

After the Gold Rush

Understanding how millennials give meaning to vinyl in
today's digitalized music market

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore *how globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today's digitally saturated music-market*. It does so through fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews, composed of a globalized sample of millennials. These interviews have then been subjected to a thematic analysis, which revealed there are both manifest and latent motives in which globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in present-day. On the one hand, there are manifest factors such as materiality, physicality, and rituality, as well as the appreciation for the overall vinyl culture that stems greatly from record shops. On the other hand, there are latent reasons which are predominantly based on the content that the vinyl holds, in terms of music and memories, and how this constructs consumers' identities. This leads to conclude that even though the seventies are to be considered vinyl's gold rush, it is perhaps safe to say the format is experiencing a shakeup with a new generation in this 21st century. Instead of trying to surpass another music format, vinyl is adapting and coexisting in a way that allows for it to be appreciated by an enthusiastic and select audience, and thus showing how this format can survive and thrive well after the gold rush.

KEYWORDS: *vinyl, millennials, digitalization, identity, music.*

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1. Introduction: A Change is gonna come

1.1. Present music industry overview

Music listening practices are flipping on themselves. Well after over two decades of music formats surpassing the vinyl record, there seems to be a revival of the LP, especially fueled by a new generation of listeners. Somewhere in the mid 2000s, *vinyls*—as young generations have pluralized the word, despite making some older consumers cringe¹—became ‘cool’ again (Johnson, 2014).

Within this reappearance of vinyl records on the global music market, one can observe a particularly interesting driver that will be the focus of this research. The surge is mainly attributed to consumers between the ages of 18 and 35 (MusicWatch, 2016), which has turned this driver into a topic of discussion not only in academia but also in more commercial and societal communication channels, with leading public opinion sources ascribing vinyl’s rebirth to millennials². This has thereby created the ‘new-old’ music industry (Bartmanski and Woodward, 2018), where digital and analog music formats seem to converge. This can be observed for example, when looking at vinyl charts such as the one from the UK’s Official Charts Company, which was re-introduced in 2015, which is frequently topped by contemporary artists associated with younger audiences, such as Billie Eilish³ or Arctic Monkeys⁴. The fact that contemporary artists have become part of the vinyl trend despite being modern musicians evidences a paradoxical phenomenon, where consumers—or at least a significant part of them—who seemingly have all the music they could dream of at the tips of their fingers, cheaper than ever, somehow seem to not be satisfied with the status quo music consumption. They are reaching out into the past, without even realizing the contradiction their consumption entail: contemporary, 21st Century music on a considered obsolete, analog format: the vinyl record.

¹ As stated by C. Richards for the *Washington Post*.

² According to sources such as *The Economist*, *Fortune* and *CNBC*.

³ According to an article by E. Blake (2020) for *Rolling Stone* magazine.

⁴ Data from 2018 article from British music journalism *NME* written by D. Jones.

Considering recent data on the consumption of vinyl, sales show a notorious increase in markets all across the globe⁵. This is even more interesting when one considers that the music industry's total music sales, as of 2014, were less than half of what they were in 1999, evidencing the notorious decline in profits that the market is experiencing (Johnson, 2014). The music industry has suffered an even harsher blow in recent years with entire generations of music consumers adopting digital music through downloading or streaming services, offering a brand-new consumption model at virtually no cost (Johnson, 2014). In society and media, this radical change in music consumption has become the vision of the future and the norm for content producers (Herbert, Lotz, & Marshall, 2019), as countless news sources and academics discuss and investigate the impact of technological change and the internet on our societies and economies, especially when it comes to entertainment consumption and availability (Herbert et al., 2019; Hracz & Jansson, 2017).

This consensus of how music is listened to and what music consumers want and need is increasingly questioned, however, by even more recent events that point out to an emerging vinyl trend that contradicts this mainstream music consumption. For example, there is Sony Music, who announced in 2017 that it was reopening one of its vinyl pressing plants in Japan⁶. This is further evidence that analog music formats, and at its forefront vinyl records, still seem to be relevant today.

1.2. Vinyl's survival and revival

Considering that vinyl not only survived four decades but also revived in the last decades, traditional views of the technological evolution of music carriers become contested (Hogarty, 2017; Sarpong, Dong & Appiah, 2016). With the recent numbers and events that point out to the rebirth of the vinyl record, a paradox emerges: the advancement of the digital and simultaneously the rebirth of the analog. Questions regarding the workings behind this retro trend, and why new generations of consumers still have such great interest in it, arise. With all this in mind, this research aims at understanding why young consumers are increasingly drawn

⁵ Data collected from *Nielsen*, *Rolling Stone* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Guardian*.

⁶ News taken from an article by H.Ellis-Petersen (2017) for *The Guardian*.

towards the vinyl medium in a time where the mainstream means of music consumption is through music streaming services like Spotify (Sarpong et al., 2016).

But is this vinyl revival more than just a sense of coolness? Or is it part of a bigger trend? It is not only music practices that are flipping on themselves. This trend of reaching into the past and trying to grasp some elements and input them onto present-day culture and society is seen in countless media products aside from music. From movies being produced with artistic qualities that are characteristic of old films (Schrey, 2014), to photography applications on smartphones to edit photos with filters that give a more 'vintage' feel (Bartholeyns, 2014). There are numerous elements from the past being brought back to be consumed in our present, and they are vastly popular. These media products have in common that they pick up on analog or retro elements and apply them onto their heavily digitalized selves, highlighting the paradox of digitalization's convenience and accessibility with the search for something different—something that seems to have been lost along the way when the internet appeared in people's lives. And if young generations are somewhat driving these forces, as they are seen more and more adopting different 'retro' trends, it becomes worthy to investigate why they seem so strongly drawn towards elements they did not even experience during their original use, and what do these elements contain and signify for them that their present reality does not hold.

So while the present offers music at one's disposal at any given time and place, past practices have been retaken by some music fans to challenge the current music consumption online, like consuming vinyl records (Reynolds, 2012). It seems there is a sizable, growing group of young consumers that is missing such aspects in its modern music consumption, finding it in an analog format preceding their time. What specifically people are looking for, and how they reflect on the modern music consumption will be investigated in this thesis.

1.3. Social relevance

Currently, the music industry is driven by technology (Palm, 2019)—where music is all about quantity and easy access. With the music industry finding itself in constant disruption and reinvention, especially with the ongoing technological advances and trends, it is important to

understand why such a counterintuitive format in terms of convenience, accessibility and affordability—all important pillars of the predominant music listening formats—is showing constant growth in the last decades. More specifically, it is relevant to gain insights about how and why the vinyl format is becoming popular amongst millennials, and how much it marks their identities not only as individuals but also as a generation—as there are indications of the format settling within this generation. Perhaps this craving for old, technologically inferior and more complicated objects, or ‘retromania’ as Reynolds (2012) calls it, is reflective of the millennial generation and their recent vinyl consumption habits. Since the vinyl is a format that is foreign for this generation (they mainly grew up with CDs as the main music format), it seems counterintuitive for millennials to complicate themselves by reaching even further back for such medium. Is their allure to vinyl so strong as to call it an identifier amongst a generation that was never around when vinyl was primarily relevant? And if it does, will it remain as a characteristic element for only this generation, or also for other even younger generations that are growing up in a completely digital music industry? Gaining insights into such questions will provide vital insights for the overall conceptualization of these generations’ identities.

With this hype around vinyl records in younger generations, even millennial-targeted retail stores have jumped on this trend as well. For instance, Urban Outfitters, the American fashion retailer, offers an array of records, from ‘old’ artists like The Rolling Stones, Velvet Underground, Johnny Cash, and Miles Davis, to more ‘new’ artists such as Mumford and Sons, Arctic Monkeys, and Kanye West (Johnson, 2014). This shows the industry is indeed awakening to the fact that vinyl is a growing trend among millennials, but leaves the questions of how far will this trend go within this young generation, and are these options enough to satisfy their newfound thirst for analog? While this might be considered market research, it still provides valuable insights not only to firms but also about how society may view itself and its own development. This information is valuable not only from the selling perspective but also from a consumer perspective, which could be deemed as a view on the present society.

Moreover, the music industry has time-after-time evidenced how music can become a globalized item (Lunsqui, 2007) and thus a cultural and societal product, as may be the case of

the vinyl record too. Consider Record Store Day⁷ as an example of how vinyl resurgence has further become a globalized topic, as it is a worldwide day designated to encourage and mark the resurgence of the format that was pronounced dead by many (Johnson, 2014; Palm, 2019). Vinyl's comeback can also be considered globalized by observing recent global revenues, which were estimated close to \$1 billion for the analog audio format, and partly attributed to young generations of consumers (Deloitte, 2017). Consequently, the resurgence of vinyl records should be addressed not only with a focus on millennials, but also from a more globalized lens, as this research intends to do.

On a grander scale, this trend is emphasized as it is not only evident within the music industry (Reynolds, 2012); it is in fashion design, movies, video games, and other forms of 'retro' creative media that are pushing their way back into society (Lizardi, 2016). Therefore, it is relevant to look into why people are attracted to retro or old objects because these small trends have an aggregated impact in consumption behaviors of a whole generation, and these are important not only for firms but for governments and society in general. It seems like the previously existing mentality of consumption from a 'more is better' approach (Frank, 2008), is being questioned with young generations reverting back to analog or retro mediums.

Thus, it is significant to know why people go back to specific old forms of music practices despite the digital music format being vastly more practical and accessible in theory. Referring to this paradoxical phenomenon, it is intriguing to understand why this generation wants to go back to something so manual and perhaps unpractical when their lives have been steered by convenience and availability. Why is this generation looking for something from another time period, when they grew up experiencing technological change and having everything at their fingertips? This possibly suggest the younger generation's need for a 'less is more' approach instead; today's landscape of over availability of media resources might not necessarily be what they want.

⁷ Typically celebrated on the third Saturday of April since 2007

1.4. Scientific relevance

Although different fields have analyzed this comeback –from sound engineers stating that vinyl is the analog medium that will endure (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015), to sociologists arguing that new devices do not supersede old technologies entirely nor lose relevance in relation to new technologies (Magaudda, 2011)–it can be argued that there is a lack of social and cultural explanations behind the shifts between analog and digital music mediums. The resurgence of the vinyl challenges notions of digitalization (Palm, 2019), as this happening shows how traditional product cycles are contested. The comeback of the vinyl shows the possibility of the music industry to find a way for the two forms of music consumption–vinyl and digital music– to coexist together through this new generation rather than the presumption that one format would displace the other entirely.

Furthermore, research has highlighted elements such as nostalgia as a main driver for the vinyl record to still be around, which are incomplete when one considers that young audiences have appeared to appreciate the medium and artistic message it encompasses, with different reasons behind this retro-attraction (Bennett, 2008; Magaudda, 2011). The revival of the vinyl thus cannot be accounted to mere nostalgic sentimentalism or the ‘retro’ or ‘vintage’ trend, but rather has to do with the relationship between material media and its sociocultural context. It is perhaps the intent of businesses of past media objects to appeal not only to those who lived through the original use of the object in its time, therefore opening the possibility to look into other audiences that are also consuming these media objects (vinyl records), despite not previously knowing or interacting with them (Guesdon & Le Guern, 2014; Lizardi, 2015).

Accordingly, there appears to be a lack of in-depth research about this particular audience, the millennial generation who are currently in the age range 23 to 39 years old (Dimock, 2018; Johnson, 2015) and are reinforcing the resurgence of the format. At the same time, the studies that have indeed been conducted and proved relevant for this thesis are concentrated in specific geographic areas, with one study focusing partially on the younger generations in Ireland⁸ (Hogarty, 2017), and another one focusing on young consumers in Italy (Magaudda, 2011). This therefore restrains the notions millennials may ascribe to the vinyl with

⁸ Hogarty’s study (2017) focused on music consumers ranging in the ages of 18 to 62 years.

cultural boundaries. Consequently, this research aims not only to give meaning to the adoption of vinyl records from those who were not alive during the original wave of the format's success, but also from a more globalized and multicultural perspective, representative of today's society (Calhoun, 2007), by interviewing millennials from both different nationalities and residing countries rather than focusing on a single one. This should then further expand the academic scope on millennials' experiences with vinyl around the globe. Ultimately, this thesis aims to answer the question:

How do globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records (LP records) in today's digitally saturated music-market?

2. Theoretical framework: Come together

This chapter will cover what vinyl actually is, followed by how it fits in today's music media landscape, what the appeal of vinyl is in general, why millennials have become involved with this format, and who this generation is in itself. This all leads to answer: *How do globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today's digitally saturated music-market?*

Before discussing the resurgence of the vinyl record—resurgence meaning the “new increase of activity or interest in a particular subject or idea that had been forgotten for some time” (“resurgence”, n.d.) according to the Cambridge Dictionary online—it is vital to elaborate on several features that have characterized the vinyl then and now. For some context, the vinyl record appeared in 1948 as the 33-rpm long-playing record (LP), for storing, distributing and listening to audio recordings, but it only gained popularity and became the predominant format later, in the 1960s and 1970s. An important characteristic that is particular to vinyl only is that it offers two-sided content—that is, each side of a vinyl contains tunes—which add to the intentions to be a listening experience, as Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) describe it. It is intended to be listened to continuously, with only the pause of the side division (namely A side and B side), which then serves as a chapter, and the other side reveals new sounds, a new narrative and its own personality. By having to flip the record to listen to the other side, this allows for structure and details of the record to stand out for the listener to appreciate (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). This was lost when CDs took over as the main music format in 1983, with the concept of B-sides vanishing and more tunes being compressed into one single, smaller format (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015).

Through constant comparison of the two formats, highlighting the advantages of the CD over the vinyl, the former was soon adopted as the standard by consumers, producers, and major companies in the industry that contributed to downfall of the vinyl (Hayes, 2006; Laing, 1992; Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). From there on, CDs reigned until the 2000s, when the internet made its strong debut in the music industry along with digital multimedia players like the iPod (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018; Reynolds, 2012). These revolutionized the music industry and its consumption and production. On the one hand, people's musical appetites

were rekindled, as digital music amplified music consumption, by offering everyone massive collections of music with very little need to spend time, money and effort. On the other hand, it reshaped the expectations and priorities in the music industry, challenging business models and the products and services provided (Reynolds, 2012).

Two decades later, digital music has proven to have established itself as the status quo of music consumption. Recent times have further shown the digital trend of music listening habits, with Spotify being the leading global online music streaming service, having 286 million active users as of March 31st of this year (“Company info”, 2020). Following Spotify is Apple Music, Amazon and Tencent Music, with the latter being the leading music streaming company in the Chinese market (Tencent Music Entertainment, n.d.). Other major music streaming services include India’s Gaana, which even surpasses Spotify in its country (“India’s Gaana”, 2020). Even more, the availability of content in each of these platforms is greater than ever, with for instance Spotify having a catalog of over 50 million songs and accessibility in 79 different markets (“Company info”, 2020). As these numbers suggest, the world is in a constant influx in terms of music media content, available through different platforms, making listening to music accessible throughout most regions around the world. These platforms aim to offer the newest content, and the best individually curated content for each user through the use of algorithms and thematic playlists for different moods and events. In essence, they make it possible for users to not have to worry about looking for music, but rather they just have it within their fingertips without having to do much more other than choose the playlist or artist they want to listen. This ongoing overflow of online music content is what Reynolds (2012) then introduces as the “sharity” (p. 110) network, where sharing, collaborating (charity) and rarity (of content) merge into one, allowing for everything and anything to become available through the internet.

As digitalization evolved through the 2000s and 2010s, with one format surpassing the other and music streaming services starting their own version of the last century’s format wars⁹, vinyl avoided becoming extinct due to underground musicians, collectors and

⁹ Referring to the competition between video formats such as Betamax vs. VHS and Blu-ray vs. HD-DVD (Brookey, 2007)

audiophiles who preserved the format (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018)—until recently where its resurgence can be properly observed. It seems that the motivations behind this newfound appeal for analog technologies like the vinyl record in present time both concur and diverge. There are evident manifest motives for consuming said records, such as the supposed superior sound quality, physicality aspects, packaging (cover art, sleeves and booklets), etc. However, there are more latent reasons for vinyl consumption, such as a search for authenticity (of music history and heritage), iconicity, and the offering of a tangible music experience. In essence, vinyl hold semiotic mutability, given that different audiences will have diverse motives to justify the value behind the format, with each of these motives pointing towards sociocultural aspects such as history, authenticity, coolness and ritualism (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015; Hogarty, 2017). Furthermore, semiotic mutability implies that vinyl presents different meanings and connotations that make it special for different groups of people; these social and cultural signifiers that people ascribe to the object can be at times unique, contradictory or overlapping with each other (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). Hence, both these extrinsic and intrinsic motivations will be discussed next.

2.1. Vinyl's materiality and physicality

It is relevant to point out that findings from different studies regarding the reasons for appraisal of vinyl in these past two decades are consistent with each other concerning materiality; research agrees that the materiality and physicality behind the format is a main contender to its allure for all audiences (Magaudda, 2011; Sarpong, et al. 2015; Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). More specifically, Magaudda (2011) argues that even though music is mostly digitalized nowadays, the materiality of music is a heavily sought element in the practice of music listening, therefore a medium like vinyl records holds ground for prevailing within the technologically driven music industry. Vinyl's materiality and quality are far more valued now that music is endlessly available digitally, because the analog format offers tactile, visual and smell qualities to experience (Fernandez & Beverland, 2019; Plasketes, 1992). So while digital music is seemed as impersonal, vinyl requires effort, care and dedication, making it fragile and more valuable, thus ritualizing the overall listening experience (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015,

2018). The vinyl is considered “an icon of durability and stability since the 1950s” (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018, p. 173), since it is a format that has remained unchanged and proved to be a long-lasting technology—making it even more valued now for this, especially in contrast with the constant changing music listening devices that the market offers nowadays. Embracing these physical characteristics has thus become central in the practice of its listening consumption (Magaudda, 2011; Sarpong, et al. 2015).

Furthermore, the cover art, cover sleeves, packaging, folds, etc., are greatly appreciated to the point of being considered an artistic element of the vinyl (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018). Due to their size, records provide more visual space than any other music format, which translates into creativity and design that works as additional content aside from the actual music. This material dimension of vinyl is greatly valued by consumers, since current music formats are reduced to minimal space. For instance, online music streaming services like Spotify provide very little room for even the cover art of albums to be fully appreciated, while the vinyl records’ cover sleeve was in itself considered art (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). Other elements that come in records such as lyrics, credits, photos, posters, and booklets are also lost when consuming music digitally. And even though some of this content may be available online, by being separated from the main element (the music), it loses some of its value, which further explains why vinyl enthusiasts attribute some allure to the vinyl due to its visual elements, as it allows to have more content on it for the consumer to look at, read and even touch (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008).

In line with this palpable and visual materiality, come imperfections which are commonly pointed out to as ‘pops’ and ‘crackles’ of records and refer to audible materiality. These sound qualities that were seen as flaws 40 years ago, are suddenly valued and considered special by current enthusiasts (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). These imperfections also appoint the vinyl with more human characteristics such as warmth, intimacy, authenticity and ritual regarding the format itself and its listening practices (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). Besides, the vinyl is acknowledged for creating a relation between object and humanity through characteristics that allow for a connection to people, places and times from the past (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). These qualities give meaning to vinyl as a more imperfect object, placing it

closer to humanity than other formats such as the CD or digital streaming services, and perhaps making it more interesting for millennials given their vastly digitalized and remastered world, in which their main mode of music consumption has become more impersonal.

But the vinyl's physicality allure does not end in the format itself. Part of the ritual and materiality ascribed to vinyl comes from the culture that surrounds the format. Hendricks' (2016) study looks into the relevance of independent records stores at a time where digital music consumption rules, given the recent vinyl resurgence trends which hint towards the importance of these record stores' prevalence. Accordingly, Bartmanski and Woodward (2018) consider record stores as "paramount in this respect, tying together [a] physical product with cultural narratives" (p. 174). In present time, independent record stores have become appealing to consumers because of how they have captured the essence that their niche is searching for, such as authenticity, person-to-person contact, and knowledge exchanges. In that sense, record shops have become a "valuable commodity" (Hendricks, 2016, p. 493). These shops offer a place not only to purchase the format, but a place for consumers to have an experience (Hendricks, 2016). Independent record stores have thus become the glue that holds together the format as an object, music labels, artists, and the buyers, as they are spaces where knowledge, experiences and feelings are shared (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018).

Hendricks's (2016) findings establish that stores have adapted to the contemporary consumption of vinyl records, redefining and curating their store to offer what could be an ideal experience of the format and the culture that has grown around it during its prime. While this may resonate with Lizardi's claims (2015) that the present may sometimes stunt the past by idealizing it, it also shows that the concept of a record store offers a way through a considered a heavily commercialized music industry, by offering a tangible, curated experience that has become significant to the practice of consuming vinyl records in present day (Hendricks, 2016).

2.2. It feels like we only go backwards: Retro culture

Now that the vinyl's appeal and its special characteristics have been discussed, it is pertinent to focus on the more general trend of people being interested in things from the past that has seen rise in the last years: retro culture. The retro allure is a significant pillar for this

study, which is why it is necessary to explain it. Reynolds (2012) defines 'retro' as the intersecting area between mass culture, personal memories and time. Also, according to Garda (2010), retro as a term itself implies being a modern construct, since it "requires a temporal distance from the past" (p. 10). Additionally, Reynolds (2012) states that retro's relation with the past is distinctive in that it: (1) is always about relatively near past memories, (2) has enough documentation for exact recollection and replication (through photos, videos and the internet), (3) involves artifacts of popular culture, typically found in places such as flea markets and garage sales rather than in fancy antique or auction houses; and (4) does not idealize or sentimentalize past memories but rather is enchanted by them. Thus, the retro concept offers a diverse discourse that embodies different elements that can be part of the attraction behind consuming vinyl records in present day.

The notion of retro is thoroughly attributed to extensive documentation of previous time periods through audio, video, and photo; and in more recent times, through the internet (de Zengotita, 2005; Hogarty, 2017; Reynolds, 2012). These archives have provided enough content for retro to emerge by offering content that may be imitated or used for inspiration or reference. But retro is not limited to music; it is in film, photography, fashion, advertising, and countless other forms, but they all share similarities when it comes to the retro or vintage trend. For example, music's cycles resemble somewhat of fashion's; while people can get tired of a song because of overexposure to it, it hardly ever becomes entirely unlistenable over time, similarly to how fashion items may fall out of style but can also become wearable again after some time (Reynolds, 2012). This can be argued as the return of past values disguised as physical objects, be it through music records or fashion items, as the notion of 'retro' (Hogarty, 2017).

However, fashion-like cycles cannot account entirely for the return of some music. Scholars amply claim that previous decades have offered a sense of greatness of that specific past; the sixties, seventies and eighties particularly reflect values and events that people are drawn to and want to experience (Hogarty, 2017; Plasketes, 1992). This potentially points towards a direction for why people consume retro objects such as vinyl records, as they wish to

be transported to this considered great past that contains elements that are missing from their present—which the next section covers further as the notion of nostalgia.

2.3. The role of nostalgia in retro culture

In line with the notion of retro and interconnected to it, Dickinson and Erben (2006, as cited by Lizardi, 2015) argue nostalgia is defined as acknowledging that some of the past's features are in some way better than their replacements, rather than a simple interest in the past. These observations seem to resonate with what Reynolds (2012) proposes as a means to understand retro, "a byproduct of what happens when popular creativity is enmeshed with the market. The result is a cultural economy organized around bipolar rhythms of surge and slowdown, mania and nostalgia" (p. 197). So, it could be argued that nostalgia as a term fits under the umbrella that defines retro culture, in which nostalgia contributes to why retro is such a trend. Nonetheless, although nostalgia should not be accounted as the sole reason behind the attraction to analog objects (Borschke, 2010), academics debate on the importance of it as a factor towards the allure behind vintage items such as vinyl records (Bennett, 2008; Guesdon & Le Guern, 2014; Lizardi, 2015). Yochim and Biddinger (2008) further dispute that nostalgia itself cannot be accounted wholly for the revival of the vinyl format. While the vinyl subculture does encompass some nostalgic value—the resistance to technology and the collection of objects because of their meanings and experiences—nostalgia itself does not describe the consumption of vinyl entirely because "it suggests a false consciousness inconsistent with the cultural work surrounding vinyl records" (Yochim and Biddinger, 2008, p. 184). There is more to vinyl records than just the object on its own.

Dwyer (2015) presents the idea of "pop nostalgia" (p. 11), which relies on music, fashion and other elements to construct an idealized past, and how media elements are used to visit this wanted past. Thus, when Hogarty (2017) argues that young fans go through vinyl records to experience another time period, like "memory tourists" (p. 81), this resonates with Dwyer's (2015) conception of pop nostalgia as a way for the audience to experience a specific time (for example the sixties), despite not being actually alive during it. This may be more accurately applicable to the reasons behind millennials consuming vinyl records, since nostalgia defined as

a longing for a previously experienced period itself cannot be used as reasoning given that the millennial generation was not alive during the vinyl's golden days (de Zengotita, 2005). Hence, some nostalgic sentiment that millennials ascribe to vinyl records may reflect the idea that vinyl serves as a time machine that transports the listener to the prime time of the record.

Vinyl records also seem to act as revenants or ghosts that haunt other time periods, which has been thoroughly covered by Reynolds (2012) and Hogarty (2017) through the concept of 'hauntology'. Hogarty (2017) develops this concept further as the hauntological structure of feeling, characterized as a longing for a "more futuristic and authentic past that never quite materialized" (p. 100), which stems from the idea that there is nothing distinctive about the present. Hence, explaining why young fans retreat to their pre biographical time periods to experience a deeper reality of music—and thereby, culture and society. This notion is agreed upon to by Guesdon and Le Guern (2014) and provides an interesting argument towards millennials' appeal for vinyl records, as they choose this format over other analog mediums to transport them to another time period that they find particularly amusing and bring them closer to (pseudo) live the original experiences and memories that the record and its music hold. At large, what these authors present is that there seems to be a longing for the past's constructs. There is an established notion of a zeitgeist that revolves around certain decades (i.e. sixties, seventies, eighties), while there is very little appreciation for elements of present-day, like in the case of music.

Now, if vinyl consumers are constantly hunting down these objects in an effort to recapture the past object and relive its memories, Lizardi's (2015) claims that nostalgia for media may lead to the "stunting of any form of critical past" (p. 137) seem interesting to analyze as well, as they too resonate with Dwyer's (2015) pop nostalgia of an idealized past. For instance, past media tends to focus on the peace and love movements within the sixties (Kellner, 1995), therefore somewhat neglecting that those times also celebrated rock, sex and drugs (Kellner, 1995; Prinsky & Rosenbaum, 1987). For new generations, this would mean that their views on the past may become biased or subjective, by glorifying or romanticizing certain elements based on what the media at large feeds them, and disregarding others. However, Lizardi (2015) also points out that certain nostalgia, a healthy nostalgia, is beneficial when it is

used “as an avenue for improving the present or future” (p. 85). Thereby, looking back at previous decades may have something to do with wanting to change something of the present. This is an aspect that this research aims to look into with regards to vinyl records, to understand if their resurgence is related to what the modern-day music scene offers.

Academics Guesdon and Le Guern (2014) and Hogarty (2017) do touch up on the contemporary music scene, where young music enthusiasts express their concerns and feelings on contemporary music and its lack of distinction. Reynold’s (2012) refers to this as “hyperstasis”: when music is impressive but at the same time completely familiar because its construction relies on going back and forth from the past, and thus lacks the complete feeling of newness. Perhaps then, the term hyperstasis may attempt to describe the millennial generation’s attitude towards pop culture elements as an overwhelming feeling due to the vast technology available, which results in pop nostalgia—or a need to experience the past—and therefore may explain their consumption of analog formats such as vinyl.

2.4. Iconicity of the format

Bartmanski and Woodward (2018) argue that the resurrection of outdated objects and their content (music in this case) in the mainstream results in honoring the revival, ascribing meaning to the vinyl record and its journey from its zeitgeist to its near-death, and finally to its current position as an “icon of culture” (p. 172). Since vinyl was the dominant format at the time that renown musicians such as Bob Dylan, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones (to name only a few) were at their peak, the format is considered the ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ way to listen to music (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018; Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). Additionally, these talents recorded their music and engineered it specifically for this format, which adds on to the validation of the vinyl as the proper listening experience (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018).

And now, rock albums are once again becoming vinyl’s “center of gravity” (Palm, 2019, p. 649): the same albums and artists that audiences would go on a frenzy to obtain their record during the sixties, seventies and eighties are once again appearing on physical sales charts (Palm, 2019). At its core, the analog format offers an experience like no other music format contender, mainly because it is often considered as the authentic or genuine way to listen to

music (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015; Guesdon & Le Guern, 2014). This means that vinyl has become an “auratic cultural icon” (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 19) and a vessel of music and cultural heritage. The format’s post-digital popularity is due to how it is valued for being an old medium that is simultaneously new to people (Palm, 2019).

2.5. Globalized millennials and their preferences

In the previous section the ideas surrounding the general appeal and characteristics of vinyl have been discussed to pave the path to now discuss the very specific target group of this research, which has been credited with giving vinyl a second life: millennials. Hence, looking further to understand what comprises this generation and why they are reaching out to an old format to consume music is crucial to this study.

Before continuing, it is important to address the globalization influences that millennials have grown up with, as it is a relevant portion of this specific research. Globalization is defined as “the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction” (Held & McGrew, 2002, p.1). This is considered to be strongly linked to different media (such as music), to the point of arguing that globalization would not exist on its own without media and communication. Globalization entails influxes of economic, political, cultural and social relations (Rantanen, 2005). More specifically, the media shapes what can be called “cultural globalization” (Movius, 2010, p.6) and refers to “the emergence of a specific set of values and beliefs that are largely shared around the planet” (Castells, 2010, p. 117).

As digitalization boomed while millennials were growing up, these are characterized by this globalized notion, as they are constantly adapting their consumer identities and changing lifestyles (Côte & Levine, 2016). As a result of this cultural globalization, people are exposed to more ideas and values, as they go through an interconnected world that forms their identities (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019). Since this research looks into millennials from different nationalities and even from various places of residence, the constant formation and adaptation of their identities is of particular relevance. In line with this is the concept of culture change (Berry, 1997), in which there is a selective adaptation to new environments where new traits can be

adopted without eliminating previous traits from one's past. This results in a more diverse and multidimensional construction of both global and national identities (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019). More specifically, culture shapes consumers' construction of identities by "attributing additional meaning to their possessions" (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019, p. 170). This is significant for this research because it offers a connection to the consumption of an old format such as vinyl records, and perhaps signals towards how the millennials in this study ascribe meaning to this specific possession.

Returning to what comprises the millennial generation in a more music listening related content, Magaudda (2011) conducted research focused on interviewing young Italian music consumers (between ages of 15 and 30), with the aim of analyzing the shifting relations between listeners and different musical material devices. His findings show that there is a feeling that music experiences lost some elements, meanings and values when music became a digital format. Whereas with vinyl, there is a charm behind a pressing and its delicateness, in contradiction to digital formats that can be infinitely duplicated and shared. Besides, Magaudda (2011) finds that the current appeal for vinyl in these young consumers relies on feelings of coolness and trendiness, or as similar attributes such as "hipness and alternative" (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, p. 22).

Hogarty (2017) conducted interviews with a cross generational sample of 40 music fans from the range of 18 to 62 years old, both male and female in Dublin, Ireland. The main findings of her study regarding young people are that these are haunted by popular music's past, likewise to Magaudda's (2011) findings, and resonating with Dwyer's (2015) arguments regarding pop nostalgia. These young aficionados relive what they consider the "golden age symbolic of all things youthful, authentic and futuristic" (p. 4) vicariously through old music, therefore she (Hogarty, 2017) argues that in older music they look for authenticity and a connection to a generation and a time period that is not their own.

Millennials have been brought up in a digitally-evolving world, "haunted by the ghosts of popular music's past with all those old artists and bands now available at their fingertips" (Hogarty, 2017, p. 4). Additionally, they have grown up with any documentation of the past more available than ever (Hogarty, 2017). This generation has lived through the fast-paced

technological advances in the music industry, from the CD to the MP3 and illegal downloading workings, to YouTube, to Spotify and Apple Music and other streaming services that rule the music market at the moment. But this accessibility to music comes hand-in-hand with an over availability of it too. Therefore, technology can be accounted to have played a crucial role in planting the retro and nostalgia culture in millennials because of two main factors. First, the availability and easy access to older music in digital formats (Magaudda, 2011), which allowed for young generations to explore music from other times more easily, and second, the technology equipment itself (Hogarty, 2017). The available technologies in each time period add to the notion of why millennials not only listen to older music but also listen to it through vinyl records on turntables, because they get to experience it as it was created rather than a processed version of it.

With this demand from younger audiences, new ways for obtaining vinyl appeared, such as modern global online retailers like Amazon, or more mid-point options like Discogs (www.discogs.com), a platform for record stores and individual sellers to sell vinyl online. Platforms like these managed to give vinyl a place in a digital society, and a way to offer the format to contemporary lifestyles. Therefore, technology is not only working against the record, in terms of streaming and digital music, but also works for it, by offering new alternatives for sales, distribution and marketing.

Moreover, Hayes (2006) presents interesting insights when interviewing young vinyl aficionados. He points out that the glance towards the past that is given by consuming vinyl might even make sense, since these youth are exploring the sound of previous generations at their own pace, rather than depending on what the media offers from pop culture. In line with this thought of exploring the so-called 'sound' of previous generations by Hayes (2006) and Bartmanski and Woodward (2015), Yochim and Biddinger (2008) argue there is a desire to understand the music on a deeper level. Hogarty (2017) similarly observes that young consumers have a rather negative feeling towards contemporary music: that it symbolizes commercialism and insatiability, while they view older popular music as more symbolic, authentic and containing more soul, and it presented relevant issues (political, societal, cultural) rather than just being done for the sake of making money. In other words, resorting to

records is about connecting, explaining and revealing more; there is something special about the music that can be found in vinyl records and not in another newer medium.

Millennials longing for another time period's music is not only related to the vast technological advances that have surrounded them as they have grown up, but also has to do with their upbringing itself, as parents or family members are sometimes to credit for introducing these youngsters to the music or even the vinyl format (Guesdon & Le Guern, 2014; Hayes, 2006; Hogarty, 2017). Bennett (2008) claims that post 1980's children hold better relationship with their parents and that this results in the likelihood of sharing music tastes and memories. So while parents of current young generations tended to have disputes around music with their parents, they seem to have bonded around older music with their children. Young people also seem to have a desire to return to their parents' generation times in an attempt to compensate for the dematerialization they experience in present-day society with a better valued time period (Sapio, 2014). It is perhaps because of this intergenerational sharing and appreciation of similar music that millennials have found a deeper connection to older music and its dominant format, vinyl.

To summarize, this section has delved into the workings of vinyl, its prevalence in the last decades, and the current music consumption landscape. Different motivations behind the appreciation of vinyl have been discussed, with more material and physical aspects predominating as general likings of vinyl (artwork, tactile elements, sound). These provide a comparison with the current music listening practices, and offer features that no other format delivers. Moreover, understanding the notion of retro and how nostalgia fits as an element of retro are important for this research as they set the tone for the specific audience under examination, millennials, since they fuel the notion of retro alive, as well as the idea of nostalgia for an un-lived past. In line with this appreciation for the past's elements, there is a level of iconicity ascribed to the format in terms of it being more authentic and being associated with great musicians and specific time periods. All these elements give way to understand the millennial generation better, and to establish their relationship with vinyl in terms of what they are looking for in this analog format. Thus, to explore *how do globalized*

millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today's digitally saturated music-market?

3. Methodology: Shine a little light

3.1. Chosen method: In-depth interviews

Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) signal that the resurgence of the vinyl has previously been mainly looked at through a quantitative lens that focuses on assumptions of “linear technological progress, and [...] efficiency and convenience” (p. 6). This means that vinyl’s comeback is considered unpredicted, as it has been analyzed based on the collection of numbers and statistical elements that already exist, such as numbers and figures of sales drops and new technologies in the market—all which pertain to the quantitative approach. However, switching to a qualitative lens allows for a more multifaceted view on the resurgence of vinyl. It not only allows for the researcher to collect and use data that was created by the research participants themselves (Matthews & Ross, 2010), but also facilitates an answer to the research question through the description and explanation of participants’ understandings, feelings and experiences (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Likewise, Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2016) reason that qualitative methods are employed to analyze experiences. Therefore, by looking at this topic from a qualitative perspective, insights about the complexity and sociocultural elements of the analog format’s recent rise can be understood better.

The chosen qualitative method for this research is interviews. Interviewing is a means to generate empirical data about a social phenomenon by asking people to talk about their own lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). In essence, interviews aim to yield an “intimate understanding of people and their social worlds” (Hermanowicz, 2002, p. 480). Thereby, to answer the proposed question *“how do globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in a streaming dominated market?”*, conducting interviews helps to understand the perceptions that millennials ascribe to the analog format, along with the experiences they have encountered with it.

More specifically, the interviews carried out are in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews offer the opportunity to gain a much more personal perspective on these matters (Matthews & Ross, 2010). This also allows for meaning-making responses (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003), which is crucial due to the exploratory nature of this research. Likewise, in-depth interviews are generative, they present new knowledge or ideas (Legard et al., 2003). Since this study is

exploratory research—as it tries to explain why people experience a social phenomenon in a certain way— through semi-structured in-depth interviews, the researcher can explore the participants’ experiences, opinions, attitudes and feelings to further better understand or explain the social phenomenon in question (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are flexible. They are guided with a prepared list of questions or topics by the interviewer (Boeije, 2010), but the conversation should flow smoothly (Brennen, 2017). In practice, this means that the interview has a guiding structure, but leaves room that allows for the respondent to elaborate and express themselves freely, allowing for more exploration of the topic (Boeije, 2010). The semi-structured nature of the interview therefore requires the interviewer to not only prepare questions but formulate probes to dig deeper into the statements of the interviewee. Here, a potential lack of time and attention can be mitigated by having a well-prepared topic list including probes and guiding questions to help the interviewer focus on the interviewee’s responses and get the most out of his or her answers. Thus, the interviewer establishes rapport by being able to follow the ideas of the interviewee, ask follow-up questions, and explore and gain new insights that might not have been considered in the topic list (Boeije, 2010).

3.1.1. Data collection

It is particularly relevant to discuss how the global pandemic of COVID-19 affected the overall data collection of this research. Due to social distancing restrictions, conducting face-to-face interviews was out of the question. Therefore, the interviews were carried out in an online manner instead; virtual communication applications such as Facetime audio and Zoom were used to make calls to the participants. A total of 14 interviews were conducted. These were recorded through a recording software (QuickTime) on the computer used for all communications. Recording of the interview is an important part of the process as it allows for the researcher to focus mainly on the participant during the interview, while knowing that all the raw data is then available to later transcribe and analyze thoroughly (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Traditionally for qualitative research, face-to-face interviewing would have been ideal, as this allows to establish a sense of trust and safety, which potentially improves the quality of the content that the interviewees provide and the flow of the interview itself (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Besides, by conducting interviews face-to-face, this would allow to yield additional information about attitudes, opinions and feelings of the topic being discussed through social cues (e.g. body language) (Opdenakker, 2006). Thus, these elements were limited by the online interaction.

Nonetheless, online interviews did provide some positive effects. For instance, having most of the participants communicating from their homes made it possible for them to have their vinyl collection at hand, which in some occasions was useful since they could name records and recollect memories more accurately. Also, by participants being at home due to Coronavirus measures, they were potentially in a more comfortable environment to express themselves freely (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). Moreover, while there were slight drawbacks such as internet problems and speaking into a computer, the mitigation of distance thanks to the internet (being able to call people in Costa Rica, the U.S. or Norway, for example) enabled to have an even more diverse and international sample, and enhanced the exploratory nature of this research.

Additionally, notes were taken during the interview and afterwards a brief summary of the conversation was written as well, with observations and key takeaways, problems and improvements. This was very helpful during the analysis and improved reliability and efficiency of the research. Opdenakker (2006) also argues that during in-depth semi-structured interviews, interviewers have to multitask to formulate questions and follow-ups that result from the interactive conversation happening in the moment. This calls for “double attention”, as Wengraf (2001, p. 194) defines it. The interviewer must guarantee all questions are answered to the level of depth needed for the research by the end of the interview, while also giving the interviewee enough freedom with their answers. Finally, the use of audio recording, along with reviewing the whole interview (both at the time of transcribing and afterwards for the analysis) ensures the research as reliable.

3.2. Sampling method

Since this research looks at *how globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in a streaming dominated market*, 14 people were interviewed for this research: seven male and seven female, from 14 different nationalities and various countries of residence. The interviewees all range between the ages of 21 and 28, fitting with the millennial sample. Among the participants, eight of these are pursuing a higher education degree at the moment (bachelor's, master's or PhD.) in different areas such as media and communications, psychology, physics, and economics. The remaining six participants work in different industries, such as in banking, design, festivals, and healthcare. A complete overview of the participants of this research (names, age, nationality, country of residence, other countries lived in, occupation and who first introduced them to vinyl) can be found in Appendix A.

Millennials are an interesting focus to this study because they comprise a generation that was born at the time that technology was revolutionizing itself. In accordance with both academia and popular sources (Dimock, 2019; Johnson, 2015; Langone, 2018), the millennial generation—also known as *Generation Y*—is defined as those born between the years 1981 and 1996. They got to grow up together with the fast pace of changes that technology brought; from CDs to MP3s, to music downloading, to streaming services (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015, 2018; Reynolds, 2012); from VHS and Betamax movies, to DVD to digital film streaming services (Sapio, 2014); and from analog film cameras, to digital cameras, to smartphones (Bartholeyns, 2014). In essence, they got to experience the shift away from analog formats, towards a more digital and technology-focused media consumption, while still having a glimpse of what some analog formats encompassed. It should be noted that two participants in this research are below the youngest millennial range (they were born in 1997 and 1998). Nonetheless, both were included as part of the sample given that their proximity to the age limit is minimal, and they fall under the label *post-millennials* (Fry & Parker, 2018), specifically those born right after the millennial generation cut, who still fit with the aforementioned notion of growing up with technology rising and therefore never experienced the vinyl format first-hand.

In line with the research question, participants needed to meet the requirements of being a millennial who listens to and acquires vinyl records. Hence, to successfully conduct in-depth interviews that yield insights to the proposed research question, interviewees were selected intentionally. This is referred to as 'purposeful' (or purposive) sampling (Boeije, 2010). This specific sampling method is a non-probability sampling method that selects participants based on a fixed criterion. In other words, it is used to identify particular cases (millennials in this case) for in-depth research, to gain a greater understanding of this specific generation (Neuman, 2014). This refers to a homogenous sample (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003), where all the participants belong to the same group (millennial generation) and have a common characteristic: they consume vinyl records. This results in a comprehensive study on a particular social phenomenon (Ritchie et al., 2003).

A pre-existing network of contacts was used to sample interviewees, which refers to purposive snowball sampling, where participants refer other possible interviewees to the researcher (Mathews & Ross, 2010). Initially, the researcher's existing network was asked to refer possible candidates that fit the research's criteria, and these participants were then asked to refer people from their network that could fit with the study as well and would be willing to participate in it. This resulted in a greater variety of interviewees, particularly important for the globalized aspect of this research. For instance, one participant is from Brazil and currently studies in Norway, and provided the contacts of two other female participants, one originally from Denmark, but raised mainly in the United States and currently studying in London, and one from Norway who is currently working as a nurse.

Furthermore, both men and women were interviewed, given that data shows that men are only slightly more likely to be buyers of vinyl (56%) than women (44%) (MusicWatch, 2016), refuting the idea that men are bigger record collectors than women (Hogarty, 2017; Straw, 1997). This research was comprised of exactly 50% male and 50% female interviewees—this was not intentional but rather a happening from the purposive snowball sampling method.

To improve representativeness and variety within the data, this research allowed for participants to be from different countries to follow the notion of the globalized millennial. Overall, the sample included people from: Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, England, Germany,

The Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, South Africa and Sweden. Moreover, eleven of the interviewees also presented multiple countries of residence throughout their upbringing or throughout their studies, which further adds to the globalized notion this research focuses on. These variations in countries also mean that the interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish—both languages the researcher is fluent in—depending on the interviewee and what language they felt most comfortable in talking. Out of the 14 interviews, a total of five interviews were conducted in Spanish while the remaining nine were held in English.

The in-depth interviews were carried out until the point of saturation, where additional interviews were not deemed to reveal new insights (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006), as patterns started to be observed in terms of why this young generation is currently incurring in the vinyl format trend. The interview process took a total of two weeks—these were then transcribed verbatim throughout the following four weeks, with the aid of online transcription software Temi (www.temi.com) and HappyScribe (www.happyscribe.co).

3.3. The workings of the interview conducted

Prior to starting the interview, interviewees were sent a consent form (see Appendix B), which provided a briefing on the topic and purpose of this research, along with the time the interview would take. The interviews were scheduled to last between 30 minutes and one hour each, and were aimed at covering topics related to their personal vinyl consumption. Since the interviews were conducted via online calls, interviewees were asked for consent before the recording of the call (to ensure the interview could be recorded) and then again to have their consent recorded at the beginning of the interview to keep for the record.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews should be conducted in a way that simulates a conversation where the researcher is focusing on the participant, and tries to encourage them to talk about any particular elements that yield information to answer the research question (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Specifically for this research, the interview itself was divided into sections which aimed to give a greater understanding as to why millennials consume vinyl records (the complete topic list can be found in Appendix C). The topic list allowed to address, after a few warm-up questions, several questions regarding interviewees' music listening

practices and specifically of older music. This is important because it gives a sense of connection with the appreciation for past generation's music and perhaps other elements (e.g. video games, films, clothing), as various academics contend (Garda, 2013; Hogarty, 2017; Reynolds, 2012; Sapio, 2014). This was followed by several questions focused on the interviewees' consumption of records and their experiences with it—having in mind what Guesdon and Le Guern (2014), Hayes (2006) and Hogarty (2017) argue regarding parents and relatives to be influencers for younger generation's tastes in music and vinyl. The rituality and the allure of listening to records was also addressed in the interview, based on previously discussed characteristics of the format, either physical (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008) or sentimental (Hogarty, 2017; Lizardi, 2015). Additionally, looking into the criteria that millennials hold when purchasing old and contemporary records was relevant to analyze too, to possibly weigh in on Guesdon and Le Guern's (2014) and Hogarty's (2017) arguments regarding young generations considering contemporary music indistinct, or Reynold's (2012) harsher views on the present music industry being ultimately bland. To finalize, the interview addressed the effects of digitalization on the participants' music consumption and perceptions on the accessibility of music nowadays (see Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015; Hogarty, 2017; Johnson, 2014), as well as discussing possible futures they envision for the analog format. This to understand how they see said format fit within their maturing generation.

3.4. Data analysis

After the transcribing process was concluded, an in-depth analysis took place. In line with Boeije's (2010) observations that qualitative studies' purpose is to break down and understand "social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 11), a thematic analysis was conducted to reveal motivations behind consumption of vinyl records among millennials. This method entails "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). For this, computer-assisted coding software ATLAS.ti was used as an aid to organize the data. This ensures that the research remains organized and coherent (Silverman, 2011).

The first step in thematic analysis entailed open coding, where data was separated into fragments and categorized into initial codes (Boeije, 2010). These codes aimed to group similar perceptions in terms of, to name a few: digital music, current music consumption, old music, initial experiences with vinyl, record stores, modern alternatives to purchasing vinyl records, and of course, characteristics that point out towards the allure to the vinyl format (full coding tree can be found under Appendix D). For instance, when the interviewees recall their first experiences with the format and mention parents, uncles, or grandparents, these fragments were coded under the open code: *First contact with vinyl: family member*. Likewise, mentions of cover art, lyrics, posters, or any other visual content that is valued in the analog format were coded as: *Vinyl: visual elements*. By looking through each interview and combing it by assigning codes to each transcript, categories, subcategories and even sub-subcategories emerged. With this, the data became more manageable, and thus the material can be conceptualized more clearly (Boeije, 2010).

Then axial coding was applied; this means codes are compared and merged depending on their frequency, variety, and relevance in regard to the research question. A computer-assisted coding software such as ATLAS.ti is extremely useful for this since it shows the most recurrent codes, which then show the most variance within them, as well as the scope of the codes throughout the interviews' transcripts (Boeije, 2010). At this step, the researcher was already familiar with the data and was starting to observe the patterns that were emerging among the interviews, in two ways: those behaviors and perceptions amongst millennials that resemble the literature, and those that went against what theory predicted. With this in mind, the axial coding consisted of grouping codes into wider groups that could support or contradict each other. For instance, the interviews yielded information regarding what they think of the current music landscape, which they reflect on as being empty, commercial, and distasteful. Those codes related to the current music consumption were all grouped together under the wider group name: *Perceptions on contemporary music landscape*. Then, other insights from the interviews showed how participants feel towards contemporary artists releasing vinyl, and how they accept or justify this trend for different reasons. These were then grouped into the code group: *Views on contemporary artists releasing vinyl*. These two code groups then can be

compared against each other, which brings forward the next step of the thematic analysis, where they were grouped further together as part of the notion that the vinyl format *offers a legitimate connection to music*. These groupings can be observed in the coding tree (Appendix D), which was made to help in the processing of the axial codes once they had been defined, and turn them into the selective codes.

By doing this constant comparison when analyzing the data collected, this guarantees that it is analyzed thoroughly and not partially (Silverman, 2011). The main group codes from the axial coding were transformed into more relevant and wider themes, which were then selected (selective coding) (Boeije, 2010) and analyzed to derive themes that answer the research question of “*how do globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today’s digitally saturated music-market?*”, which will be discussed in-depth in the next chapter.

3.5. Ethics and other considerations

Ethical considerations must be contemplated when conducting semi-structured interviews. For this research, the following three are the most applicable (Matthews & Ross, 2010): first, the data collected from each interview through the recording and the transcription of each must remain confidential, as in the interviews the participants stated their full name, occupation and other demographic information, along with their experiences, feelings and opinions. Second, as for the reporting of the data, care must be taken to ensure that the information used is not leading to identify any participant. Since there is one participant that asked to keep only her name as anonymous, she was assigned an alias instead. This ensures that there is more uniformity in terms of formatting and fluency. Also, this is done to ensure the consent of each participant is followed through as they expressed it.

Lastly, to ensure the participants were not overwhelmed or intimidated by the research topic, these were well informed that there is no need to be an expert in the topic and that any opinions or specific music tastes are valuable to this research. One participant was very concerned about her English level (as it is not her mother tongue) so she asked a day in advance for a general notion of what the interview would entail so she could prepare in any way. Since

the idea of the interviews is to not have rehearsed or prepared answers, the interviewee was shortly briefed by mentioning the following: The interview focuses in general on how you have experienced vinyl records, since the first times you remember experiencing it, to how you became further involved with the format to the point of collecting it yourself. It also focuses on how you listen to your records and any other format you consume (analog or digital).

This chapter explained and clarified how the research was conducted, through the use of qualitative research methods, more specifically, semi-structured in-depth interviews of 14 millennials, both male and female. It also provided a clear overview of how this sample was gathered—purposive snowball sampling, and on how the interview itself was structured. Lastly, it covered how the data collected was analyzed through thematic analysis, and the ethical considerations that were taken throughout all this process. Furthermore, the next chapter will discuss the results obtained from the interviews and the analysis conducted.

4. Results: Times they are a-changing

To answer the research question “*How do globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today’s digitally saturated music-market?*”, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with participants aged 21 to 28, from 12 different nationalities. This chapter focuses on the answers provided in the interviews¹⁰ and the themes identified through the thematic analysis. The analysis of this data yielded the following four themes (which will be discussed throughout this chapter): First, an *awareness of what digital versus analog formats offer* was observed, illustrating how the interviewees are reflective on their current music habits, what they want and what is being offered from each format (specifically digital music streaming compared to vinyl records). Second, *vinyl offers a legitimate connection to music*, as the interviewees acknowledge that in the format, they see authenticity in relation to the past, its music and its culture. Third, through vinyl consumption there is a *construction of musical identities*: demonstrating a sense of owning the music and how these records are part of who these interviewees are. And lastly, the fourth theme reflects on *the construction of a modern-day vinyl culture*, where traditional record consumption practices are praised but contested by the interviewees’ modern habits of consumption.

4.1. Awareness of what digital versus analog formats offer

To understand how millennials give meaning to their consumption of vinyl in the present’s digital music market, it is important to first understand how these millennials consume their music in general. To do so, the interviewees’ views on their more typical listening habits (digital music) will be discussed first, as according to the findings of this research, digital music consumption does hold a forefront in their music listening habits. Once their digital music listening habits have been discussed, this will then be followed by how the interviewees conceptualize their vinyl listening practices, which are seen as a more committed music listening ritual.

¹⁰ For the reporting of results, the quotes used throughout this chapter have been cleaned up for readability purposes to not reflect delays in internet connection or lagging speech, but the quotes remains virtually unchanged.

4.1.1. Online music consumption of interviewed millennials

The interviewees revealed that they are not fixed to a single genre or time period of music as their preferred or most listened type of music. They rather seem to constantly be switching music (artists and genres) thanks to the accessibility to music that digitalization brings. Consequently, all the participants acknowledge the ease of digital music in terms of availability. Several interviewees mention how the internet has provided them with more content, and the possibility of finding even more through the use of algorithms in music listening platforms such as Spotify. For example, Lenka, a 21-year old student from Belgium, describes the following, which is exemplary of how available and accessible music has become through the internet:

[...] [Spotify] suggests new and recommended songs for you based on your type of music that you listen to the most. Um, also you can see what your friends listen to at the moment. So that's also interesting because sometimes, well you just discover something new, you click on it and you click further and further [...]. Without internet, I think my music knowledge let's say, would be a lot, lot smaller [...] because then I would just keep on listening to the same genre, the same five songs.

So, in Lenka's case, music streaming platforms offer her a gigantic library of content, available at her fingertips at all times, along with the tools that facilitate it for her to find new music easier. This accessibility then offers the possibility of exploring all sorts of music, but additionally—it actually presents a new way to listen to music: a convenience-oriented approach. All interviewees pointed out they usually listen to playlists when consuming music digitally—particularly when using a platform like Spotify—as playlists offers a wider variety of music and set a mood or atmosphere that can just flow as a background while they do something else. For example, when asked about what he listened to on the day of the interview, Jake, a 26-year-old South African studying in London, mentions listening to a playlist while studying: “Um, but not actively listening. It was more of a background kind of music that

was just playing while I was focusing on something else.” Similarly, other participants refer to playlists as something to have on in the background, while they are engaged in another activity. This is an important habit of music consumption to consider once vinyl consumption is discussed later, as it presents a contrast in terms of passive versus active listening.

Another convenience of digital music that the interviewees value is the independence they have towards the digital music they listen to in terms of how they can listen to it: they are in complete control of what they listen to. The interviewees value the control they have over selecting, skipping songs or changing whenever they feel like it; they appreciate the selectivity they have. For example, one interviewee explains how sometimes he is listening to a specific song, but it reaches a part that he does not particularly enjoy or care for, so then he has the option of just skipping and moving on to the next track, while another interviewee similarly said: “I feel like now I do more skipping than before, because I mean, not all the songs call out to me in the same way” (Sebastián, 24-year-old civil engineer, Costa Rica)¹¹. This is relevant to their current music consumption because it shows they are conscious of how they listen to music, and how they have made it a more “hectic process”—as one interviewee defined it—by being in complete control over how everything plays out and how it fits their mood or the atmosphere they are going for.

4.1.2. Vinyl music consumption among interviewees

Now that what the interviewees value in relation to digital music has been highlighted, their perceptions on how they listen to vinyl records is considered next. The participants in this study were asked to elaborate on how they listen to vinyl and how this form of music consumption differs from their typical ways of listening to music digitally. Amelia’s (24-year-old, Dane studying in London) statement is illustrative here: “You put on a vinyl record, not because it's easy or convenient, you do it because it's nice to pull out your record and place it on your record player and put the needle down”. In her case, the physical aspects of vinyl add on to the experience she values of listening to records. The physical elements of the format (setting up

¹¹ It should be noted that several quotes come from Spanish spoken interviews and thus have been translated. These translations have been translated as exact as possible.

the record player, placing the needle, turning the vinyl over) are well-known characteristics that vinyl offers over digital music, which have also been discussed as impracticalities (see Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). In contrast to this appreciation for the physicality of vinyl, another interviewee mentions how his Crosley suitcase record player is great because it folds up and is portable, or Callan (23-year-old student, The Netherlands/England), who says his favorite record is Jamie XX's 'In Color' because: "[...] both sides are pretty packed so that means you don't have to flip it very often. So for convenience sake, it's very nice". In these cases, the notion of the physicality of vinyl seems to be challenged by a built-in lookout for convenience. In the case of the Crosley suitcase record player, this suggests an appeal for portability within the impracticality of the format, and in the case of Callan, who enjoys not having to flip a record too often, this suggests a desire to appreciate the music while still not having to go through too much of an additional effort.

These last two examples challenge the idea of the rituality of the vinyl that Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) have argued to be a significant reason behind the allure of vinyl. On the one hand, as Amelia's perception signals, the interviewees seem to appreciate the process of setting up and actively listening to the record—and understand that each side of the record is part of the experience—but on the other hand, they look for a rituality within limits, a ritual that they can fit to their convenience-oriented needs and lifestyle.

Regarding the analog listening experience, the interviewees all elaborated on how vinyl is attractive to them because it creates a particular atmosphere. They consider playing vinyl as an activity in itself that creates an overarching feeling or vibe that they treasure. This resonates with Bartmanski and Woodward's (2015; 2018) observations on vinyl as a ritual: a complete experience that requires continuous listening. Yet, this also hints at a paradox between music consumption with regards to the different formats and the idea that they have freedom of choice. As has been illustrated before, the interviewees seem to appreciate how with digital music they are in control to select whatever music they wish to listen to, or skip the songs they are not keen on listening at the moment—as Reynolds (2012) argued to be the main music listening practices ever since the iPod. However, when it comes to vinyl records, a commonly

valued element of the analog format is how it demands a commitment to listen to it uninterrupted. As Lorena, a 24-year-old Brazilian student in Norway explains:

If I'm listening to Spotify [...] I keep skipping. If I put on a vinyl, I am still kind of obligated to listen to the whole album as it was intended, in the order it was intended and it just kind of screams at me: 'Just enjoy the experience as it was designed for you!'. Vinyls make me do that in a way that CDs don't or digital music doesn't.

So, for Lorena, the linearity of a record is largely valued; that is, having to commit to actively listening to a full record, paying attention to it, appreciating its content and the experience it creates. This exposes how this group of interviewed millennials is reflective on its music habits, both analog and digital. Moreover, several interviewees attribute what is missing in their digital music consumption to vinyl in terms of the linearity and the experience that entails listening to a full record. Thus, the paradox is further seen here: there is an appreciation for the convenience of being in control when listening to digital music, while praising vinyl for making the listener give up control and appreciate a whole album. While this thoroughly resembles with Magaudda's observations (2011) that the vinyl holds appeal versus digital music because it offers elements that digital music cannot deliver, Magaudda (2011) referred mainly to the material aspects (smell, touch, sound, visual content). The interviewees show that there are also more concealed attractions to the ritual of vinyl, such as that of having a listening experience that cannot be influenced much further than choosing the record and flipping it from the A to the B side. This resonates with the ritualizing of the listening experience that is ascribed to vinyl (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015).

Another sense of commitment multiple interviewees consider to have with vinyl is the actual purchase, which is why there is a defined selection criteria when choosing which records to buy. Luciano (28-year-old, financial analyst, Nicaraguan working in The Netherlands) mentioned how he does not like to just randomly purchase any record, but considers it important to know he will enjoy it, "most of the time if I find a cheap one, I'll buy it, if it's from an artist that I like." This indicates how the interviewees' selection criteria for purchasing vinyl

is a more thought-out and detailed process that takes pricing into account as well as music tastes (artists they like, or albums or songs they know). Whereas with digital music practices, it is just a matter of searching because there are no additional costs for listening to one album or artist over another one. As another interviewee, Adriana (24, graphic designer, Costa Rica/Spain) similarly reflects: “You pay a Spotify membership and you can listen to *all the artists* [emphasis added] you want, instead of spending money on CDs or whatever and being able to listen to *only one artist* [emphasis added].” So, monetarily, there appears to be less of an investment or commitment with digital music than with vinyl records. The interviewees’ purchasing criteria show what they each value in the format, as it requires to make a choice in consumption, while digital music does not require them to choose one album over another. This is relevant because understanding what constructs the participants’ buying criteria hints towards how this group of interviewed millennials may perceive vinyl, and how they value different elements that construct the format.

The interviewees also seem to value how vinyl records offer visual elements that are missing from digital music. Various interviewees mention how the cover art, lyrics, posters, and booklets add on to a greater experience with vinyl, and one interviewee even remembers downloading music off of iTunes and receiving a digital booklet which in essence was trying to digitalize the visual elements that vinyl offered. But, this just shows how digital falls far from analog in terms of providing those extra components that add on value to the vinyl format, as he says: “[...]but who would open a PDF when you download music just to look at the booklet of the album” (Caspar, 25, German studying in Australia). This resonates with what Yochim and Biddinger (2008) describe regarding the importance of the visual content that vinyl offers in terms of materiality and physicality versus other music formats. Half of the participants likewise mentioned lyrics, cover art, booklets, and posters as elements that they appreciate as part of vinyl. They elaborated on how these elements allow to get to know more about the artists, the record, and the workings behind an album through the physical content because it offers them a deeper connection to the music and the format.

However, this is contested at times, as there are trends to also purchase vinyl that offer no information whatsoever, which Nicolás, a 24-year-old Chilean working in The Netherlands,

mentions when explaining one of his favorite owned record: “It's a white label. [...] that means that there's nothing printed on the label. It's a completely white vinyl with music inside. So you don't know what label released it and you don't know what the artist was.” So, the purpose of these records is to discover new music and the fact that the listener cannot skip songs forces him or her to discover all the music in the record and pay attention to it. But it is a blind discovery in that there is no way to attribute the artist or any production behind the content; it offers no deeper connections because it provides no information behind it. Thus, the appreciation for knowing the workings behind an album seem to be disregarded at times. This remark hints on the one hand, what could be a paradox of the attraction for the visual elements of vinyl that Yochim and Biddinger (2008) argue, but also suggests the diversity in preferences within the format.

4.2. Vinyl offers a legitimate connection to music

Although the ritual of listening to vinyl and the visual content of a record are considered of significance, as the previous section discussed, they are not the only features that the interviewees value in vinyl. Aside from the physical elements of vinyl, interviewees' connections to the music and perceptions of the culture around the format are fostered through records. Vinyl is perceived as authentic according to the interviewees, likewise to Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) and Guesdon and Le Guern (2014) (who consider the authenticity of vinyl to reflect on its status as an icon of culture and music heritage). They particularly link this to an appreciation of the past, in terms of its music and its culture. Caspar passionately conceptualizes this as follows:

[...] back then it was, I don't know, there was less of an economic driver in the selection of music. It wasn't so, so corporate. [...] the musicians had more of a room in it (involvement in management decisions) and talent had more room in the way that music got distributed and what was actually made.

Caspar thus particularly praises the past's music industry for being less corporate and more for the art of music making. This hints towards a perspective on today's music landscape that sees a majorly corporate music market where there is less distinct talent—'hyperstatic', as Reynolds (2012) labels it. In this view, there seems to be a negative perception of contemporary music as an indistinct present music scene (Hogarty, 2017), in comparison to that of previous decades where the music was "timeless," as interviewee Amelia defines it, or "classic," as Sebastián describes it, and "iconic," as Mathias (27-year old design engineer, Sweden) calls it. Furthermore, likewise to Caspar's praise for the past's music scene, Adriana enjoys listening to 'old' music because she considers the lyrics to be more interesting than popular music nowadays, which she thinks of as "empty" and only concerning messages of sex and drugs: "[...] whereas with The Beatles, the message was of peace and love. Or even Michael Jackson, who spoke a lot about racial equality [...] and music has put that aside nowadays." This however is actually also reflecting on a very idealized version of the past. Similarly, in Hogarty's (2017) work, the participants characterize music today as insatiable and commercial, while old music is considered more symbolic and reflective of political, societal and cultural issues. The problem with these conceptualizations of 'old' music is that they are based on selected elements that have been somewhat glorified; a threat Lizardi (2015) warned about when it comes to looking at the past through the lens of media products, as it may stunt any form of critical perception of it. This shows how the interviewees have romanticized the past at times, as Adriana's comment shows, by overlooking that the decades they keep idealizing about (i.e. the sixties, seventies and eighties) were also full of content that was constantly being called out as offensive for their messages related to sex and drugs, e.g. song lyrics (Kellner, 1995; Prinsky & Rosenbaum, 1987).

But this ideal of other time periods is not only glorified through music, it is also evident in every day society as the retro or vintage trend, where clothes, cars, films, photography, among other things are appreciated under the same idea that they reflect more pleasant, simpler or warmer times—as various interviewees reflect— than what the present offers (see Dwyer, 2015; Lizardi, 2015; Reynolds, 2012). This notion of iconicity—the highlighting and immortalizing of certain elements of the past (see Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018; Reynolds, 2012; Yochim & Biddinger, 2008) and specifically of music from previous decades also translates

onto the format itself. Vinyl is considered as “the real deal” by Embla (26-year-old nurse, Norway), whose reference to vinyl is illustrative for how interviewees feel about the format. Amelia even refers to vinyl as “a part of history”—also giving the format further status as an icon of culture. By trying to experience the past through elements that have prevailed through time, such as vinyl, they are supporting what Hogarty (2017) described as the hauntological structure of feeling, where there seems to be a need to retreat to previous times to experience another reality that is considered deeper, or, as Guesdon and Le Guern (2014) argue, more authentic.

Still, part of the hauntological structure of feeling that Hogarty (2017) described is not entirely evident within the interviews. As she (Hogarty, 2017) argued that the longing for an authentic past comes from a lack of distinction or talent in contemporary music, the interviewees *do* consider there is distinctive and good music from present-day as well. As much as they praise the past, they also apply a critical view on the present. The interviewees understand how the music industry today is not what it used to be, but also that they are part of the reason why the industry has changed so much. When asked about how contemporary artists releasing vinyl fit with their ideal that old music matches with vinyl, remarkably enough, most of them considered this a cool or even a good development because of several reasons. First and foremost, the interviewees are conscious of how digitalization hurt smaller artists, who now need to find alternative ways to make money. Embla, who was part of a band for 12 years that was streamed on Spotify, firsthand understands this, as she recalls: “[...] you can earn some money off of the internet's streaming services, but that's not easy to live off.” This is thoroughly understood by the interviewees, with five commenting on how they understand the difficulty of making money out of music is part of what is wrong with the current music market. As Jake mentions: “I think artists can sometimes struggle to make money. Um, and I think that they need to be smart in the ways that they sell their music.” The interviewees understand that with digitalization, music companies adapted and new business models appeared (Hayes, 2006). This resonates with Lizardi (2015), who suggested looking at the past to provide way on how to improve the current landscape (healthy nostalgia). Participants recognize that vinyl offers a legitimate or “luxury version of recorded music, a high-end version of recorded music,”

as Nicolás puts it, which justifies these artists for using the authenticity of vinyl as a music format to make money.

The interviewees also consider releasing vinyl to be part of creating stronger connections with their fans for contemporary artists. Fans' demand for vinyl reflects that they want to support the artists by doing more than just listening through online streaming services. Nonetheless, some interviewees did specify that they do think *not* every type of modern music should make it to vinyl, like Julia (22, Brazilian studying in the Netherlands): "There were vinyls there [at Urban Outfitters] or albums that were turned into vinyls that didn't match? [...] it's not every kind of music that fits the concept of a vinyl. [...] like Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande, [...]" This contradiction Julia sketches explains how certain artists are considered more serious and real than others, specifically in terms of what should make it to vinyl format. Other contemporary artists such as Tame Impala or Jamie XX are considered suitable with the format by the interviewees, equaling them to the seriousness and authenticity ascribed to artists such as The Beatles. In this case, these vinyl-fitting artists by releasing vinyl records are also making themselves more authentic because their consumers are willing to commit to their music in the same way they commit to iconic artists that they consider classic or original. In essence, vinyl and its music come with a notion of authenticity, that may be reflected onto contemporary artists when they fit with the format's conceptualization, which encompasses a specific vibe and experience.

The justifications that the interviewees give for contemporary artists that release vinyl show two things. Firstly, that they are accepting that some contemporary music is indeed distinctive and worthy to have on vinyl, as most of the interviews admit to listening to new music on vinyl as well. And second, that they recognize that the present's music industry makes it harder for newer artists to make profits and earn recognition, so that through vinyl they place themselves in the market and within their audiences. Since interviewees clearly distinguish vinyl as an iconic and timeless format, and assign certain artists (both old and contemporary) as fitting with the format, this points to how the participants have created a new notion of authenticity that allows for music from different periods to coexist together through the analog format.

4.3. Vinyl constructs musical identities

As the first theme discussed, there is a more detailed selection criteria when purchasing vinyl, which hints towards the construction of a curated collection of what each vinyl consumer values. In line with the authenticity factor that is acclaimed by interviewees as important to their vinyl consumption, vinyl seems to construct a part of each consumer's identity. The interviewees suggest that the format allows them to show what they value as authentic based on the vinyl they own. The notion of owning the music through the records they have is part of who they are because it shows what music they listen to, and it differentiates them from those who only stream music because it makes them feel like they have a stronger connection and commitment with the artists or the albums they possess. As Mathias clarifies: "it's something with having the music, because I basically listen to all of my music on Spotify [...]. So I don't buy CDs, but by having the vinyl, it's like *I own the music* [emphasis added]." As this quote shows, many of the interviewees expressed how by consuming vinyl, they own a piece of the music, a physical piece that is not infinitely duplicated like that of a digital music format (Magaudda, 2011). This shows how they value the notion of owning in a digitally saturated market where the music they like and listen to is not really theirs, but rather is part of this endlessly available music ecosystem. Hence, the records they own reflect on their musical identities.

One of the interviewees even compared one's vinyl collection to coffee table books, in the sense that they both should show a little on what the owner is interested in. The records should offer a glimpse as to what the owner acknowledges as valuable music. Callan, for example, commented: "I really like the fact that I have everything that I personally want and everything that has value to me can be in my own collection." So, for Callan, the records he owns show that he selected what is valuable enough (for him) to make it to his collection. He further elaborated on how in his case, as someone who started deejaying around six months ago, deejaying with vinyl versus only with digital music is better in terms of skillset, apart from being "cool" as well. With this in mind, the notion of not only playing vinyl (be it for leisure or for entertainment) but also owning vinyl is something that forms each of their musical identities; it shows what each collector cherishes or treasures as their valuable music.

Part of each vinyl consumer's musical identity includes how they got introduced to the format, and how the format has sentimental value by holding memories from their upbringing and growing up. Ten of the interviewees hold stories as to how they first experienced the format, with memories of grandmothers showing off original seventies' Beatles records, or parents or family relatives playing certain records from their youth. This insight resonates with various academic studies that were discussed earlier in this research (Bennet, 2008; Guesdon & Le Guern, 2014; Hayes, 2006; Hogarty, 2017), as it points out to the influence that previous generations have had on today's generations in terms of music. It should also be noted here that the vinyl influence from people from other generations was not solely from men, as previous theory had suggested men to be more involved in record collecting than women (Hogarty, 2017; Straw, 1997) (also see Appendix A for the complete breakdown of who introduced each interviewee to vinyl).

Some interviewees recall remembering the format from their parents, grandparents, or other relatives. Yet, they gained a desire to explore vinyl further only after experiencing it with someone closer to their age (e.g. sibling or friend). In this case, vinyl is part of their identity because it forms a connection with someone from their same generation that appreciates the format, allowing them to treasure a more contemporary memory. This gives value to the format on in the more contemporary sense, as is the case of Amelia, who vividly recalls:

[...] in college when I was 19, my friend Olivia, [...] she got me into vinyls [...] I was visiting her in Pittsburgh and we were sitting at her coffee table and she made some coffee and lit some candles, and the sun was setting and she put on this record and it was so cozy and lovely.

This shows how the vinyl record is meaningful to the participants because it holds some form of nostalgic value, not only for times that they themselves did not live through, but also nostalgia for times of their own childhood or simply of lived times. This presents an interesting notion behind the vinyl's nostalgic value, where it is not only about wanting to experience an un-lived past, as multiple academics discuss (de Zengotita, 2005; Dwyer, 2015; Hogarty, 2017),

but it is a nostalgia for their own lived past as well. This further classifies the vinyl as a timeless format, as it manages to hold memories not only of those during its prime in the sixties and seventies, but also from those born well after its demise.

Consequently, the majority of the interviewees seem to hold on to memories through vinyl constantly. Be it through the memory of receiving a vinyl as a gift from a friend, or the atmosphere and the feeling that first vinyl listening experience created, or because it was their parents' record originally, vinyl is a cherished format that holds sentimental value. The vinyl preserves a personal history rather than only the pop culture history of its prime time (sixties, seventies, eighties). For example, Luciano explains how one of his favorite records is one of his father's when he was 15 years old, or Lorena, who has some sentimental value attached to a Brazilian band record, "[...] it was my mum's when she was a teenager [...]. I've listening to them since I can remember." In both of these examples, knowing the record was part of their parents' past makes it more special for the interviewees. There is a significance given to those records that have been passed down, because they hold very specific memories and feelings for the interviewees, and thus form part of their identity that vinyl constructs.

The interviews conducted also highlight how each consumer's musical identity is seen through their nationality, which is reflected on certain vinyl they hold dearly. It was suggested by multiple interviewees that the vinyl format with its iconic status and materiality helps strengthen their connection to the musical history of their countries; it takes on a symbolic role of connecting the interviewees to their home countries. Three interviewees elaborated on this. Jake mentioned the LP 'Cold Fact' by Rodriguez as one of his favorite owned vinyl because: "[...] of the mystique around the artist. He was very famous in South Africa. I think he even sold more records than the Beatles." For him, having a record from this specific artist strengthens the close ties to having something that is intertwined within the music history of his country. Similarly, two interviewees, who are sisters, both expressed their appreciation for their records of Legião Urbana, a well-known band from their home country. Julia mentions: "since we've been away from home for so long, it's always nice to put music that reminds us of Brazil, and kinda keep this part of our identity alive still." The role of the vinyl here is that it helps people connect to their musical heritage. By being able to own vinyl that reflect music that relates to

their country, they make this record a part of their lives, their memories, and therefore, their musical identities—signaling to what Gonzalez-Fuentes (2019) referred by consumers shaping their identities by assigning meaning to certain possessions. Furthermore, this connection is central to the globalized notion of the millennials that this study focuses because through vinyl they seem to try to foster a connection to their origins (their home countries). This resonates with what Berry (1997) describes as the culture change, where the adaptation and the traits obtained in a new place do not disregard the traits from one’s past, as these young vinyl enthusiasts attribute additional meaning to their vinyl (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019) as a way to bond to their home country.

This theme aimed to show how the participants’ musical and consumption identities are partially constructed through their vinyl collection, which is comprised not only of the music they value but also for the memories and sentimental tokens that are embedded within the records they own. Part of their identity is about owning music that they treasure or value because of its authenticity—according to the previously discussed theme on the interviewees assigning this notion—or because it comes from their parents, so it is a keepsake that in return shows a stronger significance for the old format and its durability. And lastly, and particularly relevant given this research’s scope of globalized millennials, it is important because it represents a part of the participants upbringing, and by owning something that reflects this, they feel more connected to their origins.

4.4. The construction of a modern-day vinyl culture

The last theme observed throughout this research regards the current vinyl culture that the interviewees have identified as part of their consumption of vinyl records. Overall, all interviewees have a very established understanding on how vinyl records are more than just a medium that plays music; they reflect on how it is a format that goes hand-in-hand with a whole culture, environment, and experience. Several interviewees reminisce about different record stores they have been to, and how some offer a better experience and “vibe” than others:

[in] places like Clone¹²[...] I don't necessarily feel comfortable with exactly the sort of vibe that they have there. [...] [but] I can go to London, to a shop that's called Phonica, and I could be in there for hours (Callan, 23, The Netherlands).

Callan's reflection shows not only how important a record store's atmosphere is to the experience, but also hints towards the globalized aspect of this research, as in multiple occasions interviewees recalled stores from previous countries that they lived in at some point. This shows that the interviewees have moved around, addressing their constant changing lifestyles (Côte & Levine, 2016).

This agreed-upon importance of records stores is consistent throughout the interviews. When asked if vinyl could survive without record stores, while some do believe the format itself as a medium could prevail, all fourteen interviewees acknowledge that the culture that surrounds the format *does* rely heavily on record stores. As Amelia describes the appeal of these stores:

I like going into vinyl shops because I like flipping through all the records and [...] exploring [...] I like being able to touch the records and see what condition they're in and look at the artwork. And record shops have a specific smell to it. So it's the whole experience.

This suggests that the idea of going to record stores is important because it offers more than just buying a record, it has to do with the physicality aspects such as crate digging (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015): seeing what condition they are in, testing some of them out before buying them, etc. These are actions that do not have a close comparison through online purchasing, as various interviewees point out. This is consistent with previous research on how having to purchase vinyl is distinctive from digital music consumption because of its physicality (Fernandez & Beverland, 2019).

¹² Record store in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Several of the participants also consider that record stores offer a role in their vinyl experience by embracing new consumers into the culture. For example, Estefanía (23-year-old, Peruvian living in Costa Rica) believes that the young vinyl consumption audience is very little informed, therefore:

[...] [record stores] teach you how to take care of [vinyls], how to use a record player even, show you whatever music they have. [...] specific stores for this kind of thing educate you a little on how to take care of it, how to maintain it, etc.

So, for Estefanía, record stores provide a deeper understanding for this new generation of vinyl consumers; through record stores they not only get to explore music, but also they get to explore further on the format and obtain knowledge about it, as academics have researched to be of relevance for record stores' survival (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018; Hendricks, 2016). Likewise, through record stores consumers get to experience first-hand the culture that has surrounded it from its primetime, which resembles Guesdon and Le Guern's (2014) ideas that through vinyl they try to live out the experiences that surrounded the record in previous decades. This further points to how even though the participants have grown up with the internet at their fingertips, they may still prefer to go through more traditional ways to explore and experience the format better.

Nonetheless, even though the interviewees signal the importance and the added value that record stores provide to their vinyl owning experience, they at times fall for the modern purchasing options such as online shopping and modern stores that have diversified their stock to provide selections of vinyl (e.g. Amazon, Urban Outfitters). They recognize the value that record shops and second-hand markets offer towards extending the lifespan of the format and introducing it to new generations, as was previously discussed, but they are anyhow split on if the format itself could now survive without these businesses. Some interviewees mention how they think the format has already become such a trend that it could survive because of this same wave. For instance, a store like Urban Outfitters made it possible for interviewee Estefanía to incur in the format, as she purchased her first record player and vinyl records

there. So, this trend makes it possible for new generations to notice the format easier, as it becomes more and more visible in popular shops and through online shopping. In further discussion about these modern alternatives to record purchasing, Lenka clarifies:

I don't have anything against them because it's so much easier to go online, type your wishes, and then they give you a list of all those records and you discover new ones. So that's really cool. But it's more the experience, [...] I really like going to stores.

This suggests, as Lenka points out, that at times buying records online is more convenient, it offers a wider variety, and it makes it possible to find exactly what one is looking for while still exploring a little. Another interviewee similarly considers that at times, record stores prove to be the difficult or even a more time-consuming way to find records, whereas online it is a simplified and less distracting process even. Part of this convenience found in online shopping also comes from what other interviewees mention that in record shops they are also looking for a specific atmosphere and experience that they might not even be sure to find, while online offers the simpler and easier transaction. However, several participants also commented on how impersonal the online purchasing experience of vinyl records is, and how it loses elements that they value in records shops or even secondhand markets. But, as Lenka's quote suggests, they have been wired through convenience and availability, thus, purchasing records online has become a relatively normalized practice according to the participants of this study.

There are also 'midpoint' options that this generation seems to be adopting too. Two of the interviewees mention constantly using Discogs, and Caspar expanded on how this platform offers a way of consumption that fits with his habits:

It gives people a chance to have a larger reach [...] I mean if you open Discogs here you will find a lot of stuff from the U.S., Portugal, Netherlands, Spain, England, from wherever, [...] you have, uh, basically everything that Amazon has to offer plus way more [...] and you're supporting record stores all over the world.

Thus, in Caspar's case, platforms such as Discogs provide a way to support record shops, but in a manner that suits with his consumption habits (bound with convenience, availability and accessibility) by making it possible to buy from record stores but online, which acknowledges the value and importance of these while still having an easier access to the records he wants.

In essence, the interviewees recognize how vinyl is tied to a whole culture. It is a format that is made up of more than just the medium in which you listen to the music, but rather it is surrounded by a whole environment and experience (record stores, second-hand markets, learning about the format, etc.). Nonetheless, convenience is engraved onto their consumption habits—like the first theme showed—as they still resort to online purchasing for their records, or even to modern stores that offer popular record players and some records they want for their collection. Therefore, the easiness to access prevails. This does not mean they prefer these modern alternatives entirely over the more traditional purchasing through record shops, but rather shows how they enjoy the availability of options they have, and the easy access that is being given to them once again, to do whatever fits best with their lifestyle.

This chapter has explored how *globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today's digitally saturated music-market*. It illustrated how there is an *awareness of what digital versus analog formats offer*, how *vinyl offers a legitimate connection to music*, how *vinyl helps constructs musical identities*, and how *the construction of a modern-day vinyl culture matters* in this consumption process. Next, the concluding chapter of this research will discuss how these themes yield an answer to the research question posed, along with theoretical and societal implications and contributions.

5. Exit music (for a thesis)

5.1. Conclusions

This research aimed to answer the question *“How do globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records in today’s digitally saturated music-market?”* through conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews to a globalized sample of millennials. These interviews were then analyzed through thematic analysis to yield an answer to the posed research question. Doing so, this study showed that the meanings and connotations that are ascribed to vinyl by the fourteen millennials interviewed are at times contradictory, unique or intersecting with each other, as the vinyl holds semiotic mutability within different audiences (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015). This research shows that the allure of vinyl for young generations cannot be assigned solely to one reason, but rather there is an array of motives that together make consuming vinyl a relevant experience for these millennials. These motives were revealed through four main themes: *an awareness of what digital versus analog formats offer, how vinyl offers a legitimate connection to music, how vinyl helps constructs musical identities, and the construction of modern-day vinyl culture.*

This research presents both manifest and latent ways in which meaning is given to vinyl records by millennials. In the more manifest motives for millennials to consume vinyl records that this research revealed, there are factors such as materiality, physicality and rituality—as well as the appreciation for the overall vinyl culture that stems greatly from record shops. The previous chapter discussed how even though the interviewees are conscious on their music listening habits, what they want and what is offered through each format, they also present slight paradoxes or contradictions among their music consumption habits. These paradoxes are: the look for convenience in the impracticality of the format, the enjoyment of giving up control of the music when listening to vinyl—but appreciating the autonomy of digital music—, and the acknowledgement of the convenience found in purchasing vinyl records online. These paradoxes suggest that this group of interviewed millennials may have tendencies to go for what offers the most ease, practicality and convenience for them. It indicates that young generations may be interested in the format and its ritual, but from a more convenient perspective. This offers a practical implication for the businesses in the music industry, as it

could allow them to adapt to meet this specific audience's wants and needs by understanding their appeal for the analog format while still wanting some convenience within it, and provide it more efficiently.

Furthermore, these paradoxes, and overall the manifest motives, are particularly relevant for this generation because it shows how they merged online and offline. These show that the millennials interviewed understand that offline brings elements that online does not—as is in the format itself (palpable objects, visual content, smells, having to setting up the format), and in record shops (physical connections, social aspects, knowledge). But at the same time, they recognize and appreciate how available and convenient their online access to music is. This illustrates how they merged the notion of analog and digital music, as they created a space for both formats to coexist and work with each other rather than against. So, for this generation, it is evident they are not looking to replace the digital format with vinyl, but rather that they have found a way to appreciate what each format offers. Vinyl has been acclimatized to their digital landscape so that it has its specific space to be enjoyed.

In the more latent reasons that emerge for millennials' meaning for vinyl, this research shows how this is predominantly based on the content that the vinyl holds, in terms of music and memories, and how these construct consumers' identities. Regarding the music, vinyl allows for music to be immortalized and praised. The interviewees recognize the vinyl as the original, authentic format and relate it to its primetime, which they appear to try to grasp through not only music, but through other elements of retro that reflect this considered zeitgeist. Nonetheless, they are critical on the present music industry, and thus allow for music outside of this zeitgeist to be a part of what they consider good and authentic music. This seems particularly relevant, as they blurred the lines of what previous academics contested as authenticity (relating old to iconic, timeless and classic) (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2015; Guesdon & Le Guern, 2014; Yochim & Biddinger, 2008), and allowed for contemporary music to become as valued to them as music from previous generations. So it could be inferred that a contemporary artist's record that gets placed in the same person's collection with records from Bob Dylan, Pink Floyd, The Beatles and Led Zeppelin (to name a few that the interviewees mention as timeless and iconic artists) suggests that contemporary artists can be recognized as

legitimate and even good enough, despite them not being part of this glorified past that is associated with vinyl among the interviewees. This hints towards how a young generation of vinyl consumers may be renewing the notion of authenticity among artists, both old and new. Perhaps then millennials are even redefining the boundaries of the analog format and giving the industry a different opportunity to make a more equal music ecosystem.

Regarding the memories, there is a general understanding amongst the interviewees that part of the allure towards vinyl is due to the fact that they *own* the records. Thus, in each of their collections they can show not only what they value in terms of music, but also what has a more sentimental value for them as well. This is the case for example, with the connection that interviewees make between certain vinyl and their home countries. Specifically, this gives particular importance to the globalized notion of millennials for this research, as it suggests that their culture changes have not disregarded the traits from their past (Berry, 1997), and that meaning is ascribed to certain vinyl as a way to construct and strengthen parts of their identity (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019). The memories embedded in vinyl give it more strength as a timeless format and an “icon of durability” (Bartmanski & Woodward, 2018, p. 173), one in which new generations get to not only experience previous generations’ zeitgeist memories but also create their own contemporary memories. And by assigning these memories to their vinyl possessions, they are further giving meaning to their consumption of vinyl in their contemporary digital world.

This research suggests that, even though the seventies are to be considered vinyl’s gold rush, it is perhaps safe to say the format is experiencing a shakeup with a new generation in this 21st century, one where it is finally coming out above the water. Whether this analog format will grow more is still unclear, but it has managed to find a way to appeal to a new generation of people within their digitalized music market. Instead of trying to surpass another music format, it is rather adapting and coexisting in a way that allows for it to be appreciated by an enthusiastic and select audience, to the point of asserting its status of iconicity and durability, and thus showing how this format can survive and thrive well after the gold rush.

5.2. Limitations and discussion

As exploratory research, the aim is to try to understand a social phenomenon. Music is a cultural good that is consumed across the globe (Lunsqui, 2007), and vinyl is a growing trend across the world (Deloitte, 2017) so it is worthwhile investigating it from a globalized perspective. Currently, the cultural goods people consume are very much globalized, as well as the lifestyles. Thus, the globalized trait of this research adds value because it is in line with the lifestyle of millennials and their openness to cultural inputs across the globe (Côte & Levine, 2016), specifically in music. Furthermore, people change locations a lot, which is something the sample of this research confirms. So, this research would be biased without addressing the globalized notion, as it would be omitting this characteristic of the generation. Nonetheless, this specific aspect of the millennials interviewed is also a limiting element of this study, because based on the findings of this research, the diversity of the sample shows that the niche in itself is very diverse. Thus, a larger sample would improve the reliability of the research even further.

Another consideration from this globalized aspect may be, for instance, how country-specific factors may play a role in the relation to vinyl and the meanings ascribed to the format. Some of the participants of this study discussed that they got involved in the format to a greater extent when they lived abroad at some point of their lives. Also, some interviewees that live in Costa Rica mentioned how in the country they know of few people that are interested in the format, or know very little about where to find records, as it is a niche market that is particularly hidden to their everyday. This hints towards the possibility that the globalized aspect of this research is what reflects a greater access to vinyl records, whereas certain countries may have a more limited access to vinyl, and this may influence how they consume or ascribe meaning to these. With this in mind, further research could focus on more specific contexts, for instance, the reach of vinyl stores and overall vinyl sales in the Costa Rican market, as it seems to be a contributing element to people's involvement with the format.

The language barrier may also be considered as a limitation. Given the nature of the globalized sample of this research, some participants had a first language that was not English or Spanish (which are the researcher's main languages). Thus, some interviewees may have

been less confident speaking in their second language, which may affect how they express themselves, as they could perhaps have been more enthusiastic and passionate in their mother tongues. To mitigate this, further research could have the researcher's main languages as a selection criteria of participants. However, doing this runs the risk of omitting certain people that may still contribute to the research even with these languages as secondary (as was the case of some of the participants of this research). Since this study was an exploratory research, the main focus was on gaining insights, and therefore did not employ this specific sampling criteria.

On more general terms, this research aimed at looking into the millennial generation. However, the chosen sampling method (purposive snowball sampling) means that interviewees referred other people they know that would fit the criteria for this research, so recommendations for other candidates all remained within similar age ranges (21 to 28). This may present as a limitation of this research, for it means that as much as there was a varied sample, the age range encompasses the younger tail of the millennial age scope, while the older tail of this age group is not included in this study. Further research could then look into this older millennial group to see if their influences and motivations behind consuming vinyl records vary from those in the younger millennials scope. Perhaps the older ones might have more articulate recollections and perspectives of previous formats, since some of the interviewees of this research at times were slightly unsure of how or when they first experienced the format.

The diversity of the topic could also present some limitations. The researcher's experience with vinyl is relatively recent, and therefore is an ongoing learning process. This may have resulted in a lack of knowledge or experience in certain niche discussions, such as the specific electronic music and deejaying music scenes that some of the interviewees are part of. This was seen for instance, in both Nicolas's interview when he mentions 'white labels' as part of a more underground music scene, and in Callan's (he is a deejay). As an exploratory research, this affected in which direction the follow-up questions went, and presents for further research, the possibility of looking into said topics from a niched angle, specific of the techno and

electronic music scene, and on white labels, with a more diversified research team, for example with a researcher that also deejays or is more thoroughly involved in that specific music niche.

Moreover, as this research showed, there is a recognition by millennials of the importance of record shops in the comeback of the vinyl and for its overall culture. Since this research is limiting in that it only analyzes one side of this relationship (the consumers), a suggestion for further research is to investigate record stores and how they perceive young audiences' contribution to vinyl resurgence. This would entail looking further at the same phenomenon through a different angle, to evaluate if record stores consider young generations significant to the present and future of the format—as well as looking into, for instance, if these shops' music options have changed because of millennials' consumption of records, and how they perceive this group's interaction within the store and the experience it offers.

Lastly, several participants of this research hinted towards the future of vinyl being a 'best of both worlds' phenomenon if the format adapts to modern music consumption as well. This could be, for example, in the shape of record players that allow to play digital music from a smartphone or laptop via Bluetooth as well. This option allows for a dual consumption, which fits the convenience that, according to this research, is characteristic of millennials, while still offering the space for both formats to coexist. This suggests possible further research into these modernized mediums to play vinyl records, which seem to be becoming a trend and grab young generations' attention. By looking into these, perceptions may be observed as to if these digital features affect the overall perception of listening to vinyl for young generations in terms of authenticity and connections to the past, or if they simply value it for its convenience and ease.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table A1. Overview of interviewees

Interviewee	Nationality	Residency	Other countries lived	Age	Occupation	Vinyl influence (male)	Vinyl influence (female)
Adriana	Costa Rica/ Spain	Costa Rica	Spain	24	Graphic designer	Grandfather	Friend
Amelia	Denmark	England	U.S.A.	24	Physics master's student	-	Grandmother; friend
Callan	England/ Netherlands	Netherlands	England, France	23	Economics student	Friend	-
Caspar	Germany	Australia	Germany, China, Italy	25	PhD. Psychology student	Father	Aunt
Embla	Norway	Norway	-	26	Nurse	-	Mother
Estefanía	Perú	Costa Rica	Perú	23	Law student	-	Friend
Jake	South Africa	England	Netherlands	26	Economics master's student	Uncle	-
Julia*	Brazil	Netherlands	Australia, Norway, Belgium	22	Master's student	-	Sister; grandmother
Lenka	Belgium	Belgium	-	21	Multilingual communications student	Father	-
Lorena	Brazil	Norway	Denmark, Belgium	24	Television and multimedia production student	Father	Mother; grandmother
Luciano	Nicaragua	Netherlands	Panamá, U.S.A., Switzerland	28	Financial risk analyst at ABN Amro	Uncle	-
Mathias	Sweden	Sweden	-	27	Design Engineer	Friend	-
Nicolás	Chile	Netherlands	Chile, England, Italy, Egypt, Azerbaijan	24	Partnership manager at festival tech company	-	-
Sebastián	Costa Rica	Costa Rica	U.S.A	24	Civil engineer-operations officer at Texas Tech University CR	-	Grandmother

*Alias name given since participant asked to keep her name anonymous

Appendix B

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Lucía Sancho

lusanchoh@gmail.com

+50688284943

Aegidiusstraat 135, 3061XG Rotterdam, NL.

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about vinyl records consumption. The purpose of the study is to understand how globalized millennials give meaning to the process of consuming vinyl records (LP records) in today's digitally dominated music-market.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms, the questions of the interview will be related to your current music listening habits and your experience with vinyl records.

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a recording software for the interview.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

- A. As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information (such as your age or nationality) or not in the study. If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by using a pseudonym, a general label such as 'Interviewee A', or by using general identification only mentioning age, nationality and gender, etc.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take approximately 1 hour. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish– Dr. Simone Driessen: driessen@eshcc.eur.nl

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audio recorded during this study:

Name Signature Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name Signature Date

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix C

Topic List

Hello, and first of all, thank you for agreeing to participate as part of my research for my master's thesis from Erasmus University.

Before we start, I want to go over the consent form that I sent to you.

- *Do you consent to being audio recorded so I can later transcribe the interview and use it for my analysis?*
- *And second, do I have your consent to use your full name and other demographic information throughout my research?*

Before we start, I want to establish that this interview does not require you to have a lot of knowledge in music culture or on the workings of different music formats. I just want to understand your music habits and in specific, your relationship to vinyl records.

Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers; this is a safe space for you to voice your opinions and music tastes without any judgement.

Demographics (warm-up)

To start off, would you mind telling me a little about yourself...how old are you, where you are from/where you've lived, what's your occupation at the moment, etc.

1. Could you state your full name for me please?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from/where do you live?
4. What is your occupation at the moment? What industry?

Music & taste

1. Have you listened to music today?
 - What where you listening to? (Artist, type of music)
2. In general, what would you say is your most listened type of music? Genre-wise and time period wise.
3. Do you listen to music from other time periods a lot? E.g. the sixties, seventies, eighties.
 - Which are some of your favorite artists from those time periods?
 - Why do you listen to old music?
4. (About retro culture) Are you drawn to anything else from other time periods aside from music?

Consuming vinyl

(Now, based on your music habits, genres and eras of preference, I would like to dive into the topic of your consumption of vinyl records)

1. When and where was your first contact with vinyl records?
 - Do you remember which was the first record you ever listened to? (deliberately knowing you were listening to vinyl and not another format)
 - What is one of the first records you bought that drew you further into the vinyl format?
 - Why?
2. Since then, what are some of the reasons that have made you continue to consume this analog format? Why has vinyl become so special to you? *(this question should result in elaborating on material aspects, sound quality, iconicity, etc., which will result in further probe questions).*

Authenticity

1. Can you tell me a bit about how you typically listen to music?
2. Just vinyl, or also other formats?

Rituality:

1. When do you usually listen to vinyl records?
 - Where?
 - How do you listen to your records– what kind of turntable and sound setup do you have?
 - Do you listen to them on your own or is it something you do more together with other people?
 - Do you listen to records mainly for leisure and pleasure or for some other reason?
2. Can you tell me a about your favorite record? Why is it your favorite?
3. Where do you usually get your records from?
 - How does that compare for you to modern brands like Urban Outfitters and Amazon that are selling vinyl records now?
4. What do you consider to be the importance of record stores (How important are record stores for vinyl...?), do you think vinyl would survive without them?

Iconicity:

1. Can you describe what is your selection criteria when buying records?
 - For instance, do you look for specific albums from 'big legends' from the time vinyl records were in their prime, or do you try to find their original versions of records rather than reissues from recent years?
 - Or do you just in general buy vinyl of artists that you like, despite their time period?
2. What about contemporary artists releasing vinyl? Do you buy these?

Encompassment of vinyl's allure:

1. If you had to choose, what vinyl record or records that you own include some of the reasons why you enjoy vinyl over other formats so much?
 - Why that one in particular?
 - Is there a specific record that you have longed to have for a while now but still don't have it?

Digitalization

Lastly, I want to ask a little about the internet's effect on your music listening habits.

1. Has the internet affected how you listen to music?
 - Are you more inclined to listen to playlists or do you prefer to listen to albums in full?
2. How would you describe modern music consumption of your generation?

Finally, where do you see the music industry with specific regards to analog formats in the coming future?

Thank you for your time.

—end of interview.

Appendix D

Coding Tree

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding/themes
Album: linearity Album: restrictive CDs: affordability CDs: convenience Digital music: atmosphere Digital music: less albums Digital music: passive listening Digital music: playlists Digital music: rabbit hole Digitalization neg: dehumanized process Digitalization neg: loss of connection to artist Digitalization neg: loss of musical memory Digitalization neg: no context behind music Paradox: no info from vinyl	Music became a simplified listening experience	Awareness of what digital versus analog formats offer
Digital music: accessibility Digital music: affordability Digital music: availability Digital music: control Digital music: convenience Digital music: micro exploration digital music: no commitment Digital music: sharity Digitalization neg: over availability Digitalization neg: overconsumption Digitalization: find old music Modern elements on record players: pointless Paradox: freedom of choice Vinyl: compilation: variety	Ease of digital music	
Habit vinyl: social practice Habit vinyl: solitary practice Habit: vinyl setting Old music: specific moods	Rituality of vinyl	

<p>Paradox: young looking for convenience in vinyl</p> <p>Vinyl: active listening</p> <p>Vinyl: activity in itself</p> <p>Vinyl: sets atmosphere</p> <p>Vinyl: commitment to listening</p> <p>Vinyl: impractical</p> <p>Vinyl: indescribable feeling/vibe</p> <p>Vinyl: monetary investment</p> <p>Vinyl: based on moods</p> <p>Vinyl: rabbit hole</p> <p>Vinyl: social dimension</p> <p>Vinyl: superior listening equipment</p> <p>Vinyl: versatility</p>		
<p>Vinyl: credits</p> <p>Vinyl: decoration</p> <p>Vinyl: human</p> <p>Vinyl: imperfections</p> <p>Vinyl: materiality: bad sound quality</p> <p>Vinyl: materiality: physicality</p> <p>Vinyl: materiality: treasure</p> <p>Vinyl: signs of usage</p> <p>Vinyl: visual content</p>	<p>Vinyl materiality</p>	
<p>Consumption criteria: artist</p> <p>Consumption criteria: artwork</p> <p>Consumption criteria: better on vinyl</p> <p>Consumption criteria: EPs versatility</p> <p>Consumption criteria: exploring</p> <p>Consumption criteria: price</p> <p>Consumption criteria: quality</p> <p>Consumption criteria: recommendations</p> <p>Consumption criteria: tastes</p> <p>Initial consumption vinyl: known music</p> <p>Second-hand: affordability</p>	<p>Vinyl consumption criteria</p>	
<p>Introduction to vinyl: old music</p> <p>Old music considered classic</p> <p>Old music is timeless</p> <p>Old music: bottom-line great music</p> <p>Old music: more feeling</p>	<p>Authenticity behind vinyl</p>	

<p>Old music: reflects talent and dedication Vinyl: appreciation for music Vinyl: appreciation of songs/ album Vinyl: better way to listen Vinyl: connection to artist Vinyl: coolness Vinyl: DJ Vinyl: exclusive music Vinyl: exploration within Vinyl: iconic album Vinyl: iconic artist Vinyl: iconic artwork Vinyl: iconic format Vinyl: iconic songs Vinyl: linearity Vinyl: more than music Vinyl: old music Vinyl: original records Vinyl: reflects identity Vinyl: sound compared to digital vinyl: sounds authentic Vinyl: special sound Vinyl: superior sound quality Vinyl: timeless Vinyl: value of past</p>		
<p>Attraction to unknown past Old music: time machine Present: search for simplicity Retro culture: aesthetics Retro culture: classics Retro culture: simplicity Retro culture: trends Retro: attraction to other vintage elements Romanticizing past: old music was less commercial Romanticizing past: old music had positive message Romanticizing the past Vinyl: time machine</p>	<p>Appreciation for un-lived past</p>	

<p>Album: appreciate artist Artists preserving quality of music industry Contemp. artists: take from old music Contemporary music requires less talent Contemporary music: distaste Contemporary music: empty Contemporary music: offensive Current music consumption: empty Current music consumption: moods Current music consumption: trends Current music consumption: rotation Current music market: corporate Digital music: better recording quality Digitalization pos: production opportunities Digitalization: hurts small artists Vinyl: against corporate music</p>	<p>Perceptions on contemp. music landscape</p>	
<p>Contemp. artists on vinyl: get to know better Contemp. artists on vinyl: make money Contemp. artists on vinyl: prove worth Contemp. artists vinyl: connect further Contemp. artists vinyl: hop on trend Contemp. artists vinyl: increase vinyl strength Contemp. artists vinyl: support/recognize Contemp. vinyl: limited editions Survival: because of contemp. artists Vinyl: contemporary artists Vinyl: for specific types of music</p>	<p>Views on contemporary artists releasing vinyl</p>	
<p>Vinyl: coolness Vinyl: DJ Vinyl: notion of owning Vinyl: personal interest</p>	<p>Construction of identity</p>	<p>Vinyl constructs musical identities</p>
<p>First contact with vinyl: family member First contact with vinyl: friends First contact with vinyl: parents First memory of vinyl: artwork First memory of vinyl: listening First memory of vinyl: object</p>	<p>Vinyl holds sentimental value/memories</p>	

<p>Initial consumption vinyl: gifts Old music grew up with it Stigma of parents' music: negative Survival: because of nostalgia Vinyl: connection to country Vinyl: connection to parents Vinyl: holder of memories Vinyl: inherited Vinyl: sentimental value</p>		
<p>Record stores negative: pricing Record stores: atmosphere Record stores: commitment Record stores: culture Record stores: experience Record stores: exploration Record stores: knowledge Record stores: old music Record stores: original records Record stores: second-hand Record stores: social dimension Record stores: time machine Record stores: wider variety Traditional purchasing Traditional purchasing: damaged</p>	<p>Offline experience</p>	<p>Modern day vinyl culture</p>
<p>Future adaptation of format to Present Future: modern stores diversification Future: survival through online shopping Future: vinyl not too marketable Future: vinyl rare Future: vinyl remains as niche Future: vinyl remains because of retro trend Modern alternatives for record purchasing Survival: only vinyl culture depends on stores Survival: vinyl depends on stores' experience Survival: vinyl format does not depend on record stores</p>	<p>Possible future of vinyl</p>	
<p>Buying records: physicality Modern stores: convenience</p>	<p>Modern vinyl culture</p>	

Modern stores: diversification		
Modern stores: expensive		
Modern stores: limited		
Modern stores: sure good quality		
Modern stores: trending music		
Online Purchasing: affordability		
Online purchasing: availability		
Online Purchasing: convenience		
Online Purchasing: expensive		
Online purchasing: impersonal		
Online purchasing: modern music		
Online purchasing: more consumption		
Online purchasing: sure good quality		
Record stores: distracting		
Record stores: important to vinyl comeback		
Record stores: support format		
Survival: depending on reach of stores		
Vinyl: trend		