

Music streaming and culture

*Studying the use of music streaming
services in Norway and Mexico*

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- Music streaming and culture-

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Norway and Mexico

Master Thesis

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Thesis Summary

This master thesis was mainly inspired by (1) my passion for music and specific metal music, (2) my culture and roots in Mexico City, (3) my experience working with Spotify for more than two years in Mexico City, and (4) my two and half years living in Norway. Based on these four elements, and by making research on studies related to media, music, culture, psychology, digital platforms, and the era of music streaming, I encouraged myself to start a solitary journey on the research of social behaviors while using music streaming services.

In this project, I present a research made in Norway and Mexico with the purpose of analyzing how culture shapes our behaviors in our digital lives on such a personal activity as listening to music on music streaming platforms. With this project, I aim to contribute to different fields of research such as (1) media studies, (2) sociology/psychology and culture in online societies, and (3) culture convergence, adaption and the 'social' in online sociality.

First, I consider that this master thesis contributes to the field of media studies since my focus is based on music digital platforms. In this sense, I develop under the concept that music is a way of communication which has developed during the years in different ways. Music has traveled in different formats and have found its latest format on media platforms created on the internet. Secondly, I contribute to the field of sociology, since I present theories and findings on social and cultural patterns in both countries. My aim is to understand how social norms shaped by culture, determine personal behaviors in online sociality when interacting with music in digital music platforms.

I discuss my arguments based on theories based on ecological perception and interaction as well as in cultural studies and the development of social networks. I base this research on models which mainly analyze social and digital platforms.

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1 Introduction

Music distribution has changed over time due to the development of music technologies. In the second half of the twentieth century, portability became a significant design feature in consumer electronics (Bijsterveld & van Dijck, 2009, p. 69). The CD technology allowed people to listen to their music in their cars or in the public transportation due to discmans, which were mainly developed by Sony and other manufacturers. CD's could also be reproduced in a car, home radios, and in personal computers. By reproducing CD's in a computer, music listeners could also afford to copy the files from the CD to a computer. These affordances were gratefully embraced by music listeners who also started new collections between physical and digital formats of music.

Moreover, in the beginning of the twenty first century, internet developers created online platforms which were used for social purposes. According to Gillespie (2010) online platforms are defined as 'an infrastructure that supports the design and use of particular applications, be they computer hardware, operating systems, gaming devices, mobile devices or digital disc formats' (p. 349). Once these platforms were introduced, they attracted millions of users who integrated these sites into their daily practices (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 210). Within these practices, internet adopters started to interact with each other creating networks or a set of relationships using these new information technologies (Castells, 1996, p. 62). These platforms were mainly known as social network sites (SNS's) such as MySpace and Facebook. The adoption of such platforms shifted the use of new technologies which 'became technologies to act on information, not just information to act on technologies' (Castells, 1996, p. 61). During that time, music distribution continued commercialized mainly on physical formats. However, the usage of computers and internet adoption was rapidly increasing and internet users started to explore social networks. These social networks allowed the exchange of entertainment sources such as video, images, gaming, and music mainly on illegal peer-to-peer services such as Napster and Gnutella, which allowed both chat and file sharing (S. Jones, 2002, p. 214). New technologies and the development of creative industries lead to new ways of music distribution. As stated by S. Jones (2002) 'these technologies have consequences for how people get to music and for how music gets to people' (p. 214). In this sense, new technologies changed dramatically the market for art and culture, typically leading to expanded audiences having access to more diverse options (Tepper & Hargittai, 2009, p. 227). Network technologies allowed less commercial control in the way that they permitted digitized music to freely

circulate without restriction or compensation (S. Jones, 2002, p. 220). The new ways of distribution of entertainment claimed for new business models, which could pay back revenue to the industries due to the losses of income specially to the film and music industry.

It was until 2008 when Spotify (a music streaming service) was launched in Sweden under the concept of a network platform, which allowed on-demand access to a standardized music library of 8 million songs using peer-to-peer techniques (Kreitz & Niemela, 2010). European countries were the first adopters of music streaming services due to their large internet infrastructure and their vast access to mobile devices (Hagen, 2016).

The launch of Spotify suggested socioeconomic changes to the commercialization and distribution of music on the internet. On the economic aspect, Spotify suggested a model in which internet users could contribute legally to revenue of the music industry by listening to their favorite tracks and by subscribing to the service on a free model or by paying a monthly fee (Hagen, 2016). Free models on music streaming services are mainly accompanied by paid advertisements of brands and corporations, whereas users under a monthly fee payment (premium model) avoid advertisements and have offline access to their music. In both schemes, Spotify's business model acted as a vaccine towards illegal music distribution, and suggested more balanced incomes for artists, labels, and song writers. The arrival of Spotify allowed more commercial control and a more standardized distribution of music content. At the same time other competitors such as Tidal, Apple Music, Rdio, Pandora, and Deezer created music streaming platforms in search for a more democratized music distribution and a fair revenue system for the music industry while they developed their businesses and increased their sales and customers.

On the social aspect, the launch of Spotify and music streaming services had a direct impact on how music listeners, internet users, and technology consumers approached their music. Music streaming technologies, allowed users to connect their individual accounts with other social networks such as Facebook and provide online and offline access to their favorite music from mobile devices. Users could now carry millions of songs on their phones and personal computers and afford file sharing within their social networks and within music streaming platforms. Social features on music streaming platforms have adapted to the needs of the user as the user has adapted to the use of social features. Some of the main social features of music streaming platforms include file sharing, direct messaging (chat), creation of playlists,

collaborations among users, and following content. In chapter 2, I describe more in detail some of these social features and expand on the definition of music streaming services.

As more internet users subscribe to music streaming services and more music streaming platforms continue to appear in the market, there is a need for academic research on the use of social features and social interaction with new music technologies. In this master thesis I will address to the practices of social features on music streaming services in Norway and Mexico. The main objective of this research is to explore from a cultural perspective how users in two different countries interact with the same platforms and the same features. As we will see in chapter 3, I base my research on theoretical frameworks of culture and sociology, which help me to explore the characteristics of Mexico and Norway. This thesis assumes that even though self-awareness shapes the personality of music streaming users, cultural rules may be another main driver for using social features on music streaming services. We will see these influences in certain answers from the respondents regarding topics of privacy and self-presentation in online sociality in the main discussion in chapter 5. I will also explore the preferences and tendencies towards the use of music streaming platforms based on mindsets in each country and show the mental programs towards social acceptable behavior on such platforms. I aim to shed light on why users of music streaming platforms take certain decisions when socially interacting with other users, and explore which aspects they find valuable regarding their interaction with music and technological platforms. In this master thesis, I embrace the complexity between social behaviors, technology, culture and music and highlight the drivers of interaction with music technologies beyond individuality in online sociality.

1.1 Previous Research

Music streaming platforms from a technological perspective

The adoption of music streaming services around the world has generated great interest for the study of new technologies and the way in which users interact with them. In the case of music and especially when studying on demand music streaming platforms, research has been done to understand how these platforms work. Scholars like Kreitz and Niemela (2010) decided to disassemble Spotify as an on-demand music streaming platform to understand how people could listen to music through it and what users could afford from the online platform. In their research, Kreitz and Niemela (2010) state that on demand streaming services share similarities

with file sharing applications (Kreitz & Niemela, 2010, p. 1). Their research is oriented to discuss technical aspects of a Spotify as a music streaming platform, but does not analyze behaviors neither interactions with social features of the platform.

Music distribution and revenues among music streaming services

Previous research has also been done regarding the distribution of music due to the arise of music streaming services and the economic impact that this has generated. For example, some scholars like Kjus (2016), investigated on the impact that the new business models of music streaming, has affected or not music retailers. In this research, Kjus (2016) presents a series of interviews with two Norwegian record stores, one who decided to invest in vinyl records (Big Dipper), and the other one who invested in online streaming with a local profile (Platekompaniet) (Kjus, 2016, p. 2116). In this study, Kjus (2016) aims to analyze how the intermediary's relationships with artists and audiences changed during a period of two years (2013 and 2014). In his findings, Kjus (2016) states that the space in the vinyl record store offers a personal music experience, whereas the company who chose to become part of a streaming, conversely, found that its staff, as well as its streamers, became invisible and anonymous. The customer here turned into user data, which proved relevant to identifying and stimulating certain user segments, such as older male high-fidelity enthusiasts (Kjus, 2016, p. 2130).

Besides studying tendencies on distribution and the impact of streaming on digital and physical formats, other scholars like Maasø (2014) have made research on how music streaming business models impact the distribution of revenues of the music industry. Since music revenues changed drastically after the increasing adoption of music streaming services, many discussions have raised among artists on how they could make as much profit as they used to during the era of physical music distribution. In his research, Maasø (2014), compares two different business models for distributing the income of music streaming platforms to artists and labels. These models are Pro-rata (prorated) model and User Centric Model. The Pro-rata model gives users with many streams per month more financial impact than users with few streams per month, although they contribute the same via subscription fees (Maasø, 2014, p. 3). The User Centric Model, is not so different from the Pro-rata model, since each user pays the same sum of revenues, the difference is how this income is distributed and share among labels and artists (Maasø, 2014, p. 5). In his findings, Maasø (2014) states that if the User Centric Model would

be used, it could bring a positive impact to the music industry by using music streaming services. This impact could be reflected for instance on how local music fans listen to an artist on an early stage of their career. At the same time, the model could also contribute to a more fair and direct business model, since the revenue would go back directly to labels and artists behind the music (Maasø, 2014, p. 9).

Social dimensions of music and interaction with new technologies

Tepper and Hargittai (2009), studied how young people are discovering music through new technologies and digital platforms. Even though on demand music streaming services were launched in Europe during 2008, Tepper and Hargittai (2009) did not explain, neither consider music streaming services as platforms for discovering music among young people. Still, their research is relevant for my project since it analyzes on a certain degree how social networks became relevant for discovering new music on the digital age. They suggest that people regularly rely on friends and acquaintances for recommendations and reviews (Tepper & Hargittai, 2009, p. 231). In their methodology, the authors developed questionnaires among students during 2003 and 2005 in which they asked mainly about how students get to know new cultural products with a specific section on music. The results of the study showed that it was mainly social networks through which young people tend to discover new music followed by traditional mass media and in a third place, they show information technologies as a source to discover music. In this study, Tepper and Hargittai (2009) also state that there was high percentage of users who described themselves as ‘mavens’ or experts in music who mainly influence a group of friends using social networks to discover new music and also these ‘mavens’ were the ones who tend to use mainly information technologies as tools for discovering new music.

I consider that this study is useful for my research since it sets a background of how people tend to discover music through social networks. The study clearly marked a tendency for using social features when interaction with music among different users. Moreover, other scholars such as Hagen (2015b), Hagen and Lüders (2016), Boxun Zhang et al. (2013) have studied and analyzed social dimensions of music listeners and their relations with music streaming platforms. For instance, Boxun Zhang et al. (2013), were one of the first scholars to analyze music streaming services from a user behavior perspective. The study collects data from 2010 to 2011 from Sweden, England, and Spain. The purpose of their research was to get

results in order to improve the system design and operations of Spotify. In their research, they mainly analyzed how Premium users of the service (users who pay for the service), behave while listening to music

Within their findings Boxun Zhang et al. (2013), highlight that they could see the patterns of behavior of users mainly focusing on the sessions that they had while listening to music. Their five main findings are (1) that the session arrivals, playback arrivals and session length exhibit strong daily patters in Spotify, (2) that the session arrivals in both 1-hour and 10 minute intervals in Spotify can be modeled as a non-homogenous Poison Process, (3) they observe a strong ‘inertia’ of Spotify users to continue successive sessions on the same device, (4) they found that most Spotify users have their favorite times of the day to use Spotify, and (5) they found that the first session length can be used as indicator for both the successive session length and downtime (Boxun Zhang et al., 2013, p. 220). Despite their data collection in different countries, Boxun Zhang et al. (2013) did not analyze motivations of the users to interact with Spotify as a music streaming service at a collective or individual level. Their data collection and analysis are mainly quantitative and can therefore not show the behavior of a user while listening to music, neither there is information regarding interaction with social features.

On the other hand, scholars like Hagen (2015b) have also shown interest to study and analyze user behaviors on music streaming platforms. Her study was made in Norway, which currently boasts a globally pioneering streaming market (Hagen, 2015b, p. 6). The work of Hagen (2015b) is oriented to analyze the behavior of the Norwegian music listeners from a qualitative perspective. In her research, Hagen (2015b) aims to explore how the societal ascent of music streaming services has led to a change in people’s music-related experiences and practices (Hagen, 2015b, p. 10). Her study is composed by four articles that explore how music and streaming technologies have assaulted the music market and how they have developed a deeper understanding of the ways in which human technology informs and accommodates in everyday life (Hagen, 2015b, p. 10).

The main contributions of Hagen (2015b) builds on the concept of ‘Musicking’, which was first introduced by Small (1998) by framing music as an everyday life activity. But without any doubt, Hagen (2015b) major contribution is her methodology and analysis to understand user experiences and practices on regards to music streaming platforms. In this sense, her work

can be considered as a milestone when analyzing individual user behaviors and new culture in creative and new technologies.

In addition to this study, Hagen in collaboration with Lüders (2016) wrote another article which has a deeper focus on analyzing music as personal or social when using music streaming services. In this article, Hagen and Lüders (2016) study from a qualitative perspective how 124 users of music streaming services incorporate social awareness in non-sharing, selective-sharing, and all-sharing approaches with strong, weak, and absent ties (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 1). Their methodology for research was a mix between 23 focus group interviews which include music diaries and self-reports. In addition, Hagen and Lüders (2016) conducted online observation and personal interviews with 12 heavy users of music streaming platforms. Another highlight is that Hagen and Lüders (2016) did not only focused on Spotify as the only music streaming service, they also include users of other music streaming platforms such as Tidal.

The results of Hagen and Lüders (2016) research, shows that users of music streaming services tend to make use of their network to discover music. They described that strong, weak, and absent ties in the user network, appear equally relevant with regards to discovering new music, yet when it comes to sharing music, the trust and confidence that characterize strong ties are crucial (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 15). Moreover, Hagen and Lüders (2016) highlight that after their research they continue to question how social the streaming experience actually is. They confirm that social operating system of networked individualism, encourage individuals to share content and obtain information via network structures (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 15) as it was presented before by Wellman and Rainie (2012).

An additional contribution towards the study of individual behaviors in new music technologies, is also Hagen (2015a) research on the use of playlists within music streaming platforms. Hagen (2015a) research sheds light into how Norwegian users describe and make sense of practices and experiences of creating, curating, maintaining, and using personal playlists (Hagen, 2015a, p. 625). This study was also developed in Norway and gathers more than 12 heavy users of music streaming services and the creation of music diaries to analyze the individual motivations towards the creation of playlists. Hagen (2015a) explains that her literature and methodology focus on the use of playlists from her sample, how they curate playlists and how they interact with them in a personal level

Her goal was to shed light on individual user logics, structures, and preferences regarding content creation, organization, and music use in this relatively new digital context (Hagen, 2015a, p. 626). In her results, Hagen (2015a) highlights that the creation of playlists derives from the traditional practice of physical collecting. In addition, her conclusion reflects again that users of music streaming services have developed a potential for individualization in consumption considering that playlists enable ownership of music.

From my perspective, Hagen (2015a) missed to discuss or elaborate a little bit more on the social use of playlists. What I aim to do in my research is also to build on that gap using the concept of playlists not just as a personal experience, but also including its social features and the interaction with them in Norway and Mexico with a focus on services like Spotify and Tidal.

1.2 Research gap

As stated by Hagen (2015b) Norway has become a pioneering market when studying music streaming services, and therefore it can be considered as a mature market for research for social and individual behaviors. In addition, I consider that Hagen (2015b) and Hagen and Lüders (2016), have mainly focused on behaviors without considering culture. By doing this, they only see the individual leaving aside the cultural traces that shape the individual when building their identity in music streaming services. In this sense, I consider that this gap can be analyzed to understand from a cultural perspective the concerns of the individual regarding their views on privacy, value, sharing content, ownership of music, among others. Therefore, I suggest a cultural approach to have a better understanding of how culture shapes individual behaviors when listening to music.

On the other hand, little has been researched in Mexico as a music streaming market. There is a lot of space and wide areas for academic research when discussing the use of music streaming services. The music streaming market is extremely young compared to Norway. Spotify launched the service in Mexico only 4 years ago in 2013. However, this young market has been extremely quickly adopting music streaming services. According to Gutierrez (Goggin & McLelland, 2017, p. 115) 80 percent of internet users in Mexico listened to music on digital platforms on 2013 which is the year in which Spotify was launched in Mexico. In addition, internet users in Mexico spend less and less money because they prefer to access large music

catalogues from their various devices rather than buy a CD for a similar amount to what a year's subscription to a digital platform might cost (Goggin & McLelland, 2017, p. 115).

Mexico can be considered a young market for music streaming services, and therefore, I see a big gap in the research of music streaming services in Mexico. I consider that this research could be a good starting point to develop and inspire other researchers on the use and behavior of music listeners in Mexico. As there is no research which gathers concepts on how culture shapes the behavior of individuals interacting with music streaming platforms in Norway neither in Mexico, my study aims to contribute to cover this research gap for future research on a social, individual, and cultural level on music streaming services. This study might be the first on its nature to relate this theory to the use of music streaming and understand cultural patterns of individual behaviors in music streaming platforms.

1.3 Introduction to the research question

Considering the gap of research, the goal of this study is to analyze from a social perspective the impact of culture on the individuals when they interact with social features on music streaming platforms. Additionally, I consider that it is relevant to contribute with research on how music streaming platforms have developed social features for sharing or following music, since these features have become the major similarities that music streaming platforms share with social networks.

Therefore, my research question for this master thesis project is as follows:

R.Q. To which extent do cultural differences and the use of social features in music streaming platforms influence the use of music streaming services in Norway and Mexico?

To answer the presented research question, I will first present in Chapter 2, the definition of music streaming services. I aim to present a full description of what music streaming services are and their relevance for the music industry. Further on, I present a brief description of the business model of music streaming services and explain the two main modes of subscription (freemium and premium). My intention is to provide a wider spectrum of economic aspect of music streaming services since plenty of discussions have raised among artists towards a fair distribution of income to the music industry from music streams. In Chapter 3, I present my theoretical background which relies on three main theories which are (1) Theory of Cultural

Differences Hofstede (1980), (2) The Theory of The Strength of Weak Ties Granovetter (1973), and (3) the Theory of Affordances Gibson (1986) and Norman (2002). These theories will be applied and discussed according to the answers of the respondents. They are basically the base layer for making my whole analysis and for giving interpretation to the answers of the respondents. These theories are help me to connect the dots and relations between culture, online sociality, and perception and interaction with music streaming services. In addition, two other models on the field of media studies will be presented on this research. These models belong to Van Dijck (2013) and Crawford (2009) and both help me in different ways. Van Dijck (2013) model, helps to conceptualize the socioeconomic aspects of music streaming services, whereas Crawford (2009) model acts a metaphor to describe behaviors on social networks. Both models can be applied to music streaming services and can be used to give a better understanding on basic elements of new media technologies, as well as on behaviors of users.

In chapter 4, I explain why and how did I collected my data for this study. In this chapter I also explain the reasons why I decided to make a quantitative research and how did I choose phenomenology as a base to explain user behavior and interactions with music streaming services. In chapter 5, I shed light to the results and the discussion of this master thesis project. In this chapter I relate the answers of the respondents with the theory presented in chapter 3. In this chapter, I build and shape the answers to my research question based on the results of the research. In chapter 6, I present the conclusion of my thesis and I answered the to research question stated before. Nevertheless, I suggest further research on different fields of music streaming services.

2 Music Streaming Services

The following chapter has been developed to introduce the reader to the world of music streaming services. It presents some of the history and development of music streaming services, its definition, as well as the landscape of use in Norway and Mexico. Moreover, I explain some of the social features of music streaming services, in particular the features ‘Sharing’, ‘Following’, and ‘Playlists’.

2.1 Defining Music Streaming Services

As mentioned in chapter 1, music streaming services appeared in 2008 as network platforms which offer music listeners access to vast catalogues of music. Music streaming services have gained popularity in the last decade. Some of the most known music streaming services around the world are Spotify, Tidal, Rdio, Deezer, and Apple Music. These services enable users to ‘stream’ music on demand from the ‘cloud’ instead of downloading music files from illegal peer-to-peer platforms. According to other Hagen (2015b) music streaming services can be defined as:

‘Internet applications based on a delivery system that enables vast amounts of digital data to be stored in the ‘cloud’- that is, the large hubs and data centers comprised of networked servers that are connected to the internet. The provider transfers service-hosted content such as music or video file from the cloud to a user via a broadband Internet connection’.

(P.13)

Music streaming services are mainly architectural platforms which are designed as software so that internet users can download them in forms of applications in multiple mobile devices being personal computers, mobile phones, tablets among others. Music streaming services are not only virtual places or internet applications for listening to music. In fact, music streaming services also share some similarities with ‘social network sites’ or SNS. ‘Social Network Sites (SNS) are sites that primarily promote interpersonal contact between individuals or groups; they forge personal, professional, or geographical connections and encourage weak ties’ (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 8), such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. ‘Social Networks in online interactions, refers specifically to web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a

public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system' (Baym & Ledbetter, 2009, p. 409). In this sense, I hereby agree with Van Dijck (2013) and with Baym and Ledbetter (2009) that music streaming services can be also analyzed as networks for social interaction. In addition, I consider that music streaming services can also be defined as platforms. According to Gillespie (2010) 'platforms' can be analyzed as a 'raised level surface' designed to facilitate some activity that will subsequently take place. 'Platform' emerges not simply as indicating a functional shape: it suggests a progressive and egalitarian arrangement, promising to support those who stand upon it (Gillespie, 2010, p. 350). Moreover, he states that 'platforms' are 'platforms' not necessarily because they allow code to be written or run, but because they afford an opportunity to communicate, interact or sell (Gillespie, 2010, p. 351).

According to Gillespie (2010) definition of platforms, music streaming services facilitate the access to music and at the same time, they facilitate music distribution and music sharing due to its features and affordances. The development of 'the social' within music technologies, suggested a change in how people interact with their music in everyday life. 'Social features enable users to connect with one another and use music tracks as social objects' (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 1). In this sense, the very word 'social' associated with media implies that platforms are user centered and that they facilitate communal activities, just as the term 'participatory' emphasizes human collaboration (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 11).

Finally, music streaming services have become the main media channel of distribution for digitalized music and therefore, Hagen (2015b) describes that she uses the term *streaming music* as a verbal description to the process that involves the interaction of the users with their music via music streaming services. This verbal description can be compared with the verb 'Google' to which we refer when we are searching for something in the web via Google as an internet browser.

2.2 Music distribution and business model

Music streaming services have mainly contributed in the last years to increase legally the revenues of the music industry. For example, the Digital Music Report presented by IFPI (2015), shows that the music revenues increased after the introduction of music streaming platforms from 2009 to 2014. While streaming services appear to be growing as downloads and

CD sales decline (Karp, 2014) streaming services still convince hesitant consumers to adopt this technology as their primary method of musical consumption (Morris & Powers, 2015, p.106). This means that the more users music streaming services produce around the world, more money that the music industry can recover.

The term streaming covers two different business models. Once the service has been downloaded, users are able to create their individual accounts by subscribing to the service. Most of music streaming services offer two models for the users which are ‘freemium’ and ‘premium’. Within the ‘freemium’ versions, users do not pay for the service and have limited access to some of the features that music streaming services offer (Wagner, Benlian, & Hess, 2014). In addition, advertisements of brands mainly support free versions, whereas in ‘premium’ versions users pay a monthly fee which avoids advertisements and afford users to make usage of all the features in the platform, such as the option to stream music at a higher bitrate, and to synchronize playlists for offline usage (Kreitz & Niemela, 2010, p. 1). Despite the differences between what is called freemium and premium, users will have the same catalogue in both models, with the exception of some prereleases exclusive to premium users (Kreitz & Niemela, 2010).

2.3 Landscape of music streaming services in Mexico and in Norway

In Norway, music streaming services (MSS) were launched in 2008 by the Swedish company Spotify and rapidly expanded among Norwegians due to the developed technological infrastructure of the country. According to Maasø (2014) the Norwegian streaming market is the world’s most developed with a 78% digital market share of recorder music and 65% share from streaming alone.

In Mexico, Spotify was launched in April 2013 and was quickly accepted in a market with 47.4 million of Mexicans who declare themselves internet users (Nowak, Whelan, & Nowak, 2016, p. 84). In addition, Notimex (2015) published on April 2015, that Mexico occupied the fourth position worldwide with more Spotify users around the world, still in Mexico there are multiple ways of accessing to music, all of which commonly cohabit and share spaces. Any listener is attached to a unique way of getting music, much beyond the traditional dichotomy of legal and illegal (Nowak et al., 2016, p. 79).

The Norwegian users, seem to be more aware of which music streaming service they are using based on the design and content of the platforms. Some of them have even switched their music streaming service because they want to listen to a specific artist, such as Beyoncé, which music's catalogue could only be found on Tidal. Even though music catalogues in platforms like Spotify and Tidal are vast for satisfying different music cravings, there are other socioeconomic factors which can determine why music listeners in Norway choose one or the other service, for instance, in the sample of this study, the decision of choosing one service or the other, was dependent from the service that their parents were paying for.

Mexican users use mainly Spotify as their preferred music streaming service. Most of the participants mentioned that there was nothing like music streaming services in Mexico before. Music lovers used to only buy CD's and made use of illegal peer to peer services, meaning that there was not such a music technology in the country since the arrival of Spotify on April 2013. Mexican music consumers see other benefits from the Norwegian users when choosing a music streaming service. They perceive value on basic things that the platform offers to them such as payment options and the business model, but then again there are some socioeconomic factors which determine the use of music streaming services or the use of other technologies for consuming music. For instance, some of the respondents in Mexico mentioned that they do not pay monthly subscriptions to Spotify because they consider that the service is a bit expensive. In comparison to Norwegian respondents, Mexican respondents accepted that they are the one who need to consider if they pay or not for the service, since any of them mentioned that their parents pay for the service as it was the case in Norway.

2.4 Music streaming services and social features

As I have mentioned before, music streaming services allow the users to interact with each other through multiple social features. In what follows, I will provide a brief description of the social features that users can find in platforms such as Spotify and Tidal. I decided to analyze these two platforms, because those are the most preferred music services of the participants of my sample 'to 'stream music' in their phones, laptops, and mobile devices. I will first start my analysis of the sharing features of Spotify. I will provide a description of what do these features do, their relevance, and what can a user afford out of them. Moreover, I will present the same analysis for Tidal. In addition, I will also describe the main differences between the sharing features of both platforms.

2.4.1 Sharing features on Spotify

First, one should consider that Spotify and Tidal users can follow selected Facebook friends and receive feeds of music from them (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 2). When a user connects a Facebook account directly to the Spotify account, the user might receive continuous updates of what their Facebook friends are listening in real time (**Figure 1**). This might be the first and most visible characteristic of how a Spotify user can afford social interaction. In addition, Spotify users are not only able to follow their ‘friends’ of Facebook or other social media channels, they also have the opportunity to follow musicians, artists, athletes, DJ’s, celebrities, medias, or different key opinion leaders.

In this sense, Spotify users have a different music experience. For example, a Spotify user, can see what his/her favorite artists is listening to and discover new and inspirational music. For example, **Figure 1.1** shows the profile of a former British football player Rio Ferdinand, and the profile of Filtr Magazine in Sweden. Even though ‘following’ in this case does not refer to actively sharing content, it can be analyzed as a first social feature due to the interaction that a user can have with other users just by looking what they are listening to.

When a Spotify user search for an artist, a song, a playlist, or an album, the platform has a property three white dots (**Figure 1.2**) which provide different options to the user depending on what they are searching and what do they want to do or afford. When listening to a song, a user can share can click on the same three white dots and will automatically have the opportunity to share the song on different social medias such as Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, Skype, or Tumbler (**Figure 1.3**). The user can also choose to copy the link of the song in case that he/she wants to use it for including it on a website. These same steps apply when a user wants to share a playlist or an album.

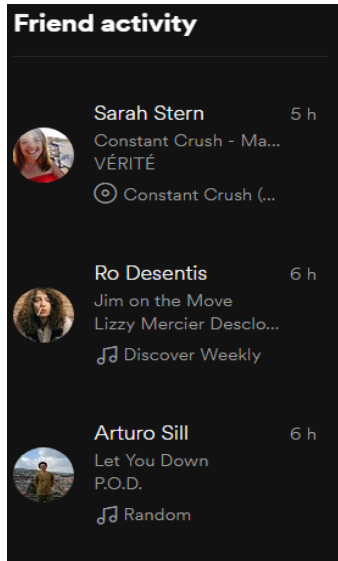


Figure 1

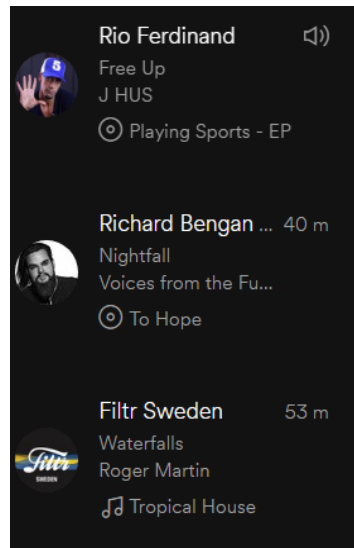


Figure 1.1

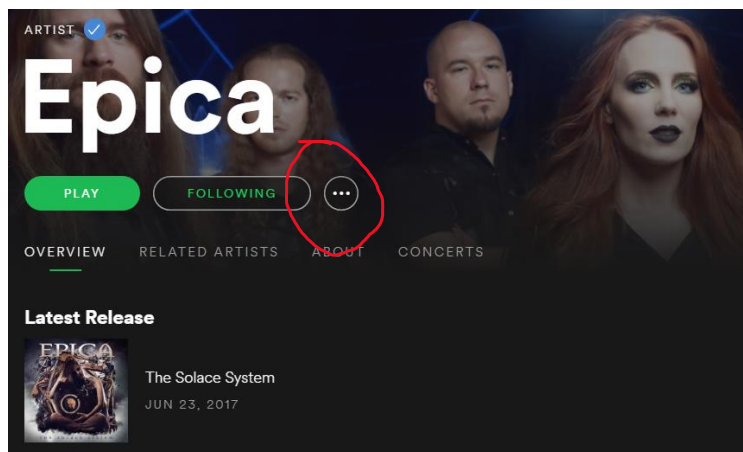


Figure 1.2

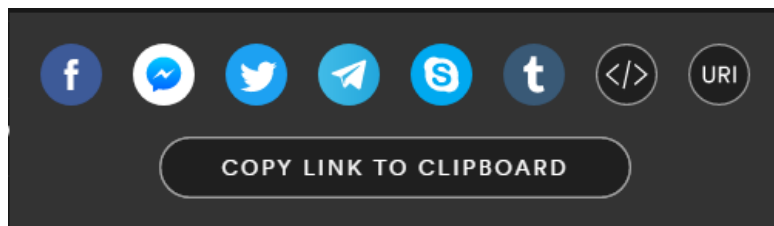


Figure 1.3

2.4.2 Sharing features on Tidal

Even though Tidal and Spotify share a lot of similarities as music streaming platforms, Tidal seems to be more limited when analyzing and using social features. On a first view, Tidal

lacks the ‘following’ feature, meaning that Tidal users, cannot follow friends or other people using the platform. This might impact from a first sight the music experience of the users. In addition, Tidal seems to be a platform which has been developed for a more personal music experience.

When searching for artists and music on Tidal, one can see a very similar design in relation what Spotify offers. For instance, a user can see the exact same three white dots on the right side of the song, artist, or playlist as shown on **Figure 2**. As in Spotify, these three white dots offer the user multiple options and they can be considered as a property of the platform which offers features which allow affordances for the users. A difference in comparison with Spotify, is that Tidal users have an immediate ‘Share’ button which makes music sharing easier (The button can be visualized in Figure 2), when searching for an artist. If a Tidal user wants to share a song, he/she needs to click on the three white dots on the platforms to access the features of the platform and decide what to afford. These features can be visualized on **Figure 2.1**.

Once the user clicks on these options, he/she can only share their music on Facebook and Twitter, and as in Spotify, the Tidal users can embed a code to use it on other websites or for programming (**Figure 2.2**). As I mentioned before, the social experience of Tidal seems to be limited, but at the same time, seems to be social enough for the users who just want to listen to their music in a very personal level.



Figure 2

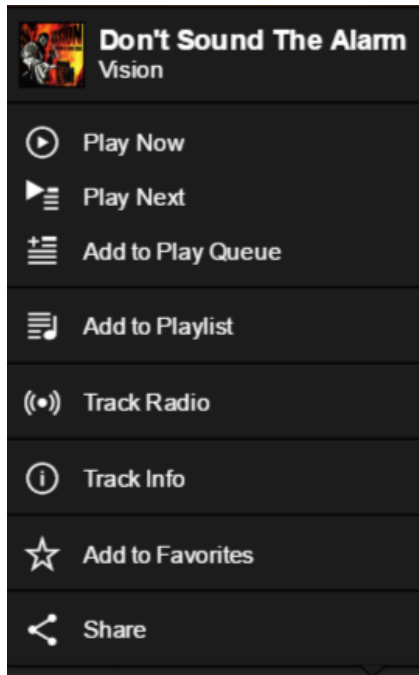


Figure 2.1

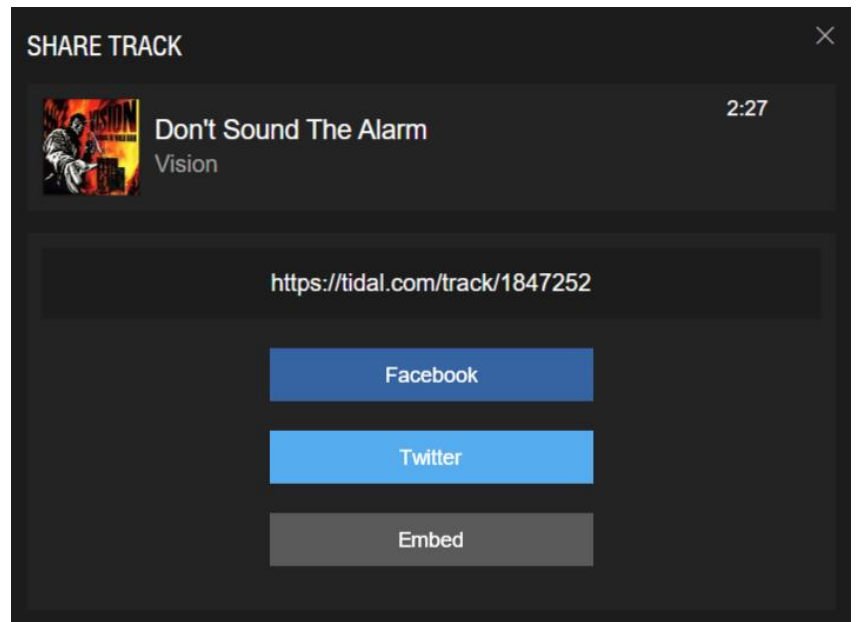


Figure 2.2

2.4.3 Playlists

So far, I have presented a brief description of the main social features of music streaming services such as Spotify and Tidal. I have mainly focused on the features of ‘following’ and ‘sharing’ in Spotify and Tidal. Even though ‘sharing’ and ‘following’ are considered as the most basic social features of music streaming services, playlists need to be analyzed as another social and personal aspect of music streaming platforms. Through playlists users can also interact with each other since they can be shared with friends, can be followed and in some cases playlists can be collaborative, which means that different users can add songs to a playlist which has been created by another user, and this provides another social feature within the analysis of playlists.

As new technological breakthroughs become mainstream, the amount of information available to the information society just keeps on growing (Mocholi Agües, Martínez Valero, Jaén Martínez, & Catalá Bolós, 2012, p. 2270). The adoption of music streaming services around the world, has generated that music streaming platforms are a mainstream way of music consumption around the world. This means that continuously increasingly users of music streaming services, enlarge their collections by collecting music and new tracks not in a physical format, but more in a digital format. According to Baudrillard (1994) collections are the result of a strong passion for certain objects or what he calls ‘the loved object’. In the case

of music, songs and albums can be mainly considered as the objects to which a listener develops a passion and strong connection. Music collections are mainly measured on quantity, but they mainly have a qualitative meaning. In this sense, music streaming services match quantity and quality collection through playlists. Playlists are the new way of collecting music. Users mainly add their songs to a playlist in which they pretend to keep their music alive (Hagen, 2015). These playlists are basically sequences of tracks that traditionally are designed manually and whose organization is based on some underlying logic or theme (Jannach, Kamehkhosh, & Bonnin, 2014, p. 26).

As I presented it on the first chapter when discussing previous research, (Hagen, 2015a) has made research and studies regarding individual motivations for developing playlists in Norway. In her research, Hagen states that there are mainly two types of playlists for the users in music streaming services which she describes as ‘static structures’ and ‘dynamic structures’. Static structures refer mainly to playlists which users tend to follow or create, but to which they don’t pay too much attention, whereas the dynamic structures are related to playlists which are constantly changing, in which users change names or add new songs. Below, I present an example of a static structure playlist and a dynamic structure playlist on Spotify and Tidal (Figure 3, Figure 3.1 and Figure 4, Figure 4.1)

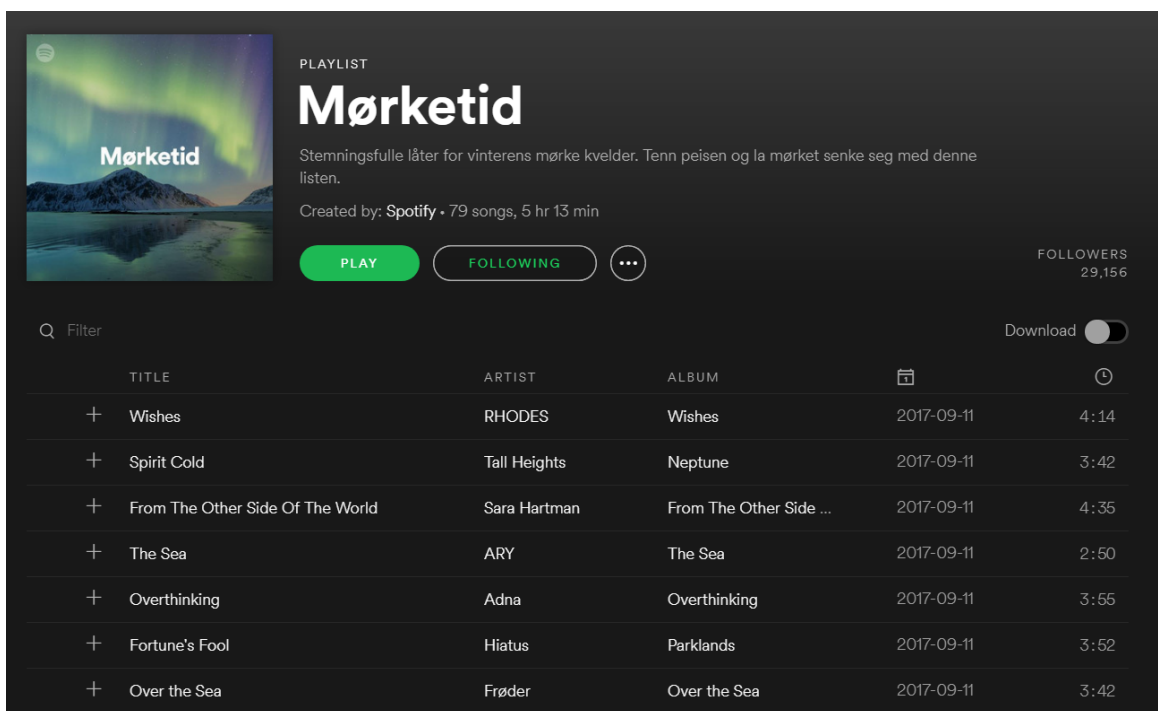


Figure 3 (Static structure – Spotify)

PLAYLIST
Spring Rhythms
 Created by: Alejandro Viquez • 14 songs, 56 min

PLAY

FOLLOWERS 0

Download

Filter

TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM		
+ El Sabanero Raver	Toy Selectah	Mex Machine	2015-02-24	3:59
+ La Llama	Compass: Mexican In...	La Llama	2015-02-24	4:39
+ Bad Behavior	Mexican Dubwiser, Uli...	Electric City	2015-02-24	3:46
+ Tapiz	Presidente	La Gran Magia	2015-02-24	4:37
+ No Puedo Parar	Meme	No Puedo Parar	2015-04-08	4:25
+ No Confies En Mí	Camilo Séptimo	Maya	2015-04-08	4:10
+ Mextasis	Simpson Ahuevo	El Morroeste	2015-11-17	3:16

Figure 3.1 (Dynamic structure – Spotify)

Autumn Songs: The Comfort of Melancholia
 Created by: TIDAL Tracks: 41 Time: 3:17:07

It's that time of year, when the days grow dark and the nights are cold. Here's some music that will serve as a warm, albeit dim, light as you crawl under a blanket to read a book or bundle up in your parka for a stroll through the woods.

Read more

Play Favorite Share ...

#	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM	TIME
1	The Departure (Diary)	Max Richter	The Leftovers (Music from the HBO® S...	1:52 ☆ 📄 ...
2	Blue Factory Flame	Songs: Ohia	Didn't It Rain (Deluxe Edition)	8:30 ☆ 📄 ...
3	The Greatest	Cat Power	The Greatest	3:22 ☆ 📄 ...
4	Some	Nils Frahm	Solo Remains	4:13 ☆ 📄 ...
5	Hey Chicago	Low	Songs for a Dead Pilot	2:40 ☆ 📄 ...
6	Jóhannsson: The Radiant City	Jóhann Jóhannsson, The Dirac Quartet	Orphée	3:31 ☆ 📄 ...
7	The Upper Peninsula	Sufjan Stevens	Michigan	3:23 ☆ 📄 ...
8	A Single Hope	Ian William Craig	A Single Hope	6:26 ☆ 📄 ...

Figure 4 (Static Structure – Tidal)

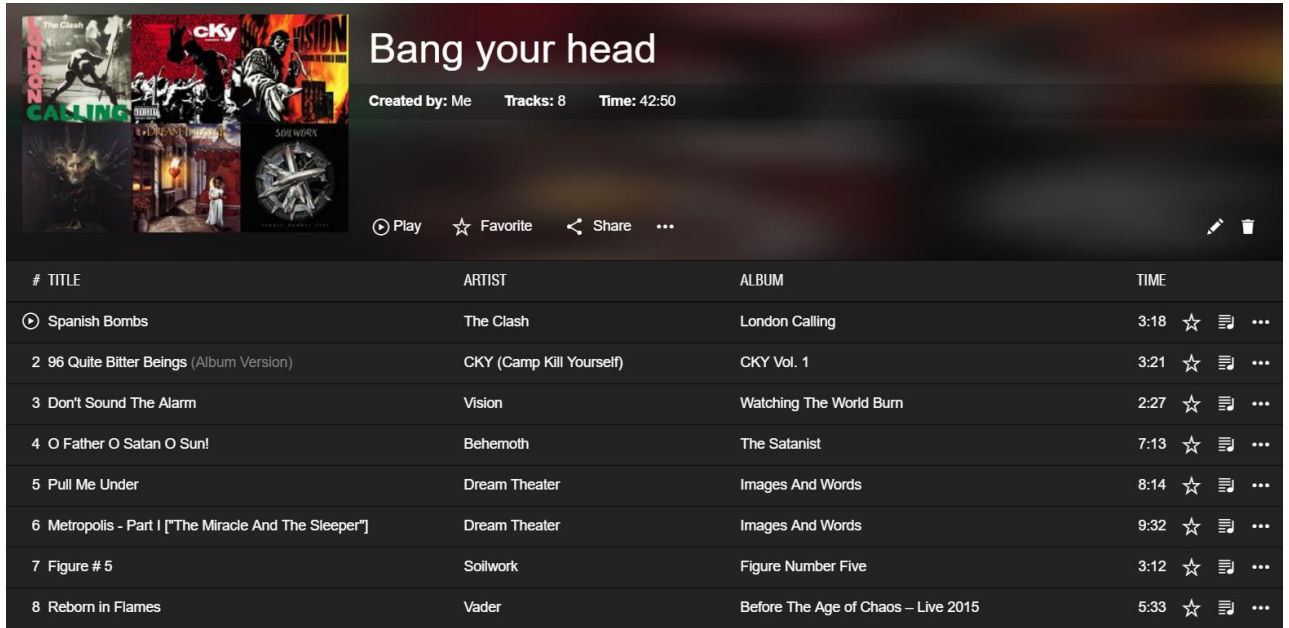


Figure 4.1 (Dynamic Structure – Tidal)

Even though playlists can be kept alive by users who collect music, playlists in music streaming platforms not just only afford a wider collection of music, but they can be also used for being shared with another user. Social features of music streaming services allow playlists to be shared on other social media platforms. In some services, such as Spotify, users can create dynamic structures in which not only one user interacts with a playlist, but many other users can add songs to it. On Spotify this feature is called ‘Collaborative Playlists’ it is a unique feature of the platform. This feature is mainly used within small circle of friends and its very handy when having a party or a training practice. This feature gives a new meaning to ‘the social’ on music streaming services. In fact, most of the Norwegian informants in my research and focus groups, mentioned that they have used this feature more than once, whereas in Mexico, almost no one has used it. I will provide more details about it in the chapter of ‘Findings’, in which I discuss the results of the focus groups in Mexico and in Norway.

3 Theoretical background and concepts

Due to the nature of my research question which aims to find the influences of culture and the use of social features in music streaming services in Norway and in Mexico, I will use a theoretical background based on three main theories which can be applied in different areas of research. First, I will present the Theory of Cultural Dimensions of Geert Hofstede (1980). He is a Dutch social psychologist who has analyzed the cultural differences in thinking and social action in more than 40 different modern nations. His research project involved more 116,000 questionnaires all around the world and lasted more than five years to be completed. He is mainly known by his contribution on the development of the cultural dimensions theory which describes the national cultures in five main dimensions; Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, and Masculinity. In this theory Hofstede (1980), defines concepts such as culture, values, and mental programming. He explains that values and mental programs are key factors for shaping culture. I use concepts of this theory to have a better understanding of how culture influence on individuality and affect the use of social features and interaction for online music listeners.

The aim of my research is to understand (based on the view of Hofstede) which are the aspects that trigger certain behaviors while interacting with social features on music streaming services in both countries. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this thesis assumes that identity, self-presentation, self-awareness, and personality on music streaming platforms are highly shaped and influenced by the cultural environment of the individual. In addition, I consider that the theory of Hofstede (1980) can be applied in the field of media studies and technology, since it provides a broader vision of cultural behavior and interaction

Secondly, I include as a compliment the theory of 'The Strength of Weak Ties' which was first presented by Mark Granovetter in 1973. This theory has been applied in multiple fields of research such as knowledge sharing across organizations, organizational innovation and entrepreneurship, social forms of organization and learning, among others. (Hansen, 1999; Ruef, 2002; Ryberg & Larsen, 2008). I also found that this approach has already been used by Hagen (2015b) in a research based on music streaming services which explores the individual behaviors of users in Norway after the music festival Øya Festival 2015. My research builds on Hagen (2015b) research by not studying the social influence within Norway only, but instead

expanding the understanding by a cultural comparison with Mexico. In addition, I approached the use of music streaming services from a cultural perspective to explain individual behaviors, rather than just explaining individual behaviors on its own. I use the theory of ‘The Strength of Weak Ties’ as a compliment to the concepts of culture, values, and individualism. I use the theory of ties, to explain how individualistic and collectivistic cultures approach in social networks to their strong and weak ties. This will help me to explain individual behaviors of users among their networks when discussing interaction and use social features with music streaming platforms.

Thirdly, I will use the ‘Theory of Affordances’, which was proposed by James Gibson (1986). The Theory of Affordances, has been considered for the study of ecological psychology and perception. This theory has been used before to study how users interact with objects in everyday life and with new technologies and online platforms. Some scholars who have used this theory for the purpose of researching user behaviors have been Kalsnes (2016) and Hagen (2015b). The Theory of Affordances relates to psychological interactions based on what we perceive with our sight on objects and technologies. This theory will help me to analyze the interaction of music listeners with the social features of music streaming services. This theory keeps relevant and has been discussed by multiple scholars and psychologists such as Heft (1989), Turvey (1992), Reed (1996), Michaels (2000), and Chemero (2003).

In the field of media studies, I explore the model of the Dutch professor José Van Dijck (2013) called ‘Disassembling platforms as microsystems’. The model focuses on the use of social media platforms and human interaction with technology. It explores the concepts of technology, user/usage, content, ownership, governance, and business model. I decided to use the model of Van Dijck (2013, p. 29) because it gives a social and an economic perspective of social networks. It combines concepts from Latour (2005) and his Actor Network Theory (ANT) at the same time, Van Dijck (2013) complements her view with the economical perspective of Castells (2009). In her research, Van Dijck (2013) describes that technology, user/usage and content are key elements to explore the social aspect of network platforms, whereas business models, governance, and ownership belong to the socio-economic perspective of Castells. I use this model because it can be applied to study the structure of music streaming platforms, especially from the perspective of the user, governance, ownership and business model.

In this model Van Dijck (2013) provides a wide definition of each of the concepts the construct the model and portraits examples on how this model can be applied for the analysis of 'social network structures' (SNS).

Finally, I will make use of the modes of listening in online platforms, which was first presented by the Australian professor, Kate Crawford in 2009. In her study Crawford (2009) develops the concept of listening as a metaphor to analyze the forms of engagement in the discipline of online attention in social media platforms with a focus on Twitter. In this research Crawford (2009) describes three modes of listening which are discussed as background listening, reciprocal listening, and delegated listening. I decide to use this model and concepts since I have not found any research which analyze listening as a metaphor for the aspects and features that music listeners focus their attention while interacting with music streaming platforms.

I will go into detail on each of the theories and models. I will define the main concepts of each theory and I will highlight the which definitions suit best my research and will provide an explanation of why am I using this specific concept. By presenting these arguments, I aim to cover build with my research on the fields of sociology/psychology, and media studies. I consider that these academic fields can help researchers to determine interaction and social behaviors with new technologies.

3.1 Theory of Cultural Dimensions and Mental Programs

Greet Hofstede and his theory of Cultural Dimensions, explores the differences between cultures and social action. As mentioned before, the research of Hofstede gathered members of 40 different countries through 116,000 questionnaires between 1968 and 1972. This research became relevant due to the several fields of research that it explores which are related to psychology, sociology, political science, and anthropology. The research was made in collaboration with IBM Corporation to study the behavior of their employees in the 40 different modern countries. As the research of IBM Corporation was developing, Hofstede did not expect himself to come with we know today as the Theory of Cultural Dimensions.

In his approach, Hofstede states that social systems and human behaviors are not random. He suggests that every person carries a certain amount of mental programming towards

situations and defines mental programs as intangibles which are determined mainly by the constructs that we know and understand as culture and values. First, he defines culture as the identity of a human group in the same way as personality determines the identity of an individual (Hofstede, 1980, p. 25 & 26). Hofstede presents a definition from Kluckhohn (1951) and cites that:

‘Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired, and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values.’ (p. 86).

I consider that Hofstede could have also include in his definition other elements that shape culture. For instance, Triandis (2001) states that ‘language, time and place are important in determining the difference between one and another culture’. (p. 908). In addition, (Triandis, 2001) mentions that cultures share tools, norms, values, habits, and determine where to pay attention as well as how much attention it should be pay to things based on their natural perception of the environment.

As stated by (Triandis, 2001), values are shared within cultures. For (Hofstede, 1980) a value is described as ‘a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others’. (p. 19). For (Kluckhohn, 1951) ‘A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions’ (p. 395). Values are also attributes which apply for the individuals and the collectives (Hofstede, 1980). Other researchers like (S. Schwartz, 1992) state that values are concepts and beliefs that guide the individual to desirable behaviors which in a primary aspect becomes a goal or a motivational concern.

These definitions provide me a clear concept of what are the elements that shape and determine a concept of culture and values for my approach. I base my definition on culture as the sharable elements that provide identity to and individual and to a social group. Culture is also shaped by the norms and behaviors of a social system which is mainly built on time frames, sharable elements, and environments. These shareables, can be adapted to define an online culture when discussing online behaviors. It seems possible to make a difference on the aspects that could shape the online culture in Mexico and in Norway. These aspects build the construct of what users in Mexico and in Norway find as valuable. By valuable, I refer to the aspects that provide the user the desirable experience. Users search for songs and music with the goal of

finding a desirable experience. This experience can be interpreted as a motivation which varies from individual to individual.

Universal, Collective, and Individual mental programs

Hofstede suggests that mental programs are divided in three main levels, which are universal, collective, and individual, as shown in **Figure 2**. The universal levels of mental programming are related to those things that are shared by almost everyone and defines them as biological operating systems of the human body including expressive behaviors such as laughing or weeping. The collective level of mental programming is mainly related to the things that we share with someone but not with everyone, meaning the common things that we share with certain groups of people but that are different to other groups of people. In a broader scale, one can consider language as part of a collective mental programming, it is sharable with some people but we do not share it with others. Finally, on a third level, Hofstede (1980) describes the individual as the last level of human programming. This level is unique since no two people are programmed exactly alike, even if they are identical (such as twins). This level defines the personality and it provides certain behaviors even in the same collective culture.

The three levels of mental programming by Hofstede (1980), have been applied to different areas of study such as culture, healthcare, mental health, design, and so on. At least Google for scholars shows more than 1,700,000 results on mental programming. I will use mental programming in my research to discuss culture and cultural differences, as well as the relevance that mental programming has on everyday behaviors while interacting with music streaming services.

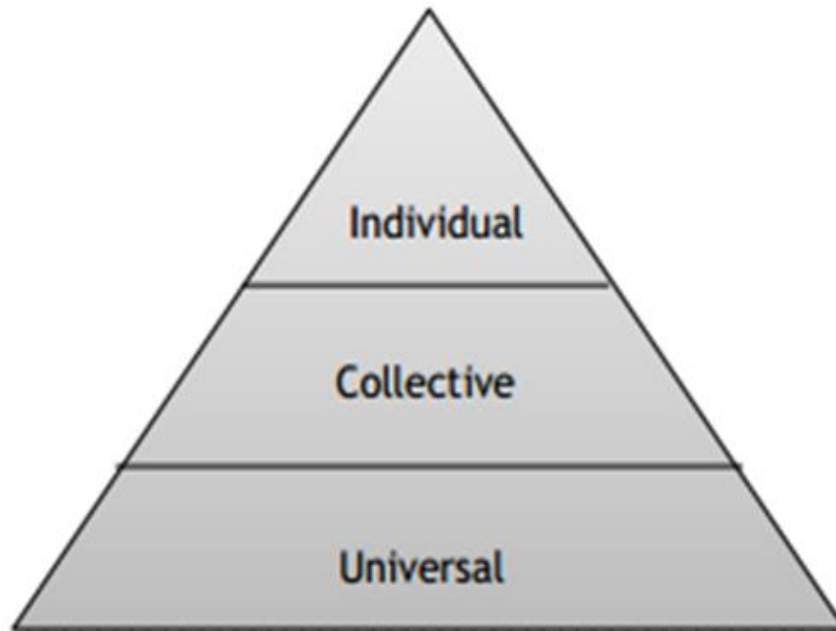


Figure 2

The definitions of culture, value, and mental programming, are the main elements that build the theory of cultural differences from Hofstede (1980). These levels are useful for my research to position the reader and guide him/her to general understanding of contexts in both countries. These concepts fit in for my research since they approach me to a clarify aspects that build the social rules in both cultures. Since my approach is related to online societies and interaction with music and social features of music streaming platforms, the levels of mental programming describe the collective mindset of my sample and help me to develop my discussions. In addition, the levels of mental programming are also the concepts which helped Hofstede (1980) to develop the four dimensions of the theory of cultural differences which are listed as: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, and Masculinity. For my research, I will focus on three of the main concepts which are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Individualism.

Power Distance

It is considered as the first dimension on the theory of Hofstede. In this dimension, (Hofstede, 1980, p. 92) describes power distance as an issue of human inequality. It can be interpreted as the distance that exists between powerful and non-powerful individuals. Hofstede explains it through the concept of inequality, which can occur in areas such as prestige, wealth, and power in different societies and weights on status consistency among these areas (Hofstede, 1980, p.

92). Power distance acquires relevance for the study of my research since I work with two different countries which are Mexico and Norway. In Norway, power distance is almost non-existent due to the relative equality that exist in the country, whereas in Mexico power distance exist among social classes. In Mexico for instance, power distance is also reflected on music. Different music genres in Mexico are constantly related to different social classes. People with a major income tends to listen to certain music genres such as pop and indie rock. Often these music listeners try to extend distances from other music listeners since there seems to be a continuous rejection of accepting each other in social groups due to the long power distances.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This is the second dimension of national culture and it is described as basic fact of human life with which we try to cope through the domains of technology, law, and religion (Hofstede, 1980, p. 153). In his research, Hofstede applies the concept of uncertainty avoidance to organizations and states that uncertainty takes the form of technology, law, and religion (Hofstede, 1980, p. 153) in which technology refers to all human artifacts that allow automation of processes, law into all formal and informal rules that guide to social behavior, and religion as the all revealed knowledge of the unknown. Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which people feel threatened by the unstructured and ambiguity (Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011, p. 351).

I aim to apply the concepts of uncertainty avoidance to the rules and social behaviors of my respondents to a technology such as music streaming platforms. My main goal by using uncertainty avoidance is to understand the rules and behaviors of Norwegian and Mexican music listeners when using music streaming platforms. This part of Hofstede's theory becomes extremely relevant to determine what is allowed and not allowed in online societies in both countries.

Individualism

Is considered as the third dimension of national culture according to the theory of Cultural Differences. Individualism describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society (Hofstede, 1980, p. 213). Hofstede explains that the relationship between Individualism-Collectivism determines the dimension of social norms and bring consequences for (1) a society at large, (2) for religion, ideology, and theory, and (3) for organizations (Hofstede, 1980, p. 214). Hofstede breaks the definition of individualism in two

main areas which are individualism in society and individualism in organizations. To illustrate individualism in society, he sets as an example wolves and tigers in which wolves are proven to be a gregarious society whereas tigers are solitary animals. Such as wolves and tigers, he describes that there are cultures and societies which live under these patterns in which the most gregarious societies tend to live under collectivism and solitary and independent individuals tend to live under individualism.

In collectivistic societies, people tend to be interdependent within their in-groups (family, tribe, nation, etc.), give priority to the goals of their in-groups, shape their behavior primarily on the basis of in-group norms and behave in communal way (Clark, Mills, & Greenwald, 1979). In individualist societies people are autonomous and interdependent from their in-groups, they behave primarily on the basis of their attitudes rather than the norms of their in-groups and exchange theory adequately predicts their social behavior (Triandis, 2001, p. 909). Regarding individualism in organization, Hofstede (1980) refers to it as the level of involvement an individual will have within an organization. He refers to individual development within the organization and how the individual behaviors may affect the way in which the individual interacts with the organization. The relationship between the individual and the collectivity in human societies is not only a matter of ways of living together, but it is intimately linked with societal norms (Hofstede, 1980, p. 214). His approach to individualism was categorized according to what he calls the Country Individualism Index (IDV). In this chart he ranks from 1 to 40 the countries of his study in which number 1 represents most individualistic development in the country and number 40 represents the lowest individualistic nations. In this table, Norway ranks at the 13th position whereas Mexico ranks in the 29th position. In addition, a second table is presented in which Hofstede (1980, p. 235) presents characteristics of individualistic and collectivistic countries. He explains that some of the characteristic of low levels of individualism are (1) 'we' consciousness, (2) collectivity orientation, (3) identity based in the social system, (4) emotional dependence of individual on organizations and institutions, (5) expertise, order, duty, security provided by organization or clan, (6) friendships predetermined by stable social relationships; but need for prestige within these relationships. (Hofstede, 1980).

On the other hand, some of the characteristics of countries with high levels of individualism are (1) 'I' consciousness, (2) Self-orientation, (3) identity is based in the individual, (4) Emotional dependence of individual from organizations or institutions, (5)

autonomy, variety, pleasure, individual financial security, (6) Need for specific friendships (Hofstede, 1980).

Other researchers have analyzed into depth these characteristics in order to determine in an individual level why are the reasons for developing a collectivistic or an individualistic culture. At an individual level, people can be described by the terms idiocentric or allocentric corresponding to individualistic and collectivistic (Earley & Gibson, 1998, p. 271). The differentiation of individuals into idiocentrics and allocentris is based on the extent to which individuals are driven by individualistic values such as independence achievement and freedom or collectivistic values such as relational harmony, commitment to family and mutual independence (Dutta-Bergman, 2004, p. 47).

It is a within-culture variable that corresponds to collectivism vs individualism at the cultural level (Triandis et al., 1988, p. 323). The dimension of idiocentrism and allocentrism has been applied in numerous cross-cultural studies in many different contexts (Park, Oh, & Kang, 2016, p. 252). Other scholars like Triandis et al. (1988) have made research on both terminologies to get a better understanding of both personalities. In their study made in the United States, they found that Allocentrism was found to be positively correlated with social support (both quantity and satisfaction with it) and with low levels of alienation and anomie; idiocentrism was found to be positively correlated with (a) emphasis on achievement and (b) perceived loneliness (Triandis et al., 1988, p. 323).

In my study, individualism and collectivism will be portrayed under the social behavior on music streaming services. These are vital concepts that to get a better analysis of my sample and their individual behaviors. What I know so far, is that according to the research of Hofstede (1980), Norway is considered as an individualistic nation whereas Mexico is considered a collectivistic nation. What I pretend to explain with this study, is how collectivistic mental programing in both countries influence personal motivations for interacting with social features on music listeners in both countries. I will use terminologies on individualism, collectivism, ideocentric and allocentic, to guide the main point of discussion on cultural differences and their influence on interacting socially with music within music streaming platforms.

3.2 Strong, weak, and absent ties

At a universal level it is well known that humans are social beings by nature. Family, is the first social organization that an individual belongs to. Some people live in nuclear families: husband, wife, and children; others in (patrilineal or matrilineal) extended families, or clans with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins; others in tribal units based on kinship ties of an even more distant nature (Hofstede, 1980, p. 214). A tie can thus be internal to a group or a bridge (Grabowicz et al., 2012, p. 1).

As I mentioned it before, ‘The Strength of Weak Ties’ theory was presented by Mark Granovetter in 1973. This theory states that the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). Strong ties are the people you really trust, people whose social circle tightly overlap with your own (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009, p. 212). Granovetter’s theory predicts that weak ties act as bridges between groups and are important for the diffusion of new information across the network, while strong ties are usually located at the interior of the groups (Grabowicz et al., 2012, p. 1). Weak ties often provide access to novel information, information not circulating in the closely-knit network of strong ties (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009, p. 212).

‘The Strength of Weak Ties’ theory becomes relevant in many different fields of research including media studies, since hundreds of social networks sites have launched with both professional and non-professional orientations (Liu, 2007) generating millions of users who connect with their friends and families through digital networks, since forming relationships with others is essential to living a meaningful life (Langlois, 2014). Within these social platforms, individuals tend to develop strong, weak, and absent ties which can be related with personal motivations and with the things that individuals find valuable for themselves in online societies.

Considering that listening to music is an individual activity (Hagen, 2015b), it is of my curiosity to discover the degree in which music listeners in Norway and in Mexico feel attracted to share content, and follow friends, family, artists or content on music streaming platforms. As a starting point, I suggest stepping back to the cultural differences theory presented by (Hofstede, 1980) in which he suggests that universal, collective, and individual mental programs, shape the personality of individuals in different culture settings. In addition, when I

presented the concept and definition of individualism, I also shared the characteristics that determine the levels of individuality or collectivity in a culture. Within these levels, I mentioned that collective orientation and identity based on social system where main characteristics of collectivistic cultures. Based on these arguments I suggest that Mexican music listeners, tend to follow this pattern while interacting with social features. Therefore, they tend to make use of what Granovetter (1973) determines as weak ties, in a digital media perspective, based on the behaviors of sharing and following which will be discussed further on. On the other hand, Norwegian music listeners, by being part of an individualist culture, show a tendency to make more use of the strong ties on social networks by presenting patterns related to the characteristics of levels of individualism from (Hofstede, 1980). They tend to have a need for specific friendships, and prefer to be ‘quiet’ while having their music experience seeking for those things that are valuable for themselves. I will develop these arguments into detail during the main discussion of my study when analyzing ‘Sharing’, ‘Privacy’, ‘Following’ and ‘Playlists’.

3.3 Theory of Affordances

Music streaming platforms as social networks offer to their user’s features within the platforms which allow users to afford experiences through their music.

The concept of ‘affordances’ was first introduced by J.J. Gibson on 1979 and was initially used within the field of ecological psychology to understand how individuals perceive their environment and act towards it just by visually noticing the structures that surround it. Since then, multiple scholars have used the concept of ‘affordances’ in different fields of research such as design, technology, and media and communication studies (Kalsnes, 2016).

In his theory, Gibson (1986) states that:

‘The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill. It refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does.’

(P.127)

What Gibson described in his theory, was the fact that through our perception of objects we can identify what are we able to do with the different affordances and how are we supposed to interact with them. In his book, Gibson (1986) discusses that affordances can be found in the environment. For example, air affords breathing or more exactly respiration (Gibson, 1986, p. 130), water affords drinking or if it is solvent, it affords washing and bathing. Moreover, Gibson (1986, p. 128) describes that affordances are mainly perceived visually and that there are different affordances for different animals whereas the same applies for humans and the way in which we interact with everyday life objects. DeNora (2000, p. 40) states that for Gibson, objects afford things independently of how users appropriate them. For example, if we think of a 4-leg wooden chair, we know by our perception that we can afford to sit on the chair because that is the main reason for the chair to exist as an object. On the other hand, we can also afford to stand on the chair to reach other objects which may lay on a covered in the top of a closet, or we can also afford to play games or contests around it, or use as a reinforcement to lock a door. What James Gibson wanted was to understand how perception—that is, an animal's only means of collecting information from outside itself—can inform the animal about the meanings of environmental objects (K. S. Jones, 2003, p. 107). Other scholars like Chemero (2003) in his analysis regarding the theory of affordances, have stated that it is important to make a distinction between features and properties of the objects.

As humans, we interact and pay specific attention to the optical and acoustic information that specifies what the other person is, invites, threatens and does (Gibson, 1986, p. 128). Media, substances, surfaces, objects, places, and also other humans and music bring with them affordances that determine their interaction with the individual, and different environments/things afford different behaviors to different people (Gibson, 1986, p. 128). In this sense, as the concept of affordances questioned perception, other cognitive scientists like Norman (2002) decided to study the concept of affordances from the perspective of design. By doing this, the concept of affordance was equally applied to the different ways in which we interact with other objects, including the digital artefacts or products of communication technology (Kalsnes, 2016, p. 38). The concept of affordances is a powerful concept when analyzing new technologies, since it focusses on the interaction between technologies and the people who uses them (Gaver, 1991, p. 82). Norman (2002) suggests the concept of 'perceived affordances' in which affordances are of little use if they are not visible for the user and suggests that designers can and should indicate how the user is to interact with a device. With Norman (2002), the concept of affordance was modified from Gibson's relational approach to

accommodate design interests, suggesting that artifacts could be designed to suggest or determine certain forms of use through the notion (Bucher & Helmond, 2017, p. 6).

3.4 Disassembling platforms and microsystems

So far, I have described psychological theories which will help me to solve my research question from a cultural and behavioral point of view, therefore, I consider relevant to include a model related to technology and social networks to give a better understanding of the concepts and definitions in relation to the language that I will be using during my findings and my discussion. Also, I consider relevant the contribution of Van Dijck (2013) and her model of ‘Disassembling platforms and microsystems’ presented in Figure 2 to the study of social networks considering that is a new model which contributes to a better analysis of the Actor Network Theory proposed by Latour (2005) which has been used and applied on multiple disciplines of social and media studies. Actor Network Theory consists on a deep analysis on how networks are constructed and how humans interact with networks. It is mainly considered as a semiotic analysis which can help to study social relations on the web. In her research, (Van Dijck, 2013) contributes to the development of Actor Network Theory by adding the view of Manuel Castells from a socio economical point of view which includes social actors and power holders. Therefore, Van Dijck states:

‘Castells’s political economy of networks complements ANT at precisely the economic-legal junction. Yet despite the fact that Castells’s approach accounts for preexisting power structures, his approach lacks the ability of ANT to expose how power is executed from technological and computational systems, for example, interfaces or coding systems for file sharing.’

(P. 27)

By combining these two approaches, Van Dijck (2013) develops her model so called ‘Disassembling platforms and microsystems’, which includes the main concepts of ANT and includes the socio economic and political aspect of networks which are mainly related to the governance and ownership of content in social network structures. In the model shown on **Figure 2**, Van Dijck (2013) provides five main concepts which are; technology, user/usage, content, business model, governance, and ownership.

The first part of Van Dijck (2013) analyses social network platforms from what she describes as a techno-cultural structure in which Technology, Users/Usage, and Content are the first layer of elements for the development of social networks. In the second part of the model, Van Dijck (2013) highlights that Ownership, Governance, and Business Model, belong to a socio-economic structure. Therefore, a social network would not be a social network if it missed a techno-cultural or socioeconomic structure.

I will explain briefly all the definitions provided by Van Dijck (2013), but for the purpose of my research and field of study, I will be mainly using her definitions on technology, users, content, governance and ownership. These concepts will be presented further on the discussion regarding the differences of behaviors and interaction with music streaming services.

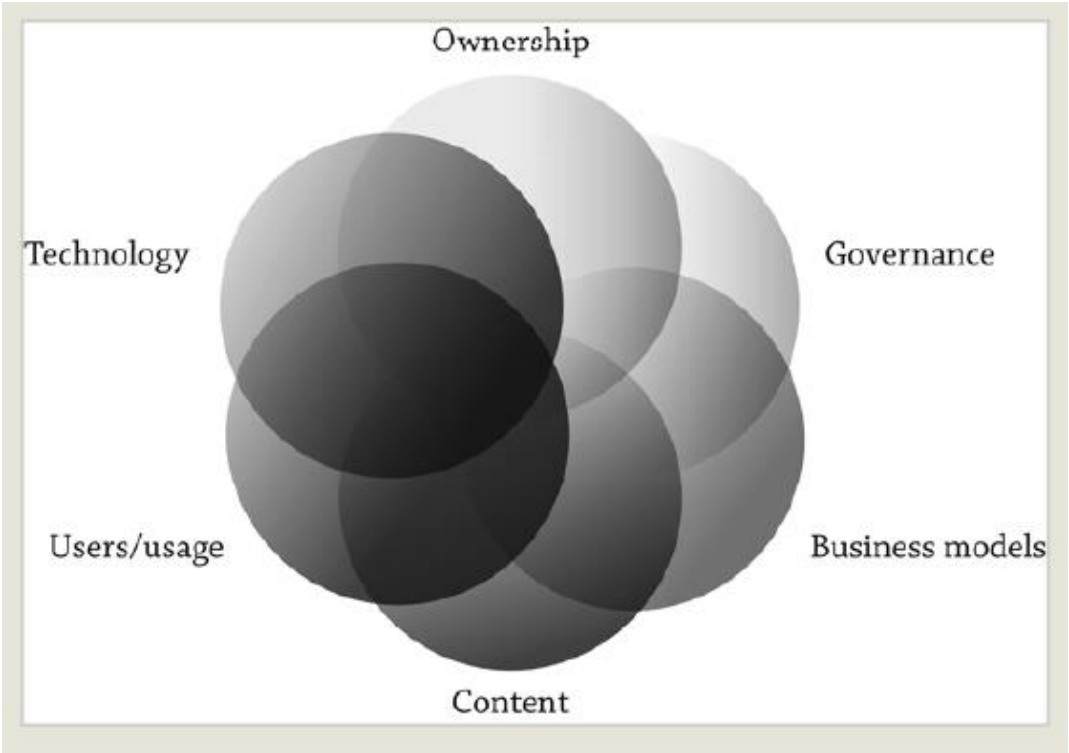


Figure 2

Technology

As a starting point to define technology and its relationship to social interactions from a digital perspective, (Van Dijck, 2013) firstly defines the term ‘platform’ by using the definitions of Gillespie (2010) who states that ‘platforms’ as a ‘raised level surface’ which are designed to facilitate some activity that will subsequently take place. I will further on dig deeper in the

definition provided by Gillespie and explain why this definition is relevant to Van Dijck (2013). By providing this definition, my goal is to make clear that music streaming services are considered as platforms, due to their software development. They are programmed for sharing digital files and collect metadata from their users which regularly develops algorithms to provide the user a more personalized experience. At the same time, they facilitate the activity of listening to music. Besides providing the definition of 'platform', Van Dijck (2013) mention that in the language of Actor Network Theory, platforms are considered as mediators since they shape the performance of social acts (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 29).

Users/Usage

Users are mainly defined as recipients and consumers, producers, and participants of culture; they may be considered amateurs and citizens as well as professionals and laborers (Van Dijck, 2009, p. 41; 2013). Within her definition of users, Van Dijck (2013) highlights that rather than solving ideological debates about how social media is stimulating active participation or not from users, she explores how user agency is shaping online social norms. In this sense, she defines social agency as a complex concept that encompasses conscious human activity and technological unconsciousness (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 32). In addition, she expresses that user agency encompasses two main concepts which are implicit participation and explicit participation of users. These two concepts were first defined by Scheafer (2011) who describes that implicit user participation refers mainly to the usage and design of the internet as a platform, whereas explicit participation refers to the act of sharing by downloading or uploading (Scheafer, 2011, p. 106), or to how real or actual users interact with social media (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 33). In this sense, Van Dijck (2013) describes that social networks and users have shaped together the development of platforms in which technology shapes sociality as much as sociality shapes technology (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 34). The main reason for this to happen is related to user agency in which developers and owners of platforms have implemented changes without affecting the user experience, so users together with the developers have set the norms and rules on the function design, and development of some platforms.

For my study, I focus on users mainly as social agents who respond to affordances on a platform and I look in to ideological debate on how users participate actively and socially on music streaming platforms according to social, culture, values, self-presentation, and social awareness.

Content

Content is mainly defined by Van Dijck (2013) as a constitute element of social media which grew since the beginning of social media platforms in the early 2000's, when social networks were open for creativity and received amateur productions mainly under a cultural setting.

Content enhances connectedness between people and also helps many acquire a (global) stage for public viewing (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 35). Moreover, (Van Dijck, 2013), states that users are in favor of platforms who are able to standardize content.

In the field of music streaming services, content has been mainly standardized for the user since owners and developers of music streaming software continuously add content which users can access rapidly. Users can access the whole discography of their favorite artists and find almost all of the songs, albums, and singles. This degree of standardization is what Van Dijck (2013) describes as facilitated connectedness to help people find content, but also to enhance connectivity, since owners of platforms develop algorithms that give users a better input in their findings.

Content has been very much analyzed and criticized in music streaming services and many discussions have been questioning if on demand music streaming services are working under the right business model and distribution of wealth among artists, labels, and software developers. The definitions of content according to Van Dijck (2013) often figure in legal clashes concerning copyright, and intellectual ownership and there are continuous debates between who owns and controls it.

Even though different artists have questioned and criticized the income distribution from music streaming services, users have grown in numbers for the owners and developers of music streaming platforms due to the vast catalogue of music a user can access by paying per year the same amount of money that they would pay for only one record.

Ownership

Moreover, and when describing socioeconomic structures of social networks, Van Dijck (2013) looks into ownership from the perspective of the companies. She describes that platforms and specifically social networks evolve and most of them in their startup age, are collectively owned, user central organizations which develop and evolve to for profit corporate owner-center enterprises (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 36). This has also impacted the music industry, and it is

a phenomenon that for instance WIMP faced during their development in the music streaming market.

Governance

Is mainly defined by Van Dijck (2013) as the mechanisms of communication that aware the user of a service regarding the trafficking of metadata that users will explicitly provide to the company. It refers to those rules regarding social protocols to regulate property, privacy, and acceptable behavior through end user license agreements (EULAs) or Terms of Service (ToS). Regularly, most of terms of service include clauses about the platform owner rights to use or sell (meta) data provided by users.

Within music streaming services, these protocols exist in which users need to accept EULAs or ToS to make use of the service. By accepting governance before using music streaming platforms, users agree to activate social features which enable other users to interact with them. Further on, I will present a discussion related to privacy matters when using music streaming services. We will see that within music services, listeners have a tendency to not bother so much regarding EULAs or ToS since they have developed some trust for music streaming services. Most of the participants consider that the bigger the company the more they can trust in them, and they are happy with selling meta data to the companies to get the latest news on concerts and new releases. These impacts and reflects also on the usage of algorithms.

Business Model

As the last level of the model, Van Dijck (2013) describes that business models are mediators that were implemented by media companies as a form of monetization for the distribution of online creative content. Business models were mainly adopted by media companies with the arrival of the internet and Web 2.0 platforms (Van Dijck, 2013). They changed the ways of distribution and commercialization of creative and cultural industries such as books, records, and films. The adoption of new business models swift the traditional models of commercialization such as physical sales, profits from viewing or subscription fees, and profits derived from advertising (Van Dijck, 2013). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, within music streaming services business models have been mainly adopted as ‘freemium’ and ‘premium’ models. Advertising sustains freemium models and music listeners can have access to almost every song by using the free version of the service (Wagner et al., 2014). While free

subscriptions to music streaming services provide advertising, premium versions do not show any advertisement and allow users to unblock and access to features which are not available in freemium subscriptions. Van Dijck (2013) also highlights that business models can be a delicate point of discussion between the user of a service and the media company. Users on free subscription models are more susceptible to be constantly targeted by advertising and brands. Users can feel exploited by the company and quit the service ‘causing the platforms to lose its most important asset’ (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 40).

3.5 Reciprocal, background, and delegated listening

As media companies facilitate the access to the distribution of cultural and creative content, users tend to pay attention (or not) to the rapid flow of content on social networks. Music can be shared in different formats in social networks. Music listeners can share music videos from platforms like YouTube or songs directly from music streaming services such as Spotify and Tidal. While music listeners share content on their social networks, ‘friends’ on their networks are the ones who decide if they pay attention or not to the content. Users of social network decide how much attention they pay to the content that is being presented to them. In this sense, Crawford (2009) contributes to the field of media studies and interaction with technologies by analyzing how and why users pay attention to content in online media platforms. She suggests the concept of ‘listening’ as a metaphor to understand online engagement. Crawford (2009) sheds light to three main concepts which she describes as reciprocal listening, background listening and delegated listening.

Reciprocal listening

Is mainly defined as hearing and responding to comments, messages, or simply by interacting with content. In music streaming services, reciprocal listening can occur in different ways. For example, before 2017, Spotify offered a direct message chat service in which users could interact directly one with the other having conversations and sharing thoughts. Recently, this feature was removed leaving the users the option of only share content in other online platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, Telegram, Skype, and Tumblr. Within these online platforms music listeners can receive ‘likes’, ‘reactions’, or ‘comments’ from other users regarding the content that they are sharing or publishing. This is considered as ‘hearing’ and ‘responding’ while interacting with music content.

Background listening

Is defined by Crawford (2009) as the act of quickly scanning through content in online platforms in which just a few moments require the attention and concentration of the user. Within the use of music streaming platforms, there are users who develop background listening behaviors towards music content. They see the content and perceive it without really interacting with it. As we will see in chapter 5, some of the users of music streaming service users, decide to adopt this behavior when music content appears in their timelines of their different social networks.

Delegated listening

Is more used by companies to follow up conversations regarding a certain topic on social networks. It refers to mode of listening in which monitoring is needed without the main actor or creator of the content follow track of what users in social networks are discussing. It requires short amounts of attention and time to be done. Within music streaming services, delegated listening can happen mainly during the release of a new album or song, in which the label will be tracking the interaction of the content, without the main artist doing it. It is a delegated task for a third party and has no impact from a user perspective.

I will mainly use the concepts of Crawford (2009) on reciprocal and background listening to describe behaviors of perception of music listeners when they ‘share’ or ‘follow’ content on music streaming platforms. In addition, these two modes of ‘listening’ are also valuable to understand from the perspective of the user their reactions when other users ‘follow’ them or ‘share’ content with them.

4 Methodology

This research was developed in Norway and in Mexico and it gathered 23 respondents in which 12 respondents were Norwegian and 11 were Mexican music listeners. These participants were split in six groups (3 in Norway and 3 in Mexico). The purpose of this methodology was to gather as much information as it was possible given the time of my work.

In this chapter, I explain that my methodology is based on phenomenological science and therefore, it explains why a qualitative research was needed to get a better understanding towards the everyday use of music streaming services as music technologies and the value and meaning that it has to each individual using social features within music streaming services.

I also describe the process for choosing the sample and how I gather my informants in both countries. Additionally, I present a description of the sample which are the participants of the focus groups in Norway and Mexico. In this description, I present the profiles of the 23 participants from both countries. The real names of the participants are not presented in order to keep their anonymity, instead a nick name was given to them based on their real gender. This prototype of personas, allows the reader to get familiarized with each of the participants and their real age.

Moreover, I explain the use of the interview guideline as a tool of research and how was it developed. I also developed more into detail the software I used for transcribing the focus group interviews and the software used as well for coding. Finally, I discuss some of the challenges that I faced during the different stages of the data collection, and I analyze the things that I could have done better during the research process.

4.1 Approaching everyday music and interaction through phenomenology

The purpose of qualitative interview is to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspective (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 27). In this sense, qualitative research in the field of sociology, can be related to the concept of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is interested in the activities of consciousness and the objects that present themselves to consciousness (Giorgi, 2012, p. 9). It is a term that points to an interest

in understanding social phenomena from the ‘actors’ own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumptions that the important reality is what people perceive it to be (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 30). Phenomenology, is an attempt to describe our experience as it is and to describe it directly, without considering its psychological genesis or the casual explanations which the scientist, historian, or sociologist may give (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956, p. 59).

The concept of phenomenology was first introduced by Edmund Husserl around 1900 and then developed in an existential philosophy by Martin Heidegger and taken into existential and dialectical direction by Jean-Paul Sartre (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 30). Phenomenological sciences developed in turn to explore the structures of lived world experiences in everyday situations and relations (Hagen, 2015b, p. 41). From the perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1962) the phenomenological science study mainly comes from the lived experiences in everyday life. In this sense, life world becomes a topic of qualitative research to obtain unprejudiced descriptions about the world as it is encountered in everyday life (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 32).

In this sense, phenomenology can be applied in the field of media, sociology, and new technologies to analyze and understand interactions with technology for individual and social settings in everyday life. As the purpose of this research is to identify which are the drivers, experiences, feelings, social rules, or cultural factors, that influence the use of music streaming services in Mexico and Norway, a qualitative interview would provide knowledge regarding interaction in life world. From a phenomenological perspective, qualitative studies of subjects’ experiences of their world are basic to the more abstract scientific theories (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 32). In this sense, qualitative interviews can be considered a powerful tool to understand the meaning of experiences from the respondents from my sample.

4.2 Focus Group as a qualitative method

Focus groups have been used in several disciplines for different types of research. According to Wilkinson (1998) before 1970’s, focus groups were mainly used in the field of evaluation and marketing. Further on, during the 1980’s, researchers pioneered the use of focus groups in social action research, particularly in the fields of family planning and preventive health

education. During the 1990's, focus groups became a relevant method in the field of communication and media studies, feminist research and health research.

I decided to use focus groups since it is a technique of group interviews that generates data through the opinions expressed by the participants (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, Digiacomio, Phillips, & Davidson, 2007). Moreover, focus groups are increasingly common research tool used to obtain the opinions, values and beliefs from an identifiable group using a facilitated interview technique (Halcomb et al., 2007). This method on qualitative research is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences, and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299).

I believe that focus groups are meant to be open for discussion. For example, (Morgan, 2012) explains that focus groups can be analyzed in three different levels which are 1) Co-construction of meaning, 2) Sharing and Comparing, and 3) Organizing and Conceptualizing. In his view, Morgan explains that 1) Co-construction of meaning is a definition based on the work of Sue Wilkinson (1998). In her text, Wilkinson presents three of focus group methodology. These features are a) providing access to participants own language, concepts and concerns, b) encouraging the production of more fully articulated accounts, and c) offering an opportunity to observe the process of collective sense making. Further on, I will present my arguments on why these three features adapt to the research.

In relation to the second level in which focus groups can be analyzed, Morgan (2012) describes that 2) Sharing and Comparing, is a process in which the participants of the focus group are interested in the topic and therefore they tend to share their experiences and thoughts while also comparing their own contributions to what others have said (Morgan, 2012, p. 5). This generates discussion between the participants and allows them to show a tendency to agree or disagree towards an individual or a collective opinion. this process of sharing and comparing provides the rare opportunity to collect direct evidence on how the participants themselves understand their similarities and differences (Morgan, 2012, p. 6).

An example of a general agreement during my research in Norway, is that most of the participants tended to agree when they were asked about the influence of politics in the music industry. In most of the cases, the participants agreed that they do not consider that people in Norway pay attention to the meaning behind a song with a political critic or background. During one of the focus group sessions, most of the participants agreed with Ole who mentioned:

‘I think in general we are content with our lives, so we tend to not care that much about it, so we don't need those protests really’.

Ole (27-year-old man, Norway)

On the other hand, Morgan also discuss that the process of sharing and comparing includes the analysis of the role of group composition in shaping the discussion as well as the role of the moderator in shaping the discussion.

In relation to the role of group composition in shaping the discussion, Morgan (2012) determines that the minimum requirement for a good group discussion is that these participants need to be comfortable with talking to the other participants about this topic. He discusses the once the sample is collected, the coordinators of the focus group session should decide how to spread the participants in each focus group. This process helps to stablish groups of people with more similarities together, therefore it is easier for them to discuss any type of topic.

Based on this concept, I decided to mix my sample in a way in which people could interact and felt comfortable between each other. In Norway, the three focus groups took place at the University of Oslo at the department of media and communications. I decided to choose this place because most of the participants were familiar with the department. This provided the focus groups sessions a more relaxed atmosphere. In addition, most of the participants were spread with familiar faces within the department. Even though a 96% of the participants were related to the department of media and communications at the University of Oslo, they were not completely related to each other. As a researcher and as the moderator of the focus group, I decided to mix them in a way I thought they would feel comfortable since I know most of them from different groups of people. The 4% of the sample who was not part of the department, was mix in between the different groups and mainly were not related to the department at all.

In Mexico, the distribution of the sample was even more spread, since most of the participants were not related to each other. The only exemption, was a focus group which consisted of four participants. From these four participants, three of them were siblings, whereas the fourth participant was not related to them at all. In addition, the three focus group sessions took place in the offices of ‘Burracus’, a branding and design agency located at the south of Mexico City. In this sense and going back to the Morgan’s definition, I decided to spread the

sample in a way in which the different personalities of the participants could show positive findings for the research. Later, I will provide more details on how the sample was collected as well as the profiling of each of the participants.

Moreover, Morgan (2012) describes that the role of the moderator in shaping the discussion is primarily to assist with the ongoing groups dynamics, rather than taking responsibility for creating those dynamics. Therefore, we can say that the moderator is not the creator but the facilitator of the conversation during the focus groups sessions. As a facilitator, the moderator is empowered to manage the conversation and include most of the participants on it. For example, if there is a participant who has been isolated from the main topics, the role of the moderator would be to include that specific person to the conversation. It can also happen the other way around, in which one of the participants decides to take lead of the conversation making the rest of the participants to follow her/his ideas.

Finally, and as the third level of how Morgan analyses focus groups, he mentions that 3) Conceptualizing and Organizing, refers to the shared sense during the interaction in the groups, of the various aspects of the topic which is being discussed. He states that this creates the opportunity for the participants to organize these basic elements into a more abstract set of concepts, which helps them express why they feel the way they do about the topic. This definition provides a wide and broader overview of why I decided to use focus groups as a qualitative method for my research. In fact, the idea of the discussion between the participants is what I needed to get from a cultural aspect to understand the everyday use of music.

4.3 The interview guideline as a tool for data collection

After making research on the impact of the focus group as a qualitative method for data collection, I realized that I needed to develop a questionnaire strategic enough, to answer my research question. According to Kitzinger (1995, p. 300) the focus group questionnaire is ideal for testing the phrasing of questions and is also useful in explaining or exploring survey results. In this sense, I decided to make a questionnaire divided in three sections. The first section was called “Everyday music culture”, the second one was called “Sharing vs following” and the third one “Cultural interaction with music streaming services”.

The first section of the questionnaire aimed to discuss the use of technology and the relationship with music streaming services. For example, the participants answered to questions regarding the number of mobile devices that they use in which they listen to music. This include the use of laptops, tablets, smartphones, or other devices in which they listen to music, such as CD's, traditional radios, or iPods. During this section, the participants also answered to questions regarding to which music streaming service they use. Most of the participants mentioned music streaming services like Spotify, Tidal, iTunes Music and Deezer. The respondents also discussed how long they have been using their music streaming service and the reasons why they decide to use their streaming service. Finally, they were also asked about their daily habits and their daily interaction with their music streaming service, as well as what are the most valuable features that they find attractive in their music streaming service.

The second part of the interview guideline emphasized on discussing the interaction of the respondents with music streaming platforms in terms of 'Sharing vs Following'. In this sense, the participants were asked about what inspired them to follow content on music streaming platforms and how often they share their music. Some of them replied about sharing content on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter, while others share their music within the music streaming platforms, by making use of the social features. Moreover, the respondents were also asked about the relationship between their emotions when listening to music on Spotify, Tidal, and other music platforms, and the fact that their contacts or 'followers' from their profiles, could see what they are listening.

The last part of the interview guideline 'cultural interaction with music and streaming services'. In this stage, the participants were asked about the type of music that they listen in terms of music genres. The structure of the questions aimed to get information on the relationship between culture, music genres, the impact of music in their country and society as well as the influence of politics in music. Finally, the respondents also replied to questions regarding their culture and their traditional music. They were asked which type of music a foreigner will never understand from their culture and why would this happen.

4.4 The Sample

As it has been mentioned, my study took place in two different countries which are Norway and Mexico, meaning that the informants, which we can also call "the sample" were recruited in both countries, through the process of *sampling*, which I consider as the first stage of my

research. The term sampling, is defined Neuendorf (2002, p. 83) as the process of selecting a subset of units for study from the larger population. In this sense, I develop different methods to collect my sample. In addition, according to Neuendorf (2002) there are different types of samples. In addition, the author describes random sampling as the process in which every element in the population must have a chance to be selected. In this part, the author presents the definitions of multiple methods on how to select a sample. Some of these types of sampling include *simple random sampling*, *systematic random sampling*, *cluster sampling*, *stratified sampling*, and *multistage sampling*. For my research, I decided to use stratified sampling as my type of sampling in Norway and in Mexico.

Moreover (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 85) states that during the stratified sampling, the sampling frame is segmented to some categories of prime interest to the researcher. In this sense, I developed a list of characteristics to prototype the personas that I needed for my research and recruitment. Some of these characteristics were that they should use music streaming services such as Tidal, Apple Music, Spotify or others, be over 20 years old, and that they exercise or go to the gym regularly. From my perspective, this last characteristic has correlation between exercising while listening to music.

After defining these characteristics, I developed a plan for the recruitment process. The first idea, was to recruit people outside of gymnasiums in Oslo, such as Elixia and SIO Athletica. At the same time, I was asking people from my network in Oslo if they were willing to help me with my research and I mentioned to them that I was searching for people with the characteristics mentioned before. Also, in coordination with Arnt Massø, Associate professor at the department of media and communication at the University of Oslo, we created a small website to advertise that there was people needed for different focus group sessions which where schedule in different dates during the autumn/winter time of 2016. At the end, the sample in Oslo was built on people from my network who had the characteristics mentioned before and from people who spread the word with other persons in their networks. The result was a total of 5 men and 7 women with ages between 20 to 30 years old.

After recruiting my sample in Oslo, Norway, I searched as well for my sample in Mexico City. In this sense, the gathering of the sample was a little more complicated considering the geographical distance between the two countries. Therefore, I decided to use my network in Mexico to start recruiting people using Facebook as my main channel to recruit people. I set the same criteria than in Norway so at the end the sample was equally balanced between the

two nations. The process of recruitment started with a post on my personal wall in Facebook in which I mentioned the characteristics that I was looking for, so people could be part of the research. The post was release on Facebook the 27th of September 2016 and a total of 17 persons liked the post, a total of 12 persons shared it in their Facebook walls and a total of 18 persons commented on it. These comments were positive and from people who wanted to participate on the research. At the end, 11 persons participated in three different focus group sessions from which 7 participants were men and 4 women between the ages of 24 to 31 years old.

The focus groups in Norway took place on the 3rd, 12th and 19th of November 2016, whereas the focus groups in Mexico occurred during December 18th, 2016 in different schedules.

4.5 Ethics

Talking about the use of music streaming services has probably a minor impact in the informants of the focus group, than discussing sexual diseases, use of drugs, or mental issues. Still, I consider that ethics play an important role of my research especially when discussing technology, music consumption, algorithms, piracy, privacy, and human behaviors in a digital life. Considering the design of my study and the fields of research, I decided to approach to my sample by following the four fields in ethical research proposed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) which are informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of the researcher.

During the prior conversations with the informants, I mentioned the details of when and where we were going to meet as well as the procedure and structure of the focus group session. By doing this, my goal was to give the informants the knowledge and information beforehand of how the sessions was going to happen. For Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 93) these prior talks would be considered as part of the informed consent field, in which the authors state that it entails informing the research participants about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research.

Secondly, I discussed with the participants at the beginning of every focus group session, that their names would not be use during the research, therefore, all the real names have been coded and every unit of the sample received a new name. The agreement with the

participants was that only their age might be published in the study if needed. The participants agreed and were happy to be anonymized.

Finally, I explained to the participants that they were the ones who were supposed to take lead in the conversation, and I made clear that I was more a facilitator than a moderator of the conversation. The dynamic that we followed was that I asked them the questions and they were in charge to develop the topic. My intention with this, was to make the participants feel empowered and in control, without any restriction or shame of talking.

4.6 Challenges

I consider that the main challenges during my methodology are related to (1) the recruitment of people in Norway and in Mexico, (2) the fact that I had to use my network in both countries to gather my sample for the study and (3) the coordination of sessions in both countries was complicated. I would like to add that there are two cases within my sample which I consider could affect a couple of answers. In Norway, two participants were in a relationship by the time that the focus group sessions happened. In this sense either some of the comments from one of them or the other, could have been influenced considering that both know each other and that their power relation could have blinded some true opinions towards a certain topic of discussion or not. On the other hand, in Mexico, one of the focus groups gathered three siblings in one group. In this group, only one participant did not know the siblings at all which was positive for her in order to express her comments and opinions towards the different topics of discussion, whereas for the siblings, their strong power relation could have been a factor for them to not express their real comments and opinions towards a certain discussion.

As part of the limitations of the research, I consider that a bigger sample could have brought better results to the research. I consider that my sample was too small and that could not be representative enough to make a generalization of the use of music streaming services in Norway and Mexico. I also consider that I could have applied observation as a side method to the focus group interviews. I consider that observing the behaviors of the users on social networks using music streaming platforms, could be a way to keep track (a diary) of the music listeners behaviors. These results could be matched with the answers of the respondents on the focus group sessions.

5 Discussing the findings

In the first part of this dissertation, I have defined music streaming services and I have highlighted that music streaming services share some similarities with social network sites (SNS). Social network services are mainly defined as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of users with whom they share a connection and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). As in SNS, music streaming services embed social features to enable users to connect with one another and use music tracks as social objects (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 1). In the following part of this master thesis, I will discuss the interaction of music listeners with social features on music streaming services. Based on the methodology of the research, I focus on ‘sharing’, ‘privacy’, ‘following’, and ‘playlists’ as the most relevant social features of music streaming services. I analyze and discuss the answers of the respondents based on the theoretical background presented in Chapter 3.

5.1 Findings on Sharing

As part of the social features of music streaming services, music listeners can afford to ‘share’ content with their online networks. The word sharing has adopted different meanings since the advent of internet and the arrival of social network services. Sharing is considered by John (2017) as the distribution and the division of something that is yours. It is governed by cultural norms and is constitutive of social relations. In his book, John (2017) analyze the concept of ‘sharing’ from the perspective of social network services. He highlights that the concept of sharing in the digital era can be studied from three main perspectives which are (1) sharing as a constitutive activity of social media, (2) sharing as a model of economic behavior, and (3) sharing as a category of speech. For this research, I analyze sharing mainly from a constitutive activity of social media, since this concept refers to the online activities users do such as sharing statuses, sharing photos, sharing videos, and sharing music. Moreover, Van Dijck (2013) also draws under the concept of sharing and highlights that from a technological perspective sharing can be studied in two types connectedness and connectivity. Connectedness refers as well to how users share information with other users through online platforms designed for sharing content. In this type of sharing, users can share their personal information other users such as

their profiles with photos and the lists of things that they like the most such as books, films, music, and other goods. In the type of connectivity, Van Dijck (2013) describes that these are the type of interactions the user has with the platform, such as clicking on the ‘like’ button on Facebook. In this sense Van Dijck (2013) and John (2017) conceptualize the activity of sharing in social network services. In this chapter, I address the activity of sharing and I present arguments on how sharing music is perceived in Norway and in Mexico when using music streaming services.

I saw big differences on the interaction with music streaming platforms between the two cultures when it comes to music sharing behaviors. Some differences are related to time frames and the adoption of technology. For instance, some of the Norwegian respondents mentioned that they have been using Spotify for more than seven years, some others replied that they have been using the service for a ‘couple of years’ without giving a specific date or number of years, whereas in Mexico the adoption of MSS started on 2013, Mexican respondents have mainly used Spotify since three or four years maximum. Norwegian respondents tend to agree that music sharing on SNS via MSS, stopped during 2009 and 2010. Some of the respondents have even mentioned that this is an ‘old school’ practice which they see on their parents., since they are the generation that used to share everything with everyone. They consider that ‘old people’ are the ones sharing music content on other social networks using the social features of music streaming services.

‘I think I used to be like that a few years ago when Spotify was quite new, that was like send music ‘listen to this one’ it was like on a direct message, send direct this and that on Spotify. I don’t do that anymore. I guess I used to do that at the beginning of Facebook, beginning of Spotify, but people don’t post that much stuff anymore’.

Sigurd (29-year-old man, Norway)

Even though some Norwegian respondents see music sharing as an old school practice, most of them agree that music should be ‘an ok’ thing to share and that people should do it more. Some of the respondents like Silje (25, Norway), stated that she would love to see that more ‘random’ people post songs because she finds it interesting. She finds it as a way of communicating and expressing something. She also thinks that there is a certain degree of ‘credibility’ if people share a song on SNS via MSS and considers it a nice practice in comparison to when a label records or a music festival do it.

On the other hand, Mexican users seem to love sharing music on different levels, some of them prefer to share their music or what they are listening on other SNS. They make use of the social features of music streaming services to communicate and express themselves. They see social features of music streaming services as tools for expression. Mexican users do not see music streaming services as social networks, but still they have a positive attitude and perception towards music sharing even though they have been using music streaming services for four years. Some of the respondents do not even question if they want to share a song which fits to their state of mind or their emotions.

‘I share songs on Facebook from Spotify. I mainly share when a song has filled me so much or if something special has happened to me. For instance, if you are heart broken and you listen to something that fits, I share it to tell people, ‘Hey! I’m cutting my veins with slices of cottage.’

Martín (32-year-old man, Mexico)

By sharing a song, Martín feels relief. He feels that someone on the other side of the screen has received a message of what he is going through. His intention is just to let people know what is happening in his life at that moment. In addition, he expresses that there is no rational behind sharing music, for him, music makes him feel alive and he recalls that sometimes when he wakes up and he feels happy he will immediately remember a song that will stick to his head and which he might share on social networks. On the other hand, Karina (26, Mexico) and Santiago (30, Mexico) seem to agree with Martín when discussing music sharing and its relation to a state of mind or emotions. For them, music sharing is out of a sense of time. It is mainly an impulse, something that they want to do to communicate with friends. Santiago for instance, mentions that he also shares music because he wants to inform people about what is happening in other music scenes. His approach to music genres is mainly related to punk and metal music. Sometimes he likes to listen to jazz while he is working.

‘I also share music and make a publication out of it just as the others, but sometimes I do it with an informative purpose if you know what I mean. Sometimes I found videos or songs that I share such as ‘In Flames concert of 1999’ and sometimes I do it just to earn myself some likes (On Facebook) to be honest’

Santiago (30-year-old man, Mexico)

Santiago shows that sharing music or using social features in music technologies, is not related in any sense with the length of the use of the services. When he highlights the concert of the death metal Swedish band In Flames of 1999, he highlights that there are no timeframes to share music in comparison to what other respondents in Norway stated.

By working with two different cultures which interact with the same platforms for music streaming such as Spotify, Tidal, iTunes Music, and YouTube, it is interesting to understand the reasons behind it, not just only on time frames which evokes to the adoption of technology, but mainly to personal and cultural behaviors behind it.

On this research, I also found that the concept of sharing features on music streaming platforms, is correlated to certain rules and conducts on the online society. These behaviors and rules are mainly determined by a cultural context of what is personal and what is social. For Hagen and Lüders (2016) the act of sharing music with friends and peers in music streaming services instigates theoretical reflections of music as personal, and how streaming users consider their own experiences of social interaction in music-streaming services, from the perspective of self-performances as reflexive and social practices (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 2). They refer to (Goffman, 1959) metaphor of self-performances, which suggests that the self is shaped and staged according to contexts; we consciously edit impressions we give and attempt to control expressions given off. Our sense of self emerges through social interactions with others, and is a product of our own internal definitions with how we perceive that others define us (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 2).

Moreover, I believe that social interactions and self- behavior on online sociality are also linked to the second and third level of the metal programming pyramid presented by (Hofstede, 1980). These levels mainly refer to collective mental programming and individual mental programming. The collective level of human mental programming refers to those levels of consciousness that we share with some people but not with everyone. They are mental programs that identify us with certain groups of people and which give us a sense of belonging.

5.1.1 Collective mental programming while sharing music

The collective mental programming analyses those actions that are intangible in our world, but that we all understand and have knowledge of. For example, if a man meets a woman in a random street in Mexico and both know each other from before, the man might approach to the

woman and give one little kiss in her cheek as a way of greeting. This little kiss does not mean that a man is harassing or being disrespectful to the woman, neither it means that he is in love with her or that they are having a relationship which goes beyond the borders of friendship, it is only and intangible that exists in the collective mindset of both genders. It is an idea that floats in the air in everyday life. On the other hand, if we imagine the same situation in Norway, it is possible that both (man and woman) give each other a short hug without giving any kiss in the cheek. This is related as well to a sense of distance which makes both persons feel more comfortable when greeting randomly in the street and as well is executed as an action which they both know and understand because of their context and culture.

The collective mental programs can also develop certain rules or actions that determine what is allowed and what is not allowed in social structures. If we apply the same collective mental programs to online society and in the way in which we interact with music and music sharing behaviors, one can understand better online interactions between individuals as well as the perception towards an action. For Elin (23, Norway), sharing music on social networks while streaming music is not ‘socially acceptable’. She considers that it is weird to see that people are sharing songs via music streaming services in her feed on Facebook. She believes this because she has a conception of music as a personal aspect of her life. Moreover, Malin (27, Norway) emphasizes that other SNS are not platforms for sharing content such as music and she think that people are breaking the ‘rules’ of interacting in online communities if she sees that someone is doing it.

‘It’s like certain rules for certain platforms kind of so you wouldn’t bring Spotify over Facebook or Instagram because you already have that platform where you can follow friends, show your music, your friends can see what you are listening to right now, it is its own platform almost so why would you bring that over to another.’

Malin (27-year- old woman, Norway)

In addition, Anne (25, Norway) and Johan (23, Norway) which belong to an independent focus group session, seem to agree with Malin in that sense. They both believe that sharing music on other social networks is not proper because it is not the right platform to do it.

‘You have Spotify for sharing music, you do not need to share it on Facebook for people to know. If you want people to know what you are doing everyday use Snapchat, if you want to share pictures or special things use Instagram. There are other apps that are

taking away some of the features that Facebook had before whereas now is more like a communication channel or where you are part of a group and some part of that community more than a “this is my life”.

Anne (25-year-old woman, Norway)

Other respondents agree with the fact that there are rules for platforms based which are mainly based in a collective mental programming in Norway. For Irene (22, Norway) including music content on SNS platforms should be more visual and therefore she likes to share YouTube videos, in which she shows more than a song and provides a general overview of the band or artists that she wants to highlight or share. She considers that this is the only way of sharing music on other social networks and which fits to other platforms.

Even though that there are some rules or social codes of behavior in Norway, in Mexico people perceives music sharing and in interaction with SNS it in a totally different way. The perception towards music sharing in a proactive and passive way is totally accepted. None of the respondents of my sample consider that there are rules for music sharing or that there are behaviors towards music sharing. In this sense and going back to the definition of the collective mental programming of Hofstede (1980), I can say that in Mexico the participants of my sample, are not programmed in a collective level to understand that there are different rules for different platforms. I would also dare to say, that an interesting finding is that there is a collective mental programming of sharing music which is linked to emotions and states of mind. Most of the participants in the three different focus groups, agreed on this statement. This means that in a Mexican online society it is allowed to express feelings, frustrations, and emotions. It seems like there the use of social networks in Mexico are working as platforms for people to express themselves, and that these actions are considered as acceptable behaviors.

Considering the fact that in comparison to Norwegians, Mexicans tend to express themselves and share music, users feel free to not just share music, but they will also interact with it. For example, when they were asked how do they react when they see another ‘friend’ or ‘user’ sharing music on social networks, most of the Mexicans replied that they actually interact in different levels. Santiago (30, Mexico), Arturo (27, Mexico), and Jonathan (25, Mexico), agreed that they would actually interact with music content on other social networks.

‘I actually really pay attention to the content and go totally in and I tell the other person something like “Hey! This is so good” or sometimes I reply to them with another video,

or sometimes I tell them ‘You know what I would really need to delete this because it is so bad’.

Santiago (30-year-old man, Mexico)

In this level, the mental programming of the Mexican online society while sharing music says as a social code, that people can even give their opinion towards something that they see. They react to music and they discuss it, criticize it, or even ask for more good music and recommendations.

‘I pay attention to the content, but it depends (to interact) if I know the person and if I know that they have something that could be interesting for me. If that is the case I would go in and click on it to listen’.

Jonathan (25, Mexico)

I found that these behaviors and ‘rules’ are also linked to two of the four dimensions of the theory of cultural differences proposed by Hofstede in 1980. These two dimensions are what he defines as Power Distance and Individualism. Power distance is the degree of inequality existing between a less powerful and a more powerful person, which in industry would be represented by the superior-subordinate relationship (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994, p. 235). Inequality can occur in areas such as prestige, wealth, and power; different societies put different weights on status consistency among these areas (Hofstede, 1980, p. 92). Power distance is mainly related with the hierarchies that are marked in country, it is linked to the eternal battle of the rich and the poor. On the other hand, individualism describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society, in addition individualism is seen as a blessing and a source of well-being and in others, it is seen as alienating (Hofstede, 1980, p. 213). Individualism and collectivism are aspects that shape and determine a society and Hofstede (1980) proposes that in individualistic societies people are expected to be more independent, giving priority to their goals, whereas in collectivistic cultures people are independent within their groups and give priority to their in-groups and social ties are much tighter. According to Hofstede, Mexico is considered as a country with a large Power Distance and Low Individualism, whereas Norway is a country with small Power Distance and a High Individualism.

5.1.2 Individual mental programming while sharing music

We know now that there is a collective mental programming in Norway which determines which are the rules to follow in terms of behavior when it comes to music sharing on other social network platforms. Music sharing in online society is not only related to collective mental programming. Individuality plays a role as well when it comes to analyze behaviors when sharing music through music streaming services. Respondents of the three focus groups in Norway agreed that music is too personal for them and that from individual to individual there are certain things that make them uncomfortable.

The individual level of human programming is truly unique part, no two people are programmed exactly alike, even if they are identical twins raised together. (Hofstede, 1980, p. 16). Individual mental programming is mainly related to those things that give us identity, such as temperament and values. Values are the criteria people use to select or justify actions and to evaluate people (including the self) and events (S. Schwartz, 1992, p. 1). Values are concepts or beliefs, they pertain to desirable end states or behaviors and are order by relative importance (S. H. Schwartz, Bilsky, & Sarason, 1990, p. 4). Most people simultaneously hold several conflicting values such as 'freedom' and 'equality' (Hofstede, 1980, p. 19). A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group of the desirable which influences the selection from available mode, means and ends of actions (Kluckhohn, 1951 p.395). They tell us what is evil and what is good, what is dirty and what clean, ugly, and beautiful, unnatural, and natural, abnormal and normal, paradoxical and logical, irrational and rational.

Other scholars like Mead (1961) have analyzed how cultures differ in the extent to which cooperation, competition or individualism are emphasized in a personality dimension labeled *allocentrism* versus *idiocentrism* (Triandis et al., 1988, p. 323). Idiocentrics tend to focus upon autonomy, self-interest, and freedom, while allocentrics tend to consider shared values and common goals with in-groups, interrelatedness, and maintaining harmony with others as important values (Earley & Gibson, 1998, p. 271).

When discussing behaviors of online sociality, these differences seem to influence the most the use of social features in music streaming services from individual to individual. From a broader perspective, most of the respondents in Norway seem to be idiocentric individuals when they were questioned about sharing music on social networks. Some of the respondents

agreed with the fact that they don't think that it is interesting for the other people to dig into their music. For example Ole (27, Norway), believes that no one is interested in his music and therefore, there is no need for him to have some of his music public, either on his preferred music streaming platform (Spotify) or in other social network platforms. The same goes for Anne (25, Norway) who believes that there is no one interested in her music.

On the other hand, Norwegians seem to be more independent and autonomous with their music since they keep it so personal. For them, there is not a thing like music sharing and seems that it is even difficult that they feel open to share their music with their best friends. Seems like it is more important for them to develop their own music for themselves. As Bjørn (31, Norway) mentioned it, it takes years for one to build their music collections so why would they share that with someone? Music represents a development for Norwegian users of music streaming services, it's their own space in which no one can access. There is no value for them in sharing music, but they stand for values such as privacy, equality, and freedom in their everyday life.

Moreover, we can say that there are more allocentric individuals in Mexico. They stand for a sharing culture and like to interrelate with what others do. Seems to be that for Mexican user's social features in music streaming services are valuable. Some of the Mexican users agreed that they enjoy seeing what other users are listening to. Most of them see social features as tools which make them curious about other persons preferences in terms of music.

5.2 Findings on Privacy while listening to music

When discussion music sharing, the use of social features, and the use of social networks, one of the main points of discussion was related to privacy in Norway and in Mexico.

Traditionally, privacy interests were implicit in legal or social protection of personal property and space, intimate settings, or personal effects (Devries, 2003). Privacy has been as an essential element of human dignity (Benn, 1971; Bloustein, 1964) and is the ability to control and limit physical, interactional, psychological, and informational access to the self or one's group (Burgoon, 1982).

Privacy has been studied and analyzed in different fields. In the field of communications Burgoon et al. (1989) suggest that privacy has mainly four relevant dimensions which are 1) Physical privacy, 2) Social or interactional privacy, 3) Psychological privacy, and 4)

Informational privacy. (See more on Burgoon 1982). Physical privacy refers to the degree to which a person is physically accessible. Informational privacy refers to an individual's right to determine how, when and to what extent the information about the person will be revealed to others. Interactional privacy refers to an individual's ability and effort to control social contacts. Psychological privacy refers to the ability to control inputs and outputs to form values, as well as the right to decide with whom and under what circumstances thoughts and intimate information will be shared or revealed. (Zhang, Wang, & Xu, 2011, p. 4).

5.2.1 Privacy dimensions in social networks

In recent years with the arrival of the internet and the use of algorithms for personal tracking, privacy has become one of the major topics of discussion in modern societies. Most of the research made on privacy and online societies has been done in the field of e-commerce (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). For example Miyazaki and Fernandez (2000), presented an analysis on the privacy and security of online consumers and e-commerce. Their focus is on discussing and finding which are the main concerns that online shoppers are more sensitive to when buying online. Other scholars have made research on the privacy concerns of the internet users, and some other have made research on the different dimensions of privacy in online societies. For instance, (Zhang et al., 2011) propose a multi-dimensional privacy concern construct based on the work Burgoon (1982) and his four privacy dimensions, which I explained before. They suggest that the study of Burgoon can also be applied for analyzing and studying privacy and in social networks with four main concepts which are 1) Virtual Territory Privacy, 2) Factual Privacy, 3) Interactional Privacy, and 4) Psychological Privacy.

Virtual territory privacy

This dimension is defined as the freedom from surveillance and unwanted intrusions upon one's virtual space by others (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 4). It is related to the space that we occupy virtually and how we protect our own virtual belongings such as personal page, web-logos, etc. For example, if a person posts unwanted information in another Facebook Wall of another user, it is considered as a violation of privacy. Therefore, every platform needs to allow users to control access to what others can do in their profiles. In music streaming services, this can be experienced when another user is adding songs to a playlist without the consent of the other user to do it. This could represent an alteration to the content of a user.

Factual privacy

Is defined as the ability to control identifiable personal information about oneself (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 5). In this dimension, we can include real name, email addresses, phone numbers, credit or debit cards and location. In this dimension, we can also include the track of algorithms and how they are used towards music streaming service users. Algorithms manage our interactions on social networking sites, highlighting the news of one friend while excluding another's. Algorithms designed to calculate what is 'hot' or 'trending' or 'most discussed' skim the cream from the seemingly boundless chatter that's on offer. They belong to a software base which transforms input data into desired data based on specific calculations (Gillespie, 2014, p. 1).

Interactional privacy

Refers to people's ability to control their encounters with others with respect to when, where and with whom they want to interact. These controls satisfy an individual's needs for security, affiliation, and intimacy (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 5). This dimension aims to reduce unwanted interactions with other users. Interactional privacy allows internet users to control instant messaging, activities, updates, likes, shares, etc. In addition, interactional privacy becomes critical for electronic users since digital communications sometimes take over physical communications, making everyone available in any platform at any time.

Psychological privacy

Psychological privacy protects the individual from intrusions upon one's thoughts, feelings, and values. It includes the freedom to introspect, reflect, assimilate, plan, analyze, regroup, disclose, or seek advice (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 5). This dimension refers to a level of privacy in which user's experience exposure to strangers in public virtual spaces. Other users can see what they feel, do, or express in online societies which psychologically, can affect users of being careful of what to do or say in social networks.

5.2.2 Privacy dimensions and their impact in music streaming services

So far, I have defined and explained the multidimensional privacy model proposed by Zhang et al. (2011). I found this model interesting to use for my study, considering the relation that exists between social network services and music streaming services. The model presents clearly the

different layers of privacy that concern a user. The model owns a solid background since it is based in the privacy communication model from Burgoon (1982) but at the same time, it lacks arguments and makes it complicated for the reader to understand if privacy is violated or not since the lines of privacy violation are very thin when discussing social networks. I believe that in further research, the concepts can be restructured to provide a clear idea of where are the lines and borders of privacy violation. Still, this model is relevant for my research and helps me understand the relationship that exists between a culture and their position towards privacy. Even though the model was made for studying privacy concerns in online networks, it is relevant to use while analyzing privacy in music streaming services.

5.2.3 Music and privacy in Norway

In Norway, music listeners seem to be more concerned on psychological privacy and in interactional privacy, whereas in Mexico, users are more concerned about factual privacy and virtual territory privacy. Most of the users in Norway, agreed with the fact that they turned off the features '*Publish my activity on Spotify*' or '*Disable Facebook Login*' in Tidal which can be controlled on the Settings of every individual account. The respondents in Norway mentioned that they feel exposed by Facebook when using Spotify or Tidal since both services provide the option to connect their account with their personal Facebook account. Beyond being exposed, some of the respondents like Sigrid (24, Norway), who stated that she did not like the fact that other people could see what she was listening too. She also mentioned that it felt invasive and that she was feeling a bit embarrassed knowing that others could see what she was listening. On the other hand, Malin (27, Norway) decided to turn of this feature from her account because sometimes she listens to music that is not particularly her taste and thinks that it is uncomfortable to know that people can see that. The same goes for Elin who mentioned that when she first started to use Spotify, she realized that her friends could see what he was listening to, therefore, she decided to turn off that feature because she found it uncomfortable.

In this sense, it seems to be that there is clear tendency from Norwegian music streaming users to hide their music taste. Their major concerns are related to being publicly exposed, knowing that other people can see and track their activity or interact with the content that they are listening. It affects them in a way in which their personal feelings and activities can be judged by others, limiting their music to only themselves. This also contradicts what other

Norwegian users mentioned when they said that they consider that there is no one interested in their music. If other users are not interested in your music, why should you hide it?

Moreover, users like Liv (28, Norway) did not know about this feature on Spotify neither in Tidal. Still, she had an opinion towards this feature and how this can be invasive for her.

‘But there is something that is really annoying with Facebook now that you kind of like add what you are listening to on Spotify on Facebook, and a lot of old people I know do that, is so annoying, is like I don't want to know what you are listening too’

Liv (28-year-old woman, Norway)

In her statement, Liv shows that her concern is oriented to an interactional privacy dimension. Her state of disconformity and low tolerance towards what other users are listening is quite high. At the same time, Liv mentioned that other users can see what she is listening, instead she would mind of the type of movies that she watches on Netflix but this is not representative with her music.

In a general overview, Norwegian male users don't seem to care too much about it, but still they consider that it is better to keep their music just for their own. Some of them think that there is no need for them to prove with their music their identity, neither to push their taste to others.

In addition, people in Norway seem to be less concerned about the use of their personal data. In this sense, I refer to the factual dimension proposed by Zheng et al. which emphasizes the fact that social networks or in this case music streaming services, collect all the identifiable data of the users such as credit cards, location, email addresses, etc. Norwegian users had different opinions towards it, but in general they agreed with the fact that they don't feel the need of not trusting companies developing music streaming services.

‘I'm not concern though, now that you are talking about algorithms, always when they are sending emails is so random, is just like “Spotify has just released a new album, jazz acoustic something” and I'm like ‘What a fuck I have been listening to’.

Malin (27-year-old woman, Norway)

Other users like Sigrid, Jørn, Ole, Bjørn and Anne (Norway), agree with the fact that they do not mind that services like Spotify or Tidal have their personal information. For some of them

the bigger the company is, the better and the safer it should be that they own your information. They don't seem to be concerned about it, even if their personal information is there. These users seem to agree also that there are other companies which we should be more concerned to give our personal information such as Facebook, Google, and Apple. They mainly believe that these types of companies are very advertised, and it is annoying and difficult to live with it. In the case of Spotify or Tidal, Norwegian users are not bother and they would appreciate that the service gives them new recommendations of artists, albums, releases, and concerts.

'I work in technology, so I know a lot about this and we have the discussion, I think people don't know how much data streaming services collect about you it's huge! Nothing is accidental from the information you get when you go into Spotify, nothing is accidental. Everything is like which music and what to pop up. Even when I think when it comes to new releases even those playlists are adapted to who you are based on what you listen to. So, nothing is random, and I love it.'

Anne (25-year-old woman, Norway)

5.2.4 Music and privacy in Mexico

In Mexico privacy while streaming and sharing music concerns seem to have a very different direction. I would dare to say that there are almost non-existent among the respondents from my sample. Still there are some users like Paula (31, Mexico) who has not dare to pay for the Premium service of Spotify because she is afraid that the company owns her credit or debit card. In fact, that though has led her to not interact at all with her music streaming service. She considers herself as a passive user who only listens, and she repeats this pattern in her Facebook profile, by not sharing, talking, or interacting with no one. Contrary from Paula, her sister Emma, shops often online, and has had bad experiences with some websites. Still, Emma believes that by sharing her credit or debit card on Spotify or any other music streaming platform is not safe.

Even though Emma and Paula have privacy concerns in a factual dimension, the rest of the respondents in Mexico seem to be open to it. Respondents like Martin and Fernando, believe that any user of music streaming platforms, should be more conscious about privacy. As I mentioned before, the concept of privacy in online societies in Mexico seems to have a minor relevance than in Norway. This means that there is a lower level of concern toward interactional

and psychological privacy dimensions. For instance, users like Eduardo, Raúl, and Jonathan, seem to enjoy and make fun of what other users are listening to. In some way, they cross the line of interactional privacy from other users by making fun of them, taking screenshots of the music that they listen to, or they just send a message to the person with a joke or just the question *¿qué pasó con esto?* (What's up? What happened here?).

‘It is more like curiosity you know, when you open Spotify and then you see the feed and you see what the others are listening and suddenly you see that someone is listening to Las Ketchup for instance. Then you just laugh and shit on your pants. For instance, we have a friend and we call her “La princesa Cachemira” she is super pop, likes to dance and so on. But when you see her feed and you see tracks like “Soldado del Amor”, “Las Ketchup”, or “Nikki Clan” you think like “really?”. It makes no sense to what see what she listens compare to the person that you interact or spend time with in real life.’

Raúl (29-year-old man, Mexico)

He also accepts that he tends to do that as well and that people make fun of what he is listening, and he is not bothered when he is listening to Cannibal Corpse and suddenly he switches to Selena with *El chico del apartamento 512*. For Jonathan, this is also a way to interact with the privacy of others and bother them just because of what they are listening.

‘I did it, I started to bully people online because of what they were listening on Spotify until someone made me pay back and then I stopped it. (He said it while he chuckles)’

Jonathan (25-year-old man, Mexico)

As we can see, there is an openness in Mexico towards playing games and making jokes while listening to music. Mexican music listeners enjoy their music and enjoy the fact that other users tease them with a joke regarding their music taste. This openness can be related to a collectivistic perspective since the community or friends open their profiles and make their activity be public. It would be hard to generalize this since there are many individual motivations for self-presentation within music streaming platforms.

5.3 Following

Music streaming services share a lot of similarities with social network services. Within these characteristics or features, one can find ‘follow’ as a basic feature of music streaming platforms. In traditional social networks like Facebook, ‘following’ refers to the act of tracking the activity of certain users, fan pages, medias sites, etc. Following in general, means linking to social-network ties via service features that produce and display updates and feeds of peers’ current activity (Hagen & Lüders, 2016, p. 9). By following an account, users can receive notifications of what is happening regarding a certain topic of their interest. For example, in platforms like Instagram, users can follow accounts of professional photographers, models, brands, magazines, friends, etc.

When discussing music streaming services, Spotify is the service which provides the perceived affordance of a ‘following’ button according to Normans approach (Norman, 2002). Users of music streaming services perceive that by clicking on ‘following’, they will have more information about similar artists, live performances of their favorite artists near their city, new releases of albums and songs, as well as recommendations on charts and playlists in which their favorite artists appear. In addition, users can also follow friends and family members, celebrities, athletes, politicians, brands, media organizations, record labels, playlists, key opinion leaders, among others. The options are uncountable. To this extent the action of following, becomes relevant for the users of music streaming services since it provides a symbolic music experience in different levels. This can be related to the interest of a person into certain type of music, an emotional connection with a song or an artist or the memories of an album with a certain stage of life or experience. In this sense I agree with (DeNora, 2000, p. 40) who states that music is a workspace for semiotic activity, a resource for doing, being and naming the aspects of social reality. I would like to add that the act of following can also represent desires, wishes, and a feeling of closeness from the users with artists, labels, songs, albums, friends, family, among others.

Considering the multiple opportunities and options that users of music streaming platforms can achieve by using the ‘following’ feature on their music streaming platforms, the purpose of interacting with music at this level relates to the discovery of cultural content—whether text, music, or videos—draws out opinions on what people like or dislike, what they covet or loathe, what interests them and what does not. And while common tastes and desires can be deployed to harness bonds and discover group affiliations, they also provide precious

information on social trends and consumer preferences (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 35). In short, the affordances of ‘following’ may be perceived by using other senses as well, affordances are not just waiting to be perceived; rather they are there to be actively explored (Bucher & Helmond, 2017, p. 7).

5.3.1 Findings on following

While ‘sharing’ and ‘privacy’ behaviors of users on music streaming platforms can be studied and analyzed from a cultural perspective, the act of ‘following’ content and people on music streaming services, is more related to personal motivations, but still I believe that there is a cultural influence for individual behaviors. I can say this after analyzing the responses of 23 participants in two different countries. I realized that every respondent has a personal reason to follow (or not) content on music streaming platforms. These reasons can be described as motivations. According to (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54) to be motivated means to be moved by something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is characterized as unmotivated whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). I relate this concept to the personal decisions of the users in both countries since some users tend to follow friends while some others care more about artists, playlists, and related artists.

5.3.2 Following music content in Norway

In Norway, users have a general tendency of not following friends on music streaming services. Some of them consider that this activity is embarrassing or that it is annoying.

‘There is something that is really annoying with Facebook now, that you kind like add what you are listening to on Spotify on Facebook, and a lot of old people I know do that, is so annoying, is like ‘I don’t want to know what you are listening too’

Liv (28-years-old woman, Norway)

There are also some other users who just decide to follow content of artists considering that they are not interested in what other people listens. For example, Ole, Bjørn, and Sigurd seem to agree on the fact that it makes more sense to follow artists on the platforms. They consider the action of ‘following’ as an activity to make artists more visible to other users. The idea is that they can go up in the charts, playlists, or number of streams. In addition, they consider that

following an artist will also make other artists realize about the competition and that they are missing something.

‘I’ve just done it with a few that I want to support, like people who are not big, but should be big. I want them to be more, I don’t know if it helps thou.’

Bjørn (31-year-old man, Norway)

‘I also follow a lot of small artists because I want them to be bigger, because the big artists will always find out if they are missing something new’

Ole (27-year-old man, Norway)

Some other users in Norway like Liv (28), Elin (23), Sigrid (24), and Malin (27) confirmed that they follow or had followed friends on music streaming platforms. They all have different reasons and personal motivations on why to follow their friends. In the case of Elin, she admits following a playlist of a friend of hers. She considers that he has a good taste in music and she uses his playlist every time she and her partner have a party at home.

‘I listen to a lot of Indi, Pop-Rock and Indie Rock? So, it doesn’t really fit into the party situation, so whenever we have a party I follow this playlist of a friend and we always play it. It is just one friend that has a playlist that I follow’.

Elin (23-year- old woman, Norway)

For Sigrid, who is a Tidal and Spotify user, her experiences with following content are different due to the features of the platforms. When she is using Spotify, she likes to follow her friends who are good with keeping their playlists and who she considers they have a good taste in music. When she uses Tidal, she gets a bit lost since the platform does not allow the users to follow friends. On Tidal, users can connect only with the social media channels of their favorite artists and can only rate with a star their favorite artists.

‘I think on Spotify I follow some playlists and a couple of friends who are good with updating their playlists, but on Tidal I don’t think I follow anything, I don’t think I know how’

Sigrid (24-year-old woman, Norway)

Silje (25) agrees with Sigrid and states that ‘following’ is more a ‘Spotify thing’ than a ‘Tidal thing’. Silje is a Tidal user who regularly uses the login of a friend to access to Spotify when she wants to listen to something that she can find in Tidal. In addition, she uses Spotify mainly when a music festival of her interest is approaching. She enjoys making playlists with her friends and then is when she tends to follow content on Spotify. When she is using Tidal, she is not actively following content since the platform does not allow it., instead, she prefers to ask for recommendations the old school way.

‘For me is like... asking friends what they are listening to or getting tips from Metal Hammer of course. The old fashion way of getting tips in new music.’

Silje (25-year-old woman, Norway)

Silje also remembers the days in which Tidal was called WIMP, a Norwegian music streaming service which was available in countries like Norway, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Poland. During her time using WIMP, Silje used to follow content but after Jay Z decided to buy WIMP and changed it to Tidal, Silje lost the connection and stopped following content.

Even though most of the Spotify users of my sample in Norway are familiar with the ‘following’ feature, some of them tend to follow friends and artists just by coincidence. Such is the case of Malin (27) a Spotify user who sometimes does not even know why is she following content on her Spotify account.

‘I follow some friends, but it is totally random. I never ever check out their playlists, so I don't even know. Sometimes it is just like "What? I'm following this person?" Then I follow artists so I am like "Why am I following this artist?" It doesn't make any sense because I don't actively go into their profiles’.

Malin (27-year-old woman, Norway)

Other Spotify users like Anne (25, Norway) like to follow artists because it is easier to find their music, but what she really enjoys is to follow playlists because she feels she can discover new music and at the same time, she is listening to the mainstream music that is trendy.

‘Yeah like I follow artists if I like them or albums because it is easy to find them again. And then playlists, I follow mostly playlists with my friends or other playlists I find random that I like’.

Anne (25-year-old woman, Norway)

Moreover, other users like Jørn (29, Norway) stated that he only likes to follow record labels in other social media platforms like Facebook. He believes that record labels have certain authority on suggesting and recommending music instead of his friends or media. Whereas Johan, and Apple Music user, stated that he does not follow content on this platform but when he uses Spotify in his personal computer, he follows mainly his closest friends.

Finally, Irene seems to be unmotivated to follow content and one of the main reasons she does not do it, is because she

‘I don't follow anyone. I mean if I'm one particular playlists and then I search in the words and what and then I just generally do the same again if I want the same list, because I don't fall in love with lists that much, if I really fall in love with the song, like "Oh I love this, this is great" I put them into my own playlist instead and like mix them with the other songs I have’.

After analyzing the answers of the Norwegian respondents regarding the use following content on music streaming platforms, I can confirm that there are several factors that affect the use of this feature. Some of these factors relate to their interest on discovering new artists and their desire to make these artists more visible and bigger. Other factors are related to the design and affordances of other platforms which are not Spotify. As an example, Tidal and Apple Music, offer a different experience while following content. Tidal mainly refers their users to other social media channels of the artists and it lacks the feature of following friends, athletes, medias and so on, whereas Apple Music users do not follow any type of content on the platform.

Other factors of interaction are related to friendships. In this sense, there are people who would just follow those friends and people around them who they know have a similar music taste. I realize that among Norwegian users, it is very common to keep music personal and they will maybe just share it with very close groups of friends and people.

I just found one user in Norway who claims to not follow anything, neither content (playlists), artists, or friends. I consider this user as an outlier in my research since it does not add value to discuss in cultural differences.

5.3.3 Following music content in Mexico

In Mexico, there is not much of a difference from how Norwegians follow or not content. As I mentioned before it is a personal motivation and varies from individual to individual. Even though there is personal motivation for each respondent in Mexico, there are some respondents who share ideas on why to follow content on music streaming platforms. For example, Martín (32), Eduardo (29), Fernando (26), Karina (26), María (30) and Arturo (27) agree on the fact that they mainly follow artists.

‘I don’t follow playlists of people especially because it’s their own interests. I can see what they are listening (meaning that he follows people) and then take their music, but I really don’t follow. I tend to follow artists because I’m interested on it and because it is easier to get notifications. The platform warns you if they are coming to give a concert in Mexico, therefore I follow those artists and I feel that I can get to know before the official announcement that they are coming.’

Fernando (26-year-old man, Mexico)

‘For me is kind of the same, I don’t follow friends, but I do follow artists. I do it exactly because I’m interested in the content and news or because I like them’.

Martín (32-years-old man, Mexico)

‘I follow very few on Spotify. I tend to follow more playlists but if I get to see an artist that I like, then I follow. I barely follow friends, I think I just have one or something like that’.

Karina (26-year- old woman, Mexico)

‘The truth is that I follow both, artists and friends, but I tend to follow more independent artists who actually they probably don’t have a CD. I mean a lot of people who plays

the guitar just to see how they play. I also follow those artists who give hints of their songs and new albums. I am an easy prey of them’.

Arturo (27-years-old man, Mexico)

There are also other factors that motivate users to follow content and people on music streaming services. For Raúl (29) the act of following other users on music streaming services, is mainly related to a similar activity that he does with his network such as in Facebook.

‘I’m following friends, but it is more like a protocol. To be honest I have never stop and see what is that my friends are listening. I believe that it is the same from me to them than from them to me. I follow them on Spotify just to be there and occasionally I see what they listen and vice versa’.

Raúl (29-year-old man, Mexico)

By following friends, artists, and people, users like Santiago (30) keep themselves updated. Santiago has a strong passion for Punk and Metal music. He is very proud of his CD collection and he used to be an admin at Ares, a peer to peer illegal service which was used for downloading music during the early 2000’s.

‘I do (follow) half and half. I do follow all the bands that I listen even though sometimes they are playing like shit. I follow them because I get a lot of news and information. I get to know new songs, events and concerts. I also follow people from other countries around the world because they are always suggesting you new things. Sometimes they even upload or share very strange things, right?’.

Santiago (30-year-old man, Mexico)

Even though by following artists, playlists, and medias, users can discover new music and get a different music experience, Jonathan (25) decided to only follow friends and persons on Spotify. He decided not follow content of artists because he continuously gets recommendations of artists that are not even related to the music that he listens.

‘I’m following only people. I follow people that I know has similar taste in music as I do. For example, they might discover new music and I’m too lazy to be clicking here and there to see what is new. So for me is more like ‘Oh look! Check out this new song!’ then it is easier for me to listen the same as they are listening’.

Jonathan (25-year-old man, Mexico)

As in Norway, there are some users who just follow content randomly or accidentally, that is the case of Paula (31) who does not pay too much attention when she is using her music streaming platform. When she was asked if she is following friends she mentioned that she does not feel the call to do it and therefore she follows no one.

‘I just follow by accident. It has happened to me that I’m listening and I think ‘Oh I want that song!’ and then I’m suddenly following and I think ‘Well...never mind.’

Paula (31-year-old woman, Mexico)

Finally, Emma (27) and Spotify user, was the only Mexican who did not have knowledge about how to follow content, friends, artists and so on in Spotify. She found quite hard to answer when she was asked about the use of this feature.

After going through the answers of the respondents in Mexico, I can state that the personal motivations and reasons of following content on music streaming platforms are different from Norwegian respondents even though they share similarities.

For Mexican respondents the fact of following artists is related to the content and information that they can get out of it. The ‘following’ feature affords them information about concerts, new songs, and new album releases. When it comes to factors like friendships, Mexican users tend to not follow people because they are interested in what they are listening, they follow friends just as a protocol, like if it was another social media platform. It can be considered more as a courtesy than a real interest in getting to know the other persons. Moreover, some of the Mexican users who really interact with the ‘following’ feature, tend to take advantage of what other users are listening to discuss and get recommendations of new artists, songs, or albums.

Some other users, tend to just follow content randomly and by mistake without not really paying attention what they are doing. Finally, and as in Norway, I got one outlier user in this part of the research which will not be considered in the discussion since she had no knowledge about how to use the ‘following’ feature on Spotify.

5.3.4 Cultural influences and the relevance of ties on following friends and music

As I presented it before, one of the major findings within the act of ‘following’ in music streaming platforms is related to friendships and the way in which users interact with their friends. As Norwegian users of music streaming platforms tend to follow their closest friends, users in Mexico tend to follow friends as a protocol or courtesy but not because they are interested in what their friends are really listening too. I find that these patterns can be explained as the ties and relationships that users have from country to country.

A tie can thus be internal to a group or a bridge (Grabowicz et al., 2012, p. 1). In the theory of strong ties Granovetter (1973) states that the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). Strong ties are the people you really trust, people whose social circle tightly overlap with your own (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009). Granovetter’s theory predicts that weak ties act as bridges between groups and are important for the diffusion of new information across the network, while strong ties are usually located at the interior of the groups (Grabowicz et al., 2012, p. 1). Weak ties often provide access to novel information, information not circulating in the closely-knit network of strong ties (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009, p. 212)

In addition, the patterns of both cultures, also seem to relate to the levels of high and low individualism in cultures presented by Hofstede (1980), in which he explains that some of the characteristics of low levels of individualism are (1) ‘we’ consciousness, (2) collectivity orientation, (3) identity based in the social system, (4) emotional dependence of individual on organizations and institutions, (5) expertise, order, duty, security provided by organization or clan, (6) friendships predetermined by stable social relationships; but need for prestige within these relationships. (Hofstede, 1980, p. 235 - see figure 5.5). On the other hand, some of the characteristics of countries with high levels of individualism are (1) ‘I’ consciousness, (2) Self-orientation, (3) identity is based in the individual, (4) Emotional dependence of individual from organizations or institutions, (5) autonomy, variety, pleasure, individual financial security, (6) Need for specific friendships (Hofstede, 1980, p. 23- see figure 5.5).

In this sense, Norwegian music listeners tend to encounter strong ties since they tend to make use of the ‘following’ affordance to mainly keep themselves updated with good music. Respondents like Elin (23, Norway), Anne (25, Norway), Silje (25, Norway), Sigrid (24, Norway) and Johan (23, Norway) seem to follow their strong ties in their network.

In the case of Silje (25, Norway) she prefers a small talk one on one with her closest friends to get some music recommendations. In addition, when she mentions that she asks her friends working at Metal Hammer Magazine, seems like she knows exactly whom to talk to get good recommendations for her musical taste. These people are mainly her friends, and colleagues who know her and to whom she might trust her musical taste. The fact of trust in the music taste of friends can be also related to the levels of individualism presented by Hofstede (1980). In his chart of Index of Individualism, (Hofstede, 1980) shows that one of the characteristics of individualistic countries, is the need for specific friendships. This means that for instance, Norwegian users like Silje, could be influenced to keep her musical taste in a close group of friends who share similar tastes and in which she feels it is safe to talk about her music and follow the recommendations that her friends can bring to the table, instead of following random content on any platform on her own.

Other users like Anne (25, Norway) tend to follow playlists created by her friends just for fun. She explained during the focus group session, that she lives together with her roommates. In this sense, it is possible to assume that Anne tends to spend a lot of her time with her roommates, and if she spends time with her roommates, then one can assume that there is a deeper and intense connection between them, meaning that Anne and her roommates have what Granovetter would define as a strong tie. By keeping a deep and strong tie with her roommates, Anne feels free to follow the playlists and profiles of her roommates. By spending time with them, Anne knows when are her roommates updating their playlists and therefore, she will follow them in order to get new music.

Here again, Anne keeps her music with her closest group of friends, she comments that they tend to go out together and they have high levels of trust within each other. This behavior is reflected in her use of music streaming services and seems to relate to her strong ties. In addition, Anne also presents some characteristics of high levels of individualistic cultures by expressing her individual pleasure of listening to whatever playlist she wants from her friends or suggesting new music to her roommates.

By combining the approach of Hofstede (1980) and Granovetter (1973), one can understand that some of the Norwegian music listeners use the ‘following’ feature only with their closest group of friends. In addition, there are other users who seem to present absent and weak ties with high levels of individuality. By this, I refer to some of the other users in Norway, who mentioned that they are not following their friends on Spotify because they also do not

want to be followed by them. They keep their music very personal and are very self-oriented to discover artists from themselves by following other small artists for themselves. Their personal motivations are oriented to make the small artists bigger.

When analyzing the behaviors of Mexican music listeners, the contrary seems to happen. Mexican music listeners apparently follow their friends in their network but are not interested in them. This type of behavior can be related to the concept of absent ties. Absent ties are those (ties) that lack any underlying relationship whatsoever, as well as those between people who are aware of each other, but whose relationship lacks substance (Hagen, 2015 p.198). This phenomenon seems to appear in Mexican music listeners considering that some of the respondents present a lack of interest in the music of other users which could be their friends.

In the case of Martín (32, Mexico), Eduardo (29, Mexico), Raúl (29, Mexico), Fernando (29, Mexico), the act of following is related to make it as a formal action. Their personal motivation seems to lack of underlying relationship as stated by Hagen (cited above). I consider that these patterns can also be related to the low levels of individualism in collectivist cultures as proposed by (Hofstede, 1980), in which the individual follows a collectivity orientation without really being independent of following its closer group of friends. Moreover, friendships in collectivistic countries, are predetermined by stable social relationships but that there is a need for prestige within these relationships Hofstede (1980). In this sense, cases like Jonathan (25, Mexico) who tends to follow only friends just to take from them the music that he considers good, can be related to low levels of individualism since he shows dependence and expertise of others, to just take the music. At the same time, this can also be related to his absent ties with those friends that he follows, since he does not follow friends based on trust, he follows people without really caring who they are.

Despite these differences, I also found similarities which can be related with the personality and self-presentation of the respondents in music streaming services. Some of the music listeners in both countries shared similarities when replying to 'following' artists. Respondents like Ole (27, Norway), Bjørn (31, Norway), Sigurd (29, Norway), Fernando (26, Mexico), Martín (32, Mexico), Karina (26, Mexico), Arturo (27, Mexico), María (30, Mexico), Santiago (30, Mexico), and Raúl (29, Mexico) stated that they tend to follow artists in a major degree than they do with friends. Even though these respondents belong to Mexico and Norway, similarities related to high levels of individualism according to Hofstede (1980) can be shown. For instance, most of these respondents seem to be self-oriented and are concerned of getting

information from their favorite artists. This gives them a feeling of pleasure and based on what they want as individuals. There is a tendency also related to weak ties, since these music listeners, tend to get superficial information from the artists, such as live performances and releases of new albums.

Despite the different behaviors on the music listeners from above, there are some other users in Mexico and in Norway who are not oriented to follow their friends, neither artists. For some of the users, like Malin (27, Norway) and Paula (31, Mexico) it makes no sense to follow artists or people since sometimes this action is totally random and unexpected. To this extent, I cannot determine if there is culture plays a role, or if it is only a spontaneous impulse to follow certain friend or artists. So far both of them did not present any characteristic of individualism, neither make use of their strong or weak ties.

It seems to be very challenging to generalize the behaviors of users in both countries but so far, my research shows that cultural differences tend to play a role in the way individuals interact with a social feature like ‘following’. It is indeed a personal motivation from individual to individual, and I agree with Hagen (2015b) when she mentions that personal experiences are always grounded in the individual and are therefore hard to categorize unambiguously.

5.4 Playlists

Most of the music streaming platforms afford the creation of playlists, which means that users can gather their favorite music in a unified list which can contain as many tracks as the user wants. Weather there has been prior research on how music streaming platforms can develop better algorithms to upgrade the creation of playlists based on the characteristics like homogeneity, diversity, and freshness, (Jannach et al., 2014), little has been analyzed on a social level the interaction with the Playlist feature in music streaming services.

Recently, scholars like Hagen (2015a), have develop research in a cultural and social level of the user experience towards playlists in music streaming services in Norway, whereas in Mexico a gap of research exists.

In my analysis, I decided to split the affordances of the feature ‘playlists’ on music streaming services in three main concepts which are (1) Following Playlists, (2) Creating Playlists, and (3) Collaborative Playlists. In these categories, following playlists refers to the

action of clicking on the feature ‘following’ of a ‘playlist’ which allows easy access to the user at any time to the playlist. Jannach et al. (2014) classified them as generated playlists. Creating playlists or Hand-Crafted Playlists Jannach et al. (2014), refers to the action of the user developing a playlist on his/her own, whereas collaborative playlists, refers to the act of creating a playlist in which other friends can add songs. This last feature might be only a characteristic of Spotify as a platform. I decided to make these categories based on the answers from the respondents on my sample.

Within these categories, I found different dimensions and motivations for Norwegian and Mexican users for following, creating, and sharing playlists while listening to music on streaming services. These dimensions seem to be related mainly to (1) social norms and behaviors in online societies, (2) self-consciousness and motivation, (3) cinematic experiences and states of mind in everyday life. In addition, I find within my respondents, that the characteristics of the levels of high individualism and collectivism, appear one again in a cultural level when interacting with music streaming services, even though this is a personal and individual activity.

Based on the answers of the respondents, it seems to be that Norwegian users have a stronger tendency to follow, create, and build collaborative playlists, whereas Mexican music listeners, show a low tendency on building collaborative playlists in comparison to Norwegian users, but still they enjoy following and creating playlists for their own. I consider interesting to explore the reasons for building collaborative playlists in an individualistic country and at the same time seems strange that Mexico being a collaborative country, does not interact at all with collaborative playlists. Only one respondent out of eleven respondents in Mexico, stated that he created a collaborative playlist with his former girlfriend, whereas in Norway people tend to create these playlists in social settings.

5.4.1 Playlist interaction in Norway

When being asked about the use of playlists and if they are familiar with the ‘Playlist’ feature on their music streaming platforms, all of the respondents in Norway were familiar with the concept of playlists and they were aware of the affordances this feature offers. Eight of the twelve respondents, mentioned that they create playlists for their own personal interest, while ten out of twelve mentioned that they follow playlists and seven and nine stated that they have built collaborative playlists for social settings.

‘The only thing I used it for socially would be... you know like you are with a group of people and you can put a playlist together. I went to a friend’s cabin trip a couple of weeks ago and we just did that, because we had this playlist and just keep playing and then people just kept adding songs to it.’

Ole (27-year-old man, Norway)

‘Yeah, we do that as well actually, when we are about to have a party someone makes the playlists and then we just add things.’

Liv (28-years-old woman, Norway)

‘Where you create a Spotify playlist specially when it is more underground music where one has not much heard of the headliners, so someone puts in so everyone can listen to it.’

Silje (25- years- old woman, Norway)

Even though the interaction with playlists is determined by personal motivations, some of the Norwegian respondents seem to present characteristics of high individualistic cultures. By the answer of the respondents, it seems to be that there is a tendency to develop collaborative playlists, only with specific friendships. There is an interest to share their music with others even though they consider their music personal, but it’s being kept in a small setting or in a very closed group of friends. In this sense, the conception of keeping specific friendships relates to the characteristics of high individualism from Hofstede (1980) who mentions that some of the individualistic cultures have a need for specific friendships. In addition, by setting this context into digital platforms, new media, and how we relate and behave in social networks, the concept of the strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). By stating that collaborative music playlists are mainly kept in small settings with friends such as small trips, small parties, or to discover music together, presents also a high correlation in relation to sharing those moments only with

the people that the users trust, which means that they are mainly using collaborative music playlists with their strong ties.

On a personal level, several respondents who like to create playlists, develop them for their own based on a desirable experience, such as Sigurd and Bjørn. Both users are just following one or two playlists in their platform. They consider that following a playlist is not representative for their taste and instead they like to develop their own playlists with their own music. For Bjørn, it is dumb to do it (follow playlists). He believes that his own music is the best music in the world, why would he follow a playlist since it has taken him years to build his music collection? Moreover, Sigurd states that he develops playlists for himself and for his future self to develop a cinematic experience while walking on the streets of Oslo. Sometimes he gathers a lot of albums which he can't listen because he is busy and therefore he tends to listen to those on a playlist in the future. For Jørn, the playlist experience is quite unique but he does not create a lot of playlists, instead he has developed one playlist in which he builds every now and then depending on his music taste.

‘Every time I travel I make travel playlists with much more upbeat, but I never listen to them is just like they are there. it's the idea or this feeling is what I'm looking for.’

Bjørn (31-year-old man, Norway)

‘I think I listen to more down tempo music when I listen to it like on a headset or walking or in the bus and more up tempo if you are bringing up a speaker.’

Sigurd (29-year-old man, Norway)

‘I have one playlist that I have had for maybe 6 or 7 years and I keep adding and removing songs, it's alive. Is the only playlist I have with all the songs I like and if a song comes out that I don't like I remove it and if I hear a song I like I put it on the list, it's constant you can say.’

Jørn (29-year-old man, Norway)

For Bjørn, Sigurd, and Jørn, cultural patterns and high individualism levels, seem to be influence their behavior towards playlists and its affordances. Their individual answers show a

tendency and a correlation with ideocentric personalities, since they seem to search for value for themselves. The answers are also related to self-orientation and are based in their individual desires. Probably this tendency has a relation with their self-awareness, which refers to a state, the existence of self-directed attention, as a result of either transient situational variables, chronic dispositions, or both (Fenigstein, Scheier, Buss, & Maher, 1975, p. 522).

Other users such as Sigrid, and Elin have personal opinions towards their use of playlists when interacting with their music. In the case of Elin, there is no need for her to discover new music and therefore she does not like to follow playlists. Instead she just follows one playlist of a friend of hers which she considers he has a good taste in music. Elin also considers that music is very personal, so why would she create a playlist which people can view? In the case of Sigrid, she considers that creating playlists is boring and she regrets that she is not motivated to make playlists. Her motivations for interacting with playlists are more oriented to social settings such as the coming of a music festival or concerts.

‘I’m really bad at making playlists, I think is just because I don’t have the same need for finding new music so I just like search for the bands I know and I listen to them and I click the one that I will adopt next so I can hear it later.’

Elin (23-years-old woman, Norway)

‘I never do it, I think is boring and I wish that I had a pleasure doing it but I almost make this like Spring 2016, Summer 2016 and I never make like themes or anything so it’s just what I listen to now and then I get bored of it. I’m not good with the playlist at all, I think it takes too much time.’

Sigrid (24-year-old woman, Norway)

Finally, other users as Malin and Irene, playlists seem to be more like a tool. In the case of Malin, her interest is in finding new songs. She likes to create playlists but at the same time she follows other playlists which are recommended to her. Malin also finds value on the playlist feature of music streaming platforms, since she considers that it is very convenient to have a list of playlists to which she can listen at any time with one app.

‘I do that a lot like "Uh I like this song" is just like instead of making my own playlist I'm just like following some customized playlist, and I don't like all the songs but it's fine.’

Malin (27-year-old woman, Norway)

‘I mean if I'm one particular playlists and then I search in the words and what and then I just generally do the same again, if I want the same list, because I don't fall in love with lists that much. If I really fall in love with the song, like "Oh I love this, this is great" I put them into my own playlist instead and like mix them with the other songs I have.’

Irene (22-years-old woman, Norway)

In these two cases, it seems like both users tend to have individualistic patterns related to what gives them value in terms of music, which is independent from an experience such as traveling or creating for themselves playlists which provide them an everyday cinematic experience. It is about the variety of songs and music that they can get from other playlists in order to develop more their own music taste.

In a general overview, it seems that some of the Norwegian music listeners tend to apply characteristics of high levels of individualism according to Hofstede (1980), since there is a sense of self-consciousness and self-awareness, regarding the things that are valuable for them. Within this level of individualism in a general level, I find some users such as Ole, Liv, and Silje, who tend to develop allocentric behaviors while interacting with Playlists in music streaming services. They like to develop collaborative playlists in which people can add songs in party settings, trips, and music festivals. For instance, Ole mentioned that every time he develops a playlist, he is thinking that it should have songs that other people like. He designs a scenario in his mind in which he thinks about how to make his playlists nice for everyone and not just for himself. In this case, seems like music streaming user who is influenced by individualist patterns who develops allocentric behaviors when creating playlists in music streaming platforms.

On the other hand, users like Silje, seem to develop idiocentric and allocentric behaviors when interacting with playlists. Silje is a fitness instructor at Elixia and therefore, she tends to develop playlists for her classes at the gym. In addition, she tends to develop collaborative playlists with her friends in special occasions, such as prior to music festivals and before concerts. Also, she admitted to developed playlists on her own for her states of mind, which she keeps private for herself. In this case, it seems to be that her emotional state of mind is also another factor of motivation. If she creates a playlist for when she is mad, sad, or happy, the value of the playlists is to reach a desirable feeling.

For the rest of the respondents in Norway, it seems that the levels of individualism and self-consciousness, tend to influence their behavior while creating, following, or making collaborative playlists. These behaviors can be related to the development of idiocentric personalities in which users will only interact or create playlists which have some certain value for their experiences, and those experiences are the main motivations for them to adopt certain behaviors under the online society rules that they in.

5.4.2 Playlist interaction in Mexico

When collecting my data for analysis in Mexico, I asked the respondents if they were familiar with the concept of playlist in their music streaming services. Most of the respondents mentioned that are were aware of affordances such as following and sharing playlists, but little was mentioned about collaborative playlists. There was only one male respondent in Mexico, who stated that he has used collaborative playlists. In this sense, I consider that this is a relevant finding for my project, but it is difficult to say why such a collectivistic culture like in Mexico is not creating collaborative playlists. One of my hypothesis for this phenomenon, is that Mexico is still a young market for music streaming services, and probably the people of my sample was not really familiar with developing collaborative playlists either because the respondents have not use the function, or either because there is a lack of knowledge in a technological level.

In addition, I consider that this phenomenon can be related to the concept of power distance developed by Hofstede (1980). In this sense, there might be a correlation between the adoption of certain sectors of the society in Mexico who have access to platforms like Spotify or Tidal and other sectors who still use peer to peer services for illegal downloading of music and other ways of entertainment. As a hypothesis, I consider that this might also be the reason

while people are not that familiar with the affordances of features like ‘playlists’. For the only respondent who mentioned that has interacted with collaborative playlists, his motivation is related to share music with his girlfriend and with a close friend of him to whom he shares music tastes.

‘I have a collaborative playlist with my girlfriend, we made it together before she was my girlfriend. That was a common point of a certain type of music which we both like as Cumbia Electrónica. Then we started to add stuff there. For instance, I have a playlist with Camila, another friend of mine which has a lot of pop music because I know that Camila is very pop, so we keep on adding things there.’

Fernando (26-year-old man Mexico)

In addition, Fernando mentioned that he does not follow playlists from other users in his music streaming platform because he is not interested in knowing what are other users listening too. Instead, he prefers to talk with his closest friends and girlfriend to build playlists and have a closer level of social interaction through his playlists. Moreover, Fernando mentioned that he has met more people within his group of friends, who tend to follow a radio host in Mexico named ‘Rulo’ who is considered as a key opinion leader in music in Mexico. In his statement, Fernando mentioned that most of the people who follows Rulo, follow also one of his playlists called ‘Flamante’ from which other music listeners in Mexico tend to get songs and pretend to know more about music than others, by adding those songs to their playlist.

For other users like Raúl, and Eduardo playlists are valuable since they can gather many music genres in one playlist and reproduce it at all time. In the case of Eduardo, he has different playlists which he tries to keep updated under different themes and music genres. For Raúl, his playlist called ‘Mind Fuck’ gathers more than 2,000 songs in a collection that goes from Selena to Pantera. He also enjoys making other types of playlists for family gatherings.

‘You can gather a horde of music in which can have not just one song from a music genre but you have many of them.’

Raúl (29-years-old man, Mexico)

Despite avoiding the creation of collaborative playlists, Raúl considers that he is able to develop playlists that everyone can enjoy specially during a dinner at home with his parents or in any

other setting with his family and friends. Raúl seems to perform under a collectivistic mind set and for him there are no limits in the music that he listens too. In addition, Raúl

For other respondents in Mexico, such as Emma, Paula, and Karina, following playlists is interesting. The find value in discovering new music and new songs from the playlists that are already hand crafted for them. They tend to follow playlists instead of creating new playlists, they tend to be background listeners as described by Crawford (2009) which can be stated more as a passive listening of music, in which the user does not interact so much with the creation of playlists.

‘I see sometimes that Spotify has already some suggested playlists, in comparison to YouTube just reproduces whatever the platforms wants. When I see those playlists I sometimes think “Ah! This girl is listening to the same music as I do” and then I tend to follow. Sometimes I don’t even need to do my playlists since there are some of them which are already made and I like the music that it is in them.’

Karina (26-year-old woman, Mexico)

‘Sometimes I don’t event search for them (playlists) I just wait until I get a music genre and I let them on.’

Emma (27-year-old woman, Mexico)

‘I usually play them (the playlists) and I let them run.’

Paula (31-year-old woman, Mexico)

In these three answers, collectivistic patterns are shown from the respondents when they interact with playlists on their music streaming services. There are some characteristics such as identity based on a social system as well as emotional dependence of the individual on organizations and institutions. In this case the institution could be consider a music streaming platform.

For example, in the case of Karina, there seems to be a strong dependence on what other users in Mexico are listening, since she tends to look at the playlists of people who she considers have a similar taste of music to hers and therefore, she follows those playlists. On the other hand, Emma and Paula, tend to show some cultural collectivistic patterns as a dependence on what the music streaming platform can do for them. Both rely on the automatization of the platform becoming passive music listeners while interacting with playlists. It seems to be that there is no pattern of allocentric use of the platform. In this sense, I can relate this type of interaction with the platforms what Crawford (2009) defines as background listening as a metaphor.

Other respondents like Jonathan in Mexico, tend to search for a cinematic experience when using playlists in music streaming services. The way in which he uses playlists, is related to a personal motivation of using music as a tool for his own autonomy.

‘For example, I get easily distracted when I study, and I told myself “I need something that keeps me focus and concentrated”. Then I decided to search for something like “Sounds of nature” and it really came out! There was a broad playlist which covered my study time and then I decided to put my headphones on.’

Jonathan (25-years-old man, Mexico)

Despite showing some patterns of collectivistic cultures while listening to music on his dependency for what the playlist can do for him, Jonathan tends to make use an idiocentric use of playlists. For Jonathan, there is no point of reflection on what other users listen or add to their playlists, it is mainly for certain settings when he interacts with playlists. In this sense, this can also be considered as a passive use of playlists relating once again to Crawford (2009) metaphor of background listening.

Finally, other users like Maria in Mexico City, tend to develop more allocentric behaviors on the use of her playlists, since she tends to interact with her strong ties in her network when using playlists on music streaming services. Her ideal by using playlists, is mainly to get to know what other users are listening and exchange music with them.

‘Sometimes I hear people saying “Hey! I really liked that song that you were listening” I tend to tell them “Yes! if you liked it follow me on Spoti I have my playlists there so that you can take my music” or sometimes I search in their playlists. It avoids me to

search in YouTube just a part of the song to remember which song was the one I wanted to listen. It's super-fast.'

Maria (30- year- old woman, Mexico)

In addition, Maria is delighted as well with how the platform works for different social settings. She finds value in the algorithms and recommendation of playlists from the platform.

'There is also this things like music for a family dinner, music for running, etc. it is great because it avoids you to sit down searching for music and thinking like "Which music should I use for running?" so then you can try with a certain playlist and see if it really works for you. If it works, then you say to yourself "ah it works" so I think that it has a wide range of music'

Maria (30-year-old woman, Mexico)

As most collectivistic cultural patterns are shown in the use of playlists for Maria, individual allocentric characteristics are shown in her online music behavior. Seems to be that she is oriented to contribute with her music to other user's playlists and vice versa. This reflects can be interpreted as a 'we' consciousness as defined by Hofstede (1980) which tends to develop also collective orientations. In addition, seems to be that Maria interacts not only with her strong ties, but at the same time she has also a tendency to share music with her weak ties or with those groups of friends that she has developed in other social settings such as school, or when she exercises. Within her weak ties, Maria tends to diffuse new information to them in a novelty degree so can people can interact with her in online societies while listening to her favorite music.

In a cultural overview, there are certain patterns that Mexican and Norwegian music listeners develop when interacting with playlists. On an individual level, both countries share differences and similarities. The major difference is related to the fact in which Norwegian users of music streaming platforms have a major tendency to interact with collaborative playlists, while Mexican users do not tend to do that. This is an interesting finding considering the fact that Mexico would be a more collectivistic country and that behavior could have shown that Mexican listeners should have a bigger tendency to share playlists and interact with playlists in social settings. Instead, there is major tendency for Mexican users to rely on their playlists and 'let them run' when it comes to parties, social gatherings, or moments with family

and friends. Instead, this behavior is more present in Norwegian music listeners, who tend to develop collaborative playlists for social settings. As I mentioned before, it is difficult to say if this online behavior is related to the maturity of music streaming services in Norway, since it was one of the countries who first adopted online music services, whereas in Mexico, music streaming services were properly adopted in the early months of 2013.

From an individual perspective, music listeners in both countries tend to develop idiocentric and allocentric behaviors. Some users prefer to develop playlists or follow playlists searching for an individual experience. Their motivations are mainly knowledge for new music, follow trends on music genres, or develop personal cinematic experiences which increase the value of using playlists.

6 Future research suggestions

As I explored the role of culture on the use of music streaming services, more questions regarding the use of music streaming came up. I consider that there are several ways to analyze the use of music streaming services and their social features. First, more research could be developed on a cultural level when studying the use of music streaming platforms. As music listeners interact with music platforms, concerns mainly about privacy are a topic of discussion when interacting with online music platforms. I suggest that a detailed and more elaborated privacy model should be studied and applied to attend the concerns of music fans and the relation that music streaming platforms have with social networks. The different dimensions of privacy presented in this master thesis seem to be a good starting point for the development of future research. It seems to be that privacy concerns of music fans are interesting to analyze in countries with big and short power distance. I mention this, because the influence of culture suggests more open or more narrow visions towards privacy and the use of music streaming platforms.

Second, I would like to highlight that another cultural study could be developed to question if some music listeners consider that they are self-censorship themselves while listening to music. There seem to be some hints of music listeners feeling ‘ashamed’ of the music that they are listening. As culture shapes online sociality, some users could feel repressed to share their music in order not to be judge or criticized by others just by the fact that culture develops ‘rules’ of behavior in online sociality. This could be understood as a behavior of self-censorship when interacting with music streaming platforms. I consider making more research in the Nordic countries to study if privacy concerns and individuality can be pillars for considering self-censorship when interacting with music streaming platforms. In addition, I recommend to future researches to have bigger samples when studying the use of music platforms in order for the data to be reliable.

Moreover, more academic research should be developed in Mexico towards music streaming services. As Mexico is still a young market for the academic research of music streaming platforms, different fields of research could be developed. As a starting point, I suggest making a second study based on culture and media studies with focus on sharing music content on social networks. Since most of the respondents in this research stated that they consider themselves as ‘shares’ of music content in other social networks, a bigger sample could

be studied to understand the cultural rules for music sharing in Mexico. I recommend to other researchers as well to approach the use of music on social networks from a cultural perspective. It would be interesting to know more into detailed in music listeners in Mexico decide just to share music based on their emotions and state of mind, or if there are other factors that motivate music sharing among Mexican music listeners. I also consider interesting to analyze the behavior of sharing and following from users who listen to different music genres in Mexico. Since different social classes listen to different music genres in the country, it is interesting to explore if certain music listeners develop certain behavior according to the music genre that they listen. For this type of study, bigger samples should be considered in order to make the data reliable. I also would recommend applying other methods for study that go beyond interviews. I think that the method of observation on music streaming platforms and social networks could also bring positive and wider results to the research. This method could be implemented on one month of tracking the behaviors of the respondents and analyze how and where have they shared or interact with music streaming platforms.

Finally, I consider that it is also important to keep comparing the use of music streaming services in Mexico in comparison with other European countries. I suggest that other researchers can repeat this study and compare with other Scandinavian countries in order to make the data presented on this dissertation reliable.

7 Conclusion

As music streaming services continue to increase in popularity and number of users, updated research is needed to understand the relevance and impact of new music technologies and their users. As I presented in Chapter 1, some academic research has been done in different fields of music streaming services. I highlighted that Norway is one of the most developed markets for music streaming platforms (Maasø, 2014) whereas Mexico is still considered a young market. In addition, music streaming services have been explored from different perspectives in Norway. From music revenues and business models (Maasø, 2014), to the study of individual interactions with music streaming services in everyday life (Hagen, 2015a, 2015b) have been some of the fields explored in the Nordic country.

Moreover, and as I presented in Chapter 2, music streaming services can be analyzed and studied not just as technological platforms with music on-demand. Music streaming services can also be studied from a social perspective due to the multiple social features that they offer to their users. In this master thesis I address social interaction and use of music streaming services from a cultural perspective. The aim of this study was to build on the discussion on the impact of culture as a main driver for social behavior when using of music technologies and their social features. With this study, I shed light to a unique analysis to understand how users in two different countries (Norway and Mexico) perceive music streaming services and how they are perceived as users through their behaviors in music streaming platforms. As presented in chapter 3, I based my argumentation mainly under a theoretical framework based on sociology/psychology, perception, and media technologies. The main theories applied to this thesis were Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) Strength of Weak Ties (Granovetter, 1973), and Theory of Affordances (Gibson, 1986). As presented in Chapter 4, the research for this study was held in both countries Norway and Mexico and it gathered 23 respondents (12 Norwegians and 11 Mexicans). The research process was based under the concept of phenomenology to understand the experiences and approach of music listeners to the social features in music streaming platforms.

I found out that my main contributions with this master thesis are (1) suggest that there is a tendency in which individuals base their behaviors and decisions on what their culture dictates for interacting with social features on music streaming services (2) present that different cultures have different concerns related to their privacy when interacting with music streaming

services and its social features, (3) give advice of the ‘social rules’ that exist in Norway and Mexico towards the self-presentation of idiocentric and allocentric users in music streaming platforms, (4) demonstrate that users in Mexico and in Norway interact differently with the same social features in their music streaming platforms, and (5) present one of the first academic research projects of the use of music streaming services in Mexico.

I can see some hints on how cultural differences and cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) shape the behavior of music listeners in Norway and in Mexico. Music listeners in Norway tend to be more passive in the use of social features than music listeners in Mexico. The collective level of mental programming in both countries seem to influence the use of social features in music streaming services and has a stronger impact in Norway. Collective mental programming determines the rules of what is socially acceptable or not within social networks and new media technologies and is present in the mind of most of the users. Even though music is considered an ‘ok thing’ to share in both cultures, the collective mental program in Norwegian music listeners seems to interfere and stop the user to express or share their music. This could be interpreted as an act of self-censorship since their major concern relies on what other users will think about them. Norwegian music listeners seem to reflect more when it comes to making use of ‘sharing’ and ‘following’ features on music streaming services than Mexican music fans. Therefore, there is a more individualistic use of music streaming platforms and their social affordances in Norway. There is less sharing, and less following from the users in Norway, and a stronger feeling of privacy and the invasion to their freedom. In this sense, Norwegian music listeners seem to have major concerns regarding interactional privacy and psychological privacy when using their music streaming services. The concerns regarding privacy in Norway have more to do with the social interaction in online sociality than with concerns regarding their personal information. These concerns can also be related to their culture, since people seem to trust in each other as much as they trust in brands or companies such as music streaming services. Still, their mental programming seems to appear when it comes to social interaction with other users and friends in their social networks.

As part of the findings when interacting with social features on music streaming services in Norway, it seems that there is an influence of individualism in the country and the development of idiocentric personalities. It appears that Norwegian music listeners tend to only interact socially with their music just when it is socially allowed to do it. They tend to make use of collaborative playlists as a way of interaction and there should be a good reason for doing

it. Cabin trips, roommates, music festivals, and concerts seem to be strong reasons for Norwegian music listeners to share music content with other users. This leaves aside social rules and encourage them to share music within small groups of people. This relates to what Hofstede (1980) suggests in the levels of individualism in both cultures since individuals or users, tend to have stronger and tighter relationships. This also confirms that Norwegian users tend to have use their strong ties when interacting with music and social features.

There is also a high correlation between the levels of individualism as a societal norm between Mexican and Norwegian music listeners. By being a collectivistic country, Mexican music listeners tend to use music streaming platforms in a more collectivistic way. They are more dependent on the algorithms and hand-crafted playlists that the music platforms have to offer. They tend to share more music on other social networks to express their feelings and states of mind. They depend on their emotions to listen to music and they tend to follow people just as a courtesy, which can be interpreted as a collectivistic activity in the search of a 'we' as a collective society in an online network. Compared to Norwegian users of music streaming services, Mexican music listeners seem to more relaxed about their approach to music. 'Sharing' music seems to relate to their state of minds and their moods. They do not consider what other people will say about it, neither they are concerned about 'breaking a social rule' in online sociality, instead, they accept the exchange of music and consider that this express feelings and emotions. It seems to be that sharing music provides relief, like if they were being listened y other users. Openness to share music content with other users in social networks via music streaming platforms, brings to the table more interaction, discussions and conversations towards music.

I also see the relationship of the individual with the collectivistic culture since there is a development of allocentric personalities. Mexican music listeners also tend to interact more with music and be critical towards others music listeners within their social groups. There is more dialogue, more sharing, and more following. These things have value among music streaming users in Mexico and give the Mexican music listeners an experience of standing out with their music taste among other users. Despite the openness to interact with other users in their networks through their music, Mexican users developed virtual territorial and factual privacy concerns. There are still concerns towards companies owning their personal data an information, but their bigger concerns are mainly on how their music collections are affected by music streaming services. As I worked on this master thesis, I realized that there are so many

areas for research in Mexico to study music streaming services. From individual and social behaviors, to matters of privacy and active participation with music. As the country evolves and continuously grows in infrastructure and the adoption of mobile devices and new technologies, socioeconomic factors could also be analyzed in the country, but I leave these topics open up for other researchers since the goal of this thesis is focused on the social use of music technologies.

I hope that this thesis can inspire more academics and music lovers to develop research on new technologies in relation to music and behaviors on music streaming platforms.

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Appendix

1. Interview guideline – Master Thesis 2016

Intro: The following interview guideline has been developed for a master thesis project at the University of Oslo. The questions have been designed as to get a better understanding of the cultural differences or similarities of music streaming users.

The interview guideline will cover the following main topics:

- A) Everyday music culture,**
- B) Sharing vs Following,**
- C) Cultural interaction with music and streaming services**

A) Everyday music culture

During this first part, we will discuss about the everyday use of the music streaming service and the opinion you have regarding streaming services.

- 1) How many mobile devices you have at home and which ones?**
 - a) Laptop, smartphone, tablets, Apple Watch.
- 2) Which music streaming service do you use and how long have you used it?**
 - a) Spotify, Tidal/Wimp, Deezer, iTunes Music, SoundCloud, others.
- 3) Can you explain the reasons why you choose this music streaming platform?**
 - a) Monthly cheap fee, catalogue and content in the platform, friendly platform good design and easy to use, recommendation from my friends, because of trend and media buzz around it, availability in the software that I usually use (IOS, Android, Windows, other)
 - b) Value Proposition: Novelty, design, performance, brand, status, accessibility, convenience, usability
- 4) What are the most valuable features of the platform for you?**
 - a) Sharing music, discovering new music, pre-canned playlists and creation of playlists (collaborative playlists), radio functions, algorithms and recommendations, interaction with other social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, others), private messaging, merchandise and purchase, facts and data about artists, browse, offline and online

modes, local file selection, calendar and concerts, following artists, see what my friends are listening.

- 5) What would you consider is the first activity of the day in which you make use of the music streaming service that you are using?**
 - a) Waking up, taking a shower, making breakfast, driving, changing cloths, when I arrive to my office or school, in the public transportation, during working hours/school, at the gym, cooking dinner, before going to bed, while sleeping.
- 6) Can you discuss why streaming is better or worse than other formats of listening to music?**
 - a) Ownership, privacy, business model, piracy,
- 7) Which was the first music streaming service that you decided to use? And why?**
 - a) Spotify, Tidal/WIMP, Deezer, SoundCloud, Apple Music, Google Music, other...
- 8) How often during the day you use your music streaming service per day?**
 - a) Definite amount of times during the day (3, 5 or 10 etc.), for special activities,

B) Sharing vs Following

We are now in the second part of the focus group. Here, I would like to talk with you about your interaction with the music streaming services in the sense of how much you share content and how much you follow content in the platforms and how you interact as well with your music in other social media platforms.

- 1) Can you talk a bit on how you follow friends, family, artists etc., through your streaming services?**
 - a) Follow friends and artists, create playlists on my own (which what purpose?), share music on other social media platforms, listen to the radio, stay tuned to exclusives and new releases in the platform, follow media or Key Opinion Leaders to see what are they listening to and what is new, search for concerts nearby my area, buy merchandise and products, check and follow the tendencies of what other people is listening around the world.
- 2) Do you consider music as a personal or social element in your life? And why?**
 - a) Personal – Expresses feelings, moods, personal activities (painting, writing, reading, etc.)
 - b) Social – Parties, social events, public domain, activism, concerts, music festivals

- 3) **Are you familiar with sharing songs, albums, playlists created by you and artist's profiles in your personal social media channels?**
 - a) Rarely/seldom? Often/continuously?
- 4) **Are you familiar with following albums, playlists, and artist's profiles in your music streaming service?**
 - a) Very familiar/not familiar, high interest in following/low interest in following, following many/following a few.
- 5) **Have you reflected on the fact that people can see what you are listening in music streaming services and how does that impact your sharing habits with music?**
 - a) Intimidating/not intimidating, encourages me to follow or share/doesn't encourages me, makes me happy to know that people knows/preference of keeping my music personal
- 6) **If a friend of yours shares on her/his Facebook/Twitter timeline a song or an album... What is your reaction to it?**
 - a) Listen to the song or album, considerate as another normal publication, ignore it (explain why will you ignore it), search in my own music streaming service the song or album (explain why will you do it), make fun of it and it's bad/good music taste, get in touch with the person and discuss about it.
- 7) **What encourages you (or could encourage you) by using a music streaming service with other social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, others)?**
 - a) Let my friends and family which type of music I'm interested in, recommend an artist, album or song, communicate through music how am I feeling (mood), just share for entertainment and fun, sharing under a political or social situation to show your position against a public topic, to prove to others about my musical knowledge. Other.
- 8) **How do you come to follow friends, artists, and playlists? Is there anything concrete that makes you follow someone?**
 - a) Discovering music, know what your friends are listening, get updates on releases, preference for the music streaming service to suggest playlists for my lifestyle, feeling of finding an artist that I used to listened before, follow music trends.
- 9) **What role does emotions play when you are listening to music and do they influence on the music that you follow or share?**
 - a) A very important role/ a minor role
 - b) Sharing emotions/not sharing emotions
- 10) **Do you consider music as a personal or social thing?**

- a) Music is social (parties, social events, public domain, concerts, music festivals, etc)
- b) Music is personal (expression of feelings, moods, use of music for personal things such as writing, painting, exercising, cooking, before sleeping working)

C) Cultural interaction with music and streaming services

This is the last part of the focus group. In this last part, we are going to talk about the cultural interaction of music and streaming services and the things that make unique the music in your country.

- 1) **Which music genres do you listen the most in your music streaming platform?**
 - a) Pop/Rock (Indie pop, indie rock, alternative music), Jazz/Blues, Electronic, Dance Metal, Regional (Mexican banda, norteña, ranchera,), Regional (Classic Norwegian music) Cumbia/Salsa/Reggaetón. Other.
- 2) **If you think on the music that you listen... Where does it come from mainly?**
 - a) United Kingdom, United States, Norway, Mexico, Sweden, Australia, Germany, others.
- 3) **Which would be the soundtrack for a normal day in Oslo/Mexico City? What would be the relationship between the music and the lifestyle of both cities?**
 - a) Respondents can create a soundtrack of a day in Oslo or Mexico City and describe the reasons behind it.
- 4) **To which extent do you think music impacts the Norwegian/Mexican society?**
 - a) Social (parties, clubbing, daily life), Political (music related to political and social movements), Economic impact (More music festivals and concerts in your country or nation, a unicorn artist)
- 5) **How would a perfect day in your daily life would sound like and why? Would you share this playlist?**
 - a) Respondents can create a soundtrack of their everyday life and can explain the reasons behind it according their daily life
- 6) **Have you ever reflected on the fact and symbolism that music has on social events (terror attacks, 43 students, natural disasters, demonstrations, etc.)?**
 - a) Is this trigger to share your feelings through music with others?
- 7) **What music (song, genre, artist) a foreigner would never understand from your culture and why?**
 - a) Open for respondent

2. Example of focus group transcription - Norway

Alejandro: Thanks for coming, ok so for the first part we are going to talk about everyday music culture and I just need your opinion regarding streaming services so first of all how many mobile devices do you have at home and if you can mention which one, let's say tablets, smartphones and stuff. Anyone can start

Elin: I have one smartphone and a tablet and then I have a MacBook

Malin: Yeah I only have smartphone and MacBook if that counts I don't have a tablet

Silje: Smartphone and MacBook

Sigrid: Smartphone and MacBook as well

Jørn: I have a smartphone, a tablet and a laptop and a desktop

Alejandro: And which music streaming service do you use and how long have you used it?

[00:01:00.000]

Elin: I kind of, I'm not using one all the time but I keep borrowing Jørn Spotify and I have been using it for a couple of months, I had it before I had my one user but I don't want to pay for it myself, so I'm not using it much

[00:01:20.000]

Alejandro: So it's Spotify for both of you? |Looks at Elin and Jørn|

Elin: Yeah

Sigrid: I use now Tidal and I just switched because of the Beyoncé album from Spotify

Silje: Yeah |Laughs|

Sigrid: But I still have a couple of friends in Spotify, because I once logged in so I have in my logg in information, but yeah I use both

Silje: I've used Tidal since it was Wimp in Norway, so it's been a couple of years and I have access to a friends Spotify so I use that if there is anything I need to check out that is not in Tidal because I work for Metal Hammer so sometime there is these policy things but mostly Tidal

Malin: I use both Spotify and Tidal

Alejandro: Actually

Malin: Yeah I switch, when I want to listen to Beyoncé I listen to Tidal and when I want to listen to other songs I listen to Spotify

3. Example of transcription of interviews- Mexico

Alejandro: Bueno, pues gracias por venir como ya les expliqué, vamos a tener tres temas, el primero se llama "Cultura musical día tras día" el segundo es "Compartir vs Seguir" seguir como en Facebook, Twitter y así, pero en Spotify o cualquier servicio de streaming, y el tercero se llama "Como interactúan culturalmente ustedes con la música y con los servicios de streaming" ¿vale? Si hay algunas preguntas que se traslapen o se crucen las respuestas, pues no importa discutimos un poquito y si ya la tocamos, me brinco a la otra y así ¿vale?

Raúl: Va

[00:00:55.598]

Alejandro: Entonces en esta primera parte lo primero que vamos a discutir es el uso diario de los servicios de música en streaming y cuál es su opinión respecto a ello ¿va? Entonces, antes que nada, quiero saber ¿cuántos dispositivos móviles tienen y cuáles son en los que escuchan música? Ósea si cuenta como lap top celular, tableta, lo que sea. Entonces ¿podemos empezar contigo?

Fernando: Si, yo tengo dos

Alejandro: ¿Qué son?

Fernando: Lap top y celular

Eduardo: Yo igual laptop, celular y tableta

Raúl: Yo igual, laptop, celular y tableta

Martín: Yo computadora, celular y tableta

Alejandro: Tres, ok perfecto, ¿qué servicio de música en streaming usan y por cuánto tiempo lo han usado?

Fernando: Yo... uso Spotify por como creo que 4 años ya

Alejandro: 4 años ¿y los demás?

Raúl: Yo también tengo como tres o cuatro años usando Spotify

Martín: Si, igual, tres o cuatro años usando Spotify pero, antes tenía iPhone, nada más que me lo robaron y usaba el iTunes Music, ahí si yo pagaba y lo tenía abierto y es bastante bueno

Alejandro: Vientos

Eduardo: Yo dos años

Alejandro: Dos años ¿con Spotify?

Raúl: Llegó a romper