“From pixels to playlists” - The cultural meanings behind the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers

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Master Thesis

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Date: June 17

Preface

This master thesis is the final step in completing my masters degree in Business Administration specializing in Innovation and Entrepreneurship. After completing my bachelors thesis, I was not too thrilled about writing a master thesis. However, thanks to the supervision of my supervisor Dr. Paolo Franco, I learned that writing a thesis can be, in fact, an interesting research. Combining interests of mine, generative AI and music, made this experience pleasant. Being able to discuss and research subjects that intrigue me gave me a lot of motivation. I would like to thank all the participants that provided me with interesting and helpful interviews to compose this thesis. Furthermore, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Paolo Franco, for providing me with his expertise, motivation and extensive feedback. And my second supervisor Dr. Caroline Essers, for providing feedback during the proposal stage. Lastly, I want to thank my friends and family, especially my sister for always being available when I needed help with academic questions.

Abstract

In recent years, not only the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has increased, but the implementation of AI in music generation has also increased significantly. This thesis, focuses on the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers. More specifically the research question stated is: "*How do cultural meanings influence the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers?"* Taking on a consumer culture approach to add cultural meanings to existing adoption theories. Providing a deep understanding of how consumers adopt AI-generated music. Existing literature on AI-generated music is mainly quantitative, lacking the social and cultural factors that influence adoption. This thesis aims to address these cultural meanings, by performing netnography and in-depth interviews. Grounded on practice theory, a framework is composed to discuss the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers. The framework addresses the change in a dedicated listening practice when AI is introduced. The introduction of AI as a material, has an impact on the meanings of dedicated listening. This change has two challenges (authenticity and regulations) that influence the adoption of AI-generated music. Overall, adding a cultural perspective to existing adoption theories and contributing to research on AI-generated music. Shedding light on why consumers resist or adopt AI-generated music, provide insights for managers and entrepreneurs to understand adoption from a consumer perspective.

Keywords: *AI music, Generative AI, Consumer adoption, Consumer Culture Theory, Practice Theory*

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Introduction

Artists and consumers have been suspicious of innovations for decades regarding media and technology (Tschmuck, 2006). For instance, when the first record player was invented, artists and consumers thought everyone would listen to music at home instead of going to live concerts (Winokur, 2021). In recent years an innovation arose that takes interest from both musicians and scientists, artificial intelligence (AI)-based automatic music generation (Civit et al., 2022). There are many views on AI generation in music. For example, news articles are speculating about AI in music, ranging from "AI destroying the music industry" (Lamacraft, 2024) to "AI sparking new creative ways of making music" (Zarczynski, 2023). Understanding consumers' thoughts on AI-generated music is helpful in understanding the adoption of AI technologies. The adoption of AI-generated music is different among consumers. A clear example of this is when several students would listen to AI-generated music out of curiosity once but some were convinced something is missing (e.g. originality, authenticity, soul) (Network, 2023). This sense of missing something in the music, results in consumers valuing the music of lower authenticity and therefore of lower quality. Nonetheless, Tigre Moura & Maw (2021) found that consumers' perceptions of the music piece (meaningfulness, affective reaction, and general attitude) were not significantly affected by their knowledge of the composition process. In other words, consumers do not value music differently whether the music was written by a human composer or an AI. However, This research is performed quantitatively, lacking the underlying reasons why consumers would adopt AI in music. These kinds of cultural meanings have implications for understanding consumers' adoption of AI-generated music.

Adoption refers to the process that describe how a consumer considers whether or not to use a technology that is new to them. There are various models explaining why a consumer adopts a new technology, such as, the TAM model consisting of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of a technology (Davis, 1989) and the UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003). However, in adoption theories, the focus lies on rational-decision making and does not capture the underlying reasons why a consumer would adopt AI-generated music. These models tend to overlook the broader social and cultural meanings connected to technology adoption. Therefore, it is not stated how consumers think and feel about this innovation. In other words, the reasons why a consumer would adopt AI-generated music. The introduction of AI in music opens up many doors for consumers. Such as, on one hand consumers think this will lead to new creative music that humans cannot produce (Marr, 2023), on the other hand there are a lot

of people who fear AI and think it will harm the music as we know it today (Beato, 2023). These consumers would thus resist adopting AI as they fear losing the music made by songwriters as we know it today. These interesting feelings and thoughts cannot be reduced to concepts in the TAM and UTAUT. To capture these cultural understandings and what implications they have for understanding the adoption of AI music, this thesis, uses the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT).

With this approach, one can discuss the relationship that exists between the marketplace, consumer behavior, and cultural meaning. CCT is a theory that delves into the consumption patterns as social and cultural practices (Arnould et al., 2019). Emphasizing the relationship between consumer actions, cultural meanings, and the marketplace and viewing consumer culture as a social practice where individuals use commercially produced products and images to construct their identities and navigate relationships within society (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). To further examine these practices, the enabling lens of practice theory is used. Identifying the materials, meaning, and competencies that possibly change by adopting AI-generated music (Reckwitz, 2002). For example, current practices consist of daily, simple practices like consumers listening to music that is made by humans. With this theory, the meanings behind why a consumer will adopt AI-generated music into their life will be addressed. In the theoretical background chapter, the aforementioned theories are further elaborated on.

Current literature states that some consumers resist AI-generated music, while others are more open to this technology. As innovations such as AI-generated music are not immediately adopted by all consumers, the adoption of AI-generated music is an interesting field of research. A way we can grasp consumers' different thoughts on AI-generated music, is to consider them as influencing their adoption of AI-generated music. Researching how people adopt innovations can explain much about the opinions and beliefs towards that innovation. With the limited availability of literature on this topic this thesis will contribute to an overall understanding of the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers.

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Research goal

To gain from generative AI, specifically from AI-generated music, theories are needed that can predict and explain why this innovation is used and accepted among consumers by exploring consumers' cultural understandings of AI-generated music and how these influence their adoption choices. Making use of the CCT approach and practice theory, what consumers think

of AI in music can be researched. Aiming to answer the current gap in literature, in this thesis the following research question is composed:

How do cultural meanings influence the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers?

Relevance (academic and managerial)

This thesis advances research on AI-generated music in general as there is limited research performed on this topic. By contributing to the literature with data including how and why AI-generated music is adopted among consumers will fill the gap in literature. Furthermore, adding to adoption theories, as current models like UTAUT include several social factors that focus on how adoption is affected by a new technology but do not capture the cultural meanings of consumers regarding AI music. In combination with CCT, a qualitative approach, a deeper understanding of feelings and the customers' thoughts will be brought to the light. With the CCT approach, this thesis will add the cultural meanings to existing adoption theories. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature and provide an overall understanding of this topic.

The practical relevance is of use as well, since the music industry has an evolving character over the past decades (Beato, 2023), the use of AI in music can be of use for multiple actors. Artists, producers, innovators, and entrepreneurs. A relative advantage towards competitors can be created and business processes optimized or improved with the appropriate application of AI (Brock & von Wangenheim, 2019). Understanding what consumers may like and dislike about AI music is of importance as it will have implications for whether or not musicians will adopt the AI-technologies that are becoming part of their music production process. It also allows artists to view the use of AI in music from a consumer perspective, and these insights could be valuable when implementing AI in the music generation process.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs could use this thesis to make decisions regarding AI-generated music in business by understanding how consumers perceive this innovation. Entrepreneurs could benefit from using AI-generated music in e.g., commercials. With the use of AI, the expenses will decrease compared to buying music from producers. When consumers resist this technology, it can be an indication that innovators and entrepreneurs must stay away from implementing AI in their practices to prevent negative responses from their consumers. In short, entrepreneurs could gain a deeper understanding of consumer adoption regarding AI-generated music.

In chapter 2, the theoretical background will be covered. Moreover, the operationalization of this thesis will be addressed in the methods section (chapter 3).

Subsequently, the collected data will be examined and the outcomes recorded in chapter 4. In chapter 5, a discussion part that includes the limitations of this research as well as suggestions for additional research. Finally, chapter 6 includes a conclusion. Answering the research question based on the findings.

Theoretical background

The theoretical framework that guides the research will be covered in this chapter. An introduction to adoption theories will be given, and why these theories need to be pushed forward. To add to existing adoption theories, CCT is used. Lastly, the enabling lens within CCT will be covered.

Adoption theory

Within the existing literature of adoption theories, widely used theories are the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Straub, 2009). TAM is the base for many adoption theories, such as UTAUT. The latter is a more complex model that aims to explain the adoption of technologies on a deeper level.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

User's acceptance and adoption of new technologies are explained by the widely used Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) created by Davis (1989), drawing inspiration from the Theory of Reasoned Action. The fundamental idea of TAM is that two primary aspects influence a person's intention of using a technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived Usefulness (PU) is the extent to which an individual thinks that utilizing technology would improve their output or performance at work. A person's perception of how easy it will be to use a technology is known as their perceived ease of use (PEOU). In short, people are more inclined to embrace new technology if they believe it to be beneficial.

The adoption rate of a technology is higher when people believe it to be user-friendly (Shachak et al., 2019). TAM states that an individual's attitude toward using technology is directly influenced by two factors (PU and PEOU), which in turn determines the individual's behavioral intention to use it. The actual usage behavior is therefore determined by behavioral intention.

TAM only focuses on PU and PEOU. These two constructs do not capture the underlying reasons why a consumer adopts a technology. Since it is a relatively simplistic model, it is easy to use but does not go into much detail (Hirschheim, 2007). There are multiple modifications made to the TAM model to add more depth to the underlying reasons of adoption, one of these modifications is the UTAUT.

Unified Theories of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

Developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), UTAUT is an established theory that aims to explain why users choose to adopt and use particular technologies. As an extension of previous adoption theories such as TAM, the UTAUT model addresses four important components of technology use and acceptance: Performance Expectancy, the extent to which a person thinks that by utilizing the system, their job performance would improve. This is the strongest indicator to predict intention. Effort Expectancy, the level of simplicity related to system operation. Social Influence, the degree to which a person feels that significant others think they need to utilize the new technique. Facilitating Conditions, the extent to which a person thinks that the system's technological and organizational infrastructure is in place to enable its utilization.

These components aim to overcome the simplicity of the TAM model, by diving into more detail about the acceptance of a technology. However, when linking UTAUT to AI-generated music among consumers there are some implications. UTAUT still has a narrow approach regarding the applicability of consumer technology (Shachak et al., 2019). This is because the model is focused on inter-organizational factors (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Therefore, Venkatesh et al. (2012) proposed an extension of the current UTAUT model. Acknowledging that the applicability is focused on organizations and lacks an explanation of consumer behavior (Venkatesh et al., 2012). The proposed extension incorporates three new constructs: Hedonistic Motivation, the enjoyment or fun that comes from utilizing a technology. It has been claimed that this affects behavioral intention. Price value, is the mental trade-off made when weighing the alleged advantages of a technology against its financial expenses. It is claimed that this affects the aim of behavior. Habit, the degree to which a person's learning has caused them to perform certain behaviors automatically. This is claimed to have a direct impact on how people utilize technology.

According to Venkatesh et al. (2012) these additional constructs focus more on individual consumer markets. These constructs aim to provide a deeper understanding of consumer acceptance and adoption of a technology. However, these constructs are all measured using a quantitative approach. Measuring only how much consumers accept a technology, and not the reason behind their answers (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2021).

In the domain of the adoption theories and AI-generated music, the majority of the research is performed in a quantitative manner. Such as Tigre Moura & Maw (2021) investigating to what extent AI is creative. They conducted research with two different

structured surveys. The results were quantified and analyzed. However, the underlying meanings of why people thought in a certain way are not covered in this research. Furthermore, Atassi (2023) researches how AI music is diffused. Making use of machine learning in order to generate music. The paper describes how the model works and the best way to implement this when making music. These articles are focusing on perceiving the characteristics of technology and linking it to adoption theories, the previously explained "hedonistic motivation" might be the closest thing to cultural meanings in UTAUT. However, these articles are lacking the meanings behind the adoption of AI generation in music (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2021). Such as previously mentioned whether consumers value human creativity or in what context consumers think AI generation music is more appropriate.

In order to accomplish this, another perspective is needed. In this thesis CCT is used to provide this additional perspective. CCT is a theoretical approach considering the consumer culture and focuses on the dynamic relationship between consumer actions (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Researching beyond organizations, will reveal how consumers use and accept AI-generated music. The findings can contribute to the existing literature of UTAUT, adding a perspective outside the interorganizational context.

Consumer Culture Theory

To achieve the above mentioned deeper understanding of consumer behavior and acceptance CCT is used. Unlike conventional economic or psychological theories, CCT offers a theoretical framework for comprehending consumption from a social and cultural perspective (Arnould et al., 2019). Instead of thinking of culture as a single, uniform construct that everyone shares, CCT views culture as a mix of different groups with their meanings and ways of doing things. CCT focuses on how these different groups interact with each other, how they buy and use things, and how all of this is connected to the marketplace and cultural values (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). By using CCT, researchers can examine real customer experiences and social interactions (Arnould et al., 2019). This approach focuses on the practice and changes made by consumers. Through researching beyond individuals and focusing on the culture, this study can examine how consumers as a whole impact the market and (re)form behaviors surrounding AI in music generation.

With CCT the aim is to research why AI-generated music is adopted among consumers, and how their consumer experience and social behavior influence adoption. The consequences for originality and authenticity (Network, 2023) in the music industry are highlighted by the implementation of this innovation, which makes it possible to research how AI-generated music

is positioned within consumer culture. With CCT the cultural meanings and practices can address why AI-generated music is adopted among consumers in a certain way. Social relationships and consumer experience are influenced by markets and consumption. Unlike the research traditions like UTAUT, CCT gives a perspective of culture where ethics, emotion, and non-realized practices can be understood. This is achieved by developing an understanding of the drivers behind these cultural changes (Franco, 2022). Addressing the weak points in adoption theory and extending these theories with added perspectives of CCT.

CCT provides a variety of perspectives on how consumers engage with the market and consume, breaking from the conventionally dominant decision-making approach (Franco, 2022). Within CCT there are different enabling lenses available to understand certain ways of context. An enabling lens supports researchers to understand certain ways of context. For example, to research how individual behavior influences practices, practice theory is used. This theory will be explained in the next section.

Many academics have been motivated to apply social psychological theories and models to various adoption theories emphasis on individual decision-making (Taherdoost, 2018). However, few of them cover the practices and the cultural meanings, objects, and skills that drive them. Therefore, this thesis aims to gather data and an overall understanding of this by applying consumer culture theory. The CCT method will be applied to accomplish this. This thesis can advance current AI research by drawing on this research tradition. Contributing to conventional research methods, such as TAM (Davis et al., 1989) and UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2012), adding to the individual characteristics such as hedonistic motivation, individual differences, and ease of use within TAM. The next sub-section explains how CCT can enhance UTAUT.

Practice theory (enabling lens)

In this research the enabling lens of practice theory is used. Practice theory is used to understand why and how consumers adopt AI-generated music in their routines. This is done by identifying the materials, competencies, and meanings related to the practice (Arsel & Bean, 2013). Practice theory looks at how people engage in practices related to consumption, such as shopping, using products, and similar to the focus of this study, adopting technologies. Instead of focusing on individual choices, practice theory emphasizes the routines and habits that people do in their daily lives. For example, one might have a morning routine that includes checking

their phone for notifications or stopping by their favorite coffee shop on the way to work. One might have particular listening practices when it comes to music. Practice Theory helps us understand that these actions are not just isolated behaviors, but can be shaped by cultural norms and meanings, objects, and skills you have learned over time (Reckwitz, 2002).

From a philosophical viewpoint, practice theory looks at how our personal choices and society's rules explain how we interact with each other. Practice theory is known for explaining how people interact socially and gives us a way to understand human behavior in different situations (Warde, 2005). With CCT, one can understand these personal preferences and consumer actions, in this thesis the adoption of AI-generated music. As mentioned previously, a practice consists of three constructs: Materials, actual tangible items, technologies, infrastructures, and resources needed to conduct a process (e.g., a radio to listen to music). Competencies, the know-how, skills, techniques, and practical knowledge need to conduct a practice correctly (e.g., know-how to operate a radio). Meanings, symbolic meanings, ideas, feelings, and motivational knowledge connected to a practice (e.g. the meaning of music can be linked to empathy, or togetherness) (Reckwitz, 2002). These three components are closely related to one another and combined make up social practices. While meanings influence how materials are used and what competencies are valued, materials both enable and constrain the competencies that can be determined. When materials, competencies, and meanings are successfully incorporated and replicated in people's daily performances, practices are created and sustained (Halkier et al., 2011).

Practice theory is a widely used approach to theorize markets and their practices. For example, practice theory can be applied to study consumers' adoption of AI-generated music. Explaining how this technology is adopted among consumers, and understanding why consumers behave in a particular way. Practice theory is as previously mentioned widely used. For example, Arsel & Bean, (2013) outlined the element of taste using practice theory. According to Arsel & Bean (2013), a taste regime is "*a discursively constructed normative system that orchestrates practices in an aesthetically oriented culture of consumption*". Exploring the connections between objects, behaviors, and meanings in consumer culture. It demonstrates how practice theory can be used to theorize simple, routine behaviors. The adoption of AI-generated music is from an adoption standpoint a small practice. However, for consumers the (cultural) meanings of adopting this practice can be of significant impact. This can be a current or an future change in the practice (Thomas & Epp, 2019). For example, how consumers think AI will change the practice of music listening. In this thesis, the aim is to

compare the music listening practices of those who would adopt AI music and listen to it, and those who resist it. Aiming to find patterns in materials, meanings, and competencies that might explain why one group adopts, and the other resists. This enabling lens is used to push the adoption theory forward. Creating an understanding of why AI-generated music is adopted among consumers.

Methodology

The choices for, and a description of the research methodologies are included in this chapter. Explaining the methodology used for the study will be accomplished by outlining the purpose and methods of data collection through netnography, and interviews, including the use of elicitation (Heisley and Levy, 1991) as an interview technique. Furthermore, the data analysis, quality of research, and the formulation and application of ethical considerations are covered.

Research approach

Methodologically speaking, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is frequently linked to qualitative techniques such as ethnography, case studies, interviews, and netnography because of their applicability in examining the sociological, cultural, and experiential aspects of consumption. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), qualitative research can provide valuable insights into the experiences of consumers listening to AI-generated music, including their perceptions, beliefs, and motivations. Therefore, the data will be gathered from a qualitative perspective and thus in this thesis the CCT approach is used.

Research context: Dedicated listening

Tigre Moura & Maw (2021) have shown that to examine the perceptions of consumers regarding AI music, a distinction between high & low-involvement contexts needs to be made. They state that music listeners find AI music less acceptable in "High" involvement contexts (e.g., music for dedicated listening) than in "Low" involvement contexts (e.g., elevator music).

The difference needs to be defined, as this thesis focuses on the "High" involvement context. In literature the following definition can be found: *The main difference between contexts with high and low involvement is the level of cognitive strain and level of thought that the audience is required to provide the message* (Chandler & Munday, 2011). When it comes to music, Niosi (2021) stated that the difference between "high and low" involvement contexts relates to the audience's degree of engagement and connection triggered by the musical composition. Listeners typically engage in little cognitive work while they are listening to music in low involvement contexts therefore, these compositions tend to be simple. There is less of a sense of musical commitment among listeners, who are more likely to move between artists and genres (Schäfer et al., 2013). On the other hand, listeners in high involvement situations are expected to actively participate and invest emotionally. Such music is typically found in specialized or exclusive settings and is characterized by complex compositions, nuanced

melodies, and thought-provoking lyrics. There is an increased connection between the music and the listener, and attitudes are mostly shaped by how well the music fits in with the surroundings (Schäfer et al., 2013).

In high involvement contexts, listeners are more likely to be dedicated to a musician because they value the artist's identity and artistic integrity more. To capture the thoughts of consumers the focus is on the high involvement contexts. In this thesis, the high involvement music listening practice is used interchangeably with dedicated listening.

Data collection

For this research, two rounds of data collection are performed, which is common in CCT research. The first round of data collection was focused on searching for an interesting phenomenon within a topic. Netnography was the main source of information at the beginning of this research by browsing through online communities on Reddit and YouTube (mostly discussions in the comments under a video). This nethnographic research was the base for the first round of interviews. The goal of the first interviews is to find the interesting story that consumers tell about AI-generated music that is missing in the current literature. In the second round, the interview protocol is adjusted to the previously collected data to gather more useful data (Verhoeven, 2011). Focusing more on the interesting answers that previous participants have given, to fully understand a phenomenon. For this thesis, the focus shifted towards the adoption of consumers in a dedicated listening practice. The second round of data collection consists of semi-structured interviews again, with a more in-depth focus on the topic. Zooming in on specific elements and details to build a complete theoretical framework. The interviews are the base of the theoretical framework, netnography is used as a complementary source to fill in the gaps that the participants could not answer. Moreover, netnography increases triangulation since this provides insights from multiple sources.

Netnography

The starting point of orientation was nethnographic exploration. Netnography is similar to ethnography. However, the focus is on online communities in contrast to offline, in-person situations (Kozinets, 2010). Indulging in the data on Reddit such as, R/LetsTalkMusic, and YouTube, discussions about the use and opportunities of AI music. Aiming to find communities discussing AI-generated music and the adoption of this innovation. Due to the fact that the information is already present on the internet, less time is needed to collect data from these communities. The fact that several actors from different communities are examined makes this beneficial. *"Communities' textual identity will not disappear either because the same result can*

be obtained without direct involvement" (Cova & Pace, 2006 p. 1093). Meaning, that observing the consumers in their communities is a reliable source of information gathering. The discussions in these communities are the inspiration for the questions in the first interview protocol.

Furthermore, netnography is used as a complementary source of data, filling in the gaps or complementing the data from the participants. The valuable insights into communities were found on Reddit. Communities discussing whether AI is a good or a bad development for music. Mostly focusing on what the challenges are when AI is implemented in music generation.

Interviews

For this thesis, semi-structured interviews are conducted. The semi-standardized approach by Arsel (2017) was chosen to include themes and subjects that are pre-determined. However, each interview may have different follow-up questions that will be addressed in detail. This allows the participants to express their beliefs and opinions and gather useful data. In the realm of CCT research, semi-structured interviews are appropriate for inductive, emergent, and iterative research approaches to have high authenticity, plausibility, and credibility in this research.

The first round of interviews is more "open" to find interesting characteristics of AI-generated music. This approach is used to get a better understanding of the consumers (Verhoeven, 2011). At the start of every interview, a written consent form (Appendix B) is either signed or verbally communicated and agreed to. Following the introduction of the topic and why this research is performed. Only when these steps are completed the interview is performed (Appendix C). A first round of interviews is conducted to get insights and identify emerging concepts, later a second round is conducted to refine the framework of this thesis. For the second round of interviews, selective sampling was used. According to Shaheen et al. (2019), selective sampling is selecting participants who are useful and have either expertise or can contribute to research. For this thesis, experts on both AI and AI-generated music are interviewed. On the other side, music enthusiasts who do not particularly have profound knowledge of AI were interviewed. This is done to get an understanding of the wide range of consumers, from unaware consumers to consumers who are experts on the topics of AI and music.

The interviews were conducted either in-person or online via platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Nehls et al. (2015) state that even though in-person interviews are

the best option, being able to see the body language of the participants via video-calling is a viable option for qualitative research. These interviews were performed until saturation occurred. Saturation in research refers to a point where no new information is discovered in the data. Indicating that the data collected process has reached a point of redundancy (Saunders et al., 2018). In appendix E an overview of the participants in this research can be found.

Music Elicitation

To capture how participants perceive and think about a technology Heisley & Levy (1991) developed a technique, photo elicitation. By using the technique, photos were taken of the participants and they were asked to reflect on the image. This qualitative technique ensures more details and enriches the data from the participants. However, this thesis is focused on audio and not on images. Inspired by music elicitation by Allett (2010), where music is played for a focus group or individuals to provoke emotions, memories, or a reaction. In that research, music was used to communicate how one felt or relive emotions connected to that song. Since this research is interested in AI-generated music instead of existing songs the participants will hear AI-generated music pieces (Appendix D).

According to Tigre Moura & Maw (2021) it is interesting to research listeners' perceptions of AI-generated music. Therefore, the participants do not know beforehand that the audio files are AI-generated. Only after a couple of questions, the researcher reveals that the audio is AI-generated. This is done to capture the reactions of the participants when they are provided with this information. When this information is provided afterward, the reaction of the participants can be observed. This will result in more in-depth insights into what consumers think of AI-generated music.

Another aspect to consider is the preference for music (e.g., genre preferences) can influence the way the music is perceived. Research on music in particular has revealed that listeners' preferences for particular musical genres may be related to their overall receptivity to innovations (Rentfrow and Gosling, 2003). To address this phenomenon in this research, a worldwide well-known song has been chosen which has been sung by one of the most popular artists at the moment. The song “Life is A Highway” by the Rascall Flatts, only the vocals are AI-generated to sound like Taylor Swift (Appendix D). The combination of a known song and a popular artist will increase the likelihood that the majority of consumers will either know the artist or the song. Aiming to eliminate the listeners’ preference bias.

Furthermore, an audio file without vocals is AI-generated. In the music generator “Veed.IO” the input “create elevator music without vocals.” is inserted. The created audio file

is repetitive and is used to highlight the contrast of what is possible with AI in the realm of music generation (Appendix D). The difference in the audio files aims to highlight the difference between "high involvement" and "low involvement" listening. Where one would generally put on a pop song ("dedicated listening") to listen to because one wants to listen to music. And the "low involvement" context like elevator music is used to pass the time.

The participants are asked what they think of the music, how they feel about how both are created with AI, for who this is made, and what they think about how AI could be an artist. With the use of this technique, the participants can have a more elaborate response when experiencing AI in music.

Data Analysis

The interviews are analyzed following the qualitative content analysis approach. This involves systematically identifying patterns, themes, and findings in the interview transcripts (Vennix, 2019). The first stage in the study of qualitative data is preparing and organizing the data, which could include transcripts, field notes, and other materials. This procedure entails methodically organizing the data to make additional analysis easier (Dye, 2021). Coding is used to connect the gathered data to the previously discussed theoretical concepts. Assigning specific concepts to word fragments to define them (Bleijenbergh, 2013). There are three steps in coding according to (Bleijenbergh, 2013).

Open coding for exploratory analysis: to find and classify information inside data segments, researchers use open coding techniques for exploratory analysis. This stage involves the inductive or deductive construction of codes, which helps to structure the data and produce preliminary insights. *Comparative analysis using axial coding*: next, researchers use axial coding to do a comparative analysis in which codes are compared to create cate, spot trends, and detect variations in the data. To identify connections and themes, groupings of text segments are analyzed in this step. *Integrative analysis through selective coding:* integrative analysis through selective coding is the last step in the study of qualitative data. Higher-level data interpretation is done by researchers who take the data set as a whole into account when determining overall themes, revelations, and conclusions. The goal is to give full knowledge of the data by synthesizing the findings.

Quality of research

CCT research is interpretive research and therefore different than traditional quantitative research approaches. Therefore, Wallendorf & Belk (1989) argue that traditional evaluating criteria (internal and external validity and reliability) do not fit CCT. They propose four

different criteria: *credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability.* Credibility, relates to the integrity of the findings and believability. Such a persistent observation or triangulation. In this research, triangulation is achieved by combining netnography, interviews, and existing literature. Transferability, Providing rich descriptions, allowing readers to evaluate the transferability. This is done by rapport-building questions at the start of every interview (Appendix C). The interviews are recorded and afterward transcribed, to prevent information from being lost and create rich descriptions. Dependability, relates to reliability in quantitative research, keeping an audit trail of the data and enabling others to examine the data. In this thesis, the interview protocol used is provided in Appendix C. Recordings and transcriptions are made from the interviews. An audit trail of the data is maintained to ensure that others can re-examine the work. Confirmability, Keeping raw data available to be revisited by others. The data of this thesis will be stored anonymously for five years. This will increase confirmability.

As mentioned previously, interpretivist consumer research is a qualitative method aimed at understanding customer behavior and experiences through the eyes of the consumers themselves. It is founded on interpretivism, a philosophical position that holds that reality is subjective, socially constructed, and can only be understood by the meanings and interpretations that people attach to it (Szmigin & Foxall, 2000). For this kind of research tradition, there are constructs needed to increase the quality of this thesis. According to Hogg & MacLaran (2008) three primary rhetorical dimensions are taken into account to increase overall quality: *authenticity, plausibility, and criticality* (each having sub-dimensions). Authenticity is established by showing researchers' close connection to the consumer culture, providing complete descriptions, and revealing their thought processes (Hogg & MacLaran, 2008). In this research, this is done by diving into nethnographic data, indulging in online communities to understand the culture of AI in music. Furthermore, performing music elicitation increases authenticity. This technique adds a deeper insight into what participants think or feel about an audio file. Aiming to capture their thoughts when it is revealed that the files are AI-generated. Plausibility, the researchers need to show coherent and believable data, and the provided data needs to be interpreted right and fit the existing knowledge (Hogg & MacLaran, 2008). By previously mentioned nethnographic research, studying theory and combining this with the data provided by the participants there is data from multiple sources. Increasing the amount of insights that create a deep understanding of AI in music. These valuable insights add to existing literature. Criticality, the researcher needs to stimulate the critical thinking of the readers (Hogg & MacLaran, 2008). Besides the researchers themselves, the reader can question the

assumptions of the researcher. Giving the reader space to reflect on the interpretation of the researcher, and letting the reader imagine new possibilities, increases the criticality. In this research this is done by providing clear answers from participants, aiming to stay as close to the participants' narrative. This allows the reader to reflect on the provided information. The questions leading to the answers/quotes can be found in Appendix C.

Research ethics

Research is guided by ethical principles such as objectivity, care, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, and social responsibility (Dignum et al., 2018). In this thesis responsibility and confidentiality are of high importance. At the start of every interview a written consent form (appendix B) is presented and either signed or verbally agreed to by the interviewee. Stating that the confidential information will not be shared outside of the thesis circle. Using pseudonyms instead of names will ensure anonymity (Heaton, 2022), which is adhered to in this thesis as well. Afterwards, all recordings of the interviews are destroyed to guarantee the anonymity of the participants.

Furthermore, objectivity and social responsibility are addressed in the following. The participants are free to stop participation at any point in time, and the questions are asked in a natural form to ensure that participants can express their beliefs and opinions in a comfortable atmosphere. Being transparent about the goals of this research, such that the participants are aware of what kind of research they are involved in.

Due to the use of netnography, the fabrication of data is needed to maintain online privacy (Markham, 2012). The data is anonymized and reconstructed, preventing that the posts or users can be easily traced. By reconstructing and combining data the online, the privacy of users is taken into account. Netnography is used as a starting point and as a complementary source of data. The data is gathered from the platforms, YouTube and Reddit.

Findings

While analyzing the interviews complemented by nethnographic research, multiple practices were highlighted. These findings are represented in the following conceptual framework. Grounded on practice theory (Arsel & Bean, 2013), the adoption or resistance of AI music is addressed.

High involvement context (Dedicated listening)

In the gathered data respondents noted that actively listening to music is a big part of their daily routine. Music is playing at various locations and situations.

> ***Chip:*** *I always listen to music. When I'm at home, I have it playing on my speakers. When I'm on the go, I have my headphones on. When I'm exercising, I also have it on. The only time I don't have music on is when I'm at work. But even then, there is often music.*

However, the context of music is important (Tigre Moura & Maw, 2021). Therefore, in the interviews, audio files were played to examine the different reactions to high and low involvement context music.

The reason why people listen to music is rather different. This is the main difference between dedicated high and low involvement contexts. Active cognitive engagement with music has meaning to people (Niosi, 2021), therefore the framework focuses on dedicated listening as the practice that will be influenced. Since there is meaning to this practice, people have a stronger opinion on changes to that practice. Like in this thesis the use of AI in music. (More responses regarding the meaning of dedicated listening can be found in Appendix A).

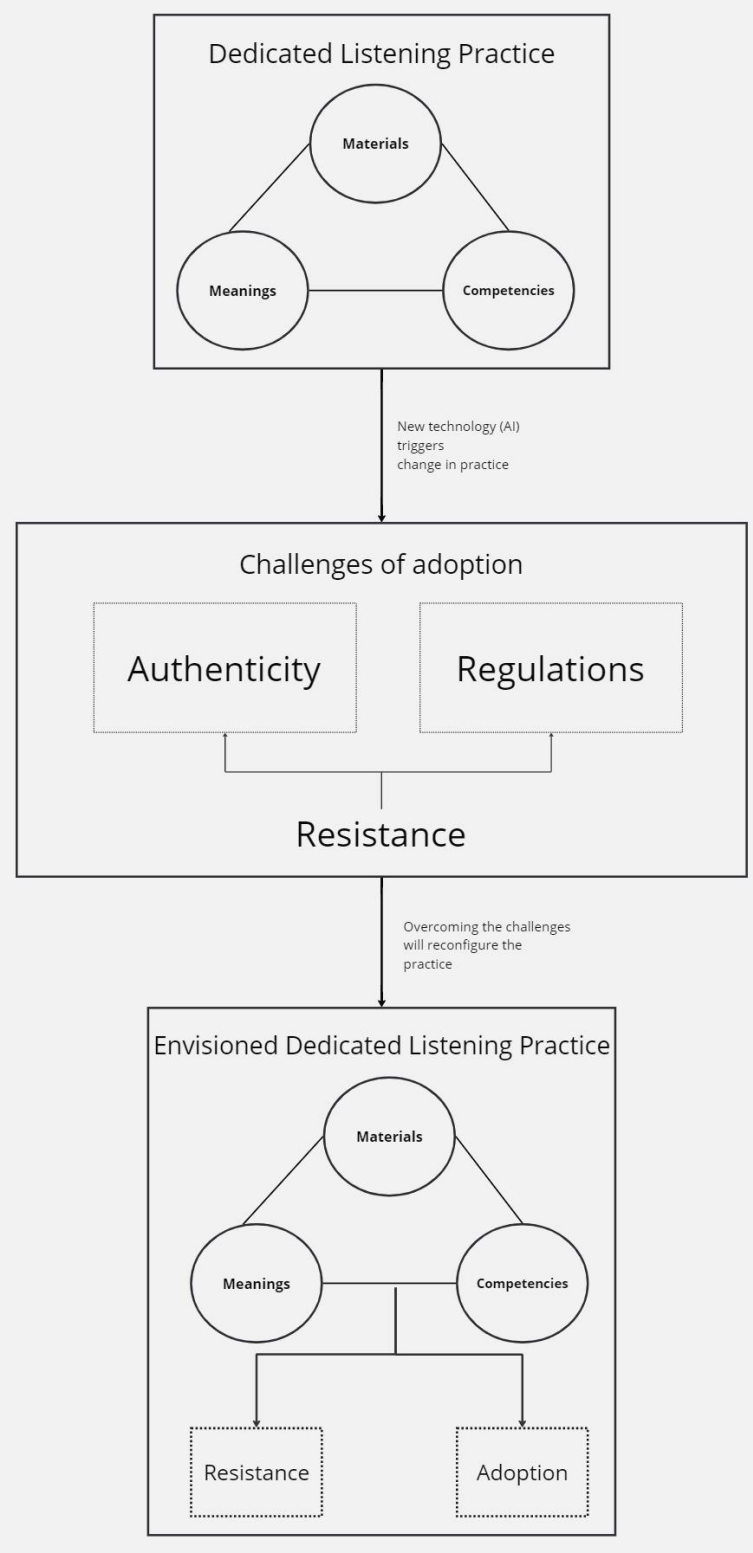

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework Dedicated Listening Practice

Dedicated listening to music is represented as a practice. Consisting of three constructs: meanings, materials, and competencies. The technology (AI) triggers a change in the practice. With the introduction of AI in music, consumers have two challenges when adopting AI in their music listening. The first is authenticity, where consumers are discouraged to listen to an AI-

generated music piece. Secondly, the lack of regulations. Without regulations, consumers find it hard to determine who owns the music. This delays the adoption of AI-generated music. In the last phase of the framework, the reconfigured practice is either adopted or resisted by the consumers. Some consumers resist this kind of AI-generated music listening and other consumers adopt AI use in music generation.

Meanings

From the perspective of practice theory, the meanings of music listening are intertwined with other day-to-day activities. The meaning of music stems not just from the music itself, but also from how it impacts and influences everyday activities such as working out, studying, and traveling. In the found data interviewees explained that music is an escape from their thoughts. Like Anneke *"Music means a lot, I use it as an escape. Not being busy in my own head, and just enjoy someone's thoughts which are backed by a melody.."* Being able to shut down thoughts or just not think about anything but the music. This response reoccurred multiple times in the data. Some expressed this as releasing some energy or being able to zone out.

> ***Kelsey:*** *It's really a form of release. I absolutely love going for walks outside with my music on, allowing my thoughts to wander somewhere other than the present moment. Yes, I often use it as a distraction, or I also really enjoy belting out songs at the top of my lungs.*

On a deeper level, music can be more than just a way of escaping or releasing energy. Music can have an impact on one's personality and how they do things in life.

> ***Charlie:*** *It taught me a lot like it helped shape my personality, my tastes, my interests in life. So it means a lot. It's much more than just a sound which I hear. Also, when I started writing music, a way of expressing myself. So, it's a lot of things with the artists which I followed. They also have a really strong influence on what I do professionally or what I think, what my values are. It's really a lot, it's like about motivating me when I need motivation. It's about calming me when I want to calm down. It's about allowing me to express myself or helping me reflect about things.*

This highlights that the practice of music listening is connected to more practices in an individual's life. Music and artists can shape a person. For example, how someone wants to express themselves to their environment can be influenced by music. Furthermore, the perspectives of consumers on certain topics can change due to music listening. Being able to identify with the artists and what they have written in their lyrics is another important aspect of shaping an individual through music. As Willem stated: *"I connect emotions to music, this can be either sad or happy feelings. The artists and their music can take me back to that memory. And relive that emotion."*

Materials

The materials of dedicated listening consist mostly of using two technologies, these are the radio and a smartphone. Where most people older than forty-five often listen to the radio and complement this with their smartphone, using Spotify. In this case, Kai is a perfect example *"When I just wake up I turn on the radio. And for work, I work with Spotify."* However, most of the participants (younger than 45 years old) almost exclusively used Spotify. Their smartphone is connected to earbuds, headphones, or a music box.

> ***Chip:*** *I listen to music quite often, while cooking, exercising, cycling. Actually quite often. I get up and turn on the music, I don't turn it off. So usually If I do an activity, for example during dinner or other things, cycling or during work.*

The main difference between using Spotify and listening to the radio is that one can decide which song they want to hear on Spotify. In contrast, on the radio, one can only choose the channel they listen to, which will provide songs in a genre but not a specific song. The choice of listening to the radio is more convenient. Like Willem: *"For car rides I usually listen to the radio, only for longer road trips I use Spotify."* And Chip: *"I used to listen to the radio to fall asleep, to distract my mind."* When using Spotify, the majority of respondents listen to their own created playlists, these consist of songs that they like and are tailored to their music taste. For example, Charlie: *"It's mostly like a playlist which I made to focus and concentrate with instrumental music. Pretty cool."*

Besides radio and Spotify some respondents attend music concerts or festivals, the main difference between the previous materials is that an individual physically goes to the event and listens to the artists live.

> ***Kelsey:*** *Yes the festivals I've been to so far are all techno related, so then I listen to that, I've also been to the Toppers. That's really the opposite, but that is more because of the atmosphere than the music. Because it is not particular my taste of music.*

The music that respondents listen to when attending festivals is not exclusively their favorite genre like with Spotify. These festivals are about the complete atmosphere of listening to music with other people. Dancing or singing to music in these places is different than listening to your specific music taste at home. The overall experience makes these events interesting to go to.

Some other notable materials are listening to physical vinyl records, YouTube, and social media such as TikTok. Where the vinyl records are the predecessor of Spotify where you can choose to listen to what you want, YouTube and social media are mainly used as another platform to express music or things about an artist. These platforms are used for dedicated

listening to music, however, in the found data this only accounted for a small proportion of music listening.

Competencies

The practical competencies and skills that people build through their daily practices and experiences are highlighted by practice theory. In other words, the know-how to do something. In the current dedicated listening practice, there are no relevant competencies regarding this practice.

Envisioned dedicated listening practice

Due to that the respondents currently do not listen to AI-generated music in a dedicated listening context, this section is about the envisioned reconfigured practice. In other words, what do you think will be the main influence of AI on music listening. Consumers envision AI music as a new material, this mostly changes the meanings of the practice. The change in meanings is impacted by two major challenges, authenticity and regulations. These challenges need to be overcome in order to adopt AI music. When these challenges are not addressed some consumers will resist adopting this new technology.

Authenticity

In the gathered data, human creativity is a recurring theme. The process that artists are thinking and finding ways to express themselves is important to consumers. However, an AI tool mimics previous work and aims to be of similar value. Some participants say that creativity is lost when using AI to make music.

> ***Kai:*** *I do think it (audio files) is a shame that it is all made by AI. The creativity of humans is no longer used. And with AI, of course, some input is needed, otherwise you do not get very far, But I do think it is a pity that there is not a whole work process preceding it.*

According to the interviewees, artists should use AI as a complementary tool instead of a replacement for music generation. When music is completely generated by AI, consumers say that human creativity and the personal touch with the music will be lost. There are some different perspectives on human creativity. For example, there is a difference in creating the melody with AI and the vocals with AI. Like Willem stated: *"I think that, but I know little about it. It's easier to fabricate melody than vocals since you need a voice anyway. It's more work, so I think the instrumental is easier."* This theme occurred multiple times and there is also a difference in how interviewees perceive creativity regarding melody and vocals.

One interviewee claimed that the melody is based on previous music and often looks like it already, without the interference of AI.

> ***Charlie:*** *For instance, in the 1980s, rap artists extensively utilized sampling from other musicians, leading to considerable debate surrounding sampling practices and copyright issues.*

Therefore, authenticity is a challenge for some consumers when adopting AI-generated music.

Furthermore, that AI is going to be used in the future is a recurring theme among consumers. However, the thoughts on what AI is capable of have changed rapidly. Since the technology is evolving, little time can make a difference. For example, on this Reddit thread.

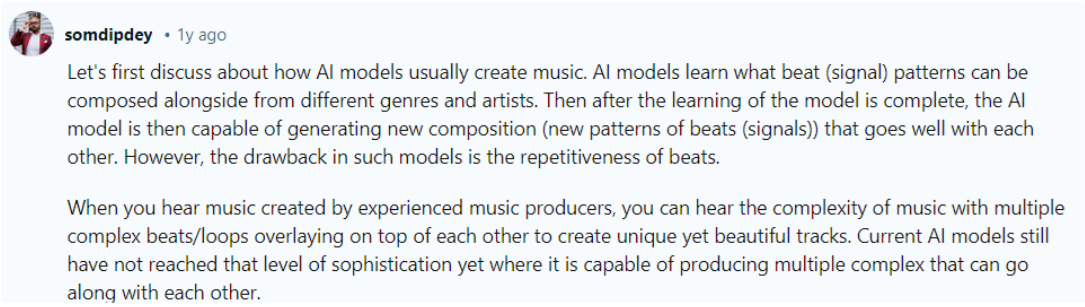

Figure 2: A producer talking about what AI music is like in 2022.

Only one and a half years later consumers feel that AI can recreate songs that are hard to distinguish from human-created songs. That an AI can reproduce the melodies or the voices of artists to make a new song is a big concern among consumers. While contemplating using someone else's voice, is the music still yours or does it belong to the artist? Either way, there is not much human creativity in the making process and that is vital to some consumers.

> ***Ada:*** *That this is already possible, is impressive to a certain extent. However, because this (referring to audio file) uses the voice of, for example, Taylor Swift, the charm of the music disappears, much less personal. Someone's own voice makes it more personal.*

On the other hand, some consumers think that if music sounds good it is fine. Even though the music is (partially) made with the help of AI, the music will sound as good as a song written by an artist. But it is still uncomfortable to know that AI makes this instead of a songwriter.

> ***Willem:*** *What I find unfortunate, is that people who make music nowadays, do not use a lot of instruments, that a lot comes from synthesizers or from the computer and that no one uses their brains to anymore (to play the instrument), but that they just use the*

computer until they have a nice tune and often I like that tune. Only then, I sometimes think the profession of musician is becoming a bit extinct.

Additionally, AI only produces music that is based on previous music, AI cannot make up completely new songs. All the output is inspired by existing songs; therefore, the AI is not creative according to some respondents. That the music is not deemed creative is not the end of the world, some interviewees feel it is the constant evolution of how music is made.

Jesse: *I think it's part of evolution. It's not like when you used to pick up a guitar back in the day. It's just typing something as a prompt, but yes, you can't keep living in that time, as everything is now developing differently. Constantly changing.*

The majority of the respondents think that AI will be indispensable in the future. Therefore, everyone will need to accept this technology.

Regulations

Another envisioned challenge of adopting AI in music listening is the lack of regulations. Due to AI being new in music creation, there are not many guidelines or laws concerning AI in music creation, so who owns the music? With AI it becomes easier to mimic the voice of an existing artist, which can be used to create songs. According to the respondents, regulations are needed to clarify this matter.

Willem: *There needs to be some kind of law like "BumaStemra" (law that allows someone to use the music) or authors' rights. Because if I put a prompt in AI that uses the voice of an artist, that person does not get any money.*

There are currently laws concerning copying a melody and lyrics (copyright), but there are not any laws concerning the use of someone's voice. Because, when there are many records or audio files available of a voice, AI can recreate the voice and let them say anything you want. This creates a grey area where it is not clear if the real artist sings the song or is it is AI-generated.

Anneke: *Suppose my voice sounds exactly like Taylor Swift, and I publish a song. Then you actually do exactly the same thing and then people often say, wow, that really sounds like Taylor Swift super cool, she needs a stage. But with an AI it's often said don't do it, don't touch our artist.*

Even though this is a challenge, the majority of the participants think that using AI in music is going to be the normal standard. However, some consumers think that musicians will not be transparent about the help of AI tools in the music generation.

Ada: *It is kind of like powerlifting, everyone knows that they use anabolic steroids but they all say that they are natural and do not use them. Otherwise the powerlifting*

> *federation will suspend them. I think the same will happen with the AI in music. We will know that things will be created with AI but not know exactly what. That the music labels want to claim that it is all man-made to prevent getting into lawsuits concerning regulations about using someone else's music.*

When clear regulations are set, only then consumers think that they will accept AI in music generation more. Since the respondents think that AI will become more influential in music generation, regulations need to be composed to keep the music industry fair for all parties.

Adoption and resistance

Since there are different perspectives on the same matter, the aim was to find where the crossing line of accepting AI generation in music lies. On the one hand, resisting to listen to AI-generated music. Claiming to be non-authentic and non-creative and therefore missing flair/human touch which makes music personal. On the other hand, accepting AI, music is to escape your thoughts or express yourself with for example dancing.

Among the respondents there was a separation between wanting a song made by a real artist and having a personal touch to it. In contrast to, some consumers wanting a song that is catchy and nice to listen to, where it did not matter it was AI-generated.

> ***Kai: "****Yes, I think that (listening to AI-generated music) will happen if I really like it! Yes. Maybe a bit against my principles, but, if the song is good, and it's already made, I think, well, come on, add it to my playlist."*

For some interviewees, the implementation of AI in music is seen as a new way of creating music. Hoping that new genres or sounds will be produced that without AI never would have happened. Creating synergies between genres, songs, and even artists. Expressing that AI is around, so better to use this technology to the best advantage.

> ***Charlie:*** *We just, don't know what is going to happen with AI. I do defend that we have to change our paradigm on what it means to be creative. Because the genie is not going to go back in the bottle, you know, forget it. That's not going to happen. So, if it's not going to happen, then maybe we might as well change the way that we view things.*

Besides only speculating what AI will change to how we know music, there are some aspects that we know that will change. For example, personalization. Like Anneke stated *"With the algorithms of AI, really personalized playlists of music can be created for you. That is one of the best things that you can do with AI."* The AI will get to know your music taste and patterns and provide you with new music to explore that one might like according to the data. Taking this one step further, creating music inspired by the kind of music played in the past. Creating

personalized musical synergies that one would otherwise not be available. These arguments are making people tend to adopt AI in music listening since the technology is beneficial.

In contrast to these rather positive perspectives on AI in music, some resist the use of this technology in music creation. There is an aversion towards AI in music when it is stated to be completely human-made but is created with the help of AI. Some consumers think that artists will not be transparent in their AI use, thinking that artists will use AI because it is so easy to use, without having to do all the hard work.

> ***Willem:*** *The skill of being a musician, the craftmanship will probably disappear with the introduction of AI. Which is a shame, I think that is also the beauty of music. Therefore, I'm not a fan of AI music.*

Some consumers tend to resist AI in music. Being afraid that the occupation of musicians will disappear and music will transform into something that only computers create. Wanting to keep the essence of the artists, thinking that the personal touch of artists is one of the most important aspects of music, and AI will not be able to recreate that.

Discussion

In this chapter, the contributions to existing literature will be discussed. In addition to that, directions for future research about this topic will be covered. Furthermore, the managerial implications will be addressed to express how the findings of this thesis can be used in practice. Lastly, the limitations of this research will be discussed.

Theoretical implications

This thesis contributes mostly to adoption theories. As discussed in the chapter on the theoretical background, this thesis contributes to the UTAUT extension (Venkatesh et al., 2012) on TAM (Davis, 1989), which includes hedonistic motivation, habits, and price value. These constructs are measured quantitatively, focusing on the individual consumer (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2021). The adoption theories currently used mostly concentrate on using rationality to determine whether or not to accept a new technology (Ajzen, 1991). Rational-decision making is focused on the attitude of an individual, their norms, and perceived ease of use. This rational-decision making lacks a deeper understanding of cultural and social aspects (Shachak et al., 2019). Though social aspects are taken into account in later adoption theories, some social and cultural elements are integrated into performance and effort expectancy or social influence (Williams et al., 2015). Previous studies have not examined these social and cultural elements as extensively as this thesis has through utilizing a CCT approach.

This examination of the social and cultural elements of adoption is achieved by concentrating on what AI music means to the consumer, rather than focusing on the perceived ease of use and usefulness of this technology (Davis, 1989). This is done by going beyond current adoption theories, addressing concerns about authenticity and regulations in AI music, and aiming to capture the cultural meanings of consumers regarding the adoption of AI in music. By using this qualitative approach, a deeper understanding is achieved, extending the current literature of UTAUT theory.

To achieve this deeper understanding, practice theory is used. The envisioned practice (Thomas & Epp, 2019) aims to capture the future thoughts of consumers about AI-generated music adoption. This enabling lens (Dolbec et al., 2021) of CCT has three constructs. Besides the focus on the meanings (what people think and feel), also focuses on the materials and competencies that can influence the adoption of AI in music generation (Reckwitz, 2002). Using CCT, the perspectives of consumer culture are added to these constructs (Arnould et al., 2019). The combination of this theory and the enabling lens helps to extend UTAUT with a consumer focus on social and cultural meanings regarding AI in music. Since there is little

literature on the acceptance of AI music, this thesis addresses more than just the meanings of adopting this new technology. It aims to create an overall understanding of how consumers think about this technology, and how consumers think AI in music should be implemented in the future.

As seen in the findings, the authenticity and regulations are the main challenges for consumers to adopt AI music into their music listening. The effort that a human puts into music is important, effort makes music valuable to consumers. Moreover, the lack of regulations concerning AI use in music generation is another obstacle for consumers. The main point of resistance being that everyone can create music with AI by using the voices of existing artists, essentially "stealing" the artist's voice and creating a song without the consent of these artists.

For future research, there are multiple research opportunities possible following this research. Firstly, participants have deemed focusing on different genres to have an impact on the acceptance of AI use. To do so, one could extend on the article of Tigre Moura & Maw (2021), discussing the importance of context in music. In this research, some data hinted that EDM (Electronic Dance Music) genres are more accepting of AI use compared to ballads or classical music. Brandi (2023) reported an experiment about EDM producer Snell who created an AI model that makes music. The AI model eventually became so good that, according to Snell, it created better music than the producer itself. The producer now exclusively uses AI models to make music. This is one example of a genre that will be influenced by AI. Future research can be performed by examining how consumer acceptance changes in different genres.

Secondly, the different AI tools for music generation can be examined further. Since this thesis focused on the overall acceptance of AI use in music generation, the different AI tools and their influence on consumer acceptance can be further examined. There are AI music generators that can create complete songs like Veed.IO or SunoAI, but there are many differences between these music generators. The input into the model is important for the output, with the same prompt one generator can create a better piece of music than the other generator, only because the other model is trained differently.

Lastly, due to that the interviewees currently do not listen to AI-generated music and answered what they envision the future to be. This research could be performed again in a couple of years when AI in music generation is a more important factor in consumer listening practices. As discussed earlier AI (in music) evolves rapidly (Beato, 2023). Researching if the

acceptance of consumers regarding AI in music has changed over time will likely generate different answers to the questions.

Methodological contributions

When considering the Photo elicitation approach (Heisley & Levy, 1991), and applying this method to the interviews, a methodological addition might be made. Originally, this technique was termed as autodriving, in which interviewees reflected on photos and drove the information themselves. In this thesis this technique is used as an inspiration to apply to music. When considering the music elicitation approach (Allett, 2010), and applying this method to the interviews, a methodological addition might be made. Using the original technique, the participants knew the songs in advance, they had an emotional connection or experience linked to that song. In the original technique existing, known songs were used. This technique is an inspiration to apply this to AI music. Where the participants were presented with two different audio files without any context. Afterward the response was observed and questions were asked on what the participants thought or felt about the files. By presenting the audio files without any context the participants were not biased, increasing the plausibility (Hogg & MacLaran, 2008) of this research.

For future research, this technique can be used to capture observations of participants when listening to a new music piece. With the first reaction to a music piece, one can express what they think or feel about the audio. Since this research was focused on the acceptance of AI music, consumers were presented with beforehand AI-generated audio to capture their thoughts. Future researchers could extend music elicitation by letting the participants create AI-generated music. When participants create music themselves, that will result in more personal music. Which will enrich the data.

Managerial implications

Consumers think AI will have a big impact on the music industry, which can be interesting for managers or entrepreneurs who work in the music industry, e.g., record labels. This thesis can be used as a base for their strategy. Understanding to what extent consumers will accept the use of AI in music. With the implementation of AI in music generation, the practice of dedicated music listening changed (Arsel & Bean, 2013). Out of the three constructs meanings, materials, and competencies (Reckwitz, 2002), AI in music generation has the biggest impact on the meanings. Consumers assign value to music, and the interference of AI can devalue the music

in some aspects. In practice, there are challenges that managers need to take in mind. Tackling the challenges of authenticity and regulations. That implies that managers need to be thoughtful with implementing AI to produce songs and simply publish them. Besides being in a grey area of copy- and author rights, that raises awareness on legal and philosophical issues (backstagelegal, 2024). This will result in negative reactions from consumers, they will think the manager/company is only focused on time and cost and not on the music itself anymore.

Artists and music producers can benefit from this thesis. This research highlights a focus on cultural factors that are important for adopting a new technology. As an extension of prior theory, not only rational decision-making (Ajzen, 1991) is important for adopting AI in music generation. This shows artists that there is more to accepting AI in music generation than just rational decision-making. For example, the findings show that transparency of AI use in music creation is a vital aspect of adopting this technology. Music creators need to be open about the use of AI in the music generation process. This will increase the acceptability of consumers to listen to the music. However, a survey from Pirate.com (2023) found that over half of the musicians would conceal their AI use in music creation. In line with this thesis, this will result in a lot of negative reactions from consumers. Because when musicians are not transparent and consumers later find out about AI use in songs, the lack of transparency can be detrimental to the value of the artist and their music. Expressing that they feel lied to and do not appreciate that from artists. Possibly devaluing their music or reputation by not being transparent. This is something that artists need to take into consideration when adopting AI tools in their music generation process. Opening new opportunities for future research on this topic, researching how consumers adopt AI music when the use of AI is not transparent.

Limitations

In this research, there are a number of limitations. First of all, the selection of most participants is based on close contacts or second-line contacts of the researcher. This could lead to not being a representative selection of the whole population of consumers. However, to increase the transferability (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989) of this research the participants are aimed to spread out on the consumer spectrum. Providing a rich participant description, defining a range of ages, select participants on the different genres of music that they listen to, and difference in their familiarity with AI. By providing a rich description of the participants themselves and their answers combined with netnography the credibility (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989) of the research is addressed. With data from multiple different sources, the credibility increases. However, in this research, netnography is used as a complementary source for filling in gaps or as

confirmatory source.

For this thesis, eight useful interviews were conducted, which could be argued to be a small number of participants. Due to the purposeful sampling of the participants, the selection of consumers was widely spread. This is done to gather as much insights as possible. Given the available time for a master thesis and the complexity of this research, this was enough data to draw an analysis for the findings. By the last interviews there were no new insights discovered, and a deep understanding of consumers' acceptance of AI in music was reached. Therefore, coming to data saturation (Saunders et al., 2018).

The focus on dedicated listening, and less focus on careless music listening is made relatively late in this research. In the earlier interviews, both of the listening practices were examined equally. However, when more data was gathered, the focus shifted more toward dedicated listening. Since there is research on the importance of context in music, the low involvement context is for consumers less interesting. Because this music listening means less to them, the implementation of AI in the generation phase does not bother consumers much. However, the implementation of AI in music for dedicated listening means much more to consumers. Therefore, the focus could have been more on dedicated listening, which would possibly have resulted in a deeper understanding of this construct.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers. What the cultural meanings are behind why a consumer would accept/adopt AI-generated music. Aiming to answer the research question: *How do cultural meanings influence the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers?* According to the findings, multiple elements need to be considered. Most consumers think AI use will increase in the future; this is similar to AI use in music. Consumers will need to deal with AI in music generation, however, there are some challenges to adopting AI music. The authenticity of artists is an important factor to consumers. Where music created by an artist can create a feeling of relatedness, and consumers think that an AI will not be able to do this. Another challenge is the regulations. Where an AI can recreate someone's voice without consent and there are currently no regulations to prevent this. This means one can create songs using an existing voice and claim that they completely own the music.

These challenges need to be overcome before consumers will accept AI in music generation and even when these challenges are overcome, not all consumers will listen to AI-generated music. On the one hand, consumers will resist AI music and will only want to listen to human-made music while on the other hand, consumers will accept AI music. Seeing the benefits of the possibilities of creating new synergies between genres or personally tailored music.

When AI will be used in music generation, transparency is important. Consumers want to know if artists/producers use AI in their creation. When consumers find out later that the published music is created with AI, most of the music listeners express that they would value the music and the artist less. Feel lied to and therefore feel less connected to the music. Above-mentioned elements are the main drivers behind the adoption or resistance of AI-generated music among consumers.

This thesis adds to adoption theories, contributing to the extended UTAUT. The main additions to this theory are the cultural and social aspects. Where the current theory quantitatively researches habits and motivation. With this thesis, a deeper understanding of consumer acceptance is added to the literature. Furthermore, a methodological contribution is made to elicitation approaches. Current music elicitation is used to provoke emotions or memories among participants. The contribution is a technique where music/audio is new to the participants. Displaying the audio without any other context will capture the first opinions or thoughts about that music piece.

To conclude this thesis, the key takeaway is that while AI in music may be met with resistance from some consumers, that there are two key factors that drive consumer adoption, 1) authenticity is valued highly among consumers and 2) the need for clear regulations regarding music rights. By understanding these factors, the challenges of consumer adoption that lie ahead can be better overcome.

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Appendices

Appendix A Quotes

Participant	Practice Meaning of music
Anneke	music means a lot, I use it as kind of an escape. Not being in busy in my own head, and just enjoy someone's thoughts which are backed by a melody.
Anneke	In some sad moments in my life music was also a bright spot, music sometimes could make more happy. This could be a sad song that I can familiarize with or a happy pop song that reminds me to be happy and shake it off.
Charlie	I found music like genuinely enjoying music. I think when I was like a teenager like, I think like everybody else. And for me it was like a great way of escapism.
Charlie	It taught me a lot like it helped shape my personality, my tastes, my interests in life. So it means a lot. It's much more than just a. Sound which I hear. And also, then afterwards when I started writing music, also a way of expressing myself and. So, it's a lot of things with the artists which I followed. They also have a really strong influence on what I even do professionally or what I think, my values are. It's really a lot, it's like about motivating me when I need motivation. It's about calming me when I want to calm down. It's about allowing me to express myself or helping me reflect about things.
Kelsey	It's really a form of release. I absolutely love going for walks outside with my music on, allowing my thoughts to wander somewhere other than the present moment. Yes, I often use it as a distraction, or I also really enjoy belting out songs at the top of my lungs.
Willem	And yes, music has to do with events in my life. I connect images to them in my mind, and some things make you very happy. So, good periods. Sometimes when music is less enjoyable, you think, 'oh yes, that was that

	time,' and you can also feel a bit down. So, I feel it. I connect music to emotion and actually the emotions I've experienced in the past."
Chip	Music for me means a piece of relaxation, bit of Energy too. It's also a kind of extra release mechanism, isn't it? Because when I'm just going through something, I just put on some music and I feel better. It can make me feel better in some situations.
Kai	Mood, sensitivity, music can touch you well. It is an expression of emotion. If I see an enthusiastic band, their enthusiasm works through on me. makes me happy. Especially that you have a certain particular emotion with certain song absolutely especially with funerals, parties or whatnot.
Ada	The point is, it keeps me engaged or something like that, when you work with music. Yeah, it keeps my brain running instead of getting too caught up in things, because it keeps going, it keeps going.

Participant	Practice Materials of music
Anneke	Music during my work when I'm not in meetings, I often listen to some music on Spotify and when I really want to listen to music consciously for the sake of listening to music, I listen to one of my records and that's mainly In the evening times.
Charlie	It's mostly like a playlist which I made for like to focus and concentrate with instrumental music. Pretty cool. I am currently writing music for my son, using my guitar I want to create an album for him in the future.
Jesse	Well. I mean Turfy Gang they make TikTok, Instagram and YouTube Videos. I like watching that. I follow them on Instagram and I like that, interesting and myself I'm giving a second party soon and then I also want to book artists, so we look on the internet what I like myself and how they perform and whatever can appeal to a target audience. So that way I also try to know more about that and I think it's pretty cool if someone can tell you something about someone that you have absolutely no knowledge of, but the beginning. But can teach someone else something about being a musician, so to speak.
Kelsey	Actually always When I'm at home, I have it on my box. When I'm on the road, I have my headphones on. When I'm exercising I also have it on The only time I don't have it on is When I'm at work. But then it's often actually music too. Or When I'm at my study.

	a. Yes the festivals I've been to so far are all techno related, so then I listen to that, I've also been to the toppers. That's really the opposite but that is more because of the atmosphere than the music. Because it is not particular my taste of music.
Chip	I listen to music yes quite often actually while cooking, while exercising while cycling. Yes, actually quite often. If I get up and turn on the music, I don't turn it on. I used to go to sleep and have the radio on, but that's not really the case anymore to fall asleep. So usually If I do an activity, for example during dinner while preparing dinner or yes, such things, cycling or during work while studying, also happens sometimes. and to festivals Of course.
Willem	Yes. Mainly In the car and at work I think mainly the radio. But with longer drives, own music and then Spotify.
Kai	When I just wake up I do. Then I have the radio on. And for work, I work a lot with Spotify.
Ada	24/7. When I'm on the road When I'm working. When I'm doing chores, or well, activities. Mainly my own music, But that's Because I have prefer relatively a separate music taste than most. So I also almost always have my earbuds or headphones with me. In addition, I produce my own music.

Appendix B Consent form

Radboud Universiteit

Nijmegen school of management faculty

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: ***The cultural meanings behind the adoption of AI-generated music among consumers.***

This is a student research project contributing towards the fulfilment of the requirements of the master of science degree being completed by the student researcher, Mr. Stan Bennink.

Name of participant:

Name of investigator(s):

Student Researcher:

Name; Stan Bennink,

Email: …

Supervisor:

Pao Franco, Institute for Management Research, Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands;

Email: …

1. I consent to participate in this student project, the details of which have been explained to me. And if requested have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.

3. I understand that my participation will involve observations and I agree that the researcher may use the results.

4. I understand that the data collected and analyzed in this project might also be used by the researchers in closely related research projects.

5. I understand that my participation may involve audio, photo and/or video capture if possible and appropriate, and may involve a period of discussion with the researcher over the interview recorded.

7. I understand that my participation includes:
   - This initial interview with the researcher(s).
   - A potential invitation for further interview(s) with the researcher(s). This is at my discretion.

8. I acknowledge that:

   (a) the possible effects of participating in the ***observations*** have been explained to my satisfaction;

   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any data I have provided;

   (c) the project is for the purpose of academic research;

   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

   (e) I have been informed that with my consent the ***observations may be recorded and transcribed. Recordings*** will be destroyed after transcription (but no less than 5 years after the fieldwork). The transcriptions will be retained indefinitely in safe storage;

   (f) I am aware that all reasonable measures to de-identify my responses will be taken, including removal of personal information in audio transcripts and using a pseudonym instead of my real name while the interview is being recorded.

   (g) Due to the small sample size of this study and in consideration of all reasonable measures to de-identify my responses, I have been informed that there is still a risk that my responses and I may be identified through the outputs of this study.

   (h) I am aware that there are legal limitations to the confidentiality of the data collected from me after all measures to de-identify my responses have been taken. This includes that the data provided can be subject to subpoena, freedom of information requests or mandated reporting by some professions.

   (i) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings can be forwarded to me, should I desire.

I consent to the researcher observing behavior □ **yes** □ **no**
(please tick)

I consent to interviews being audio-taped □ **yes** □ **no**
(please tick)

I consent to the use of a pseudonym instead of my real name after the interview has been transcribed and the usage of this pseudonym in resulting outputs of this study.

□ **yes** □ **no**
(please tick)

I wish to be notified when outputs of this research project are published and receive a summary of research findings (If yes, please also provide your email address below)

□ **yes** □ **no**
(please tick)

Participant signature: Date:

Participant contact email:

Appendix C Interview protocol

Interview protocol Master Thesis AI Music

I am researching what cultural meanings consumers have towards adopting AI-generated music. What are the reasons behind individuals resisting or adopting AI-generated music. In listening but also in overall acceptance.

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Project: Brand Storytelling and Fan Experiences

DATE & TIME:	
OTHER COMMENTS:	

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Name*:*	
AGE (CIRCLE RANGE):	18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+
GENDER:	Male / Female / Nonbinary / Transgender / Prefer not to say
Favorite music genre	
Familiair with AI	None / little / average / a fair bit / a lot

Rapport building and general questions

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Can you tell me a little bit about the town or city you live in?

What do you spend the most time doing outside of work?

What does your home situation look like? Roommate, partners etc.

What do you do in your spare time for fun?

General questions music

When do you like to listen to music normally?

What kind of genres do you prefer to listen to?

What does music mean to you?

What kind of music do you normally listen to when you are (is there a difference):

1. Difference to listening alone or with people
2. Travelling

3. Busy cleaning
4. Go to festivals
5. Car rides

In what way are you invested in the music industry (just listen to the radio – know the ins and outs of the music industry)

Is there anything that you do not like about music/music industry?

Photo elicitation with audio files (explanation why)

What do you think of the audio files?

How does it make you feel that both are created by AI?

Would you listen to this yourself?

When do you think that AI music will be used?

- Will this be in commercials/ads or will this conquer the whole industry? Why do you think that

Would it affect you (in any way) by knowing these audio files are made with AI?

Do you think that consumers will accept this? (yes/no) why?

General questions AI

Are you aware that music can be created with the help of AI?

Have you created or heard an AI-generated music in the past?

Do you think this is a good or bad development for the music industry?

Do you see yourself using ai to make music?

How do you perceive the uprise of AI?

Follow up questions

Which genres do you think will be using AI? And in what ways?

Do you think you will use AI to create or listen to music yourself in the future?

What do you expect the music industry to look like in the future?

What will be the transition like with AI music?

What will this mean for current artists and songwriters?

Will AI change how you view music?

Burn-out questions

What is the most negative scenario with AI-generated music?

What is in your view the most positive scenario with AI-generated music?

What will festivals or concerts look like (e.g. generated ai music no physical artist/DJ)?

Wrap up questions

Is there anything left that you want to tell me? Something to add?

Do you have any questions for me?

Is there anyone that you recommend I should talk to?

Appendix D Music elicitation files

Audio file 1 for the carless listening practice (low involvement context):
https://youtu.be/Z2yg_KfRrPE

Audio file 2 for the dedicated listening practice (high involvement context):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHBOKfHZwL8&t=9s

Appendix E Participants information

Pseudonym:	**Date:**	**Age:**	**Familiar with AI:**	**Favorite genre:**	**Duration of interview:**	**Where did the interview take place**
Anneke	26-02-2024	25-34	A lot	80s rock	55 min	In-person
Charlie	16-04-2024	35-44	A fair bit	Everything, Rock	53 minutes	Microsoft Teams
Jesse	17-04-2024	18-24	Average	Hip-hop, Studentennummers (Studentsongs)	25 minutes	In-person
Kelsey	18-04-2024	18-24	Little	Pop, Techno	32 minutes	In-person
Chip	19-04-2024	18-24	Average	Hip-hop, Uptempo	31 minutes	Microsoft Teams
Willem	22-04-2024	45-54	Little	80’s music	30 minutes	Microsoft Teams
Kai	30-04-2024	55-56	Little	Rock, pop, 80’s, Nederlandstalig (Dutch spoken music)	35 minutes	In-person
Ada	01-05-2024	18-24	A lot	Hardhouse, Techno, Hard groove	40 minutes	Microsoft Teams