attention to date. The literature is split between two paradigms: one that examines music technologies and their materiality to unpack the cultural transformations they encourage (Sterne, 2006; Kot, 2010; Wikström, 2013) and another that studies individuals' interactions with music as an object (DeNora, 2000, 2006; Bennett & Nowak, 2014). Principally adopted by cultural theorists, commentators and marketeers, the former critically overlooks the social embeddedness of music technologies. The latter, predominantly a sociological perspective, neglects the technologies' materiality. Along with practice theorists Hand et al., (2007), Magaudda (2011), and Shove et al., (2012), this dissertation argues that a greater confluence is required between the two trends in order to provide a stronger grasp of the complex interplay between individuals, music content and music objects that unfold in their everyday contexts.

This research project takes contemporary modes of music consumption as its principal focus, and pays specific attention to ordinary music practices. It applies Magaudda's (2011) practice theoretical approach because it allows us to focus 'on the individual and concrete level in which practices are created, stabilised and transformed' (Magaudda, 2011: 21). Thus it allows for a study of the appropriation of music technologies at the level of consumer practices, which is yet to be fully investigated. Moreover, by studying the social integration of these technologies, it considers music practices from the sociocultural perspective, and connects materiality and their social location — that is, notions frequently separated in the literature. This inscription of music artefacts within the pre-existing configurations of cultural practices is also the reason behind Magaudda's call to study music consumption in terms of the 'circuit of practice'. While the concept of 'circuit of practice' will be unpacked throughout the dissertation, what matters for our purposes is its representation of cultural processes that measure the degree to which music technologies penetrate consumers' everyday lives. The results of this study show that individuals diversify their music experiences by using different sound carriers at various levels. Empirically, the project relies on data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 young London-based digital music consumers. These afford the desired personal accounts of music interactions (Gilbert, 2001).

The project addresses the issues in three stages. First, it scrutinises the literature on music consumption in the digital age and users' engagement with music content that has emerged across diverse disciplines, situating practice theory in relation to the paradigms. Second, it unpacks methodological considerations, followed by a presentation and interpretation of results. Third, it illustrates the significance of music content in consumers' material music interactions by advocating an inclusion of the element of music 'preferences' in Magaudda's (2011) analytical scheme, and proffers recommendations for further research. If music is becoming 'ubiquitous' (Kassabian, 2013) with music technologies, then both the material conditions that underpin the ubiquity and musical taste need to be investigated in order to provide a comprehensive portrayal of contemporary music 'circuits of practice'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes a critical review of selected scholarly literature, which informed the formation of the research question and, in various ways, supports and challenges the arguments and results presented in this dissertation.

Music Technologies in the Era of 'Digital Revolution': Downplaying the Uses of Technologies

Fifteen years have passed since the introduction of Napster and similar peer-to-peer platforms, commonly cited as the source of profound changes in the music industry (Leyshon et al., 2005; Rojek, 2005; Currah, 2006; Liebowitz, 2008). Depending on whose interests are presented, technological innovations tend to be framed as either the end of a business model or an opportunity for new collaborative networks (Nowak, 2014b). However, Nowak (2014b: 147) continues, 'more than a decade after the advent of digital technologies, neither has emerged'. This indicates an overestimation of music technologies' effects, which this section observes in the literature.

To illustrate the divided opinions on the digital music era with examples – economist Cameron (2015) writes that not only industry-driven pleading but also independent commentators use terms like 'death' and 'end' in relation to falling demand. This is commonly associated with the decreasing CD sales and the spread of file-sharing (Bhattacharjee, Gopal, & Sanders, 2003; Huang, 2005; Stafford, 2010; Rogers, 2013). Meanwhile, focusing on technologies' possibilities, sociologist Rojek (2005: 358) argues that the Internet offers 'music for the people at no more than the cost of the Internet connection'. Once online, users are faced with an

unlimited scope to consume music, for 'the whole point of digital music is the risk-free grazing' (Doctorow, 2003, quoted by Tepper et al., 2008: 207). Thus a link is drawn between the assumed ease of accessing music, music's availability online, and users' capacities to enjoy endless possibilities.

Such arguments echo the discourse of what Kusek and Leonhard (2005) and Kot (2010) term 'digital revolution'. 'Digital revolution', observers note, is the unprecedented potential of 'the digital' (Prior, 2010). According to Kusek and Leonhard (2005: 6), music is now circulating like 'water,' as 'digital technologies have been totally and unobtrusively integrated into the lifestyles of individuals. As a result, the persistence of physical sound carriers like CDs is also questioned. As Molteni and Ordanini (2003: 389) argue, 'managers working in the industry…will have to face the shift to a world without physical artefacts'. While this dissertation does not deny digital technologies' impact on consumption practices, it argues that such a framework is problematic due to its analytical overestimations. First, it assumes that technologies determine practices, which is associated with technological determinism. On the latter, social media scholar dannah boyd notes (2014: 16) that its 'extreme rhetorics are unhelpful in understanding what actually happens when new technologies are broadly adopted…reality is nuanced and messy.' Second, the term 'revolution' implies a dramatic alteration of system. This change needs to be critically evaluated (Nowak, 2014b). This project aims to accommodate this by studying individuals' consumption practices. But, as practice theorist Magaudda (2011: 18) highlights, there is little literature on the subject: 'while the changes occurring in music listening practices have been partially addressed from productive, legal and economic perspectives, their consequences on the sociocultural level and the level of consumer practices still need to be fully considered'.

Recent quantitative inquiries researched the technological mediums whereby listeners access music (The British Recorded Music Industry [BPI], 2013; UK Music, 2014; Nielsen, 2014; The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry [IFPI], 2015). Although tending towards generalisations rather than an in-depth analysis of music consumption, these accounts provide fruitful results. Contrary to the assumptions voiced by 'digital revolution' analysts, they highlight the materially diverse ways of consuming music: 'The industry remains a multi-format business…we find our 'sales' revenue streams – downloading, physical and streaming – now split into three roughly equal parts'. This signals two important points. First, streaming is rising in importance. However, there is little literature on it apart from perspectives resonating 'digital revolution,' as seen in Wikström's (2013) demarcation of music industry as 'the Cloud industry'. Weijters et al., (2014) add that streaming is only one part of the many online music options. For instance, there also exist file-hosting services like

FileShare and online radios such as Berlin Community Radio. Second, physical artefacts remain relevant. As IFPI (2015: 31) finds, 'the physical market, including an increasing vinyl share, remains important not only for collectors, it is also a popular format for domestic repertoire'. IFPI (2015: 8) adds that 'more than a third of respondents have purchased CDs or vinyl in the last six months'. This is surprising in the light of earlier statements about CDs' 'death' (Molteni & Organini, 2003). Furthermore, vinyl records are associated with performativity (McCourt, 2005) and nostalgia (Katz, 2010), leading to 'vinyl revival' (van Dijck, 2006). On the qualitative side, Magaudda (2011) notes the use of objects like external drives, designed principally as computer accessories. These are increasingly integrated into music practices, thus further denoting the coexistence of digital and physical artefacts therein.

Moreover, Nowak (2014a) highlights audiences' differentiation of music practices by the artefacts they use. Individuals with wider musical preferences frequently consider digital music formats due to their convenience and extensive music catalogues. Others, keen on a specific artist, often use physical formats. This is a process Nowak (2014a) terms the 'gradualism' of music practices. UK Music (2009: 4) notes a respondent's music practice: 'The touch and feel of CD or vinyl, of having a tangible product in the hand, the appreciation of seeing what effort has been put into the CD sleeve' is 'really interesting'. This example portrays the perceived quality of physical artefacts. Furthermore, the former do not only offer an aesthetic satisfaction but also a visual portrayal of audiences' preference for an artist. Denoting the strong association between the vinyl record and the electronic music scene, Bartmanski and Woodward (2013) observe how to electronic music lovers, the format symbolises their music preference. This highlights that music preferences matter in terms of how individuals access music. In lieu of cruising through unlimited music options (Doctorow, 2003), they rely on their 'repertoires of preferences' (Rimmer, 2012).

Indeed, people differ in their ways of consuming music. Investigating the rate of innovations' adoption, Rogers ([1962] 1995) names five categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Albeit criticised for his allegedly simplified quantification of human networks (Damanpour, 1996), Rogers' contribution is important in highlighting the varied appropriation of innovations. This, Rogers argues, relies heavily on human capital, an assemblage of resources like skills and knowledge possessed by individuals. Moreover, Rimmer (2012) notes the role of pre-dispositions in the shaping of 'repertoires of preferences', a view he predicates on Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. Based on Bourdieu's (1990: 53) definition of 'habitus' as 'a system of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures', Rimmer (2012) discusses 'musical habitus' as an outcome of early exposition to certain music genres that then affects

one's later music preferences. Bourdieu is relevant for practice theory as one of its formulators. In his strand of practice theory designed to approach 'habitus', Bourdieu (1990) emphasises practices' routinisation. However, his view has been critiqued as overly structure-oriented and static (Nicolini, et al. 2003). As will be discussed, this dissertation espouses practice theory's strand that stresses change. This strategy adapts the empirical application of practice theory to the otherwise dynamic everyday life (Warde, 2005).

These findings indicate that music consumers' interactions with music are diverse and entrenched in the materiality of music technologies, as it is through these they access music. This reveals the inadequacy of 'digital revolution', a notion widely diffused across the work on music technologies and the associated cultural changes. By focusing on what individuals can do with these technologies, this paradigm critically downplays individuals' actual uses thereof (Hand *et al.* 2007; Magaudda 2011; Nowak, 2014b). Several disciplines have tackled consumption issues, as it is discussed in the next section.

Studying Music Consumption in Everyday Life: Downplaying Materiality

Hand et al. (2007) write that although various disciplines have studied material objects (sociology, anthropology and archaeology), materiality represents a missing territory in scholarly literature. Sociology is particularly important because it was in its realm that objects and their consumption became a matter of academic interest in its own right, rather than figuring as a subsidiary part of boarder analyses of capitalist processes (Veblen, 1912, cited by Hand et al., 2007: 4). Several sociologists have also specifically studied the interactions between individuals and music, which is relevant to this dissertation (Hennion, 2003, 2007; Sloboda, 2000; DeNora, 2000, 2006). This section shows that while sociology addresses objects of consumption as symbolically communicative, it overlooks their pragmatic utility. The gap is addressed by practice theory and – to a certain extent – science and technology studies (Shove et al., 2012).

A sociological focus on objects as carriers of meaning can be found in, for instance, Featherstone's (1990) study on goods being acquired to make visible one's economic success. Bennett and Nowak (2014) outline the 'everyday life and music' paradigm as productive due to its conceptualisations of the place music holds in people's everyday lives. To portray its tenets, the section presents the work of Hennion (2007) and DeNora (2000). This is because, according to Bennett and Nowak (2014), both authors are renowned for their contributions to the field: DeNora (2000) for sparking a sociological interest in ordinary music consumption, and Hennion (2007) for his analysis of music taste.

DeNora (2000: 46) highlights the significance of music's sonic structures and emotional strength. DeNora (2000) borrows Gibson's (1979) concept of affordances to unpack the various impacts and uses of music. For example, songs' lyrics afford recalling partners and, with these reminiscences, emotionally heightened events. The object here is music, as it affords possibilities for semiotic and emotional processes: 'music is a resource – it provides affordances – for world building' (DeNora, 2000: 44). However, she mentions neither the actual interaction with music objects, nor their importance for the accomplishment of consumption practices. As portrayed earlier, digital and physical music objects sustain and shape the modes of music consumption.

Hennion (2007) meanwhile explores musical trajectories of 'amateurs', who are people that develop love for music. Like DeNora (2000), Hennion (2007) argues that individuals' encounters with music produce aesthetic experiences. These emerge not from music artefacts, but music's sonic characteristics and semiotic force: for instance, 'the opera lover (because of the singing, the divas) is more prone to thinking about music in terms of…emotions' (Hennion, 2007: 9). Unlike DeNora (2000), Hennion (2007) studies the use of an object, the CD. However, Hennion interprets CDs as merely mediums to express one's music taste: 'as mediators, they are capable of arousing passions and intimacy' (Hennion, 2007: 13). The actual participation of materiality in amateurs' listening practices remains undeveloped.

The exploration of the ways in which objects shape daily routines is at the core of science and technology studies. Bruno Latour (2000) claims that:

> The great import of science and technology studies to the social sciences is to have shown how many features of the former society, durability, expansion, scale, mobility, were actually due to the capacity of artefacts to construct social order. They are the stuff out of which socialness is made (p. 13).

That is to say, 'stuff,' including music technologies, affects users' actions. Latour (1990) illustrates this point by giving an example of oversized hotel key fobs. These say, through their design, 'return me to the desk'. Latour's argument that objects literally shape socialness is perhaps a step too far (discussed below), but the point here is that people's actions are inscribed into material objects' design (Hand et al., 2007). Thus, 'it is misleading to think things are infinitely flexible carriers of ascribed meaning', as observed in sociological accounts (Hand et al., 2007: 7).

Science and technology studies offer a perspective through which to conceptualise the relations between music objects and their users. Indeed, sociologists DeNora (2000) and Hennion

(2007) give productive accounts on music diffusion and its interrelation with people in everyday contexts. Thus, they also contribute to theorising on the everyday, which remains under-researched. Hesmondhalgh (2002: 120) argues that 'the everyday is a taken-for-granted category', and de Certeau (1984) calls for more attention to what people do and how. As the next section suggests, ordinary music consumption may be fruitfully addressed via practice theory.

Towards Practice Theory

This project adopts the lens of practice theory, which began in the thinking of Wittgenstein, Taylor, and Dreyfus, and in social theory, including Bourdieu and Foucault, and Giddens' structuration theory (Driessens et al., 2010). Due to its scattered origin, the theory constitutes 'a relatively unsettled intellectual landscape' (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011: 1243). However, Reckwitz (2002) and Schatzki (2002), along with Warde (2005) in consumption studies, have made important contributions in this regard.

Generally, the practice approach places and analyses the social in practices. A practice is 'a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge' (Reckwitz, 2002: 249). This project therefore assumes that consumption practices result from individual performances embedded in compound contexts, where bodily activities, meaning, as well as objects, form specific configurations of practices (Magaudda, 2011). This is also a position adopted by Magaudda's (2011) 'circuit of practice', which is further explored in the next section.

Artefacts are vital parts of practices. Schatzki, et al. (2001: 3) support this by stating that 'understanding specific practices always involves apprehending material configurations'. Reckwitz (2002: 252) is direct: 'in order to play football we need a ball'. Therefore, practice theory addresses the disconnection in the literature between materiality and the study of daily life, 'adding a material dimension to otherwise conventionally 'social' theories' (Shove et al., 2012: 9). Moreover, the materiality echoes Latour's emphasis on 'stuff' being constitutive of socialness, and demonstrates science and technology studies' influence on practice theory. Latour is one of the key figures in Reckwitz's work (Shove et al., 2012). But practice theorists largely disagree with Latour's idea that objects literally anchor social action (Law, 1991). Nor do they shape practices in a causal way, as seen in technologically determinist accounts of music technologies. A ball does not make the practice of playing football because practices also involve other elements like skills and human body activity (Shove et al., 2012). This is also

supported by Magaudda (2011: 21), who in his 'circuit of practice' addresses 'materiality not as a single entity, but as one of the elements inside a specific social practice'.

Furthermore, people sustain practices by performing them. Adopting practice theory in the project involves seeing music consumers as performers of practices (Shove et al., 2012). Reckwitz (2002: 251) adds that 'when we learn a practice, we learn to be bodies in a certain way'. This embodied nature of practices can be portrayed by the gestures performed by Hennion's (2007) amateurs to reach musical satisfaction. For instance, amateurs listen to music through CDs because of their supposed intimacy. This indicates three ideas, important for the dissertation. First, individuals' choice of CDs highlights that embodied practices are also constituted by mental knowledge. Thus, the dissertation perceives practices as 'bodily-mental' (Christensen & Røpke, 2010). Second, this broadened perspective on knowledge means that practices are performed with affect and emotion, which opens up space for discussions on music taste (Gheradi, et al., 2007). This links back to Rimmer's (2012) statement that individuals exhibit 'repertoires of preferences' in their music consumption. Hence consumers' preferences are given attention throughout the research. Third, respondents' use of CDs due to the intimacy they offer shows that material objects participate in people's responses to music. Studying music consumption, Nowak (2014a) argues that Gibson's (1979) concept of affordances can – by exploring what material objects afford – help to explain how individuals interact with music objects. This project therefore considers music technologies' characteristics or affordances. Yet it bears in mind that these alone do not explain how technologies materialise within everyday music interactions. This project addresses this issue by exploring the performative integration of materiality within music consumption 'circuits of practice' (Magaudda, 2011).

Despite its advances, practice theory has been critiqued as overly abstract (Warde, 2005). Several scholars have noted the difficulty of translating its philosophical tenets into empirical analysis (Christensen & Røpke, 2010; Gieger, 2009; Magaudda, 2011; Hargreaves, 2011; Truninger, 2011). Warde (2005: 136) adds that 'philosophical descriptions of practices often presume an unlikely degree of shared understanding and common conventions'. According to Christensen and Røpke (2010), its focus on routines and the integration of bodily-mental practices suggest stability, thereby making it challenging for practice theory to account for daily life's heterogeneity. Because empirical applications are centered on change, the project now turns to the 'circuit of practice' tool.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The 'circuit of practice' is an analytical tool for examining dynamic processes of consumption on the basis of the general framework advanced in the domain of practice theory. Under the assumption that social practices' heterogeneity and complexity can be more easily simplified into three elements interweaved with one another, Magaudda (2011) defines the 'circuit' as consisting of objects, doing and meaning. In this, he draws on the work of Reckwitz (2002), Shove and colleagues (see Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2012). Shove and Pantzar (2005, quoted by Magaudda, 2011: 20) define the three elements of practices as: '(1) that of meanings and representations; (2) that consisting of objects, technologies and material culture in general; (3) that represented of embodied competencies, activities, and doing'. Practices are therefore socially shared patterns of activities that result from performative integrations of these dimensions (Magaudda, 2011).

The analytical framework was chosen for three reasons. First, it stresses the flexibility and dynamics of change, providing the theoretical perspectives on practices by Reckwitz and Schatzki with an empirical articulation in the domain of mundane practices (Magaudda, 2011). The emphasis on dynamics is also evident in the term 'circuit'. The latter has its roots in Marx's concept of the 'circuit of capital' (1965, cited by Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 20). By this, Marx shows how capital relies for its operations not solely on exploitation in a certain workplace, but on the continuous incorporation of various social sites; it circulates (Dyer-Witheford, 1999). But our tool is neither directly related to Marx's circuit, nor should it be mistaken for Hall's ([1973] 1980) 'circuit of culture', a concept that depicts fluid processes whereby culture gathers meaning. In fact, practice theory was developed as a conceptual alternative to this tradition of media texts because, by neglecting practices, 'the tradition has in diverse ways narrowed our understanding of the social' (Reckwitz, 2002: 258). Second, Magaudda tested the tool in his empirical research. This is important given the stated difficulty of applying practice theory to the study of everyday life. Third, Magaudda explored music consumption, which further confirms its suitability for this project. Yet, our objectives slightly differ: while Magaudda is focused on the change in users' music practices with reference to their appropriation of three specific music objects, this research scrutinises the dynamic use of music technologies more generally. As Nowak (2014b) contends, focusing on specific objects runs the risk of downplaying the diversity of music consumption.
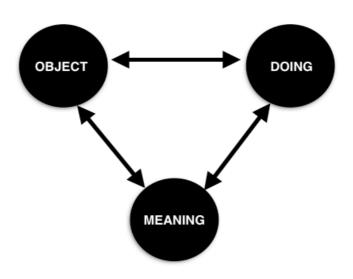
Figure 1:

Simplification of interconnected elements of practice

RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

Thus, the project aims to provide a comprehensive portrayal of contemporary music consumption in London. It considers multiple materialities in its circulation rather than several specific ones. Moreover, as shown in the literature review, there exists a disconnection between two traditions, focused on music consumption: on the one hand, the studies highlighting sound carriers' materiality; and on the other hand, the social theories insensitive to objects. This project aims to connect the two by looking at individuals' mobilisation of music technologies in everyday life. Accordingly, it follows Magaudda's 'circuit of practice', an analytical scheme developed for applying practice theory to the patterns of consumption activities. Because of their dynamic nature and composition involving three elements (object, doing, and meaning) in continuous circulation, music consumption practices are in this project referred to as 'circuits of practice'. Following the tri-dimensional structure of the 'circuit,' the research question is constituted as:

RQ: How do music objects, doing, and meaning interrelate and cohere to shape specific individuals' music consumption 'circuits of practice'? Explored with reference to music technologies in contemporary everyday contexts among 20-30 year old digital music consumers in London.

Embedded is practice theory's central question, which will be necessarily addressed. This is, according to Couldry (2004), a question of what people do in relation to media in all its openness.

RQ2: What do people do in relation to music technologies?

Overall, the project aims to provide an up-to-date depiction and understanding of music consumption practices. By using practice theory to investigate the issue, it aims to complement the relatively limited literature on its empirical applications. Additionally, detailed conclusions are facilitated by the project's qualitative approach.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The ensuing section compares qualitative interviews and thematic analysis to other possible methods, thereby justifying their suitability for the project.

Qualitative Interviews and Thematic Analysis

According to Nicolini et al. (2003: 28), 'a practice-based approach directs the researcher's attention to what people do and say, to the world of life made of the details and events that constitute the texture of everyday living'. These preoccupations in turn insinuate a preference for a method that espouses a strong involvement in the reality of practitioners. Qualitative interviewing is seen as optimal, considering that 'the understanding of the life worlds of respondents and the specified social groupings is the *sine qua non* of qualitative interviewing' (Gaskell, 2000: 39). Defined as 'a method for accessing individuals'…views, understandings, experiences, and opinions' (Bryne, 2012: 209), qualitative interviewing affords a detailed exploration of individuals' music practices. In this project, qualitative interviewing refers to conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews, for reasons further explored throughout the section.

Alternative data-collection methods were critically evaluated, but rejected due to their unsuitability for the project. As a quantitative method, surveys are useful for capturing the experiences and behaviour of larger populations (Dillman, 2008). As shown in the literature review, several researchers (IFPI, 2015; Nielsen, 2014; Molteni & Ordanini, 2003) used surveys to map music consumption patterns. These accounts usefully depicted heterogeneous modes of music consumption but omitted respondents' actual interactions with music. This

could be due to surveys' closed questions, designed to elicit particular information from the respondents (Bryne, 2012). Meanwhile, the flexibility of interviews suits our purposes, for it 'allows the interviewees to speak in their own voice…offering a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches' (Bryne, 2012: 210). Furthermore, the generalised results proffered by surveys fail to match practice theory's preoccupation with 'the [specific] contexts within which social life unfolds' (Cox, 2012: 182). Additionally, being 'the key methodology with which to observe social and situated practices' (Corradi, et al., 2008: 23), ethnography is desirable for our exploration of practitioners' music consumption. The method was rejected because of time constraints, for it typically involves the researcher spending extended time in the field (Geertz, 1975). To observe the location of media like music in people's daily lives, Pink and Mackley (2012) complemented their use of qualitative interviews with ethnography. But they (2012: 682) also 'learned how media are part of everyday routines, precisely because participants could tell…us how,' hence qualitative interviewing may sufficiently address the research question.

Semi-structured – rather than unstructured and structured interviews – were employed. In contrast with structured interviews, semi-structured interviews afforded the desired flexibility to seize the interviewees' perspectives without limiting their views via predetermined categorisation (Bryman, 2008). Relative to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews provide the option of investigating relevant issues. That is, interview guides were used to ensure the discussion of topics relevant to answering the research question (Silverman, 2013). Moreover, the flexible yet organised semi-structured interviews took place in one-to-one settings. In-depth interviewing was chosen because 'with one respondent, far richer detail about personal experiences, decisions, and action sequences can be elicited' (Gaskell, 2000: 48). While group interviews' productivity lies in group dynamics and the members' exchanges of ideas, our focus is placed on individual practitioners (Gaskell, 2000). Moreover, this choice is supported by Gaskell's (2000) observation that academic research favours in-depth interviewing, while the commercial sector employs group interviewing. Overall, semi-structured, in-depth interviews have proven effective in similar studies (Magaudda, 2011; Pink and Mackley, 2012), wherein the method 'enabled music listeners to offer more developed, personal accounts about their everyday interactions with music' (Bennett & Nowak, 2014: 433).

Qualitative interviewing entails certain limitations. Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 113) portray interviews as 'potential sources of bias, error, misunderstanding, and misdirection,' and Alvesson (2003) highlights that the interviewer's presence can impact the interviewees' responses. For example, interviewees might try to form responses that favour them in order to

make a positive impression. To minimise these distortions, various strategies were used, including establishing rapport; ensuring the respondents that all perspectives were welcome; asking sub-questions; avoiding leading questions; and staying reflexive throughout interviewing (Bryne, 2012). However, having an entirely objective perception of data is never completely feasible (Blumer, 1979). According to Gaskell (2000), qualitative interviews alone posit a structured exploration of prejudiced reality. This is linked to the broad ontological discussion on the objective stance of the positivist approach (typically associated with quantitative methods) *vis-à-vis* the acknowledgment of human subjectivity by the interpretive approach (typically related to qualitative methods, including interviewing). Due to the section's limited scope, the reader is directed to Creswell (1994).

Regarding data-analysis methodology, thematic analysis was used. Endorsed for finding, examining, and recording patterns within data, thematic analysis has been framed as 'a fundamental method of qualitative analysis' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). The literature outlines two types of thematic analysis: a rather deductive approach, driven by formerly identified assumptions and theories, and a rather inductive approach, where findings arise from the prominent themes in raw data (Thomas, 2006). This study employs a hybrid approach: while analysing themes in transcripts, it relies on Magaudda's (2011) theoretical tool. This allows for relevant themes to emerge from the data, whilst concomitantly the empirical data is perceived through the lens of practice theory. Pattern-seeking is also a preoccupation of grounded theory. The latter is primarily focused on theoretical formation. As argued, thematic analysis too supports this inductive approach. Yet, thematic analysis is prioritised due to its insights into individuals' music experiences, practices, and thoughts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nevertheless, researchers need to be cautious about personal biases, which can influence the thematic procedure. The researcher's personal unfamiliarity with most of the interviewees was therefore useful (Boyatzis, 1998). Alternatively, content and discourse analysis could have been used but both were rejected due to their respective preoccupations with language (Tonkiss, 2013) and restrictive categorisations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These do not match the research's primary interests.

Sampling Strategy

The sample consisted of 12 young digital music consumers between the ages of 20 and 30, studying and working in London. Operating on the assumption that this generation has been in contact with various music technologies, the interviewees were recruited based on their age. Proven effectiveness of recruiting this generation of listeners is noted in related studies (Magaudda, 2011; Bennett & Nowak, 2014). This selection excluded other potential interviewees, such as the less 'tech-savvy' (Klopfer & Yoon, 2005), older music listeners, and

the unemployed. But, in lieu of generalising results to the population, this project aims to portray the diversity of music practices in a specific segment of the population. This also matches practice theory's explanation of everyday life through practices performed in specific contexts (Schatzki, 2005).

The interviewees were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball technique (Bryman, 2008). The process commenced with two familiar participants, selected on the basis of their age. They were asked to suggest other music listeners, members of the age group that use diverse music technologies. This strategy was employed to represent the maximum range of music consumption practices, allowing for a comprehensive grip of contemporary music consumption. Also framed as self-selection sampling, the technique has been critiqued precisely for the limitedness of perspectives (Gaskell, 2000; Handcock & Gille, 2011). Yet, as shown in the Results section (p. 23), the collected data showed heterogeneous music habits.

The composition of the sample was as follows: six female and six male interviewees. Wells and Hakanen (1991) note gender differences in musical interactions by observing women's higher likelihood to develop emotional attachment to music. However, neither the three pilot interviews nor the dissertation interviews displayed such variation. To clarify the appropriation of different music objects, the Results section touches upon respondents' employment status. Overall, for practices are in focus, researching predispositions is a matter of further research (see the Limitations section).

Topic Guide

The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews entailed open-ended questions. By the virtue of flexibility and openness, these enabled interviewees to offer elaborated, personal accounts about musical interactions. The topic guide helped to maintain the focus on relevant topics to be investigated (Bryne, 2012). Principally, it was the knowledge about the ordinary interrelations between technologies, music, listeners, and their everyday routines that was pursued throughout. The topic guide was formulated after two revisions of its initial version: the first revision was done after the three pilot interviews, and the second following the first interview. The repetitive questions were eliminated, and the vocabulary in some was modified to avoid academic jargon and abstraction. Moreover, the order of questions was changed. The final guide starts with easy-to-answer questions, progresses into demanding topics and finishes up with background questions. This facilitated the natural flow of interviews, and helped the interviewees to speak freely (Kvale, 2009).

The topic guide (Appendix A) was composed of five sections. First, the respondents were welcomed, and the interview's purposes and progress were presented. Second, ethical

considerations were explained and, third, consent forms were signed by all respondents. The fourth part included research-specific questions, divided into four sub-sections. This arrangement followed the structure of Magaudda's (2011) 'circuit', displaying a clear link to the research question to ensure consistency during the interviews and thematic analysis. Thus the respondents were asked about music technologies, doing and meaning. The last sub-section asked about music futures, additional comments and other listeners' music practices. This was done to conclude the interviewing pleasantly and to help me compare my judgments of interviewee's practices to how they presented them themselves. According to Bryman (2008), this strategy increases the interview data's credibility and validity. The last section included background questions. These questions were asked for my own reference and were, due to their close-ended nature, posed last.

Operationalisation and Ethics

The interviews were conducted in person, at respondents' convenience, ranging in length from 50 to 80 minutes. To ensure uninterrupted interviewing and recording, the interviews took place in quiet surroundings like the library. Each interview was different, as the flexibility of the guide allowed for adjustments for each participant. For example, some revisited queries or answered them before posed.

Because the study involves human subjects, ethical issues had to be considered (Patton, 2001). University ethics clearance was granted before data-collection began. All interviewees were informed about the right to withdraw anytime, the confidentiality of their data, privacy and anonymity. Thus the names presented in the project are made-up. Consent forms were signed at the beginning of each interview. The atmosphere felt natural and the researcher's presence did not appear to hinder the conversations. Building rapport likely contributed to honest discussions. All interviews were audio-recorded, with permission from interviewees.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. This was the first step towards thematic analysis. This study employs the analytical procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). That is, first, multiple readings of the transcripts offered a comprehensive sense of the empirical data. Data familiarisation was followed by the formation of initial codes. Useful strategies were colour-coding, comparing and contrasting answers, searching for trends and peculiarities (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Relating these codes to the theoretical resources, facilitated the detection of more detailed themes in the data. In total, four main themes and 14 sub-themes were identified. Extracts from the interviews were selected to capture the core of each theme. These are presented amongst findings with commitment to proffer a stimulating account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather than being linear, the procedure was iterative, moving back and forth across the theoretical background and the collected data where required. This also

demonstrates the stated hybrid approach, with the lens of Magaudda's (2011) 'circuit' informing the analysis. Appendix B presents the themes and their interrelations.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This section entails a detailed discussion of the project's main findings. These indicate outcomes that support and challenge the arguments explored in the literature review. The three main emergent themes from the interviews to be explored are, as follows: the persistence of physical music objects, the heterogeneity and gradualism of digital-tangible music practices, and the aesthetics and practicality of music technologies. These correspond to Magaudda's (2011) scheme involving dimensions of objects, doing, and meaning.

Object: The Persistence of Physical Music Objects

All respondents were asked 'How do you engage with music?' along with questions regarding the specific music objects they use. All respondents mentioned their use of digital music technologies, which was anticipated given the topic of research. Contrary to the notion of 'digital revolution', the majority of respondents also highlighted their appropriation of physical music technologies. Ivo and Clementine discuss their activity of discovering new music through the radio:

> I listen to the radio everyday. I think it's the only medium that astonishes you... It's not music on demand... If I like something, I search for it online, look at the videos, download it; stream it.
>
> (Ivo, 28, copywriter)

> I use the radio daily, and streaming platforms. It's a great tool for discovering music. Not only that...people on the radio actually speak to you, they interview artists...it gives you a different perspective on music.
>
> (Clementine, 23, postgraduate student)

Both extracts illustrate Ivo and Clementine's use of the radio on an everyday basis. As their employment of the terms 'tool' and 'medium' suggests, the radio is a means of accessing music with which they were not familiar beforehand. When they hear a song they like, they also search for the artists online. Once they gather the desired information, like the artist's name or the song title, they can choose to stream the song on audio platforms, download it (il) legally and watch music videos. This means that including radio into their music consumption 'circuits of practice' entails a network of activities that allow them to pursue the relationship

with an artist they find to like.

Their emphasis on radio's characteristics is also interesting to note. Ivo stresses that radio is one of the rare mediums that astonishes him because it plays the songs he does not expect to hear. Clementine meanwhile underlines her appreciation for interviews. It feels as though radio hosts and people are talking to her, which changes her views on music. It is important to note that these arguments were articulated in a context where digital music technologies are dominant. In contrast to the radio, extensive libraries of music are available on demand, as seen in music streaming platforms like Spotify. As such, music consumption practices feel more impersonal – which is also an aspect voiced by several interviewees and further developed in the section on the practices' 'meaning'. This signals radio's altered status when integrated in the 'circuit of practice' with other music objects. Magaudda (2011: 31) supports this by arguing that rather than being new, these music consumption processes are changed by the co-existence of digital music objects:

> The material devices and other accessories needed for the reproduction of music also existed in the pre-download period, but today the ways of appropriating these objects and technologies have become more central in the whole practice of music consumption.

Digital technologies, specifically the Internet, are vital in the interviewees' 'circuits of practice'. They allow Ivo and Clementine to instantly find the songs and access artist information, thereby helping them to benefit more fully from the music found through the radio. Subsequently, these music discoveries define the position of radio. Although radio afforded music discoveries before the digital era, its integration into the consumers' 'circuits' alongside digital technologies means that this characteristic is now even more pronounced.

Discussing digital music technologies' characteristics, respondents mentioned the extensive music catalogues and the ease of accessing music on multiple occasions. This allows consumers to explore and experiment with music. Nevertheless, it should be noted that individuals do not browse through endless options as Doctorow (2003) argues in his aforementioned depiction of digital technologies' possibilities. As portrayed by Clementine and Ivo's practices, musical practices through these objects occur in relation to their music explorations through other platforms like the radio. Moreover, there exist certain constraints. Jan depicts his use of digital music objects and their design:

> I listen to music on YouTube, SoundCloud, sometimes I use my Spotify app. Listening to music like that is easy, you have large libraries...I won't listen to just one artist, I like to change songs. You want a more peaceful song, or something up-beat. When you have a digital format, you can switch

easily…the Wi-Fi can be a problem, though. My Internet cache crushed the other day. This can't happen again [laugh].

(Jan, 21, undergraduate student)

Digital technologies allow Jan to listen to different artists and switch between them. This is enabled by both the technologies' design that allows him to do so, as well as their multiplicity. The latter is evident in Jan's use of various websites (YouTube and SoundCloud) and a music application (Spotify). A lost Internet connection has already caused him inconvenience by pausing his music listening activity. This pinpoints that technologies do not merely offer possibilities but also constrain consumption activities due to their dependence on the Internet by design. Jan also names songs' elements that define his choice of music. If he enjoys a song's upbeat nature, he will include it in his 'repertoire of preferences' (Rimmer, 2012). This shows that rather than cruising through unlimited music options online (Doctorow, 2003), people rely on their music preferences that they establish through both digital and physical objects like the radio.

Furthermore, respondents also use material objects to access digital music, which reaffirms the presence of materiality in contemporary consumption 'circuits of practice':

For streaming, I use laptop. I have the SoundCloud and Spotify app on my phone.

(Lisa, 24, postgraduate student)

I use my hard drive to store all the music files…I also plan on buying good speakers.

(Neza, 24, art conservator)

This inclusion of material objects bears three repercussions for our conceptualisation of 'circuits of practice'. First, it illustrates Magaudda's (2011: 25) stated observation about the appropriation of the hard drive as an example of an 'object that already existed but was not previously present and integrated into musical listening and collection practices.' What might seem ironic to the scholars stressing tangible technologies' demise, Magaudda (2011: 25) outlines materiality as integral to digitisation: 'one of the consequences of the increasing amount of music available for purchase on the Internet is the increased amount of music that one cannot possess and store.' Subsequently, music consumers employ objects to store digital music, as seen in Neza's use of the external drive. Additionally, Nowak (2014b) highlights that digital files cannot be used without material devices like computers. Second, the presence of tangibility in the digital context questions digital revolution's assumptions about the material and the digital's mutual exclusivity, as well as indicates the importance of acknowledging materiality in 'social' studies of everyday life. Third, it opposes the commentators stressing

digitisation's threat to the industry's revenue by showing that respondents like Neza still invest in music, particularly in music-related material objects such as speakers.

It should also be acknowledged that respondents tend to discuss their practices by referring to sound carriers' affordances. Denoting technologies as affecting musical experiences is reminiscent of technological determinism. However, a closer examination of music objects reveals them as mere counterparts of consumption 'circuits' wherein they interrelate with individuals' bodily-mental activities. As Magaudda (2011: 32) contends: 'music consumption remains a practice deeply rooted in an embodied set of activities and social relationships inscribed and hardwired into the design of material artefacts.' Thus outlining objects through what they afford reveals as a productive way of researching consumption 'circuits', for it enables both the researcher and interviewees to explain the possibilities afforded by design. This also confirms Nowak's (2014b) aforesaid contention about the usefulness of the notion for the research on music consumption.

This section showed the importance of sound carriers when engaging in music interactions. Given their accessibility, speed, and large music libraries, digital technologies entail a consumption logic different from that of precedent technologies. But the new logic complements rather than replaces the pre-existing one. This brings us to the heterogeneity and 'gradualism' (Nowak, 2014a) of 'doing' that music objects participate in.

Doing: The Heterogeneity and Gradualism of Digital-Tangible Music Consumption

The wide use of digital technologies marks them as the core of everyday music consumption practices among young, professional Londoners. As we have seen, this is facilitated by both their diffusion and affordances such as presentation of artist information. In spite of their quasi-omnipresence and dominant status, these technologies are supplemented by preceding music objects such as CDs. That is to say, diverse technologies are in circulation, underpinning individuals' development of heterogeneous music consumption activities or 'doing'. Jan elaborates on the issue:

> I usually download single tracks…listen to them on my phone and laptop. Usually I do it without really caring about it, if it's one track that I like, I'll download it. Then, what I'm going to buy is an album. So if MGMT releases a new album, OK, I'm going to buy it because I want to listen to it, I want to get the whole experience. When I want something extensive or complete, I buy CDs. This is where you can see the difference between when I actually like an artist or just a couple of productions.

Jan's 'doing' includes music listening, downloading and buying albums in a CD format. The variety of activities via different music formats paints his modes of consumption as heterogeneous. The use of the CD is particularly fascinating, given its alleged downfall in the digital age (Molteni & Organini, 2003). Moreover, his 'usual' activity of downloading digital files points to the uneven use of digital and physical objects, with the former being central to his everyday consumption practices. Yet the presence of CDs also underlines digital files' insufficiency. The reason for his activities of listening to, and buying CDs is the 'whole' and 'extensive' experience they induce by containing complete albums of his preferred artists. Jan therefore gradually moves from listening to digital files, which he performs through material portable devices, to listening to albums through purchased physical music objects, CDs. This is a process Nowak (2014a) terms 'gradualism' of practices, marking Jan's doing as not only heterogeneous but also expressive of gradual transitions between different music technologies.

Furthermore, the interrelationship between Jan's preference for a particular artist, MGMT, and the associated employment of the CD highlights the role of musical preferences in his consumption practices. The gradual scheme of Jan's 'doing' corresponds to the scale of his music preferences, as evident in his purchase of, and listening to the CDs of an artist he 'actually likes'. As the respondent moves from the use of digital files to the more suitable physical music object, he reflexively ranks his musical preferences according to the desired way of interacting with an artist. Facilitating a 'whole experience' of MGMT's album, Jan's mobilisation of CDs underlines the close link between one's musical taste and sound carriers, doing, and meaning. Circulating within consumption 'circuits of practice,' these dimensions are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The interrelationship bears repercussions for the organisation of the dissertation: while each dimension is given separate attention, their interactions also feature within each section. Leaving the explicit treatment of the dimension of 'meaning' aside for now, of relevance for 'doing' is that heterogeneous music activities are not merely synonymous with diversity in music objects. This would be a simplistic observation, indifferent to the three dimensions' dynamic intertwinement. As also observed by Nowak (2014a), individuals' use of diverse music technologies (*object*) is rather used to differentiate their music interactions and distinguish their preferences for artists (*preferences, meaning*), which links to the concomitant development of music consumption activities characterised by heterogeneity and gradualism (*doing*). The links that form consumption 'circuits of practice' are tackled separately in the section titled Zooming Out: the Interrelations within the Assemblage (p. 28).

Another productive emergent theme is constituted by a respondent's use of the iPod. Andrea's practice of listening to digital files through this object *vis-à-vis* other respondents' depiction of its outmodedness constitutes an interesting case. It updates Magaudda's (2011) observation regarding the iPod being exemplary of new listening objects. For the technological milieu has indeed changed since Magaudda's writing in 2011, the following contrast in 'doing' represents a fresh insight into contemporary consumption practices:

> I have the Spotify app on my phone. There you can access the sea of music, unless it's Taylor Swift's latest album [laugh]. I use it to preview songs before buying... Otherwise, I always have the iPod with me and the music I have comes from iTunes...I have always have done that [buying], music means everything...especially my favourite artists...I love how the iPod is just focused on music.
>
> (Andrea, 24, musician)

> I don't use the iPod...why keep two pockets busy when you can now have everything on one device [a smartphone].
>
> (Ivo, 28, copywriter)

> Oh, no iPod for me... it belongs to the time when telephones and music were separate.
>
> (Jessa, 23, postgraduate student)

Like Jan, Andrea exhibits heterogeneous and gradual forms of 'doing'. Heterogeneity is evident in his multi-format listening and purchase activities. While Andrea buys music via iTunes, he performs music listening through his iPod, the material sound carrier, and Spotify, the streaming application that he accesses through the phone. The objects entail different affordances and 'doings': while Spotify affords listening to a wide selection of artists, the iPod affords listening to only certain artists that Andrea had bought and uploaded on the device. The associated musical experiences too differ: contrary to Spotify, the iPod entails an experience that is explicitly 'focused on music,' reflecting Andrea's commitment to the work of several selected artists. In line with his musical preferences, Andrea thus gradually moves from digital Spotify to physical iPod.

Ivo and Jessa meanwhile stress the iPod's irrelevance by referring to the option of having all music on one sound carrier *now* and the iPod being a testimony to the previous technological era, respectively. Andrea could be seen as resistant to today's predominantly digital consumption practices, these being 'socially shared patterns of activities' (Magaudda, 2011: 20). Linking back to the literature review, his case resembles Rogers' ([1962], 1995) notion of the 'laggard', the last segment to adopt an innovation. However, the lack of human capital – for which Rogers presumes to be the source of varied adoption rates – does not seem to be the

case for Andrea, given his music career (stated below the extract). Researching individual pre-dispositions is neither in the dissertation's scope nor in practice theory's domain. As Schatzki (2002: 4) argues, the theory provides 'general and abstract' – hence 'supra-individual' – accounts of mundane processes'. Nevertheless, to portray that rather than resistance, Andrea's activities demonstrate a form of contemporary heterogeneous and gradual 'doing', it may be fruitful to acknowledge the linkage between his strong preference for favourite artists that 'mean everything,' his regular purchase activities that he 'has always done', and the sound carriers he deems suited to his 'doing' of consuming music and music preferences. While the iPod accommodates Andrea's performance of listening to favourite songs and Spotify allows him to preview these songs, the objects together form Andrea's narrative of today's heterogeneous and gradual music consumption 'circuits of practice.'

These processes showed that today's 'circuits of practice' include individuals' mobilisation of diverse music technologies, in accordance with the scale of their music preferences. Spanning from the central, digital, 'doing' that accommodates a multiplicity of music tastes, to the material 'doing' that involves preferred artists, music consumers differentiate their everyday music interactions. However, as already anticipated through Jan's denotation of CDs as 'complete,' and Jessa and Ivo's description of the iPod as outmoded, music objects and activities cannot be separated from 'meaning'.

Meaning: The Aesthetics and Practicality of Music Technologies

As the use of specific digital and tangible music technologies depends on music preferences, respondents' interest in using either object lies in the specific musical experiences they offer. The findings reveal the experiences afforded by digital technologies as 'practical' and 'impersonal', while those of tangible music objects are personal and 'aesthetic'. Expressed two respondents:

> Now I listen to music through Spotify, especially when I see people listening to music online, such as Facebook which shows what people listen to on Spotify, On Spotify you find everything, so now you don't need to be a music nerd to find stuff, whereas before [material formats] I felt that you had to specifically look for music. It's just that Spotify [as a streaming platform] is not as personal, feels less exclusive.
>
> (Gabriella, 24, photographer)

> I use CDs. It's nice, rather than just, okay, SoundCloud, let's click this track, you know... A CD is different, there's more effort involved, you can unpack it, remove the price...you have the artwork, which is quite nice...I bought them because I like the artists...I've also kept all of my CDs, I have a

> collection in my bedroom…For practical reasons, I use streaming. I can use it wherever.
>
> (Clementine, 23, postgraduate student)

Gabriella's rhetoric stresses the practicality of having access to extensive music selection through Spotify. Its easy availability to all users, including her friends, marks listening to the music catalogue as less exclusive and personal. The meaning emerging from this interaction between the given 'object' and 'doing' is that of practicality. Worthy of note is also the social aspect of Gabriella's music practice, as evident in the act of following her Facebook friends' listening activities. Due to their breadth, an in-depth elaboration of social domains is outside the research's scope (see Kietzmann et al., 2011; O'Hara & Brown, 2006; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Nevertheless, in face of the stated technologically determinist statements, it may be useful to acknowledge that technological interactions do not merely involve specific objects but also social interactions (Larsen et al., 2009).

Clementine too outlines digital technologies as practical. She streams music through SoundCloud, which can be done with just a click of a button. Her example is productive because it contrasts the rather utilitarian digital platforms with the CDs' aesthetic value. Clementine's emphasis on the value of CDs' artwork and her collection of exhibited, tangible objects show commitment to a specific artist, rather than a variety of artists. Drawing these perspectives together, it could be argued that music consumption is not limited to music but extends to artists' visual presence. Physical formats supplement individuals' mostly digital music interactions, which links back to the earlier discussion on the radio. There, we observed that despite the object's existence in the previous technological context, the meaning of materiality intensified in the digital era. With reference to the literature review, the findings confirm UK Music's (2009) report on tangible products' inherent aesthetic value.

Furthermore, respondents' attachment with tangible music objects takes the form of economic retribution to favourite artists for their efforts. In the subsequent extract, Kaja highlights her connection with 'Atmosphere':

> I still haven't even bought a CD of my favourite band [Atmosphere]. I have everything they have made, but it's downloaded. I would like to support them for the emotional development and support that they have given me…and the cover looks nice…I bought CDs but that was before…but as soon as there was the MP3 format, I started downloading.
>
> (Kaja, 24, postgraduate student)

Like Clementine, Kaja likes to own CDs of her preferred artists. She perceives CD purchase as a way to reimburse the artists for the received personal development and emotional support that

their music facilitated Thus she goes beyond the aesthetic fulfilment that CDs provide, albeit this too is an important factor for the object's inclusion into her consumption 'circuit'. The shift from her prior activity involving CD buying to illegal downloading indicates Kaja's tendency to acquire digital files freely, contrasting her eagerness to repay the artists through tangible sound carriers. Indeed, as shown by Weijters et al.'s (2014) statement about the availability of multiple digital technologies presented in the literature review, there exist payable music streaming platforms like Spotify. Spotify pays artists and labels from the revenue partly generated through sold subscriptions (Spotify, 2015). As with tangible music formats, subscribing to Spotify could be seen as a 'doing' towards artist support, albeit perhaps not as aesthetically satisfying or limited to a few preferred artists. However, no respondent has considered this. Kaja continues to explain her consumption practices:

> I wouldn't mind paying a small fee, but until I have a job, I will try doing things that are free [music downloads].
>
> (Kaja, 24, postgraduate student)

Although Kaja values tangible formats like CDs, the limited student budget prevents her from obtaining them. Again, this opens up a broad issue, hereby of consumer music spending. Due to its limited scope, the research directs the reader to the work on the shrinking leisure-time expenditure by Cammaerts and Meng (2011) and the study of music downloading behaviour by Weijters *et al.* (2014). With relevance to our discussion on how objects, doing, and meaning interrelate and cohere to shape consumption 'circuits of practice', these processes signal that digital formats numerically supercede material ones. Despite the tendency to posit smaller collections, the latter are valued for their relative quality. Gabriella explains her appreciation of vinyl records:

> The Interviewer: Is the experience of listening to a vinyl record different as well [from digital formats]?
>
> Gabriella: It is. It gives this nice warm feeling. In Norwegian we say 'koselig' [cosy], it perfectly describes it...it also looks nice in the flat.
>
> (Gabriella, 24, photographer)

Being the respondent who previously outlined streaming platforms as impersonal, Gabriella expresses a different approach to tangible music formats. It is the importance of the object's aesthetic meaning that affords a particular, warm, interaction with an artist – one that is different from the diffused interaction mediated by digital technologies. Like Clementine, Gabriella also notes the decorative function of material commodities whereby her music taste

is portrayed. The notion of the vinyl is also vital because it reaffirms contemporary presence of the 'vinyl revival', a process highlighted by several respondents, as well as scholars in the literature review (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2013).

The presented results regarding 'meaning' further indicate the complexity of heterogeneous music practices today. This heterogeneity reveals the notions of artist support and aesthetic quality in relation to material music formats, and of practicality and diffusion with relevance to digital technologies. The next section strings these processes together, to provide an overview of contemporary 'circuits' and thus a comprehensive answer to the research question.

Zooming Out: The Interrelations within the Assemblage

Having explored the individual elements necessary for the dispersal and consumption of music in everyday contexts, the project now tackles their assemblage to illustrate how that facilitates and coheres to produce music consumption 'circuits of practice'. It is a form of ordinary practice whereby music is consumed and experienced on both individual and collective levels. Drawing on the presented individual-level accounts of music practices, this section maps the elements' interrelations from a broader perspective.

It was shown that current music consumption practices are heterogeneous. This is underpinned by the coexistence of diverse music artefacts, both physical and digital in form (*object*). The two possess their own characteristics, materialising as forms of appeal for consumers: while digital music technologies afford a relatively fast and easy access to a wide array of music, physical devices offer a tangible access to only selected artists. Thus their affordances facilitate various activities (*doing*). Music on both objects can be listened to or purchased, but digital music forms can also be (il) legally downloaded and streamed. The presence of the heterogeneous model of consuming music is predicated on its interrelations with not merely objects and associated 'doings', but also their subsequent redefinition (*meaning*). Given their respective characteristics, diffused digital technologies tend to be marked as numerous and practical, and material objects as aesthetical and quality. Thus by being performatively integrated into individuals' practices, music objects attain respective meanings, thereby producing consumption 'circuits of practice'. Because the 'circuit' represents both an analytical and *visual* tool to account for the work of reconfiguration of the practice as actually experienced by consumers [emphasis added]' (Magaudda, 2011: 21), a visual representation of its elements and the interlinkages can be found in Appendix C.

As observed in the previous sections, consumers' music preferences too are vital. Using certain

music technologies in correspondence with these preferences is at the heart of how individuals differentiate their music consumption practices in their everyday lives. Given their preference for either a variety of artists or a specific one (*preference*), individuals opt for a corresponding music technology (*object*). As stated, music technologies differ in the scope of music-listening options they afford. Being a respondent previously presented for using both formats, Gabriella expresses this aspect: 'On Spotify, you find everything…Whereas on vinyl records, I'd be more like, these are my favourite artists, so I will just listen to them.' Objects also inform her consumption logic. Possessing access to various technologies, Gabriella can gradually switch between them in order to align her listening activity to her music preferences. Thus it is in relation to music preferences (*preferences*) that gradual and heterogeneous music consumption activities are performed (*doing*). Through their performative incorporation into consumers' 'circuits of practice', music objects in use get redefined. Gabriella's extracts demonstrated the practicality of, in her words, 'finding everything' on digital Spotify. Tangible vinyl records are, meanwhile, decoratively satisfying. Moreover, Clementine's extract described how she exhibits CDs, as these visually represent her preferred artists (*object; doing; preferences; meaning*). This interrelationship between objects, meaning and one's preferences contribute to the selection of certain music technologies for music consumption activities. Therefore, this process links back to the element of 'object' and concludes the 'circuit'. Supported by the concrete practices performed by Clementine and Gabriella, the intertwinement of Magaudda's (2011) three elements of the 'circuit' with the element of preferences is visually depicted in Appendix D.

Maggauda's (2011) 'circuit' is productive because it, through its constituent three analytical dimensions and their links, aims to explain the dynamics of practices at the consumer and sociocultural level. This facilitates a concrete exploration of practices' development, removing the risk of delivering 'general explanations of why social life is as it is…[which] practice theorists are suspicious of' (Schatzki et al., 2001: 4). However, emergent findings reveal the importance of music preferences in the shaping of consumption 'circuits', suggesting its inclusion into the analytical scheme as its dimension. Certainly, the notion of preferences has been acknowledged in practice theory, as evident in the following extract from Reckwitz's (2002: 41) definition of practices: 'a routinized type of behavior which consists of…states of emotion and motivational knowledge'. Additionally, Strati (2007), Warde (2005) and Geiger (2009) note the inclusion of aesthetic judgment, emotion and passion in practices. With no intention to downplay the relevance of Magaudda's 'circuit', the project argues for its enrichment by making explicit the notion of preferences. The latter may afford a detailed account of today's music consumption landscape wherein consumers differentiate their practices in line with music taste.

Thus in addition to answering the research questions regarding people's practices in relation to music technologies and the formation of the 'circuit,' the research aims to contribute to the existing literature by emphasising the importance of preferences in music consumption in the digital era. This represents the project's creative input, inviting further discussions on musical interactions. The limits to the project's scope are addressed in the next section.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The implications of the research's approach to music consumption are numerous. Regarding respondents, issues such as gender, ethnicity, socialisation and the political dimensions of individual musical interactions require further attention. Moreover, by supporting preferences' vitality in individuals' consumption practices, the research posits an avenue for the exploration of their pre-dispositions (Rimmer, 2012). The research may benefit too from a bigger sample. Despite the depth of insights afforded by interviews, the time constraints and practicality frequently limit the sample size (Bryman, 2004). Thus potentially insightful would be a study that included older age groups. As Albarran et al. (2007) note, online music listening tends to be skewed towards younger generations. Following Corradi et al. (2008: 23), combining ethnography with interviews could be useful, for it is a productive 'methodology with which to observe social and situated practices.'

Moreover, researching dynamics of practices brings up the issues of continuity and change (Shove et al., 2012). Whilst our focus on music technologies' use and their integration within the constellations of interconnected elements offers an understanding of current consumption context, a study of practices' change would add a time dimension. Elements of change featured in for example Ivo and Jessa's use of streaming applications in place of the iPod, indicating an avenue for the investigation of how products and people co-evolve. As Shove et al. (2012) argue, a change in practices happens when the relations between objects, doing, and meaning alter along with temporalities. The contribution of this research is portraying this complexity of consumption practices. More on practice change can be found in, for example, Shove and Pantzar's (2007) study on the appropriation of digital photography. The latter is valuable because it deals with the broader context of our research – digitisation.

Furthermore, this research addressed the material conditions of consumption practices. Music is played with mobilising technologies that – through their affordances – also alter its aesthetic character. For example, this was observed in the artwork's visual depiction of music, which gives aesthetic pleasure to music listeners. These conditions also include respondents'

attachment to music technologies (such as Andrea's use of the iPod) and the diffusion of music in their everyday contexts (for instance, via digital devices). Fruitful may be a further investigation of the narratives individuals develop around music and music technologies, bearing insights for technologies' design. As Shove (2007: 22) argues, 'products, designers, and consumers are all agents of change'. Judging from their practices, respondents revealed imaginative perspectives on music futures:

> Vinyl records are quite expensive, they get scratched...I imagine all devices will be minimised, maybe they will create hologram records [laugh].

> (Laurens, 24, undergraduate student)

> I would recommend Spotify to produce a tool for DJs like me... a simple fade in/fade out button, so I don't have to download music from the iTunes... But the greatest ideas come from the need.
> (Ivo, 28, copywriter)

These examples demonstrate the value of taking practices as a unit of both research and design. Like Ivo, Shove (2007: 22) argues that, 'needs emerge from the dynamics of practice.' Design researchers (Korkman, 2006; Munnecke, 2007), who have used practice theory, present the approach as 'a way to inform the design of interactive consumer products' (Kuijer et al., 2013: 212). Given their value reaching beyond media and communications, practices deserve further investigation. However, this can only be done when materiality is given sufficient scrutiny (Nowak, 2014b).

CONCLUSION

The rise of digital music and the associated diffusion of music have invigorated debates about the face of music consumption in a contemporary technological context. Addressing the missing link between material studies and music in investigations of ordinary music reception, this dissertation adopted a theory-of-practice approach. Using Magaudda's (2011) analytical framework, it investigated individuals' appropriation of music listening technologies in everyday life, focusing on how these objects, their meaning, and performers' bodily-mental activities interrelate and cohere to shape specific music consumption 'circuits of practice'.

These specific 'circuits' were predicated on data collected through qualitative interviews with 12 young, London-based, digital music consumers, aged between 20 and 30. Using a combination of snowball and theoretical sampling, the generation of listeners was recruited due to their assumed familiarity with the latest music technologies. The iterative thematic

analysis was conducted in relation to Magaudda's tripartite model, and revealed the following conclusions. First, the numerical dominance of digital music technologies is reasoned in their immediacy and ease of access. Contrary to 'digital revolution' arguments, digital objects are supplemented by physical formats like vinyl records and CDs. Second, the two types of objects afford different 'doings', giving rise to heterogeneous practices within contemporary 'circuits'. Individuals differentiate their ways of experiencing music by employing different types of technologies in parallel to their music preferences. Thus, the observed 'doing' is not only heterogeneous but also gradual. Third, by being incorporated into consumption 'circuits of practice', technologies also get redefined. While digital objects are valued for their practicality, tangible formats matter for the economic retribution to chosen artists and the aesthetic quality they afford.

Magaudda's tool was productive because it enabled this study to map the complexity of contemporary music consumption – particularly how objects, doing and meaning intertwine and mutually shape individuals' 'circuits of practices'. The dissertation extended the analysis by adding the dimension of music 'preferences' to the 'circuit', given their prominence in consumers' diversification of consumption practices. Herein lies its creative input. Indeed, there exist limitations to its scope, specifically regarding issues of consumers' pre-dispositions, sample size, and change. Concomitantly, the project hopes to have proffered an informative cross-disciplinary conversation about the relevance of music 'circuits' for media and communications, design, science studies, consumption research and sociological theories of practices.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Dissertation Interviewing Guide

1. Introduction:

Hello, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is *** and I am conducting this interview for my MSc thesis at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The interview forms a part of my research project on music consumption practices in everyday contexts.

I am very thankful for your time and effort, and your contribution is vital for the successful completion of my project. Please be aware that this is about your views and perceptions on the topic. There are no right or wrong answers.

2. Ethics and Consent Form:

This interview is voluntary, and the session should take about one hour. I will ask you three sets of questions regarding your music listening practices, the music technologies that you use, and their meaning.

I would like to let you know that you have the right to withdraw at any time, the right to refuse to answer any question that is posed, and to not express any opinion if you do not want to. The interview can be terminated at any time, without giving reasons. This will not affect any rights, care or access to services, such as LSE services. If you wish to do so, please say stop, and I will stop recording it. All the data will be kept strictly confidential.

I will keep you informed about all applicable information that becomes available during the course of the project.

3. Sign the Consent Form

4. Research-Specific Questions:

4.1   Topic: General engagement with music
Prompts:
4.1.1   How do you engage with music? For example, complete the sentence, 'when I engage with music, I...'
4.1.2   How often do you listen to music? Why?
4.1.3   What genre(s) do you like?
4.1.4   Do you make music?
4.1.5   Peers/family influences? Socialisation?

4.2   Topic: Music Technologies (objects)
[Explain what you mean by objects and the reason to cover this topic]
Prompts:
4.2.1   If you listen to music, where does it come from?
4.2.2   Music streaming platforms? Which ones do you use/why/what for/when/where?
4.2.3   Material formats? If YES, which ones do you use/why/what for/when/where? If NO, why not?
4.2.4   What devices do you use to listen to music? Storing?

4.3   Topic: Music Consumption Practices (doing)
[Explain what you mean by practices and the reason to cover this topic]
Prompts:
4.3.1   Particularly in your daily life, how and when do you consume music?
4.3.2   How do you keep in touch with the artists that are part of your music taste?
4.3.3   How do you get to know new artists that you would include in your music interest?
4.3.4   The role of social networks in your music practices?

4.4   Topic: Meanings of Music Consumption Practices (meaning)
[Explain what you mean by meanings and the reason to cover this topic]
Prompts:
4.4.1   What sustains your music listening through these technologies?
4.4.2   What is your image of listening to music online? Describe with adjectives?
4.4.3   How would you describe material and digital formats of music? Use? Treatment?
4.4.4   Some people argue that music objects like iPods and vinyl records are now status symbols. What
        is your view on that?
4.4.5   Some people argue that the material is disappearing in face of the digital. Would you agree with
        this statement?

4.5 Topic: Comparative Perceptions and Music Consumption Futures
Prompts:
4.5.1   Compare your music consumption practices with how peers consume music?
4.5.2   The current situation of music industry? Future speculations?
4.5.3   Change anything about your music consumption? Different practice? Your ideal platforms?

5. Background questions:
Name/Number:
Age:
Gender:
Occupation/part-time or full-time: (e.g. student, employed, unemployed; full/part-time)
Degree/job title: (e.g. MSc student; journalist)
Place of study/work: (e.g. LSE; Protein magazine)
Grew up where?

Appendix B: Themes and Their Interrelations within the 'Circuit'

The links are portrayed by the black lines. The black dotted line denoting those of 'Resistance?' marks the possibility of perceiving music listening through the iPod as resistance (see Andrea's case: 29). However, this 'doing' was outlined as a manifestation of contemporary heterogeneous and gradual consumption activities.

Appendix C: Circuit of Practices' Three Elements

Whilst the solid black lines show the continuous relationships between the circuit's three dimensions, the dotted grey lines represent the actual experiences these dimensions implement in individuals' music consumption practices.
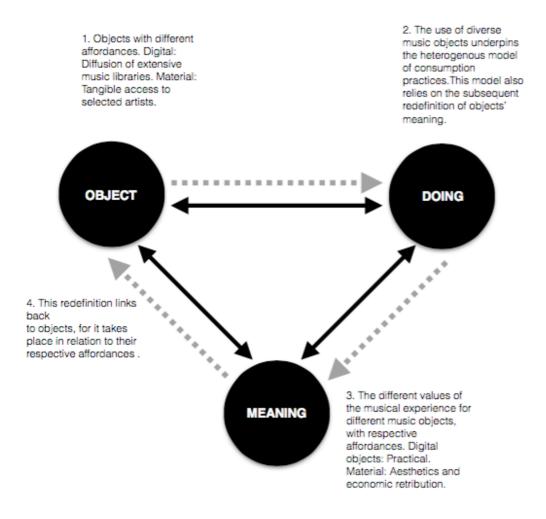

1. Objects with different affordances. Digital: Diffusion of extensive music libraries. Material: Tangible access to selected artists.

2. The use of diverse music objects underpins the heterogenous model of consumption practices. This model also relies on the subsequent redefinition of objects' meaning.

4. This redefinition links back to objects, for it takes place in relation to their respective affordances .

3. The different values of the musical experience for different music objects, with respective affordances. Digital objects: Practical. Material: Aesthetics and economic retribution.
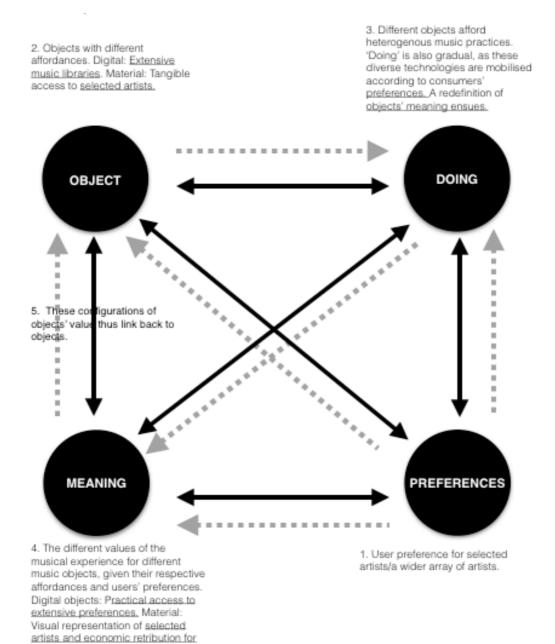
OBJECT

DOING

MEANING

Appendix D: Circuit of Practices' Four Elements

Whilst the solid black lines show the continuous relationships between the circuit's three dimensions and the dimension of 'preferences', the dotted grey lines represent the actual experiences these dimensions implement in individuals' music consumption practices. To present how preferences intersect with objects, doing and meaning in a clear and concise manner, the location of preferences within each element is underlined.

2. Objects with different affordances. Digital: Extensive music libraries. Material: Tangible access to selected artists.

3. Different objects afford heterogenous music practices. 'Doing' is also gradual, as these diverse technologies are mobilised according to consumers' preferences. A redefinition of objects' meaning ensues.

5. These configurations of objects' value thus link back to objects.

4. The different values of the musical experience for different music objects, given their respective affordances and users' preferences. Digital objects: Practical access to extensive preferences. Material: Visual representation of selected artists and economic retribution for their work.

1. User preference for selected artists/a wider array of artists.

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