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Digitalization of classical music: The perception of the genre, the music and the performances through live stream digital platforms

ABSTRACT

In the past years the music has been facing significant changes related to its consumption, production and distribution; mostly derived from the latest developments in the media technologies and the widespread use of the internet as a key element for accessibility (Arditi, 2018). The digital era has also increased the availability of music globally, changing the social dynamics by offering a vast cultural source fully reachable for younger generations (Webster, 2019). To that end, the main goal of the research is to understand how the digitalization of classical music is influencing the listeners' perception of the genre, the music and the performances through digital platforms, in contrast to live performances. Based on a multi-angled literature constructed of aesthetic and social theories concerning the digital artistic experience, I attempt to explore the digital innovation of classical music concert experiences and how their aesthetic perception could be considered a cultural asset and a "new art form" (McLennan, 2007; Fricker, 2008 as cited in King, 2018, p. 222). In summary, the thesis suggests that the digitalization and mediation of classical music concerts are definitely influencing the perception of the genre by adding a different possibility of understanding and a refreshed perspective of the whole concept of the artistic experience. In addition, the digital services have shown to have a much greater social and aesthetic potential than just being a digital representation of a live performance. The international health crisis derived from the COVID-19 virus has been the perfect frame to understand the fundamental role that the digital services play in today's society, maximizing their potential and their scope to unlimited boundaries. Although the countries' physical borders were closed during the COVID-19 health crisis, the social exchange around cultural goods prevailed through digital channels, revealing that the digital social interaction has become a cornerstone in the structural grounds of the current society.

KEYWORDS: art, classical music, digital platforms, artistic digital experience, aesthetic perception, COVID-19

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Personally, music has always been a meaningful endeavour that implies wonderful opportunities and indescribable emotional satisfactions. To perform an academic research about music has been a remarkable challenge that enriched my personal and professional growth in many unexpected ways. The particular social and cultural circumstances around these days helped me realize that while being far from my own culture and roots, music and creativity help to bring people together, offering new possibilities and panoramas for interpersonal communication and cultural emancipation. Being far from everything I know is not easy, but the multicultural artistic surrounding of this city is very inspiring. I am thankful for every part of this process, mainly for the challenges and uncertainties that encouraged me to keep learning and growing. Moreover, by doing this research I had the opportunity to meet new people that have brought great joy to my life and that taught me invaluable life lessons.

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1. Introduction

In the past years the music has been facing significant changes related to its consumption, production and distribution; mostly derived from the latest developments in the media technologies and the widespread use of the internet as a key element for accessibility (Arditi, 2018). The digital era has also increased the availability of music globally, changing the social dynamics by offering a vast cultural source fully reachable for younger generations (Webster, 2019). On these grounds, classical music marketing, production and distribution has been developing and changing according to the current aesthetic perceptions and cultural demands of the society, consequently, the digital era has brought new ways of listening and appreciating art. To that end, the main goal of the research is to understand how the digitalization of classical music is influencing the listeners' perception of the genre, the music and the performances through digital platforms, in contrast to live performances.

According to Durkheim's idea of collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1995) and Benjamin's (2010) reproducibility of the art, the aesthetic perception of art has been strongly linked to the artistic *aura* (Benjamin, 2010) and to the collectiveness of the ritualistic experience (Durkheim, 1995), restricting the artistic experience to a physical presence, but how are the new technologies; such as live streaming affecting the appreciation process? Which is the individual perception of a concert as a ritual without being physically there? Considering *ritual* as a "situational entertainment process when two or more participants assemble around a common focus of attention" (Dimaggio et al., 2018), the experience of attending a live concert triggers a sense of community and high-energy emotions reached via the aesthetic significance of the ritual itself (Collins, 2014). Based on these concepts, one of the goals is to understand if the emotional energy of a live performance is still palpable when perceiving music through the digital platforms or if the known emotional characteristics of the collective ritual are suitable to chance in a collective digital experience. Additionally to this literature, throughout the research I strive to elucidate on the potential benefits, risks and implications derived from the implementation of the digital technologies on classical music, including arguments concerning accessibility, internationalization, democratization of art and cultural participation.

Through semi-structured interviews, the research attempts to explore the digital innovation of classical music concert experiences and how their aesthetic perception could be considered a cultural asset and a "new art form" (McLennan 2007 & Fricker 2008, as cited in King 2018, p. 222). The research is structured in the following way. First, I present the relevant literature building on some of the perception theories of the aesthetic elements such as Berlyne's collative and arousal theory (Chmiel & Schubert, 2017), appraisal theories (Silvia, 2005) and the flow theory (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), pursuing to build a theoretical frame constructed from different interpretations and approaches for a similar phenomenon. Second, I move into the theoretical sociocultural aspects of the digital platforms considering the potential benefits and risks of the digital artistic experience itself. Third, I present and explain the selected methods to perform the data collection and further analyse the results according to qualitative thematic coding. Here, I also expose the main academic repercussions on this thesis derived by the international health crisis originated by the virus COVID-19[1], which impacted profoundly the social and civic structure, directly affecting this investigation and the methodology process. The COVID-19 topic was included in the research because it brought unprecedented consequences in the performing arts, situation that lead to a boost of the digital platforms and live streams. In addition, most of the interviewees draw upon this topic and its implications in the cultural sector, moreover the interview did not include any direct question related to the repercussions of the virus, for this reason, these inputs were organically and naturally brought by the interviewees. Fourth, by systematically analysing the collected data based on thematic maps, I create links and tentative relations between the results and the theory presented on the literature, in order to build stronger foundations that would help to find the answers to the research question. Lastly I conclude with my observations grounded on the analysis of the results and I discuss the potential answers to the research question, trying to contribute with significant data to the existing social and aesthetic theories on the topic and aiming to broaden the understanding of the aesthetic element of arts and its perception in the digital era.

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[1] "COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally" (World Health Organization, 2020).

Nowadays, the digital platforms have revealed to be a mass-phenomenon with an impressive potential in regards to audience engagement and art accessibility. In 2013, the New York Metropolitan Opera broadcast 10 productions in more than 2,000 movie theatres in 64 different countries, with a digital attendance of more than 2.5 million viewers (King, 2018). In terms of communication and media, these numbers show how the digital platforms have been rapidly increasing (Webster, 2019) since the digital revolution has permeated almost every social structure (Enhuber, 2015), underlining the academic relevance to have a deeper understanding of their social benefits, risks and limitations. The findings presented in this research pursue to enrich the existing academic theories related to the implementation of digital tools in the art world, more specifically on the fields of aesthetic perception and collectiveness, which are topics on continuous development. Likewise, the research also aims to provide insightful knowledge for professionals on the field of digital platforms and live streams that could help to develop a better understanding of the digital audiences and their expectations associated with content and stream quality. Finally, the provided outcomes also contribute to the study of the digital platforms from a cultural policy perspective, highlighting some discussions that should be considered in the decision-making process of the governments and cultural organizations in relation to art consumption and distribution.

2. Theoretical framework

In the context of the present research, I pursue to build a theoretical framework based on a multi-angled literature constructed of aesthetic and social theories concerning the digital artistic experience. Far from judging or comparing theories, the whole aim is to generate a theoretical space where they can co-exist and feed from each other in a symbiotic way. I start by recasting some of Berlyne's (Chmiel & Schubert, 2017) collative variables such as novelty and complexity in the appraisal structure of interest described by Silvia (2005), the juxtaposition of concepts can closely relate to some of the subjective challenges described in the flow theory (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). From a similar perspective, I employ Small's (1999) research on stimuli and sensory experience with the goal to complement the appraisal argument and I present the term *musicking* (Small, 1999) to interlink the perception theories with the physicality statement of the interaction rituals (Collins, 2014). From this point, the literature focuses on the features of the digital platforms such as mediation (Davis, 2012) and liveness (Auslander, 2008), highlighting their practicalities and social implications.

2.1. The aesthetic perception and the emotional experience

According to a simple and broad definition of the word "aesthetic", it generally refers to the appreciation of beauty, but the subjectivity that prevails in such concepts like beauty and appreciation obstructs the creation of a solid unified definition of the term. For this reason, the goal must not be to find a universal definition of beauty, but instead, go deeper in the common cognitive process that makes the individual realize the beauty and generate an aesthetic experience (Park, 1994). The relationship between art and emotions has been a subject of profound research, there have been numerous theories and studies focused on first, the actual existence of such relationship (Juslin, 2013; Silvia, 2005) and two, the emotions and factors that are involved and responsible for the particular individual emotional perception of art (Juslin, 2013). In order to understand the relation between music and emotions, it is crucial to take in consideration that to humans, music is always related to *meaning*. In other words, humans decode sounds, make an interpretation and finally, act accordingly to the connotation (Juslin, 2013). According to some theories, this three-step pattern in music interpretation is almost unconscious since music making and its

appreciation is not a matter of human adaptation, it is an innate human drive (Perlovsky, 2010). In this regard, one of the most influential theories developed during the second half of the 20th century was Berlyne's psychophysical theory on aesthetics, which central argument states that "every behaviour, including aesthetic activity, must be related to biological structures" (Cupchik, 1986, p. 349), focusing the individual aesthetic preference on the role of arousal (Chmiel & Schubert, 2017), this means that variations in the pain/pleasure are directly related to fluctuations on arousal (Cupchik, 1986). According to Berlyne's theory, the level of arousal and hence, artistic preference would be determined by three main variables: psychophysical, ecological and collative. Psychophysical variables relate to the biological stimulus-response relationships (Cupchik, 1986), the ecological variables impact arousal based on previous personal associations and meanings (Chmiel & Schubert, 2017) and the collative variables, which are the most significant determinants of preference, connect with the viewers judgment and evaluative elements of a stimulus (Chmiel & Schubert, 2017; Cupchik, 1986). As listed by Chmiel and Schubert (2017, p. 887), some examples of the main collative variables include "complexity, novelty/familiarity, change, conflict, surprisingness, uncertainty, interestingness and ambiguity". These variables impact directly on the individual experience with the aesthetic object and the fluctuations of pleasure are relative to the arousal derived from the stimulus-response relationships (Cupchik, 1986). A simple interpretation of the arousal model could be captured in Berlyne's inverted U curve, where low levels of complexity and high levels of familiarity could be perceived as less interesting for the individual, while high levels of complexity or low levels of familiarity could result as not understandable and dislikeable. **See Figure 1**.
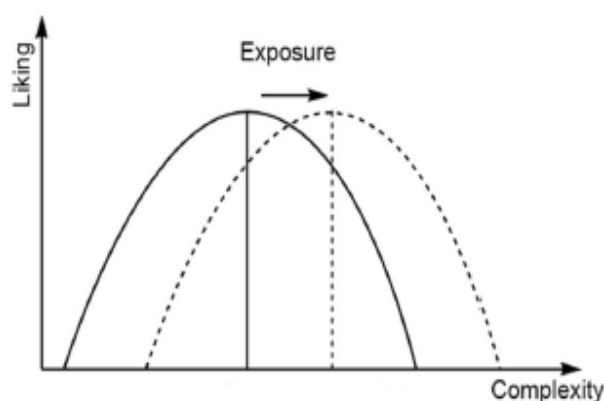

Figure 1. Berlyne's inverted U curve. Adapted from "Repeated listening increases the liking for music regardless of its complexity: implications for the appreciation and aesthetics of music" by Madison & Schiolde, 2017, *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, *11*(Mar), p.

Despite the fact that Berlyne's collative and arousal theory has been discarded by academics such as Dickie and Margolis (Cupchik, 1986) on the grounds of "the logical difference between understanding a language and drawing scientific conclusions from data" (Dickie, 1962, as cited in Cupchik, 1986, p. 352) and the reductionist approach of aesthetic elements and cultural aspects into simply physical elements (Cupchik, 1986); some key elements such as *novelty/familiarity* and *complexity* remain as undisputed features that influence the interest (and appreciation) on art (Silvia, 2005).

In pursuance for a more comprehensive understanding of the emotions derived from the aesthetic experience, the appraisal theory has enriched the research field of the *emotional artistic experience*, focusing in a more subjective and contextual approach, based on a personal understanding of the aesthetic elements (Silvia, 2005). The central concept of the appraisal theory finds its grounds on the assumption that the cause of the individual emotional experience is the subjective evaluation of the events (i.e. appraisal), and not the event itself (Roseman & Smith, 2001). In other words, there is no question on the fact that events will evoke emotions, but the emotions are not coming from the event itself, but from the subjective and personal interpretation of each event. This means that the same person will perceive different emotions from the same event at different times; likewise, many different events can cause the same emotion for any given person. On the other hand, the groups of personal evaluations are defined as appraisal structures and each emotion is perceived under a specific appraisal structure. For the specific purposes of the present paper, it would be pertinent to consider Silvia's example (2005, p. 5) of the appraisal structures of *interest*: "Some emotions have small, simple appraisal structures. The emotion of interest, for example, has two appraisals: an appraisal of something as new, unexpected, or complex and an appraisal of one's ability to comprehend the new, complex thing". In the frame of appraisal theory, there is no room for a concept as *objective complexity*, since the object will only be perceived as *complex* as long as the person appraises the object as *complex*, which will depend on many different factors. Silvia (2005) also suggests that according to the appraisal structures that evoke artistic interest, attraction grow proportionally in relation to the novelty factor and in the ability to understand and decode the complexity of the art based on cognitive judgements. In addition, Small (1999) contributes to the topic by remarking that the sensory experience is an active and creative process in which the individual creates a subjective meaning of the stimulus, "the receiver

creates the context in which the message has meaning" (Small, 1999, p. 14). For this reason, it is not possible to think in the idea of *objective knowledge*, since everything that could be learned or known is mediated by the individual and the meaning of such stimuli is created and converted subjectively into useable knowledge (Small, 1999). For this reason, emotional responses related to music are not spontaneous; they are the result of a complex combination between thoughts and behaviour related to what music means, considering that the meaning resides "in the mutual relationship established at any given moment in time between particular listeners and musical events" (Juslin & Becker, 2012).

In connection with the present research, a possible link can be built around the concept of *novelty*, not only referring to the artistic novelty *per se*, but also to the technological innovation that involves new ways of engagement and participation creating a different experience of art through digital platforms (Enhuber, 2015). This specific factor could develop into new connections through technological devices that may arise the interest and curiosity of new audiences. In the context of art, Enhuber (2015, p.123) defines digitalization as "the use of the digitised physical content in a richer, virtual reality different from the original art space" and suggests that the digitalization of art could maximise the awareness and curiosity of the audience towards the original art space.

The notion of "digital performance" is a broad concept that in modern times presupposes many different factors and features, but shortly could be defined as "all performance works where computer technologies play a key role rather than a subsidiary one in content, techniques, aesthetics, or delivery forms" (Dixon, 2007, as cited in Davis, 2012, p. 503). Moreover, in recent years, artistic and cultural organizations have innovated the performance experience by involving digital tools and applications (Davis, 2012). With the appearance of the digital platforms, the interpretation of the interaction and correlation between the aesthetic object and the aesthetic experience has developed into a new dimension. According to Udsen and Jørgensen (2005), interactive devices and digital systems involved with arts should ensure a pleasant engagement with the user by using emotional and intellectual metaphors, which at the end could rebrand the digital interface into an actual expressive form. When the arts broadened their scope by endorsing the digital platforms, the device itself (e.g. computer) became the artistic aesthetic object, abandoning its former perception as a merely screen representation, from an artistic perspective (Udsen & Jørgensen, 2005). This position makes an important breakthrough by

understanding the interface as a cultural object itself able to arise human emotions and reflections.

It is significant to highlight the fact that the appraisal theories recast in the appraisal structure of *interest* some of the collative variables listed by Berlyne, such as novelty and complexity. Taking in consideration both theoretical backgrounds, it may be safe to conclude that the novelty and complexity features are key elements to boost audience interest towards a work of art. In addition and considering the premise from Udsen and Jørgensen (2005) where the interface is considered as a cultural object itself, it may be relevant to point out that the digital art space does not aim to replace the original artistic experience, but to supplement it (Enhuber, 2015). For this reason, the appraisal structures that are used to evaluate the original artistic experience will be different from the appraisal structures that are involved in a live streaming experience, nevertheless, according to the assumptions of the appraisal theory, the emotional outcome between the two experiences could be very similar.

2.1.1. The flow theory

Closely related to the *subjectivity* argument of the appraisal theory, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) developed the concept of *flow*, which can be defined as a self-motivated cognitive process of entire awareness and consciousness of the aesthetic experience. Likewise, the flow premise states that "it is the subjective challenges and subjective skills, not objective ones, that influence the quality of a person's experience" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 242). In the frame of the present research, if we transpose the *flow* concept to the aesthetic experience, art perception is an individual activity that subjectively challenges our codification and interpretation skills, where aspects such as knowledge and familiarity could determine the experience and its perception by increasing the *flow*. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) relate the main concepts of the flow theory with the creation process, but on this research, I pursue to construct an eloquent approach to the concept of *flow* from the appreciation perspective formulating a discourse on how some specific elements such as complexity, familiarity and knowledge could potentially improve the aesthetic experience, even though when it is perceived over a digital platform.

Under a *state of flow*, audiences reach a cognitive awareness that develops into full involvement, achieving an optimal artistic experience. In order to reach such a state, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) identify attention as a key element. Moreover, the literature defines intense concentration as a fundamental quality of the *flow* and since attention is a finite process, consciousness is the abstraction of the processed information. As it has been described, the subjective choices taken during the experience are a critical element, since the attention is a finite process complemented by goals and challenges that keep the individual operating at full capacity. In this self-cognitive process, the self can find a wide scope of subjective challenges and skills.

Chilton (2013) affirms that the state of flow is the perfect balance between anxiety and apathy, where the cognitive challenges are complex enough to keep the attention, but not too complex to let the apathy prevail. According to the literature, one of the main features of the concept of *flow* is that it offers long lasting positive effects on the individual well-being, rather than an ephemeral rush of pleasure and satisfaction, building on the emotional capital for future experiences (Chilton, 2013).

Starting from the idea that the digital revolution has permeated almost every human space, the art and cultural organizations have consequently tried to adapt and follow the technological pace (Enhuber, 2015). Building on the assumption from Udsen and Jørgensen (2005) where the digital devices are considered the aesthetic object itself, the recast of concepts such as novelty and complexity acquire an essential role in the understanding of the aesthetic experience via the digital platforms. First, given the novelty/familiarity feature of the digital devices in the postmodern societies, the interest towards digital forms of art may potentially increase creating a different artistic experience. Secondly, with the digital platforms, and specifically, through live streams; the music is connected to a visual image, creating a storyline that could result in a more accessible representation by helping to generate a context in which the aesthetic message has a meaning (Small, 1999). Through adapting these two concepts in the digital live streams, it may be possible to reach a perfect balance between anxiety and apathy (i.e. flow), resulting in different forms of enjoyment derived from an "optimal" self-state towards the artistic experience.

2.2. The concert as a ritual and its effects on audiences

According to O'Sullivan (2009) research on audiences as consuming communities, the author claims that music has the potential to generate and consolidate communities based on their specific relation to sound, nevertheless, the aesthetic perception is an individual and autonomous process that creates an own and particular version of the event even when it involves multiple spectators (O'Sullivan, 2009). In the context of this research, I strive to understand the importance of the collective experience in the ritual of the artistic performance based on the premise of physical proximity and bodily presence. Taking this in consideration, throughout the research, I will attempt to find an argument that can help to take a clear position on the subject, understanding and defining which outcomes of the Interaction Ritual (Collins, 2014) are demonstrable to happen in the digital platforms.

Collins (2014) explains that the Interaction Ritual (IR) is mainly formed by: a group of people in the same place, boundaries that delimitate who participates in the ritual, focus of attention on a common object and sharing of emotions and experiences with other participants. All these described elements sustain a symbiotic relation with each other, enriching themselves from the others. Moreover, the self-awareness of being part of the ritual increases the awareness of others, which immediately exalts the so-called effervescence. In addition, the intersubjectivity tradition also argues that sharing the experience with multiple subjects enhances consciousness and emotions during the ritual. Theorizing on Collins (2014, p. 49), the IR has specific outcomes such as: "group solidarity, emotional energy, symbols of group representation and feelings of morality". Nevertheless, Collins delimits the IR by conditioning it to the physical proximity of the participant members. However, recent studies (Dimaggio et al., 2018; Maloney, 2013) argue that peer identification through online real-time interactivity could potentially engender similar outcomes of the ones described in the IR theory, disregarding the physical proximity as a essential factor. Through this research, I attempt to identify these outcomes within an audience by contrasting their experiences between a live concert and a digital live stream; trying to find a significant pattern related to perception and immersion effect that responds to the interaction ritual theory.

Collins (2014) constructs his main IR theory on grounds of the Durkheimian socio-religious foundations (Maloney, 2013). In a nutshell, Durkheim elaborates on the idea that the sacred world is expressed via the community rituals, where the individuals can forget

about the daily responsibilities for a moment and through the ritual can achieve unrestrained passions and feelings that are a considerable spiritual highlight, in comparison to the daily routine (Durkheim, 1995). This extremely passionate state is the result of sharing the ritual process with the rest of the community members, generating a collective sentiment of togetherness. This collectiveness is a fundamental aspect of the ritual, since it creates an *effervescence* that could even take the individual to the point of not recognizing even himself. The repetition of these rituals and hence the effervescence feeling, will generate natural strong feelings of spirituality, solidarity and belief (Maloney, 2013).

Elaborating on Collins' (2014) IR theory, there can be successful and failed rituals, the latter are emotionally demanding and exhausting, generating feelings of boredom and constraint plus a lack of effervescence and collectiveness. In order to avoid a failed ritual, the presence of human bodies is essential, since closeness and awareness of other human bodies is a primary ingredient of any ritual. According to the author, the experience of belonging to the ritual is what ultimately matters, even above the quality of perception. "Bodily presence makes it easier for human beings to monitor each other's signals and bodily expressions; to get into shared rhythm, caught up in each other's motions and emotions; and to signal and confirm a common focus of attention and thus a state of intersubjectivity." (Collins, 2014, p. 64).

Concerning this assumption, some scholars have argued that the Interaction Rituals are "generic to human communication" (Dimaggio et al., 2018, p. 2), since they are still suitable to happen even over digital platforms. Elaborating on the fact that despite online communication lacks essential aspects according to Collins theory, such as shared "physicality" and "temporal synchrony", Dimaggio et al. (2018) build an argument explaining how digital communication can still form successful interaction rituals in social media platforms. Acknowledging the relevance of the "multi-sensorial" and "physical synchronicity" (Dimaggio et al., 2018, p. 4) features of the face-to-face interaction, it has been proven that "neurons implicated in producing physical synchrony face-to-face can be activated by purely auditory stimuli" (Lizardo, 2007, as cited in Dimaggio, et al., 2018, p. 8), opening the door for online communication to achieve physical synchronicity through virtual interaction. Moreover, research on shared attention has confirmed that when people share their focus on an object together with others, they show an improvement in their memory abilities, a bigger motivation when action is required and exacerbated emotions; however

these features depend only on belief and not on physical co-presence (Shteynberg, 2015, as cited in Dimaggio, et al., 2018, p. 8-9), recasting the IR theory outcomes such as solidarity and emotional energy as also achievable components of the virtual interaction, overlooking the physical co-presence as a primary element for a successful IR.

From a similar perspective, Small (1999) introduced the term *musicking* to refer to the action "to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance" (Small, 1999, p. 12), not only as a performer but also as a listener or as any other member that makes the music performance possible. Following the construction of the concept of *musicking*, Small (1999) acknowledged that the musical performance involves an encounter between humans where inter-relational meanings beyond the music itself are being generated in relation to the social and physical space. From this perspective, the musical performance and the meanings generated within a particular physical space is only a part of the whole social meaning of the performance, this means that "the physical space shapes the social space" (Small, 1999, p. 16).

2.3. Mediation, immediacy and liveness

Technological innovation in the field of media will inevitably be competitive with each other (Davis, 2012), leading to Auslander's (2008) premise that media are not equal and audience perception will tend to be more sensitive and influenced by the current dominant media. Accordingly, nowadays live performances are happening in a cultural context where the online activity and video projection are more closely related to the dominant digital media, than the body-present experiences, arising inevitable implications in the audience perception of the artistic experience (Auslander, 2008). In order to go deeper in this idea, it is important to identify the components of the concept of innovation: novelty, creativity and a break with the past (Godin, 2012).

Davis (2012) and Auslander (2008) have added substantial insights to the topic from the perspective of *mediation*, *immediacy* and *liveness*. Within the cultural frame, *mediation* relates to the process of externalization of ideas or expressions, not only through technological tools, but also through the use language itself, as a primary tool to exteriorize expression (Davis, 2012); hence the critical importance of the aesthetic goals that want to be transmitted to the audience and the strategy build around to achieve the purpose. Davis (2012, p. 507) mentions that "mediation tools enable a sense of immediate connectedness,

a direct affective experience and pleasure." On the other hand, the term *immediacy* alludes to the communication process that aims to reduce the distance between stakeholders, encouraging a closer connection with each other. Davis (2012, p. 507) points out that *immediacy* implies "audience members experiencing an emotional response, a feeling of pleasure or sense of connection." When the mediation tools are invisible to the user/audience and do not obstruct the experience, then the immediacy factor will be easier to accomplish.

These concepts are closely linked to Auslander's (2008 p. 196) perception of *liveness*, which according to him should involve "physical and temporal co-presence of performer and audience", but through the digital platforms, we can experience both, temporality of perceiving the performance as it is actually happening and presence, which can be palpable over direct feedback given via social media, since there is a response from a distant spectator, making the feedback the ultimate quality of the *liveness* concept. These three concepts (mediation, immediacy and liveness) offer a relevant academic approach to the understanding of the digital platforms and bring an important input to the present research. The use of digital technologies and social platforms in the cultural sphere can produce a sense of connection and liveness in the audience, offering an opportunity to experience the digital performance under a different scope. Audiences are constantly searching for connections that would allow more real, intense and gratifying experiences; a task that puts the technical innovations and mediation languages in the spotlight (Davis, 2012). These three concepts will be further operationalized in the research, attempting to gather substantial data that could enrich the understanding of the *live* concept through digital platforms.

2.4. Modes of consumption, sociability and networking

Moving forward on audiences and modes of consumption, framed in Bourdieu's (2010) approach to the social distribution of lifestyles, Jarness (2015) compiles a qualitative research based on how people appropriate the same cultural goods and in which ways this capital is perceived and engaged by the audiences. The relevance of this research based in Norway almost 40 years after Bourdieu's study, is the approach towards cultural consumption, moving from the "what" to the "how", focusing the attention in the modes of consumption, rather than in cultural objects. Similarly, Jarness (2015) pursues to construct

and understand class relations within social actors in relation to cultural taste and aesthetic preferences. With this goal Jarness (2015) identified and categorized the modes of consumption in the intellectual mode, the luxurious mode, the educational mode and the practical mode. These modes are significantly different from each other, despite the fact that they all are referring to the same cultural activity. Briefly, the consumption modes (Jarness, 2015) are: the intellectual mode, which connects to the audiences whose art consumption is perceived as a purpose itself, the joy and motivation comes from the purest aesthetic pleasure. The luxurious mode includes those consumers whose main purpose is to acquire cultural capital that could be exchanged into material goods or social benefits, here the aesthetic value is not the main reason, the motivations are more related to socialising. The educational mode relates to the group of consumers that finds their motivations in the possibility to learn and educate themselves, most of the time approaching from a basic knowledge of the cultural world. The practical mode refers to those audiences which will only consume cultural goods, as long as these can be practical, useful and necessary; for them art must represent something real and commonly known. Taking this in consideration, the artistic performance could potentially shape the social identity and consolidate a community whose perception may be determined by the socioeconomic conditions (O'Sullivan, 2009). The characteristics and particular conditions of the place/venue could be a crucial factor to ignite individual emotions and particular interest, given the context and surrounding.

Contrary to Jarness' (2015) model of cultural consumption based on taste and class, Lahire (2008) argues that the social sphere should focus on the individual, not as a representative of a class, but as a intra-individual lead by mixed circumstances more than taste, opening the possibility for non-singular and dynamic modes of consumption. "In order to grasp these most individual of realities, we should neither adhere to the notion of an irreducible singularity in the destiny of individuals […], but should rather focus our attention on the collective structure of the societies which have engendered them" (Lahire, 2008, p. 172). Additionally, Lahire (2008) sustains that habitual cultural practices can also occur disregarding taste or personal interest, cultural activities may also respond to different motivations such as mandatory activities related to school or professional obligations. Consequently, certain modes of consumption will be derived from "the plurality of groups

(or of institutions) and the multiplicity of social living environments that each individual is likely to come into contact with simultaneously" (Lahire, 2008, p. 172).

Within the frame of this research, the relevance of the academic dissertations regarding the modes of consumption will help to build a deeper understanding towards the motivations of the audiences to consume certain cultural goods, considering the intra-individual perspective and the circumstances around the cultural consumption. In pursuance for a clearer taxonomy of the participants of this research and their reasons for consuming artistic content, their personal intakes will be analysed considering Jarness' (2005) different modes of consumption and the intra-individual variations of cultural practices described by Lahire (2008).

2.5. Streaming platforms: Accessibility, practicalities and social implications

In recent years, the audience engagement potential of the Internet and social media has been rapidly increasing; as reported by Webster (2019) and Arditi (2018) the Internet can refresh the public sphere and turn the social dynamics composing new forms of consumption among the art world. The digital feature of the streaming platforms offers the possibility of remote and affordable access, broadening the scope of potential audiences by making the classical music experience accessible almost for everyone. In this regard, Webster (2019) argues that based on the accessibility and inclusion of the digital platforms, many of the old-fashioned paradigms related to elitism and class divisions in classical music could be diminished. Adding on this thought, Van Eijck (2018, p. 94-95) argues that by "weakening the cultural boundaries" and renewing the classical concert format into a more relaxed and informal concept; newer and younger audiences would find the genre more appealing and less exceptional. Taking this in consideration, the digital platforms have proved to be an alternative that could fulfil such demands. Recently, the digital platforms have risen as an important tool for many different cultural organizations, offering international/remote accessibility to the performances at lower costs and with high broadcasting quality. When the New York Metropolitan Opera presented their live streaming platform, the main goal was to make the performances more accessible for the audience in terms of price and location. Since then, the productions have been broadcasted live to 4 different continents, including the transmission of the 2008-2009 Season Gala outside in Times Square, making it one of the most successful events in terms of audience

attendance, besides the New Year festivities (Heyer, 2008). In 2013, the New York Metropolitan Opera broadcasted 10 productions in more than 2,000 movie theatres in 64 different countries, with a digital attendance of more than 2.5 million viewers (King, 2018). In relation to the very wide scope and reaching potential of the digital platforms, another interesting example can be drawn based on the reports provided by the digital platform Medici.tv concerning the performance of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra on March 23th 2018:

1. Video Views

	LIVE	REPLAY	TOTAL	%
website	34,776	11,979	46,755	89%
mobile app	3060	2,980	6,040	11%
total	37,836	14,959	**52,795**	

These digital audiences are demographically distributed in the following way:

3. Geographic Breakdown

Number of countries: 71
Number of cities: 882

Top 10 countries:

1.	Netherlands	26.07%
2.	United States	22.62%
3.	Canada	9.16%
4.	Spain	8.98%
5.	Germany	7.19%
6.	France	5.97%
7.	United Kingdom	3.42%
8.	Mexico	3.29%
9.	Russia	1.6%
10.	Argentina	1.39%

The reports show that the performance was accessed from more than 70 different countries in more than 880 cities around the globe. These numbers demonstrate that there is a high demand by audiences that appreciate and enjoy the digital streaming experience of a performance. Numerous cultural institutions have implemented and invested in their digital platforms experiences for their local and international users, such as ballet and theatre companies, orchestras and museums; all offering a new form of cultural entertainment that could resemble a similar aesthetic experience of attending to the actual event. At this point it is important to highlight that the development of mobile *apps* as a digital resource for cultural organizations has been rapidly growing, showing potential opportunities in relation to marketing strategies and audience engagement (Gosling et al., 2016). Nevertheless, according to previous academic research (Crawford et al., 2014a), some orchestras have attempted to engage new audiences by creating a specific mobile app, but the results show that this platform is not suggested to be the ideal vehicle to engage new listeners, neither to be the a proper substitute of a cultural venue. The main reasons to draw these conclusions are mostly based on technical difficulties and limitations of the app itself, additionally; the digital audiences have different expectations and desired levels of interaction with the app, which will be difficult to standardize given the broad differences between younger and older generations (Gosling et al., 2016). However some other kind of apps and platforms such as *YouTube* or *Spotify* could definitely be an ideal channel to familiarize with the genre (Crawford et al., 2014b).

2.5.1. Benefits of quality and internationalization

Some authors have suggested that the digital streaming of art performances, including music, could be considered a "new art form" (McLennan, 2007; Fricker, 2008 as cited in King, 2018, p. 222), based on the medium and on the substantial differences between the live and the digital experience. From this perspective, King (2018) underlines the visual experience as one of the main discrepancies between the live and the digital audiences. Considering that the audience that attends the venue has a specific seat, their visual experience of the performance will be always from the same angle and from the same position, but with the freedom to individually decide where to direct the attention and for how long. On the contrary, for the live streaming audience, the real seat is not relevant, since the visual experience is mediated through several cameras strategically placed around

the theatre, with the purpose to guide the viewer's attention through the whole performance, building a storyline decided by someone else. On these grounds, King (2018) states that the digital live streams arise intense emotions in the audience, given the fact that they perceive a much closer and detailed perspective from the performers, creating a special bond between audience and artist. The high quality of the broadcasts offers a perspective that no one in the theatre could have; the clear gestures and expressions of the performers are captured and transmitted in a way that awakens unique feelings and emotions in the digital spectators (King, 2018).

Live broadcasts and cinema streams are not only used in classical music, many other cultural organizations have turned into the digital platforms to provide remote access to their audiences offering a new digital experience. Besides the New York Metropolitan Opera and the Digital Concert Hall of the Berlin Philharmonic, King (2018) points out some other successful examples such as the Bolshoi Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet, the Mariinsky Theatre, the Shakespeare Festival and a group of museums and galleries which offer individual virtual exhibitions. Moreover, the productions of these broadcasts add to the digital experience by including some extra material besides the main performance, like interviews and *behind the scenes*. These elements can highly contextualize and generate a higher interest among the digital audiences, something that the attending audiences cannot enjoy. In this sense, the aesthetic experience of both audiences is different, since the performance is being perceived differently, but it is important to realize that the aesthetics are not lost on the digital broadcast, simply different. Besides, it is worth to mention that many of these broadcasts are screened in movie theatres, cinemas and auditoriums, returning to the shared experience between other participants where common emotions and sensations could enhance a similar *effervescence* than the one experienced in the live events.

Heyer (2008) reaches an interesting point when introducing the medium theory, usually associated with McLuhan and Innis, which gives an important agency to the content that has been selected and produced to be transmitted and its consequent impact on the audience. According to the theory, each media codifies and delivers a different result, creating an important distinction in the perception of the original message. Monaco (2000) also states that recorded or broadcasted art performances are a *new mode of discourse*, making an evident differentiation on the perception of the digital audiences and the actual

audiences of the same event. In other words, the aesthetic experience can be perceived and appreciated by both audiences, but it will always be different.

Previous research (King, 2018) confirms that the reduced prices of the digital live streams in comparison to the price of the tickets for the live performance, are an important factor for the audiences, but it is not the decisive reason to attend: "Ticket prices were not a major reason for attending the performances in the cinema rather than the theatre" (King, 2018, p. 225). Furthermore, Enhuber (2015) highlights the importance of creating a digital live space that could be globally distributed and accessible, increasing the democratising effect of the artistic experience.

2.5.2. Participatory turn and democratization

In today's political systems, involving the society in the decision-making processes through participatory models has been an imperative goal for the political and cultural organizations (Saurugger, 2010). The traditional welfare model was originally based on the notions of "citizenship, equality and solidarity" as primary elements (Bakke, 2004, p. 3), but years later the core of the concept became more inclusive, extending its range to "social and economic circumstances, conditions of work, remunerations, the character and scope of the social services, the quality of the environment, recreational facilities, and the cultivation of the arts" (Bakke, 2004, p. 5). Through the evolution of such political systems and its modern application and understanding, the concept of "welfare" has also slightly switched to a more participational strategy (Virolainen, 2016), promoting civic involvement, which at some point would result in the understanding of the current social needs.

A significant part of this transformation is the cultural participation, which has been openly promoted by different norms and state policies stating that "the primary desired outcome of cultural policy is […] actively participating citizens, the promotion of well-being, and the enhancement of the economic impact of culture" (Virolainen, 2016, p. 65). By implementing such policies, the aim is to provide equal accessibility and availability to the cultural services, diminishing the elitist preconception of the arts and fostering an organic audience engagement.

The concept of "participatory culture" was originally created by Henry Jenkins and refers to the new modes of consumption altered by the recent technologies related to media, enabling the regular audiences to participate in the transformation of the content

(Waldron et al., 2018). In this sense, the role of participatory art has grown substantially within the digital culture and the current platforms, since the possibility of interaction and feedback is much wider and accessible (Rutten, 2018). Considering that the engagement process with cultural organizations has changed rapidly in the latest years, the inclusion of the technology has brought many different outcomes in audience participation and social engagement, most of these efforts aim to foster a closer and deeper relation between the organization and the visitor (Wilson-Barnao, 2018).

On these grounds, Walmsley (2016) confirms that the digital platforms have a positive influence on audience engagement by providing contextualization, increasing familiarity with the arts and developing a "closer relationship" with the artists. Furthermore, academic research has shown that the authoritative role of the art/artists has changed through digital participation, giving the audience a bigger agency and a "talk back" feature (Wilson-Barnao, 2018, p. 97) that boosts their creative power and breaks with the paradigm of the institution as an "authority", reducing the distance between the art and the audience.

A central consideration linked with the accessibility and availability argument of the digital platforms, is the concept of cultural democratization which refers to the equal distribution of cultural goods within the population, making it available and affordable to any sector (Virolainen, 2016). In the frame of the participatory turn, democratization not only makes the art more accessible, but also participatory (Walmsley, 2016). Participatory activities offer a transition, from a professional aspect to an average citizen-based perspective, breaking the popular stereotype that arts are exclusively reachable for the elite members of society. On this regard, Evrard (1997) has made an important differentiation between the cultural democratization and democracy. The concept of cultural democratization builds its grounds on the transcendental value of the work of art, which is considered atemporal and often categorized as universal heritage. The democratization aims to spread these cultural goods to a wider audience that normally do not have access to them, mostly because financial or educational reasons. One of the main goals of the democratization is to diminish the cultural disparities within the population (Evrard, 1997).

On the other hand, the term of cultural democracy is grounded on the cultural consumption based on the "immanence" of the art work and individual choice, where the cultural policies do not influence on artistic and/or aesthetic preferences for the masses, on contrary, the policies support the individual choices and focus on maintaining an equal and

fair distribution of the resources (Evrard, 1997, p. 170). The main challenge of the democratic perspective is to define the line between artwork and ordinary objects (Evrard, 1997). Such dichotomy between these two different approaches highlights the discussion on the western-centrism bias in relation to art distribution. Burney (2012) states that Western-centrism is a current "overreaching and predominant" phenomena still present in many different forms, such as social institutions and values, fashion trends and cultural tendencies, which have a great impact and are highly noticeable in colonized countries. "The process of globalization of world economies and the 'normalizing' of the Westernized lifestyles, food, dress, values and cultural practices is endorsed over and above local praxes" (Burney, 2012, p. 163). In the context of this research, both concepts (i.e. democratization and democracy) are considered as a key factor to construct a wider theoretical frame that could help to construct more inclusive and egalitarian cultural policies, considering that "the same work may be perceived differently by various subjects or at different moments in time" (Evrard, 1997, p. 168).

2.5.3. Digital privacy, commercial bias and cannibalization

Despite the potential benefits in the application of digital technologies in the cultural scene, some possible risks and threats should be considered in the day-to-day implementation. According to King (2018), some fundamental elements of the *accessibility* feature of the digital platforms, such as lower "entrance" costs for the user and the easy remote access, could raise a potential risk of cannibalization. This means that the attendance to the actual concert halls, museums or expositions could reduce, given the fact that the digital audiences would grow. King (2018) elaborates on the topic by arguing that a potential competitiveness between live performances and digital broadcasts could mutually diminish their audiences, nevertheless, King (2018, p. 233) confirms that "there is no evidence for this yet". Furthermore, Virolainen (2016) states that the emergence of a digital culture has changed the cultural habits and as a result, live audiences have decreased, increasing the pressure on art organizations to create new ways of engagement and to broaden the access to the artistic experience. At this point it is pertinent to underline that cultural organizations must be careful in focusing solely on increasing audiences and income generation, since this approach is a double-edge sword between the ethical integrity of the organization/art form and the search for revenue (Boyle, 2007).

Moreover, as mentioned before, digital democratization and participation is still limited to a specific social sector capable of affording a digital device and internet access, raising some social concerns. Digital platforms such as YouTube and Facebook foster the relationship user-artists by promoting more interaction between them, nevertheless, such platforms have a commercial bias which could interfere with the original artistic and cultural purpose (Rutten, 2018). It is essential to also include Enhuber's (2015) observation collected from the data analysis of the Tate Museum website visitors, showing that the global accessibility to the digital platforms is still bound to Western-allocated users who have the technical equipment to do it (e.g. updated computer and fast internet connection), excluding a vast number of people living in less developed countries and with different technological conditions. Consequently, there is still a predominant westernised bias in the targeted audience and, hence, in the content of the platforms. In this context, the research of Arora (2012) regarding online user activity is quite enlightening, stating that despite the socio-economic gap between "Third" and "First" world countries, the digital content and computer use will be mainly focused on *frivolous* and *trivial* purposes in both cases (Arora, 2012). For this reason, it may be naïve to expect that by providing equal access opportunities to digital streaming platforms, people will automatically consume classical music in a digital format, understanding that "entertainment is a key tool here with class taking a backseat" (Arora, 2012, p. 99).

Finally, audience participation through digital platforms such as Facebook or YouTube also collect personal data of the users with commercial purposes, helping to create an algorithm that predicts audience interests and behaviours (Wilson-Barnao, 2018). In this regard, the information-sharing process between users and their digital interconnectivity, maximized by social network sites and digital platforms, have brought different risks linked to user privacy violations (Houghton & Joinson, 2010). Understanding privacy as ''the selective control of access to the self'' (Altman, 1975, as cited in Houghton & Joinson, 2010, p. 76), the emerging risks of trading personal data through online platforms have evolved to the point of potentially harming the user physically and psychologically (Houghton & Joinson, 2010). Additionally, privacy is strongly related to control, this means that those who own the data are also able to control the user activity and influence on the decision-making process. In the context of this research, it is important to understand that the user shares personal data in exchange to be able to see and participate in live streams and cultural

activities, therefore, some of the so-called *free* platforms such as YouTube and Facebook are getting their revenues from marketing strategies and personalized algorithms derived from the personal data exchanged by the users.

3. Research question and sub questions

The digital platforms have revealed to be a mass-phenomenon with an impressive potential in regards to audience engagement and art accessibility. In terms of communication and media, the digital platforms have been rapidly increasing (Webster, 2019) since the digital revolution has permeated almost every social structure (Enhuber, 2015), underlining the academic relevance to have a deeper understanding of their social benefits, risks and limitations. This research pursues to enrich the existing academic theories related to the implementation of digital tools in the art world, more specifically on the fields of aesthetic perception and collectiveness. To that end, the main goal of the research is to understand how the digitalization of classical music is influencing the listeners' perception of the genre, the music and the performances through digital platforms, in contrast to live performances.

Through the research I will contribute with significant data to the existing social and aesthetic theories on the topic and aim to broaden the understanding of the aesthetic element of the arts and its perception in the digital era.

Linked to the main research question, other sub-questions arise:
- How are the aesthetic and emotional experiences of the audience structured through digital platforms?
- Is the artistic experience through digital platforms aesthetically comparable with the live performance?
- How influential is the collectiveness feature of an audience for the ritualistic experience?
- Which are the social implications of this technology in terms of accessibility and democratization?

4. Methods

In order to understand and evaluate the subjective aspect of individual aesthetic perceptions and personal emotions, the data collection consisted of interviews, a widely recognized method for qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). The analysis is grounded on 18 interviews constituted by standardized semi-structured open-ended questions, to provide in-depth results of the topic (Turner, 2010). Consequently, the interviewees will also be able to express themselves in their own terms, making the results more authentic and significant (Jarness, 2015). The list of questions was designed to collect specific information pointing to draw patterns in the audience behaviour and perception, but also trying to get a personal insight from each interviewee, fostering new paths of reflection. The main themes addressed in the interviews were the aesthetic perceptions and emotional responses to the digital platforms, the collectiveness influence of the ritualistic experience and the personal relationship between the interviewee and the classical music. The research is based on a thematic analysis methodology, since its flexible approach offers an abundant and detailed insight of the collected data (Nowell et al., 2017). Besides, the thematic analysis is a helpful method for examining the opinions and perspectives of the interviewees, offering clear similarities and differences, but more importantly, highlighting new and unexpected approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the section of *Analysis and Operationalization* I will explain in detail how I applied the theories included in the literature in the questions for the interviews and also on the analysis.

4.1. COVID-19 methodological implications

It is important to mention that on March 11th 2020, during the whole data collection process of the research, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 an international pandemic[2], calling governments of all countries to take urgent and aggressive actions to reduce the transmission of the virus[3]. This situation affected profoundly all kinds of social events, resulting in the cancellation of many cultural activities including concerts, operas and live streams; without a clear forecast of when these activities would be permitted again. As expected, the situation triggered a drastic change in the whole functionality of our society, limiting the individual contact with the outside and avoiding all

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[2] WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020
[3] New measures to stop spread of coronavirus in the Netherlands

kinds of social gatherings. Due to the described situation, the methodology and data collection process of the whole research was impossible to carry out as originally planned; therefore, a new scheme for collecting data was implemented and will be described further.

Originally, this thesis was focused on three main digital streaming platforms: Medici.tv, Met Opera On Demand and the Concertgebouw stream platform. Relying on these three different streaming platforms the aim was to gather the data from a comparable phenomenon, but from different perspectives, namely a collective screening and individual streaming of live performances. Methodologically, the data collection was planned to be done via case studies of the mentioned platforms, face-to-face interviewing and participant observation, nevertheless the participant observation was impossible to do and the case studies linked to the three main digital platforms became irrelevant, since they would not be linked anymore to the interviewees, due to the impossibility to find them in physical places. The original collection of the data was planned to be done from February 29th to March 23rd in three locations of The Netherlands, with the objective to get a broad sample of participants. The plan was to find the interviewees in the following sites:

- **Pathé Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam**: During the live streams of the Metropolitan Opera in February and March, this location was selected to find potential interviewees and to conduct participant observation.

- **De Doelen in Rotterdam**: This location was selected to find potential participants who have a subscription to the Medici.tv platform. Following the logic that some of the concerts of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra are streamed via Medici.tv. The interviewee recruitment was planned to be done during one concert in March.

- **Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam**: This location was selected to find the interviewees who access frequently to the live broadcasts of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. The interviewee recruitment was planned to be done during one concert in March.

The selection of participants/units was planned to be done by criterion sampling "to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, thereby explicitly (or implicitly) comparing the criterion cases with those that do not manifest the criterion." (Patton, 2014, p. 425). The results also would have included the data collected

through participant observation. Doing so I was going to be able to observe behavior, reactions and possibly hear conversations with useful information (Bryman, 2012). At a later stage, I was going to arrange one-on-one interviews with the participants and I was going to record them.

4.2. Data collection

As mentioned before, the COVID-19 international outbreak changed completely the data collection plans for the research. The present chapter provides the new data collection plan and how it was adapted to its final version observing the new regulations. After the governmental health measures taken due to the COVID-19, the Netherlands prohibited all kinds of social gatherings, hence, concerts, operas and streamings were called-off. Besides, people were ordered to stay at home and avoid going outside and all kinds of social contact. Such implementations in the civic order demanded a new approach for the research, given the fact that the data collection was not possible to carry out as planned. For this reason and in close consultation with my supervisor, I implemented a different approach to the subject, trying to keep the main essence of the original research question.

The data for the research was collected through qualitative semi-structured online interviews and the analysis is grounded on 18 interviews constituted by 9 standardized open-ended questions. In the new strategy, the participants were sought and selected via social networks and digital platforms, mainly Facebook and emailing lists. Consequently, the sampling frame resulted in a combination of criterion-base case selection and snowball sampling. The point of the criterion-based sampling is to collect richer information from people with some knowledge and self-involvement on the subject (Patton, 2014), in this specific case I was looking for available users/customers/subscribers of digital stream platforms, this means, people that would have experienced some kind of classical music digital live stream at least once. In addition, snowball sampling was employed when the initial contact with a group was used to establish contact with other potential interested participants (Bryman, 2012).

In mid-March I conducted a research of potential channels and networks that could have subscribers that may be potentially interested in the topic. Later, I designed and posted a "call for action", seeking participants that would involve themselves in the research and would be willing to provide a digital interview via Skype or any other digital

communication platform. The original message is included in the *Appendix C* of the present research.

The message was published on Facebook as a "post" more than 10 times in different groups of potential candidates, moreover, it was used as a "comment" in the several publications of important cultural organizations, such as Medici.tv, Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and more. In addition, the message was included in the newsletter of the GAMPSISS project (Gameful Music Performances for Smart, Inclusive, and Sustainable Societies), with a database of hundreds of subscribers.

The sample includes 16 men and 2 women, aged 21-51 (avg. 29.3). It is important to emphasize that there was no particular interest in recruiting participants of any specific gender, the outcome of interviewees belong solely to the criteria previously described. Out of the 18 participants, 15 are currently living in the Netherlands, 1 in France, 1 in Spain and 1 in the United States. Moreover, the sample contains 10 participants who are musicians (student or professional) and 8 participants who are not musicians. The full details of each participant can be found in the transcripts of the interviews (Annex D). In order to have a clearer understanding and to provide a full context of the thoughts shared by the interviewees, I have sub-divided them into "professionals" and "users". The first category refers to those participants who are industry-insiders in live stream business and the second category refers to those who have a regular user/consumer approach to the platforms.

As explained, the international measures taken after the COVID-19 outbreak limited drastically the social contact, making any kind of meeting or social gathering impossible. For this reason, the interviews were done via digital communication platforms, such as Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp and Google Hangouts. Previous research on this topic in relation to qualitative interviews (Iacono et al., 2016) states that digital communication platforms do not foster a relationship of trust and rapport with the participant, raising some structural limitations to achieve rich and in-depth responses. On the other hand, some scholars (Irvine et al., 2013, p. 91) argue that "telephone interviewing is more demanding and fatiguing than face-to-face communication." So, despite the fact that the digital communication platforms enable new possibilities for the researcher (Iacono et al., 2016), methodologically, it is not advised to perform qualitative interviews through telephone, given the fact that all the non-verbal communication could be missed or distorted (Irvine et al., 2013).

4.3. Analysis and operationalization

The study responds to a "theoretical thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this means that the data analysis and coding were driven and built around the previously mentioned theories in the literature. Accordingly, some analytic preconceptions were taken in consideration while coding, trying to fit the data into a general pre-existing coding frame. The coding of this method is guided to find potential answers to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, the thematic analysis is done at a latent level, where the interpretation "goes beyond the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), trying to find, identify and theorize on thoughts, ideologies or underlying ideas given by the participants. Furthermore, the analysis can be framed within the constructionist framework, where the main targets are not individual considerations, but socio-cultural conditions formed by the individual inputs (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "In short, rather than being an objectivist application of analysis procedures, the process is highly reflexive" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009).

With the objective to conduct a trustworthy analysis (Nowell et al., 2017), the thematic analysis process responds to the methodological steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), starting with getting familiarized with the data by transcribing the interviews and doing in-depth reading of the collected information. In a second stage, after identifying relevant and significant features from the data, 81 initial codes were systematically created through open coding and later strategically classified into 25 groups and 10 themes in correspondence with the theoretical concepts presented in the literature chapter as ordering devices. "The process of coding is part of analysis as you are organising your data into meaningful groups" (Tuckett, 2005, as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). In the third phase six broader themes were generated by relevant similarities and coincidences derived from the creation of thematic maps on *Atlas.ti* (included in the Appendix A), linking back with the research question and the presented theory. It is important to underline that the mentioned themes pursue to categorize the data based on similarities and differences, nevertheless, these categories are still abstractions and simplifications of the collected material (Jarness, 2015).

As mentioned, for the second and third phases I used *Atlas.ti*, this specific software was employed for more efficient and structured coding (Nowell et al., 2017). In pursuance of gathering empirical evidence from the interviews, the coding was done systematically and

according to the recommendations given by Braun and Clarke (2006). Additionally, the creation of main topics and thematic networks helped to explore deeper in the meaning in the content and finding patterns that would lead the discussion of the research (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Acting in accordance with the structure of the theoretical thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006), the coding and grouping of the data was theory-driven and operationalized beforehand in correspondence with the literature of the research, nevertheless, the main themes were adjusted during the analysis following a reflexive iteration process that emerged from "visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). Consequently, the data was decoded underlining the main themes and recurrent topics that could provide a robust interpretation of the gathered material. As a result, thematic maps were generated through *Atlas.ti* and the data was operationalized and analysed in the following categories:

- Aesthetic perception: Collects the impressions related to the artistic value of the digital live stream. It shows the emotional reactions derived from the mediated experience, including the positive and negative aspects of the platforms. These impressions and reactions will be connected and analysed through the collative variables, the appraisal (Silvia, 2005) and flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) theories described in the literature.

- Collectiveness: Gathers the opinions of the participants associated with the main differences between the digital individual experience and the live collective experience. By contrasting the collected inputs, these results draw clear outcomes between audiences that are in a group or individually. These opinions will be linked with the interaction rituals theory (Collins, 2014) and the concept of *musicking* (Small, 1999).

- Benefits of the digital platforms: Outlines the main benefits identified with the digital platforms. Collects all the positive aspects (e.g. technological, social, financial) of the digital platforms taken from the data.

- Downsides and implications of the digital platforms: Summarizes the downsides and implications (e.g. social, technological, financial) related to the use of digital

streaming platforms. In relation with the benefits, it helps to outline a full panorama of the features and repercussions of the digital platforms.

- Modes of consumption: Based on the modes of consumption explained by Jarness (2015), categorizes the taxonomy of the participants depending on their motivations and reasons to assist a concert.

- COVID-19 repercussions: Collects the participants' thoughts regarding the impact of the COVID-19 on the digital platforms. Shows the main consequences related to the international pandemic and how the art world responds to it.

During the interviewee recruitment and data collection process, any kind of sampling bias was tried to be avoided, nevertheless considering my own involvement in the data collection, it is essential to take in consideration the reflexivity element and the implications of the subjectivity between the researcher and the participants in the research (Holloway & Todres, 2007). Although I was attempting to make the interviewee recruitment less reliant on my personal network, my professional background on working within classical music organizations naturally brought up friends and colleagues interested in being part of the research. This means that some of the respondents to the "call for action" message posted on Facebook were already part of my personal digital social network. Nevertheless, despite my personal relationship with some of the interviewees, I maintained a systematic approach to the methodological framework and I strictly assumed the role of researcher while doing the interviews, preventing any kind of personal influence and/or bias on the results of the research. Additionally, I rely on the fact that having a personal relationship with some of the participants did not influenced the outcomes of the research, since the main subject of the investigation is embedded to personal emotions and perceptions of a subjective matter, far from a "right or wrong" panorama.

On the other hand and in pursuance to leaving a clear "audit trail" (Neale, 2016, p. 1097), I have exposed in detail how the methodology for this research was performed and adjusted due to the COVID-19 international situation. In the next chapter I present the outcomes of the data and I further explain and analyse these results according to the literature.

5. Results and data analysis

According to the collected data, systematic differences between the participants' thoughts are based on profession, rather than geographical location, gender or age. On one hand, the group of interviewees that are music students or professional music performers have shown to have more interaction towards the digital live stream platforms, often seeking for broader meanings than the aesthetic pleasure of the experience itself. On the other hand, the group of participants whose main professional activity is not intrinsically related to music have demonstrated to have a more sporadic contact with the live stream platforms. Although all participants have reported to use digital platforms (live and non-live) almost on a daily basis, they consume them with different purposes and commitment levels.

In order to have a clearer structure in the analysis of the data, the interpretation of the results follows the outcomes shown on the thematic maps, consequently, the chapter is subdivided and organized on six main themes: aesthetic perception, benefits of the digital platforms, downsides and implications of the digital platforms, collectiveness, modes of consumption and, finally, COVID-19 repercussions.

5.1. Aesthetic perception

Thinking on the relationship between art and emotions, the participants were asked to describe the feelings that were involved while experiencing a digital live stream and which factors of the live stream would be responsible for such emotional reactions. In this regard, the most recurrent answer within all participants was to acknowledge the fact that the classical music concerts broadcasted via digital platforms (live or recorded) definitely involve emotions, however, the subjectivity of these emotional reactions varies from one participant to another. As revealed in the *Figure 2*, the positive emotional reactions related to the aesthetic experience of the digital platforms are numerous, nevertheless, the most frequent opinion among the participants (15 out of 18) is that the digital platforms do not offer an experience that could be defined as emotionally strong, despite any kind of technical efforts, the emotional impact is limited in contrast with the experience of attending a live concert.

...you cannot feel 100% what you feel in a concert hall, because you are watching it via streaming, which makes a kind of a wall between the music and you.

(Mikel, music student / user, 23)

These emotional limitations associated with the live stream describe the digital performances as cold, distant and flat; impeding a full emotional engagement between the digital audiences and the performance. Moreover, some participants have indicated that their use of the digital platforms and live streams is mostly as "background music", finding difficulties to connect emotionally with the music, something that would not happen in the concert hall.

But that's the difference I think, that the experience, if I am there (in the concert hall), then I am much more able to commit to the music and really get into it, typically when I am listening to a live stream, it is just that I typically also do something else, at the same time, which… well…. Takes away the part of really getting into the emotions of a piece.

(Anonymous, student / user, 23)

For me it is not like instead of watching a live concert, because you are not that much immersed in the experience so, when I stream something on *Medici* is more like background, I listen to it but I am not watching it, so that is for me completely different from being in the concert hall.

(Fiona, marketer / user, 28)

Although the purpose of the question was not to build an emotional comparison between these two different experiences, most of the interviewees automatically relate one to another. Having said that, it is important to highlight that most of the participants also reported positive emotions and pleasant feelings towards the digital live streams, describing the whole experience as touching, exciting, joyful and energizing, among others (See Figure 2 for complete list). In this matter, it could be relevant to build a link to the theory presented by Udsen and Jørgensen (2005), where they state that digital devices have the possibility to provide a positive and pleasant engagement with the user, rebranding the

whole digital experience into a new art form itself. Moreover, the theory presented on the literature opens the possibility for the digital streaming of art performances to be considered a "new art form" (McLennan, 2007; Fricker, 2008, as cited in King, 2018, p. 222) or a *new mode of discourse* (Monaco, 2000), underlining a clear differentiation on the aesthetic perception between the digital and the live audiences. However, according to the outcomes, the participants still relate the two artistic experiences as the same, but presented in a different format. Interestingly, despite some of the participants confirmed to use the live streams as "background" music, most of them compare the digital streams with the live concert experience and not with other kinds of recorded music, underlining the significance of the visual experience (King, 2018), even though they are not fully committed to it.

> Obviously, as I was saying, the negative side of it is the fact that you lack those emotions that you feel live, but that's something that I think it's very… you will never be able to just go further, because it is just a different concept.
>
> (Bardia, freelance musician / user, 27)

Following the results from the data, it is visible that the digital platforms are definitive able to convey positive emotions creating a pleasant engagement in the audience (Udsen & Jørgensen, 2005), nonetheless, their perception is still strongly linked to the live performance, a fact that immediately diminishes the digital experience, placing it as a mere substitute of "the real thing" (Bart, marketeer, 51).
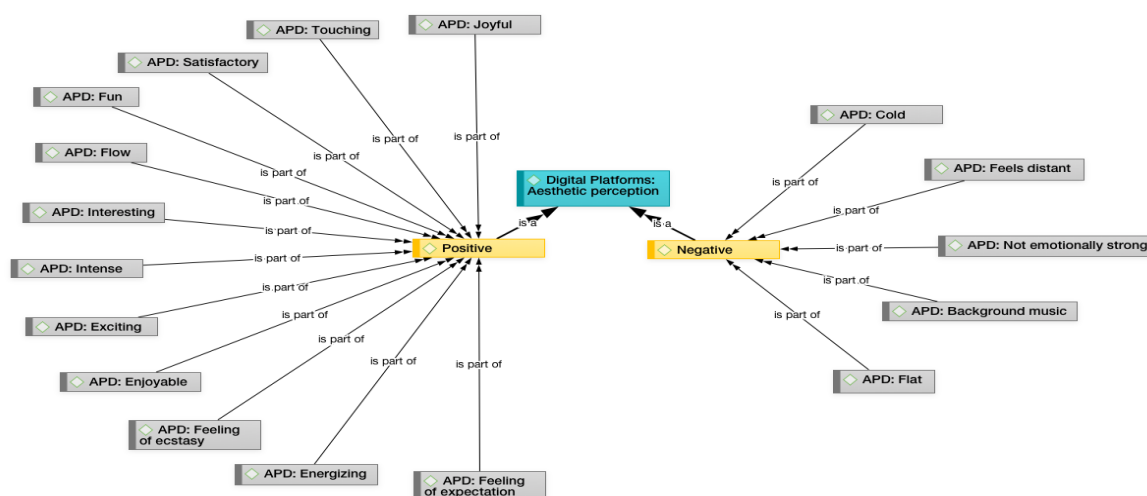

Figure 2. Thematic map of the aesthetic perceptions

Moving on, the wide scope of emotional reactions collected from the data reinforces the appraisal theory argument, which states that the emotions are not coming from the event itself, but from the subjective and personal interpretation of each event (Roseman & Smith, 2001). The individual and subjective appraisal structures deny the possibility of "global, undifferentiated emotional concepts" (Silvia, 2005, p. 10), as previously stated by Berlyne in his collative theory, reinforcing the argument of Small (1999) that states that every stimuli is converted into knowledge in a subjective way derived from the combination of thoughts and behaviour at any given moment in time between particular listeners and musical events (Juslin & Becker, 2012). Nevertheless, as mentioned in the literature, some collative variables such as *complexity* and *familiarity* may still have a key role in the perception theories. In this context, some participants have expressed that the digital platforms could simplify the art form itself, making it less complex and, hence, potentially more accessible and enjoyable. As explained, the *complexity* is a subjective matter that will only relate to individual appraisal structures, nonetheless, the visual language of the digital live streams follows a storyline, which is already a mediated version that simplifies the abstraction of the artwork.

> I think in that aspect it's really positive, that the people is much more accessible to the… for example, young society, at the same time, when you put in this kind of platforms something that people get, it's not really attached, because they think it's complex or they think that it's to tough for them, I think when you position classical music in this case, in these kind of platforms, I think it's a really attractive way to put it on the side of the people and that they feel that it's maybe more possible for them to enjoy from this music.
>
> (Bernat, music student / user, 23)

In addition, the flow theory (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) also recasts *complexity* and *familiarity* as specific elements that could potentially improve the aesthetic experience. At this point, it is important to point out that 14 out of 18 participants have revealed that their first contact with classical music was at an early age, which increases their familiarity with the genre and, according to the flow theory, adds to their individual aesthetic experience.

Moreover, as identified by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014), the attention is a key element to achieve a *state of flow*, developing into full involvement and ideally, achieving an optimal artistic experience, likewise, as described by Chilton (2013), the flow experience builds for the emotional capital for the future experiences. In this regard, some participants have exposed some signs of *flow* when referring to the digital platforms.

I think it is something that can make you maybe come into a different stage and make your mind a bit free [...] for a moment you forget about everything and you are just in the music.

(Mikel, music student / user, 23)

But in my experience, like being at the concert, then you really can cut loose, basically from everything that is going on and you can just focus on the music… So almost a bit like meditation.

(Anonymous, student / user, 23)

As discussed previously, taking the digital platforms and the live streams as a bonding point, the goal of this analysis is to engender a plausible theoretical space where these theories, related to aesthetic perception, could co-exist in a symbiotic way. By taking specific elements from different theories, the objective is to build a strong theoretical foundation, which would make indisputable the fact that it is possible to convey emotions through digital platforms. The subjectivity of the individual appraisal structures would define the emotional reaction; nonetheless, some specific elements (e.g. complexity and familiarity) could enhance the aesthetic experience at the point of reaching full involvement and an optimal artistic experience (i.e. flow).

5.2. Benefits of the digital platforms

As noted earlier, the digital platforms and the streaming services have risen as an important tool for many different cultural organizations, showing a big potential in the social, aesthetic and mediatic fields (Webster, 2019). In this regard, the participants were asked to enlist the main benefits that could be associated with the digital platforms and to give their opinion about the scope and mediatic functionality of them. As shown in *Figure 3*,

the outcomes of the collected data are interconnected in different ways and for a better understanding, the analysis is categorized in five different topics: engagement tool, contact with art and cultural organizations, technical benefits for the user, artistic challenges and digital platforms as a business model.
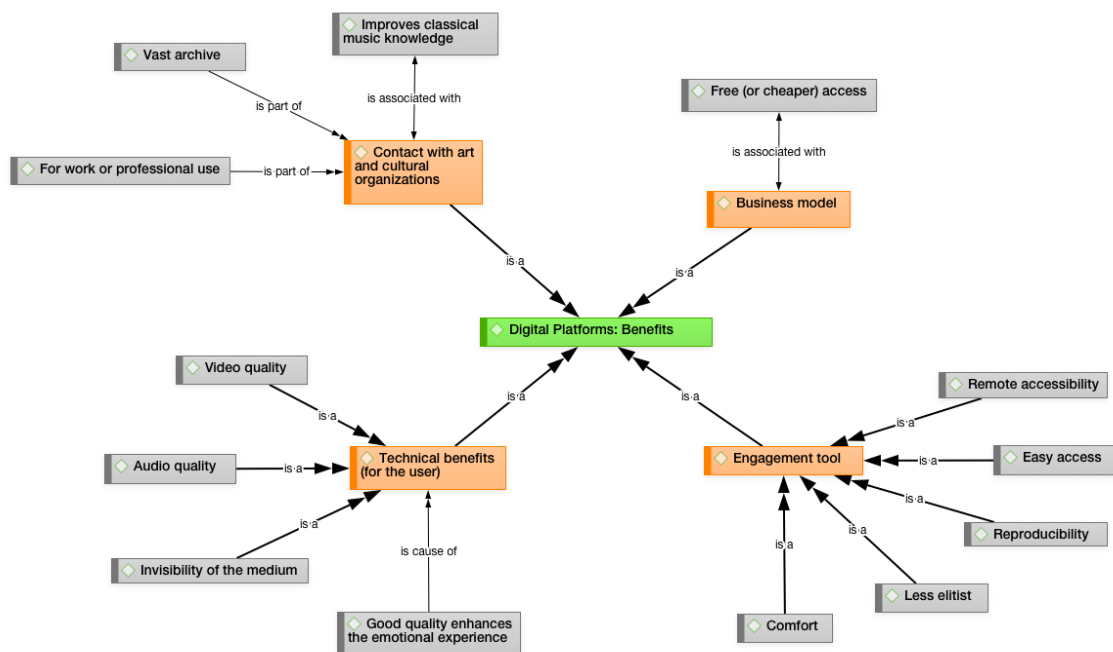

Figure 3. Thematic map of the benefits of the digital platforms

Following the results from the data, 16 out of 18 participants identify as a benefit that the digital platforms can act as a powerful engagement tool, fostering a closer relation with the existing audiences and promoting the genre with new and younger audiences. Interviewees highlight the "remote accessibility", "easy access" and the "reproducibility" as some of the most relevant features of the digital platforms, pointing out that these components make the performances easily accessible for everyone, from any place at any time.

I think it's great and as I said already, as a way for the people that it's not able physically or economically or because you live maybe on the other part of the world, to see a concert that you are really into… wow, I think that's that we have to be thankful to these platforms, because otherwise it wouldn't be possible.

(Bernat, music student / user, 23)

Another *pro* of listening concerts online is that you have the chance to, as I said, to go back and rewind or whatever, you know, in general, you can just stop the performance when you want.

<div align="right">(Bardia, freelance musician / user, 27)</div>

So, I think that's a very positive thing, it could make it easier for people to get into this kind of music. It's just way easier, you don't have to fill in, to dress up or anything, you can choose which concert you want, it's just a very easy way to have at least a comparable experience.

<div align="right">(Gabriel, PhD student / user, 26)</div>

In this regard, various academics (Arditi, 2018; Crawford et al., 2014a; Enhuber, 2015; King, 2018; Walmsley, 2016; Webster, 2019) have strengthen the argument that the digital platforms are a key element for audience engagement purposes and have shown a definitive impact in building a closer relationship between the arts and the audiences. Moreover, as presented previously in the literature, there are unquestionable examples of successful audience engagement, such as the New York Metropolitan Opera in 2013, gathering more than 2.5 million digital viewers in four different continents (King, 2018). On this grounds, it would be possible to make a connection between theories, since Walmsley (2016) confirms that the possibility of engaging new audiences is related to the contextualization and familiarization with the artistic experience, characteristics that resound with some of the variables mentioned in the perception theories (i.e. collative, appraisal and flow). It is important to point out that the participants of this research are located in different countries (e.g. Netherlands, Spain, France and the US) and 12 out of 18 have mentioned the Digital Concert Hall of the Berlin Philharmonic as one of the preferred digital platforms, reinforcing the argument that remote accessibility is a key element to engage international audiences and to keep a close relationship with the artistic organization.

Noteworthy and in relation to the easy accessibility component, 11 interviewees consider that the digital platforms also offer a relaxed and comfortable approach to the classical music, which make them more attractive and suitable for almost any environment. From that perspective, Van Eijck (2018) states that the classical music genre could be more

appealing for new audiences if the whole concept of the classical concert is renewed into a more relaxed and informal concept. Taking this in consideration, it is possible to draw the conclusion that a casual and easygoing surrounding can add positive elements to the digital artistic experience.

> ...but I think that is also the benefit, for me at least, it is also really comfortable to be sitting in my pyjamas, my shorts, with my headphones, clicking on the Berliner Philharmoniker and be there in the concert.
>
> (Lorenzo, logistician / user, 25)

Drawing from the data, another important attribute is that through digital platforms, classical music is perceived as a "less elitist" experience, offering a more inclusive and democratic approach to the genre. Participants stated that the digital platforms could help people to relate better and closer with the genre, diminishing the paradigm of "exclusivity" and "elitism". Besides, the artistic experience through digital platforms could be identified as closer and more familiar, variables that according to the literature seem to be highly significant.

> Without a doubt that live streams make listening to a concert more accessible and that will, I think, have an impact because in one way it will be less for the elite, you may be able to relate more to it, when you see the musicians playing.
>
> (Bart, marketer / user, 51)

> So yeah, I mean, more people are getting closer, that would be my input, let's say, they could try to make it more reachable instead of doing it like a VIP thing.
>
> (Jorge, musician / user, 29)

Equal access to cultural services is a topic that has been discussed by numerous academics (Enhuber, 2015; Virolainen, 2016; Walmsley, 2016; Webster, 2019) and the liaison between digital platforms and the democratization of the arts is undeniable. Enhuber (2015) argues that it could be possible to grant equal accessibility to the artistic experience through the implementation of a digital live space that would be globally distributed and

available. On the same path, Webster (2019) states that social inclusion through digital platforms could potentially break old-fashioned paradigms related to classical music, such as elitism and class division. However, besides the positive implementations related to inclusion and social engagement, Enhuber (2015) sustains that the democratization of the artistic experience through digital platforms is only partial, given the fact that internet accessibility and personal computers are affordable to a limited number of countries and still related to a specific social group able to afford digital devices. At this point, it is crucial to emphasize the fact that none of the participants mentioned to have discovered the genre through digital live stream platforms, this means that in terms of accessibility and availability they are not reflecting on their own experience, but in possible consequences and scenarios for others. In the context of this thesis, these particular circumstances raise some speculations on the engaging element of the digital platforms, opening the possibility to consider the idea that most of the users of such platforms are audiences that already consume this music. Even though the audience engagement potential of the internet and social media has been rapidly increasing (Arditi, 2018; Webster, 2019), it is risky to conclude that equal access will automatically lead to equal consumption. On the other hand, it may be pertinent to reflect that although many participants reflect on the topic of cultural democratization, they did not drawn upon the cultural democracy argument as described by Evrard (1997), raising some concerns in relation to the normalization of the western-centrism cultural practices and the biased approach of the cultural policies.

Closely related with the engagement element, the participants stated that through digital platforms it is possible to build a closer contact with art and cultural organizations. As a consequence of this relationship, digital audiences would be able to improve their classical music knowledge by accessing the vast online archive of concerts, operas and recordings that the cultural institutions are currently offering. This argument puts a lot of weight on the engagement potential of the first contact with the cultural organization, assuming that this could lead to a proactive interaction between the user and the cultural organization. On the contrary, if the audiences don't have an initial contact with the artistic organization, the possibility that the user has contact and/or knowledge of the existence of these archives is quite low.

It really helps us a lot to understand better music, to have more recordings, to have more access to the culture in general.

(Alba, music student / user, 27)

I also have the Met Opera on Demand, which is a very interesting one, because they have almost the whole archive of the productions they have done through the years and also very old recordings and audios from early 1900, so I think a lot of options and they have a lot of repertoire that you can stream, and listen and watch, that is the thing with the Met Opera platform, it is not only the videos, it is also the recording you have there and of course, live performances but also the very good recordings of the Met Opera.

(Ivan, orchestra conductor / user, 29)

As reported by King (2018), numerous cultural organizations have implemented digital services pursuing a closer relationship with the audiences. As mentioned, the digital broadcasts and virtual experiences have been launched in different artistic fields, such as ballets, museums, theatres and festivals; aiming not only to create more accessible events, but also inclusive and participatory experiences (Walmsley, 2016). From this standpoint, cultural organizations are looking to break the stereotype of "highbrow" by reducing the distance with the average citizen through social networks and participatory platforms. Noteworthy, following the results from Crawford et al. (2014), not every digital attempt has a successful implementation, as presented in the literature, it seems that a mobile *app* is not the ideal vehicle for an orchestra to engage new listeners, neither to be an ideal streaming platform, nevertheless, some other platforms such as *YouTube* or *Spotify* could help for familiarization and contextualization. In this regard and closely related with classical music knowledge improvement, it is important to consider a different beneficial use of the digital platforms revealed by some of the participants of this research. Given the fact that 10 out of 18 interviewees were musicians, it has been indicated that the streams and recordings are often used also for educational and professional purposes, not only for a pleasant experience.

I think it's very nice, above all, for a musician because sometimes when I listen to a concert, let's say YouTube or Medici or whatever… helps me to my studies, as well to understand the music, above all if the concert is something that I am playing or I am preparing, it's something that it helps to me, the way that I am going to perform later.

(Alba, music student / user, 27)

Moving forward, most of the participants (13 out of 18) also mentioned technical benefits related to the digital experience of the user, more specifically, concerning the audio and video quality of the digital broadcasts. As an improvement of the live concert, interviewees pointed out the multiangle feature and the availability of close ups and details that are offered by the HD broadcasts. According to the collected data, the possibility to see the performers and musicians in detail adds a lot to the whole artistic experience, having the possibility to involve the user and even relate emotionally with the music. In addition, the high quality sound is also a *pro* of the digital platforms, according to some participants, when sitting in the concert hall the audio varies a lot depending on your seat, which does not happen in the digital platforms, where the users experience an audio that is already mixed and balanced, trying to make the sound as good as possible quality wise.

When it is a very good camera work, you are part of the show, you are part of the live experience [...] I remember a lot one streaming of the Berlin Philharmonic with Daniel Baremboim conducting Tchaikovsky's Pathetique (6th symphony), and I think they did it on purpose, Barenboim is conducting and suddenly he didn't like something and you can watch those things only when you are watching the steaming, because you can see his face going grumpy and going unpleasant and not satisfied, and doing like… ok, the show must go on… but those little things, you can only experience them when you are watching these kind of platforms, of digital live streams.

(Ivan, orchestra conductor / user, 29)

Of course, with cameras you can come a lot closer and with our microphones we can make much more detailed picture of what is going on in the concert, so in that way, as an audience member looking at the stream, you might even be closer to the connection, you know, a singer showing emotion… than when you sit in the back of the hall and you will have to guess what emotion is on her face.

(Anonymous, sound engineer and camera operator / professional, 34)

This topic is clearly connected to King's (2018) theoretical contribution concerning the relevance of the medium and the substantial differences between the live and the digital experience. King (2018) argues that the close and detailed camera work perspective offered by the digital streams shows a unique emotional state of the performers, which will enhance the emotional experience in the spectators, moreover, it helps to create a special bond and connection between the artist and performer. Furthermore, Davis (2012) also sustains that the *immediacy* of the digital platforms and the *mediation* tools enable a feeling of pleasure, affection and connection, which reduces the distance between the stakeholders.

Closely linked to the benefits derived from the quality of the streaming, half of the interviewees reported that the quality maintains a directly proportional relationship with the emotional and aesthetic experience. This means, the better the quality, the more intense is the emotional experience. This argument underlines the significance of the broadcast production and the essential role of the camera director and operator, who decides every shot that is transmitted. Here, *mediation* is essential. As explained in the literature, Davis (2012) argues that *mediation*, as the process of exteriorization of ideas and expressions, must correspond to the aesthetic goals that want to be achieved during the broadcast. The images will be the language of transmission, for this reason, if the language is not clear or poor (quality wise), the externalization will be impeded and emotionally weak.

The emotions can be flexible and very different, but there is a very important point to consider and it is really, really vital and crucial and it is the camera work. If you have a very good camera director or film director during that concert and during that streaming and that platform, it can really, really change you and affect you, because

that guy, that is controlling the cameras and controlling what you see, can really be part of the show as well and can really decide what is important to watch and what is important for you to see and to pay attention to and I think that is crucial and very, very important…

(Ivan, orchestra conductor / user, 29)

The director has to take the best shots from the musicians when they play, that you can see their emotions playing the concert, that you see them play, the emotion that the musician has on stage that you bring to the people in their living rooms.

(Arthur, online project coordinator, 35)

Another benefit identified by half of the participants of the research (9 out of 18) is related to the financial aspect and the fact that the access to the digital broadcasts is often significantly cheaper than a ticket to the actual concert hall, sometimes even free. The interviewees revealed that the economical advantage that the digital platforms offer to the users is a good asset that could potentialize the number of viewers, besides as mentioned before, it enhances a more democratic approach towards the artistic experience. In terms of price and costs, results show that most participants (15 out of 18) prefer to use free-access platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, over subscription based services.

I use a lot YouTube, I think that is the easiest and it is free, for now.

(Mario, musician / user, 29)

YouTube, for instance, I use like everyday

(Alba, music student / user, 27)

About live platforms, I think I mainly use Facebook live and YouTube live.

(Sam, software engineer / user, 39)

In addition to the economical benefits for the user, some participants have found in the digital platforms a potential business opportunity and a profitable tool for the cultural organizations to get some new source of extra income. Paradoxically, as shown before, most

of the users prefer access-free platforms, this means that cultural policies and organizations must rethink the whole financial model in order to find a middle point that could be beneficial for both stakeholders, users and organization.

> What we do at the Concertgebouw, those are very expensive recordings and I think what Berlin does is not cheap either. Building the platform yourself is also probably difficult, so maybe it would be good if all the halls in Europe would unite and make their own platform together, and then they would have a bigger range of people.
>
> (Anonymous, sound engineer and camera operator / professional, 34)

> ...but the thing is how are you going to make money out of it as an orchestra, because you can do like Berlin does, pay a monthly subscription for the video platform... Amsterdam is giving it for free at the moment, but you have to find something in the middle, to pay maybe like… to pay for a concert… when you are a member from the orchestra, friend of the Concertgebouw Orchestra you get a free subscription or something, but you have to find new business models for that and I think that it something that a lot of orchestras nowadays, not only orchestras but also other cultural organizations, have to find a new business model.
>
> (Arthur, online project coordinator / professional, 35)

In terms of financial accessibility and cultural democratization, Virolainen (2016) argues that state policies should endorse civic cultural participation, promoting a proactive interaction between the population and the cultural organizations. Again, by providing equal accessibility and availability, the elitist preconception of the art may decrease (Virolainen, 2016). Similarly, King (2018, p. 222) states that a big attraction of the live streams is the "lower cost in time and money" for the users. These similarities between the theoretical arguments and the results from the participants of the present research reveal an interesting finding, which brings a tough challenge for the policy makers, the governmental and cultural institutions.

5.3. Downsides and implications of the digital platforms

Following the goals of the present research and the design of the interviews, the participants were also asked to mention which downsides and implications could they identify in relation with the digital platforms. In order to proceed with a systematic analysis of the data, the results have been organized and categorized in a thematic map (see Figure 4) and will be analyzed accordingly to four main topics: Production costs, cannibalization, not interesting for new audiences and curated experience.
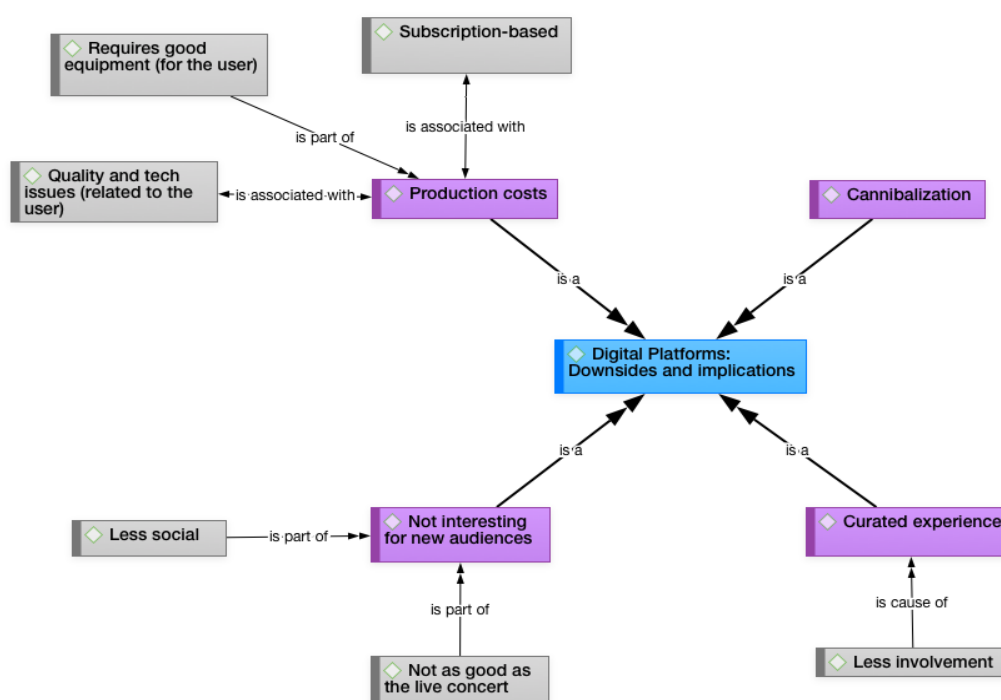

Figure 4. Thematic map of the downsides and implications of the digital platforms

Drawing from the gathered outcomes and in close relation with the financial aspect of the digital platforms, the participants noted that the production costs of a good quality broadcast and the financial needs that the digital technology imply for an individual user, could also be considered as a negative implication of the digital streaming platforms. In this matter, 15 interviewees underlined that various digital and live streaming platforms demand certain economical costs that users must cover, such as a monthly or yearly payment for a subscription (e.g. Berlin Digital Concert Hall, Met Opera on Demand and Medici.tv) and the need of certain equipment to be able to enjoy the artistic experience at its best (i.e. good quality headphones/speakers, HD screen and powerful internet connection).

I don't think many people that are not into classical music, are not going to start to listen to classical music because of the new streaming platforms, especially if you have to pay for them.

<div align="right">(Sam, software engineer / user, 39)</div>

When you want to have a great production, you need five or six cameras and that's expensive, because five or six cameras on stage, you need somebody who reads the scores, who informs the director what is coming, you need somebody who also starts, so you need around 8 to 10 people only to produce a really… for TV, for example, you need 10 people, minimum, to produce a live stream, and that is very expensive.

<div align="right">(Arthur, online project coordinator / professional, 35)</div>

I guess you need some gear for that, you need good internet so you don't want to be stopped every time, you want to have some nice headphones, or nice speakers.

<div align="right">(Mario, musician / user, 29)</div>

In relation with these outcomes and as discussed in the literature, Enhuber (2015) elaborates on the limitation of the global accessibility of the digital technologies, stating that live streamings and virtual experiences are still bound to certain countries that have the financial means to operate and develop such technologies. Consequently, Enhuber (2015) argues that the content of the digital platforms and the targeted audience responds to a westernised approach. Besides, it is important to consider the idea that not everyone with internet access will consequently consume "high brow" culture (Arora, 2012), understanding that the social and cultural inequalities will not automatically diminish by making art more accessible through digital devices. In addition, academics (Rutten, 2018; Wilson-Barnao, 2018) have also pointed out that the free-access digital platforms (i.e. YouTube and Facebook) have a commercial bias over any cultural purpose, which have implications and security issues with the user privacy and personal data.

Another interesting finding gathered from the data is that 4 out of 18 participants elaborated on the risk of cannibalization, meaning the diminishing of the audiences for the live performance as a result of the benefits offered by the digital platforms. This argument raised some concerns on the participants in regards to the future implications that this may have for the cultural organizations, who are already struggling to find new audiences. Besides, the interviewees also noted that the financial impact on the ticket revenue could potentially impact the income for the musicians and performers.

Well, now I think I have to talk as a musician [...] this affects also the musicians, because maybe in the future, everyone has a platform where they can see a lot of concerts and everything on screen, so they don't need to go to a concert…

(Alba, music student / user, 27)

…but once you open every concert for the people digitally, or live streaming, then less people come to your hall.

(Daniel, video editor and producer / professional, 35)

According to King (2018), some of the already mentioned benefits of the digital platforms such as price accessibility and easy remote access, could indeed make plausible the hypothesis of cannibalization, where the live concert would have to compete against the digital offer, losing some of their potential audience. Likewise, Van Eijck (2018, p. 94) introduces some significant data concerning a systematic decrease in the classical concert attendance in the Netherlands; the most drastic was "among those aged between 35 and 49 (from 21% in 1995 to 10% in 2007)". Virolainen (2016) also states that the digital technologies have changed the cultural habits of consumption and that live audiences have certainly diminished in recent years.

In connection with the potential downsides of the digital streaming technologies, the interviewees have raised some doubts about the audience engagement possibilities of the streaming services. Based on the collective perception (13 out of 18 participants) that the digital experience is not as good and fulfilling as the live experience and on the thought that the digital platforms are a less social phenomena that takes away the possibility of socializing and sharing the live experience with others. The results show that feelings of

uniqueness, spontaneity, artistic tension and self awareness are some of the characteristics that are lost in the mediation process, lacking the whole emotional package that involves a live performance.

> The live concert has no comparison whatsoever with any other ways of making music and I am talking about the spontaneity, the creating in that moment, creating in that particular portion of time, what you are doing. And that unique moment cannot be repeated and cannot be neither transmitted through any other way.
>
> (Ivan, orchestra conductor / user, 29)

> I would also say, personally, in the big perspective, as I mentioned before, it is a social event, so maybe it could be a little bit frustrating to end the concert and not be able to discuss it with someone, in the end you want to share your opinion.
>
> (Lorenzo, logistician / user, 25)

In relation with the results of the interview, another clear finding linked to the negative implications of the digital platforms is the perception that the broadcasts are a "curated" experience, guided by the aesthetic concepts and understandings of the camera director and operator. This impression is grounded on the fact that the digital audience does not have the freedom to choose what they want to see, since someone else has already made this selection and the user is only capable to see this mediated perception. Some participants have expressed that this digital mediation has a strong input on the whole individual artistic experience, uplifting the freedom and aesthetic features of the live performance.

> But also a negative thing it might be that you are watching, but you are like a prisoner of the camera man, because you are watching what they are recording, it is not like… Maybe you want to see this important part in the triangle, but you are just watching the piccolo because that is what the camera is showing to you.
>
> (Jorge, musician / user, 29)

I think the perception of the whole piece is either fragmented or is just mediated.

(Daniel, video editor and producer / professional, 35)

Drawing from the literature, King (2018) touches upon the topic of the mediated experience but from a different approach, stating that this visual discrepancy is one of the main reasons of why the digital broadcast should be considered a "new art form" (McLennan, 2007; Fricker, 2008, as cited in King, 2018, p. 222), instead of permanently compared with the live experience. Nonetheless, as it has been discussed before, this visual element also brings positive aesthetic and emotional implications in the audience.

5.4. Collectiveness

Reflecting on the idea of collectiveness and considering the social interactions involved during a live performance, the participants were asked to elaborate on the importance of being part of an audience during a live concert, in contrast to experiencing a digital broadcast alone. More specifically, how influential are the collective and social factors in relation to achieving a pleasant individual artistic experience, either live or mediated. In this matter, the findings from the data were categorized in different codes and then organized in two main groups: the live collective experience and the digital individual experience. As done with the other findings of the research, the results were also structured into a thematic map and analysed accordingly (see Figure 5).
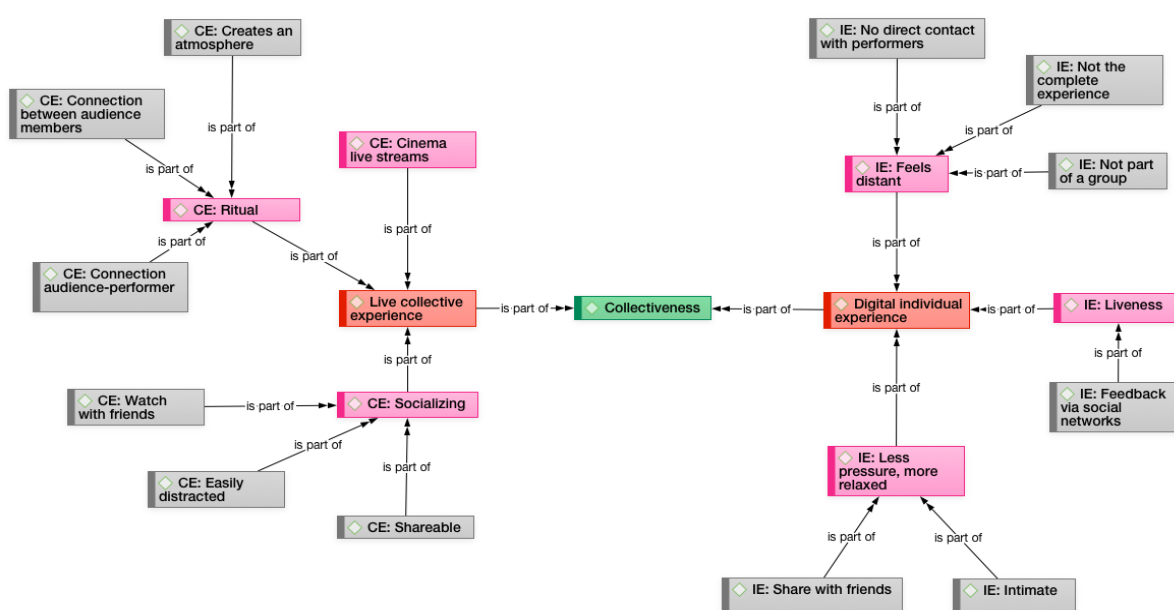

Figure 5. Thematic map of the collectiveness implications of the digital platforms

Starting with the live collective experience, 14 out of 18 participants pointed out elements that could relate with the ritualistic experience argument of the live concert, such as the interaction between audience members, the connection between the audience and the performers and the creation of a unique atmosphere around the whole event. In addition, the interviewees mentioned that the audience plays a fundamental role in the concert structure, by setting the mood of the performance and creating an emotional symbiotic relation with the artist through live feedback and interaction. Interestingly, some participants stated that during a live concert there is a sense of collective awareness, this realization would influence the personal state of mind and self-behaviour according to the situation, impacting in a direct way the individual artistic experience.

> You are part of a ritual where you give a little bit, but also see how people react in the same way, so… you can be bother sometimes for the coughing, but there is some improvisations in the emotions, you know, the artists lead what is going to happen with your senses and I think that is something that you will never know what to expect.
>
> (Mario, musician / user, 29)

> …when I see it in a concert hall, I am sharing the space with other persons, this makes, I think, a reaction of my body, a bit more tension, you have to be quiet, you don't have to make noises and at the same time, the other people is also respecting this code, so, in the live performances, when you are there physically, I think it creates an energy between all the audience that it makes you be even more present.
>
> (Bernat, music student / user, 23)

> And there is just something it's, I cannot really explain it, but there is… it can be a kind of electricity in the concert hall when the magic is happening, that will not just be there the same way when you are watching it, well… remote.
>
> (Bart, marketer / user, 51)

Following the presented literature, the results show similarities with some of the concepts presented by Collins (2014) on his interaction ritual theory, underlining the importance of the shared physicality during the ritual and the idea that perceiving the experience in a collective enhances the self-awareness and, consequently, the emotional experience. It may be pertinent to highlight O'Sullivan's (2009) argument that the aesthetic perception is a subjective and autonomous process with particular versions of the same event, even when this involves multiple spectators. Nevertheless, the results show that this subjectivity seems to be strongly influenced by the closeness and awareness of other human bodies, either audience members or performers. Noteworthy, few participants also mentioned the cinema live streams of classical concerts and operas, which paradoxically is a phenomena that combines the digital broadcasts and the elements of a collective audience, potentially evoking feelings of togetherness in digital spaces, however, given the described measures in the Netherlands against COVID-19, it was impossible to provide participant observation results from such an experience in this research, even though it was planned to.

Another important aspect collected from the data regarding the live collective experience is the social element of the live performances and the possibility to share the personal emotions and experiences with peers. According to 11 participants, attending a live concert is a social activity that implies certain codes of interaction that affect the whole artistic experience, either positively or negatively. On one hand, the possibility to share thoughts, emotions and comments with other attendees seems to be a big plus of the live performances among the participants, who argue that by doing so the whole experience is enriched and fulfilled. On these grounds, the interviewees confirmed that socializing during the breaks and at the end of the performance is an important aspect of the whole artistic experience, not necessary as a mode of consumption, but definitely as an extra positive factor to be taken in consideration when talking about audience influence and self-involvement.

But in a live performance, there is, you know… there is always afterwards the discussion with the other, with whom you watched the concert like: oh, do you remember that moment? And that was so amazing! And etc. So then, to share an experience that you can talk about.

(Kornel, music student / user, 26)

On the other hand, some interviewees confirmed the fact of sharing the physical space with other members could also bring some negative repercussions on the artistic experience. For instance, a very noisy audience or constant coughing could very well deteriorate the emotional engagement with the performance to the point of ruining the whole experience, underlining again the important role that the audience plays as a strong influencer during a live concert.

Sure, it can be, it can go both ways... if there is a noisy audience, they are coughing a lot, or they are moving, then it will really well... deteriorate, how do you say this? Influence in a bad way my experience.

(Bart, marketer / user, 51)

I would say that the other audience members are more a disturbance than an enhancement of the emotional experience.

(Anonymous, sound engineer and camera operator / professional, 34)

In this respect, some authors (Collins, 2014; Walmsley, 2016) have suggested that the possibility to share the experience with others delivers a positive impact in the emotional perception of the experience, as well as a better understanding of the artistic concept. In addition, the importance of the audience interaction and the possibility to share the experience with others is also reformulated by Dimaggio (2018) when referring to the live feedback potential of the social networks and by Walmsley (2016) when striving upon the participatory role of live and digital audiences.

Following on with the results concerning the digital individual experience, the participants (7 out of 18) expressed that through the digital streaming platforms the whole artistic experience feels distant, arguing that the lack of contact with the performers and with other audience members takes away a substantial part of the ritual, even though the aesthetic elements of the art itself are still present. The participants confirmed that as a consequence of this lack of involvement, the digital user cannot find any kind of *belonging* towards any group, which impacts directly on the social aspect of the experience itself.

In some ways it feels a little bit more distance, because you are not really in the concert hall, you are not really feeling everything that's there. [...] The negative is that it feels a little bit more distant; it's not as intense an experience as real life.

(Gabriel, PhD student / user, 26)

When I am watching a live stream, maybe I am sharing the experience with my mother, or whoever I am watching the live stream with, but I don't feel part of a group at all, like I don't feel part of the audience.

(Kornel, music student / user, 26)

In contrast, 5 out of 18 participants revealed that the digital live stream is able to offer a sense of connectedness within the audience members, knowing that the concert is happening live at the very same time and being aware that there are more people watching online as well. These interviewees elaborated on the emotional influence of the liveness effect and the feeling of being part of a unique live moment, the simple fact of experiencing something live already brings a different perspective to the whole experience. Besides, the participants also underlined the primary role of the social networks in the whole broadcasting process, stating that through these it is possible to give live feedback and have live and immediate interaction with other participants, which will again enrich the whole artistic experience.

It is not exactly the same experience and this is maybe because you feel a certain connectedness, you know, a certain oneness with the rest of the people. I think it also helps if there's… you know, sometimes there is a little banner saying like: there is 1000 people watching with you, or I don't know… 500 whatever, sometimes is in the thousands and that really helps as well to, just to imagine that you are not the only one so you are watching the live concert, you are seeing maybe people that are watching directly at the same place, where the orchestra is, and then you see the little banner that says "live", 5000 people watching with you, and that gives you some sense of connectedness, some sense of oneness with the rest of the world.

(Sam, software engineer / user, 39)

When the orchestra streams a concert on Facebook for example or YouTube and you read the comments, at the comments section, people are exposing all kinds of feelings with the music, from happiness to tears.

(Arthur, online project coordinator / professional, 35)

Taking these two different approaches in consideration, it is essential to recast Dimaggio's (2018) argument regarding the physical presence during interaction rituals. First, he acknowledges that "physicality" and "temporal synchrony" are crucial elements of a successful interaction ritual, which initially seems to be intrinsically embedded only to the live performance, nonetheless, Dimaggio (2018) builds an argument that allows to understand interaction rituals in online communication based on psychobiological grounds of sensorial *stimuli* reactions and the potential of the live feedback interaction through social digital platforms. More importantly, Dimaggio (2018) revealed that some of the pillar features of face-to-face interaction according to Collins (2014), such as exacerbated emotions and improvement in the memory abilities are features based only on belief and not on physical co-presence. According to the results of the present research, it is possible to find arguments that support the idea that the interactional benefits of the face-to-face communication are certainly ideal for some sorts of rituals, such as the classical music concert, nevertheless, accordion to some participants it is also possible to find an understanding and a sense of connectedness through online interaction. This findings certainly reveal that successful interaction rituals does not depend only on physical co-presence, despite the fact that the emotional experience involved in the face-to-face communication seem to be stronger, the digital and online interaction rituals also convey an emotional engagement that could achieve a similar state of intersubjectivity.

Also concerning the digital individual experience, 11 out of 18 participants pointed out that the digital stream platforms offer a more relaxed and intimate experience, which can also be shared with friends without any sorts of social pressure. In this regard, some argumentation similarities evoke again to the aspect of comfort, which appears as an undeniable positive feature of the digital platforms and a potential starting point for renewing the audiences (van Eijck, 2018). According to the collected data, the intimacy and the relaxed form of the concert entail already a different atmosphere, which sometimes may be more suitable for the genre than the actual performance in a concert hall. In other

words, the digital user is able to create an ideal environment around the performance by creating his own personal experience, which normally would be more open, diverse and relaxed; impacting the whole individual perception and emotional engagement towards the art form.

And when you are doing it in a very different atmosphere or in a very different hall or in your home or with your friends, in your room, with headphones or without headphones, it is a very different energy that you have, and you can be more relaxed also and you can be… feeling different things, and watching different things, and paying attention to other details and feeling different things, because you are in a very different atmosphere, you are in a very different space and time.

(Ivan, orchestra conductor / user, 29)

Of course classical music is a bit different, but, anyhow, for me, sometimes even a more intimate environment, as for example, would be my house with two or three friends, sometimes such an environment for me is actually better. Not better, but just it gives me a bit of a different vibe…

(Bardia, freelance musician / user, 27)

5.5. Modes of consumption

Taking into account Jarness' (2015) qualitative research regarding modes of consumption and the individual motivations implied in the consumption of certain cultural goods, one of the purposes of the research was to understand how audiences engage and appropriate the classical concert and the particular reasons that stimulate its consumption. For this particular goal, the participants were asked to elaborate on the reasons and motivations that encourage them to take the decision to take part in a classical music concert. As a result, the participants were categorized based on their answers into the four main modes of consumption (Figure 6) described by Jarness (2015).
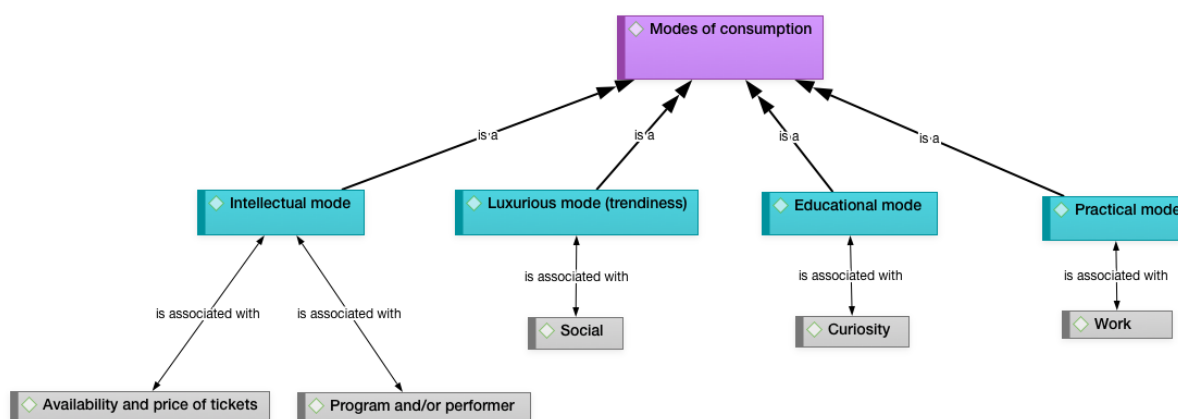
Figure 6. Thematic map of the modes of consumption

Intellectual mode (12 out of 18): Most of the participants declared that the main reason to assist a classical music concert is the music itself. These interviewees said that the program of the concert and/or the performers (i.e. conductor and/or soloist) are the principal motivation to attend a concert, consequently, they are looking for a positive artistic experience that would be emotionally engaging. Noteworthy, some participants mentioned these same aesthetic motivations, but also declared that the final decision relies on the cost and availability of the tickets, this means that the consumption mode is still based on intellectual grounds, but it's partially limited by the individual financial affordances, generating a possible theoretical combination between the intellectual and the practical mode.

Luxurious mode (1 out of 18): One interviewee stated that the main reason to consume classical music was the socializing part of it, referring to the regular gatherings at the foyer and the small parties after the performances. The participant finds it important to be surrounded by people of a similar age scope, making the whole experience socially pleasant. This exception raise interesting connotations, for instance, the idea that through a digital live stream it is not possible to get the same social benefits described by Jarness (2015).

Educational mode (1 out of 18): One participant indicated *curiosity* as the primary reason to attend. This feeling could be partially linked to the education mode described by Jarness (2015), where the motivation is fuelled by a potential learning possibility, which would further enrich the personal knowledge on the topic.

Practical mode (4 out of 18): Four participants reported that their personal link with classical music is strongly attached to the fact that they are/were working within the classical music industry. This group mentioned that the decision to attend a concert responds to work related obligations; this means that the consumption of the cultural good is grounded on practical reasons. It is important to underline the fact that despite the consumption is motivated by work related reasons, all of the interviewees declared to enjoy their work and feel lucky to be able to perform as a provider of such an artistic experience.

Following the results, it is relevant to highlight the fact that 10 out of 18 participants of the sample are music students and/or performers and they also attend classical music concerts, but as artists. The impressions categorized for this group that were taken in consideration for the analysis only involve them as audience members and not artists. At this point, it is important to bear in mind that the categories (e.g. musicians/non-musicians and professionals/users) are still abstractions and simplifications of the collected material, showing a barely visible line to differentiate one from another, but at the same time very different perspectives.

In addition and following the data, it is possible to think on a multiple/not-static modes of consumption, this means that some participants may have switched from one mode to another, depending on their personal goals and motivations. At this point, Lahire's (2008) argument on non-singular and dynamic modes of consumption based on mixed circumstances resonates more plausible to the outcomes showed in the collected data. This means that maybe some interviewees were first motivated by curiosity or educational purposes, but after some experiences, the motivation focus changed to an intellectual approach, where acquiring knowledge and cultural capital is not the main purpose, but only to enjoy the aesthetic pleasure of the experience itself. Additionally, Lahire's (2008) idea of habitual cultural practices separate from personal interest makes perfect sense when considering the group of participants that are consuming cultural practices due to work obligations, disregarding their personal taste and interest. Noteworthy, Jarness (2015) modes of consumption have a strong class connotation, which does not fully apply to the purposes of this research given the class homogeneity of the recruited participants.

Likewise, it is clear that the socioeconomic conditions are still a big factor to take in consideration when studying perception and appropriation modes (O'Sullivan, 2009), since consumption is still directly bonded to the personal financial affordances, which will have a clear impact on personal perception.

5.6. COVID-19 repercussions

As explained before in the methods chapter, during the elaboration period of the present research, the World Health Organization declared the virus COVID-19 an international pandemic and the governments of every country were urged to take drastic social and civic measures to avoid the spread of the virus. This situation provoked major changes in the social sphere, including of course a direct impact on all cultural organizations and forcing all artistic performances around the world to be cancelled or rescheduled. Besides the methodological repercussions that these circumstances had on the present research, the outbreak of the virus also had visible effects and implications in the cultural organizations, compelling them to adjust to the new measures of social isolation. As a result, many cultural institutions and artistic organizations turned to digital streams and social networks as a possible solution to offer their artistic activities to the international population, this environment generated unprecedented changes to the understanding and perception of the digital platforms and audiences (which also grew as a consequence of the isolation).

During the COVID-19 international health crisis, many artistic organizations tried to contribute to the community by creating an atmosphere of solidarity, togetherness and empathy that would help to sensibilize the whole social structure. Having this in mind, numerous cultural institutions offered free access to their archives and recorded material and some also uploaded full HD recordings of previous performances in free-access platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. Some examples are the Royal Opera House, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Philharmonie de Paris, the New York Metropolitan Opera, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw Orchestra and the Dutch National Opera, among many others (Tilden, n.d.). As a result of this initiative, a considerable amount of artistic quality content was suddenly free and available for almost everyone, a situation that raised a sort

of positive competitiveness among the cultural organizations, fostering the generation of more creative and innovative content in order to attract the potential audiences.

Since the data for this research was collected during the months of social isolation, 14 out of 18 participants mentioned something in relation with the COVID-19 and the implications of this virus in the cultural sector. Is it important to highlight that the interview did not include any direct question related to the repercussions of the virus, for this reason, these inputs were organically and naturally brought by the interviewees and show interesting findings. For the analysis, the results were categorized and grouped in a thematic map (See Figure 7) according to similarities and coincidences, which were divided into three main concepts: free content, artistic digital creativity and digital presence of art organizations.
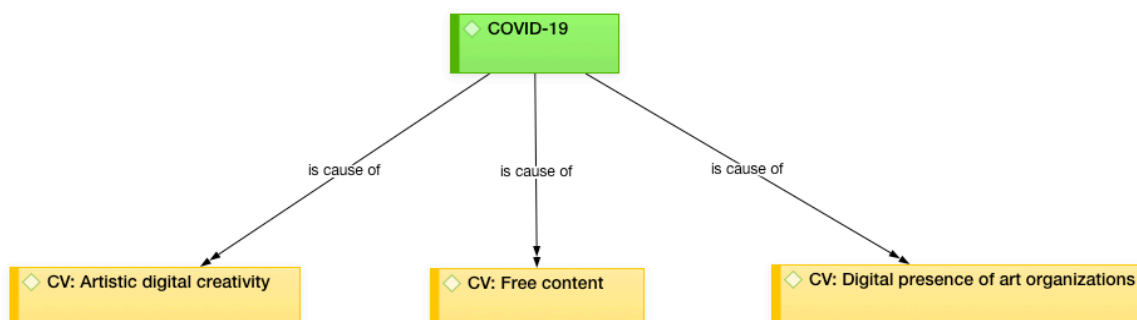

Figure 7. Thematic map of the COVID-19 repercussions in the digital platforms

The first and more recurrent topic mentioned by the participants in relation with the COVID-19 was the opportunity to have free access to some platforms and services that would normally operate under subscription or payment methods. Particularly, the interviewees pointed out the case of the Berlin Digital Concert Hall and the Met Opera on Demand, institutions who offered free access to their platforms during this period. More importantly, the participants also declared to have invested much more time than usual in these platforms, watching much more concerts and operas than the amount that they would normally consume. According to the participants, this increment seems to be strongly related to having much more time available at home, but even more important, to having access to content that they would not normally have. These results could mean that the people are definitely interested in the digital content offered by the digital platforms, but at the same time they are not interested in paying for it.

Now, with this virus situation, there are a lot of stream concerts, so I really like to see that and also the Berlin Philharmonic. They have something really, really nice as well and I try to see almost everyday, as a part of my life, to listen to this music.

(Alba, music student / user, 27)

Now that for example we have the advantage that the Met Opera on Demand is putting their operas, daily operas, free for everyone. Or the Berlin Digital Concert Hall that opened free for everyone, now I am taking advantage of these platforms, to just watch all the concerts if maybe they are not free, I don't usually pay for them on the online platforms.

(Mikel, music student / user, 23)

Following the analysis results, this digital artistic creativity is another relevant repercussion of the COVID-19 situation in the artistic sphere. Some participants expressed their appreciation of such artistic efforts, but also their admiration related to the production and logistics involved.

We don't know how long this situation will last but to move online is a smart move to do. It is a way to ensure that you are still active; you can still sell services, getting revenue and getting people employed. From an economic perspective, it makes total sense that orchestras are moving certain stuff online. I cannot imagine how hard it is to coordinate recordings of 80 people, but somehow the Rotterdam Philharmonic managed to do it with Beethoven 9th symphony and the Vienna philharmonic managed to do it with Mozart's Magic Flute.

(Lorenzo, logistician / user, 25)

I think that, well, when it is of course about this Corona crisis a lot of orchestras are really inventive in trying to work out new concepts of video.

(Arthur, online project coordinator / professional, 35)

In this matter, the particular case of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra (RPhO) is an interesting phenomenon worth to mention. Shortly after the COVID-19 was declared an

international pandemic, the RPhO uploaded a video[4] to YouTube named "From us, for you" where the members of the orchestra perform individually and from their own houses an excerpt of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, breaking immediately with the format of the traditional orchestral stream and showing big artistic/production capabilities, complemented with a powerful message of unity and cooperation. The video was an immediate hit internationally, reaching almost 3 million views in a couple of weeks. As a result, the number of followers on the orchestra's social networks started to grow rapidly, gathering a substantial number of new and international audiences with only one video. The intention of this example is to show how the COVID-19 health crisis had strong repercussions in the cultural organizations, fostering the creative process and compelling the artistic institutions to find alternative ways of content distribution and audience engagement. In this matter, the digital platforms have shown to be a possible instrument to democratize the art by making it more accessible and affordable to any sector (Virolainen, 2016; Walmsley, 2016).

As a consequence of the vast offer of free digital content and the refreshed creative approach, the participants of the research identified a stronger digital presence of artistic and cultural organizations. Following the results, this digital presence somehow diminished the gap between the organizations and the users, fostering a closer relationship with the artist (Walmsley, 2016). Additionally, cultural organizations applied different strategies aiming for a closer relation with their audiences, some encouraging their social network followers to participate and interact proactively by voting for the content they want to listen to. These engagement strategies are closely linked to the theoretical grounds of the participatory turn, where the input and inclusion of the audience in the decision-making process enhances the creative power and breaks with the concept of the institution as an "authority", which could organically reduce the distance between the art and the audience (Wilson-Barnao, 2018).

> I have to say with the COVID-19 crisis and everything, it's really a cool way to reconnect with all these organizations that you know that they are there and you know that they are kind of suffering. For instance, there's an orchestra here in

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[4] From us, for you.

Toulouse, The Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse [...]I have seen a couple of fragments that they posted to their Facebook pages and they are really good and that helped keeping the connection with them and keep thinking about them. It's almost like a kind of advertisement, or publicity, so that the people that used to go to listen to them don't forget them.

(Sam, software engineer / user, 39)

6. Discussion and conclusions

Throughout the present research, I strive to understand how the digitalization of classical music is influencing the listeners' perception of the genre, the music and the performances through digital platforms, in contrast to live performances. Reflecting on these questions, the data presented in the research suggests that the digital streaming platforms are perceived as an extension or a digital representation of the "real" artistic experience, which would be the live performance at the concert hall. In this regard, despite the efforts of some authors (King, 2018; Monaco, 2000; Udsen & Jørgensen, 2005) to categorize and define the digital streaming of art performances as a new form of artistic discourse; most of the regular users still perceive them as the same art form, just presented in a different format. Drawing from the research results, it is undeniable that the artistic experience through digital platforms convey an aesthetic and emotional impact in the user, nonetheless, this digital experience will always be profoundly different from the physically-present artistic experience. Consequently, according to the main argument of the appraisal theory, it can be concluded that the cause of the individual emotional experience is the subjective evaluation of the events, and not the event itself (Roseman & Smith, 2001), supporting Small's (1999) premise where the meaning of the emotional stimuli is subjectively created and further converted into knowledge. At this point, following the results of the research, it is possible to find potential theoretical links between the appraisal theory and the modes of consumption by concluding that the emotional and aesthetic meanings are derived from subjective mixed circumstances of cultural consumption (Lahire, 2008) and not necessary statically embedded to class and taste as previously described by Jarness (2015).

In relation to the ritualistic experience and the collective feature of an audience, it is important to underline the findings concerning the social aspect around the artistic experience and the importance to have a "shareable" experience. Drawing from the results, a possible answer regarding the interaction rituals in online communication (Collins, 2014; Dimaggio et al., 2018) is that in fact a successful IR can be reached through digital platforms and non-bodily present communication services, nonetheless, the sense of collectiveness of the traditional IR described by Collins (2014) is still more emotionally engaging than the achievable results from the online communication. In this matter, Small (1999) with his

concept of *musicking* contributes to the discussion by stating that the musical performance and the meanings generated within a particular physical space are only a part of the whole social meaning of the performance. *Musicking* involves much more that the relation between the performer and the audience, it puts in perspective everything that means a musical performance, allocating relevance to different kinds of stakeholders and approaches, also dependant from the mutual relationship established at any given moment in time between particular listeners and musical events" (Juslin & Becker, 2012). Here, the concepts of mediation and liveness (Auslander, 2008; Davis, 2012) play a significant role in order to allow a aesthetically significant and "shareable" experience that could provide immediate inter-relational meanings between the different stakeholders involved in the *musicking* (Small, 1999). The user interaction and participation through live feedback is a cornerstone for a digital successful IR, for this reason the relevance of the participatory turn. As stated by Bakke (2004) and Virolainen (2016), the conception of "welfare" has been developing and widening its scope to a participatory perspective that fosters proactive social participation and interaction in the cultural life.

The research also provided relevant outcomes regarding the democratizing factor of the digital platforms. Paradoxically, the digital platforms showed the potential to diminish the elitist approach to classical music (Enhuber, 2015; van Eijck, 2018; Walmsley, 2016), referring to the preconception that "high brow" art is somehow exclusive to certain social groups who are able to afford it, but on the other hand the digital access is still limited to a limited group of people that is financially capable to bear the implied costs of such service (Enhuber, 2015). I consider that the democratization argument should have a careful approach, since it can be a double-edge sword (Boyle, 2007). The financial means required to produce a quality digital stream and to enjoy a live stream concert at home are two important drawbacks implied in the universal accessibility argument of the digital platforms, besides, the goals of the free-access services such as YouTube and Facebook do not necessarily respond to the democratization argument, but instead, are guided by a commercial biased interest. Additionally, it is essential to include the concept of cultural democracy (Evrard, 1997) in the discussion in order to achieve egalitarian cultural policies that support both, the fair distribution and the diversity of artistic expressions, avoiding a biased western-centralized approach to the artistic experience.

6.1. Practical recommendations

I believe that the cultural organizations should aim for a new marketing strategy based on a structural differentiation between the live performances and the digital streams of art, pursuing to unlink them and promoting them as different artistic experiences with distinct aesthetic components. As an example, the Berlin Philharmonic built a whole concept around their digital platform, not only rebranding the hall as the "Digital Concert Hall", but also underlining the features of the digital stream service such as exclusive interviews, unlimited access to a vast archive of concerts and an educational programme for schools and families. By presenting and highlighting these elements, the expectations and motivations of the user are very different to the ones related to a live performance. More importantly, the strategic disassociation of these two artistic experiences should be framed in pursuance of fostering the construction of a symbiotic relation between each other, avoiding the potential risk of cannibalization (King, 2018).

Some conclusions drawn from the literature and the data analysis relate to the benefits of the digital platforms associated with accessibility and audience engagement. Previous research (Arditi, 2018; Crawford et al., 2014a; Enhuber, 2015; King, 2018; Walmsley, 2016; Webster, 2019) have already underpinned the key role of the digital platforms as an audience engagement tool based on the grounds of financial availability and remote accessibility. Drawn from the outcomes of the research, in order to achieve a successful engagement and a pleasant artistic experience for the audiences, it is essential to provide a good quality broadcast able to highlight and mediate the aesthetic insights of the performance. In correspondence with the analysed results, a poor quality streaming could demerit the whole aesthetic purpose showing a lack of seriousness and professionalism that could create a negative emotional drawback in the user. The research has shown that there is a proportional relationship between the quality and the emotional response from the user, this means, the better quality is the digital stream, the better emotional experience for the user. In this regard, it is important to consider the financial implications that involve the production of a high quality digital live stream. The production costs are very high and often the cultural and artistic organizations do not have a specific budget that would cover such expenses, consequently, the high quality streams are achievable to only a small group of organizations, leaving the smaller artistic groups and theatres unable to provide a good quality streaming service for their audiences. In the interest of avoiding a stronger

institutional fragmentation based on financial affordances, I believe that the governments and policy makers must take a primary role towards the financial endorsement of digital streaming services for art-based projects and organizations. In addition and regarding the mentioned risks and implications of the digital platforms, I consider that by having a strong financial support from the governments, the cultural organizations would not need to put at risk the users data by using "free" platforms such as YouTube or Facebook, in this way, the digital platforms would provide a safer digital environment for the user, without risking their personal data for commercial purposes.

Furthermore, the findings of the research revealed that during the COVID-19 health crisis, the digital audiences were proactive and positive towards the free and diverse streaming services available, showing interest in the artistic experience and in the digital platforms as successful mediators of it. It is important to consider that the consumption of digital cultural goods during this period does not only respond to audience interest, but also to the fact that they have more time available and also free access to many different platforms. The sum of these factors result in a closer relationship between the cultural organizations and the digital audiences (Walmsley, 2016), which impacted directly on the levels of response and feedback. Even though the results of this research come from a relative homogeneous sample in relation to consumption patters and educational levels, I think that a clear outcome of this crisis circumstances is that the digital platforms are a feasible alternative to bring art and culture to many different stakeholders, who seem to have an organic sense of curiosity and interest in involving themselves with different artistic forms and expressions.

Noteworthy, it is important to consider that apart from the aesthetic and artistic pleasure, the digital platforms also present themselves as a very handy tool for educational purposes. The participants of the present research have shown a particular interest in using the digital streams as a working device and educational source, strengthening the multi-purpose argument that could help the audiences to contextualize and familiarize with the genre, enhancing a closer relationship between the audience, the artist and the organization (Walmsley, 2016).

The biggest challenge during the research was to readapt the whole investigation into viable methodological processes that could fit into the governmental measures derived from the COVID-19 health crisis. More specifically, the data collection and the acquisition of

the participants was especially difficult, considering not only the availability of time and digital resources, but also the state-of-mind problems and limitations that impacted the participants and myself, originated by the social isolation and other unique circumstances generated by an international health crisis. I believe that the research on the topic can be further developed in many different paths, I find particularly interesting the possible results that could be taken from a researched based on live cinema streams and the combination of elements, on one hand the features of the digital live stream and on the other, the relevance of the bodily-presence element derived from the interaction ritual theory (Collins, 2014).

In summary, the research suggests that the digitalization and mediation of classical music concerts are definitely influencing the perception of the genre by adding a different possibility of understanding and a refreshed perspective of the whole concept of the artistic experience. In addition, the digital services have shown to have a much greater social and aesthetic potential than just being a digital representation of a live performance. The international health crisis derived from the COVID-19 virus has been the perfect frame to understand the fundamental role that the digital services play in today's society, maximizing their potential and their scope to unlimited boundaries. Although the countries' physical borders were closed during the COVID-19 health crisis, the social exchange around cultural goods prevailed through digital channels, revealing that the digital social interaction has become a cornerstone in the structural grounds of the current society.

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Appendix A (Figures)

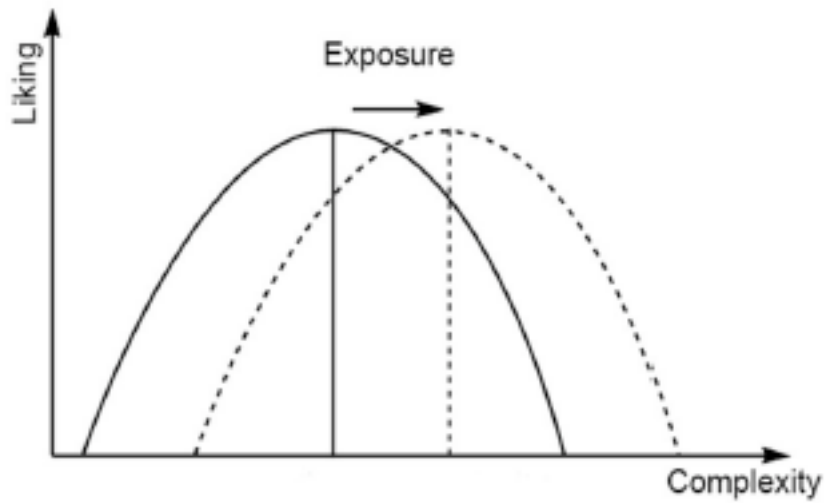**Figure 1: Berlyne's inverted U curve**

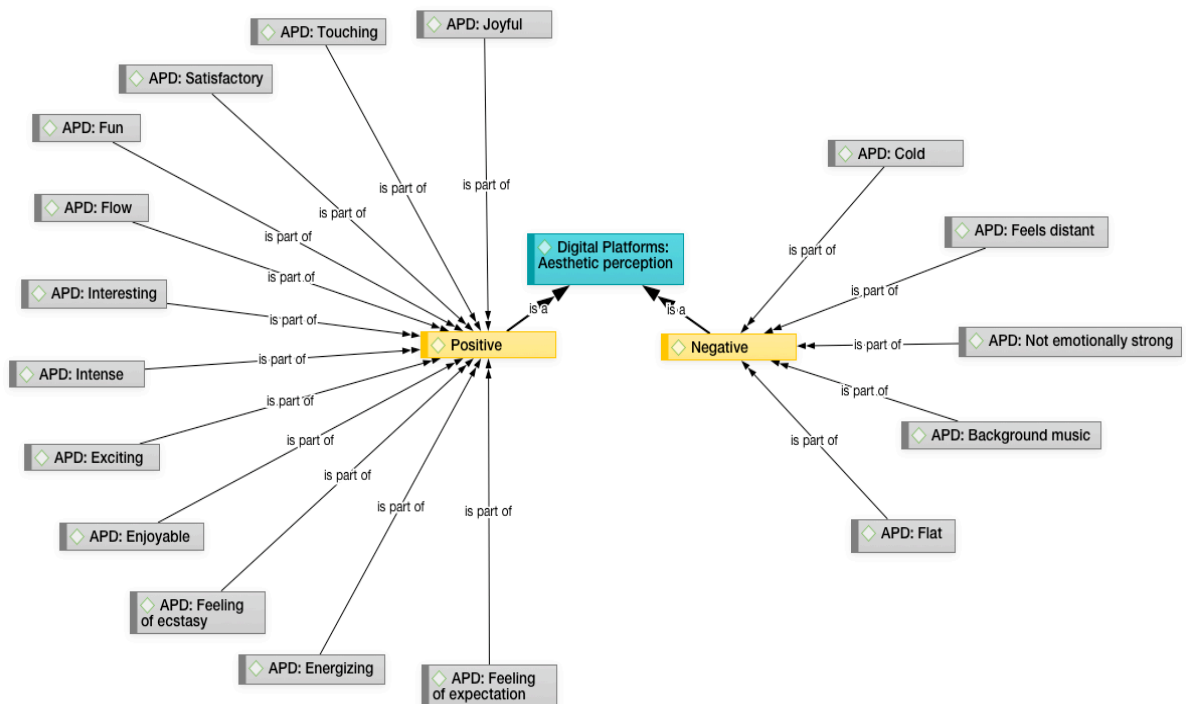**Figure 2: Thematic map of the aesthetic perceptions**

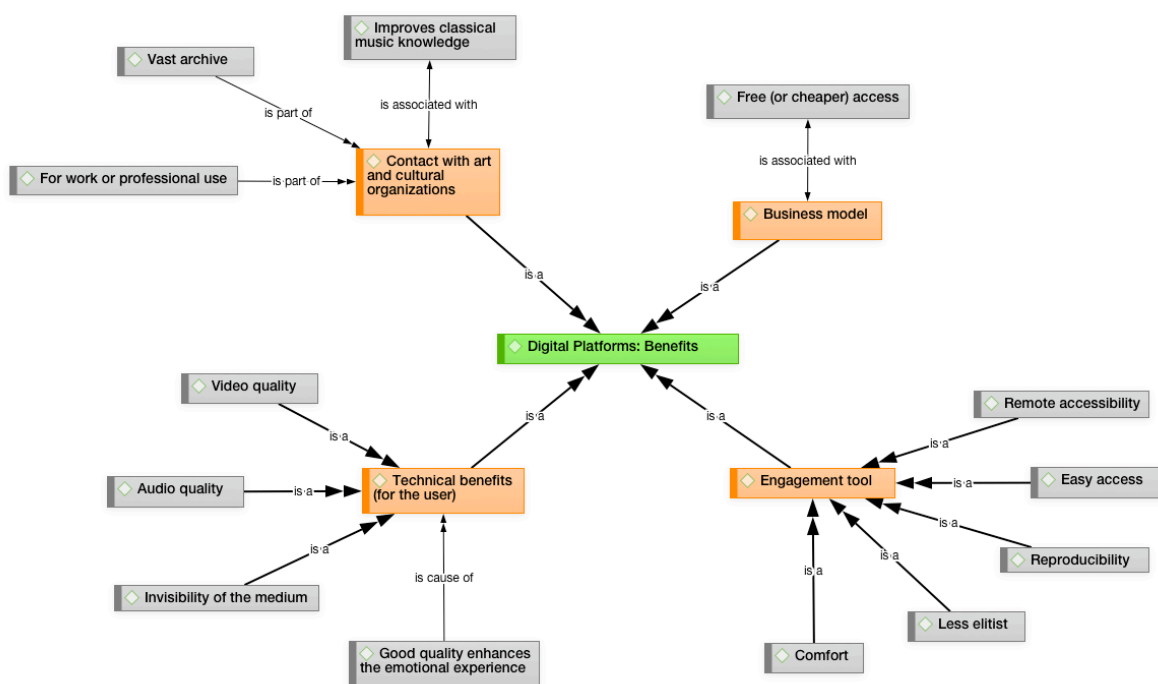**Figure 3: Thematic map of the benefits of the digital platforms**

Figure 4: Thematic map of the downsides and implications of the digital platforms
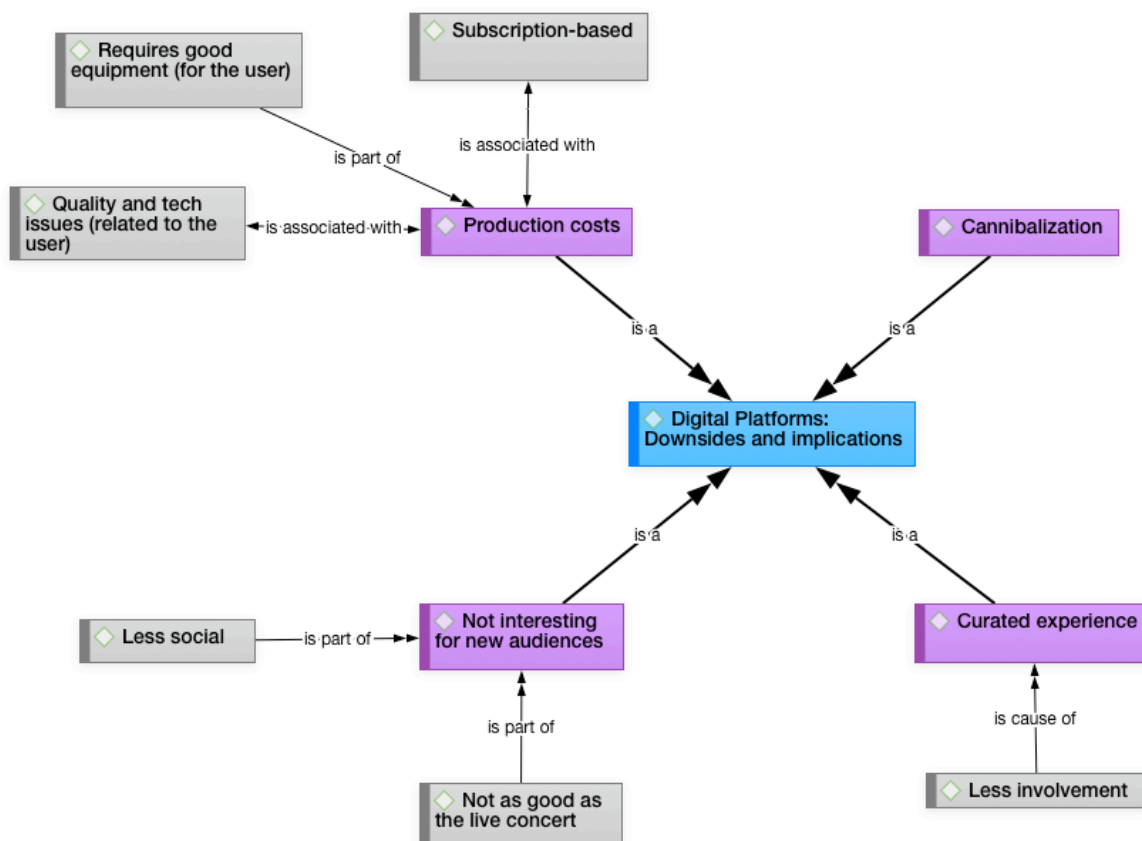
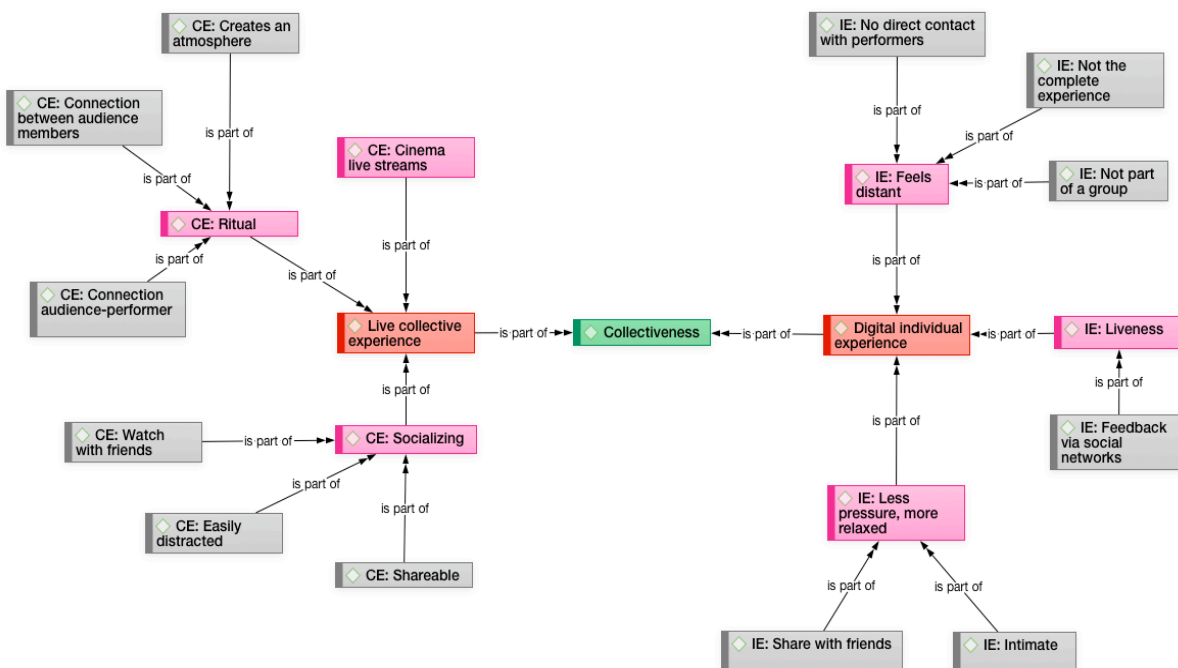**Figure 5: Thematic map of the collectiveness implications of the digital platforms**

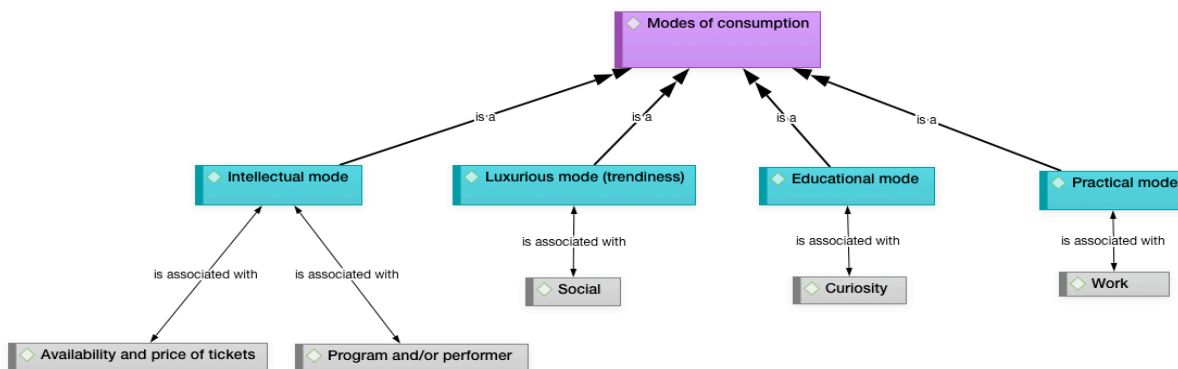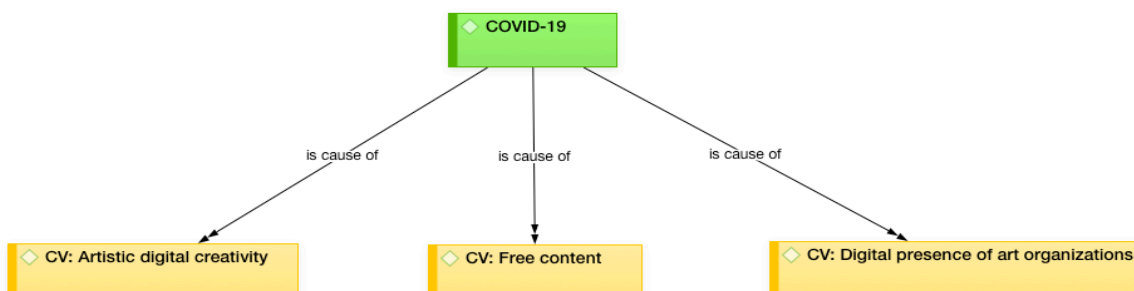**Figure 6: Thematic map of the modes of consumption**

Figure 7: Thematic map of the COVID-19 repercussions in the digital platforms

Appendix B (Table of thematic coding)

CODES	GROUPS	THEMES
APD: Energizing		
APD: Enjoyable		
APD: Exciting		
APD: Feeling of ecstasy		
APD: Feeling of expectation		
APD: Flow	Aesthetic Perception (Possitive)	
APD: Fun		
APD: Intense		
APD: Interesting		Digital Platforms: Aesthetic perception
APD: Joyful		
APD: Satisfactory		
APD: Touching		
APD: Background music		
APD: Cold		
APD: Feels distant	Aestehtic Perception (negative)	
APD: Flat		
APD: Not emotionally strong		
For work or professional use		
Improves classical music knowledge	Contact with art and cultural organizations	
Vast archive		
Free (or cheaper) access	Business model	
Audio quality		
Good quality enhances the emotional experience	Technical benefits (for the user)	Digital Platforms: Benefits
Invisibility of the medium		
Video quality		
Easy access		
Remote accessibility		
Reproducibility	Engagement tool	
Comfort		
Less elitist		
Quality and tech issues (related to the user)		
Requires good equipment (for the user)	Production costs	
Subscription-based		
Cannibalization	Cannibalization	Digital Platforms: Downsides and implications
Less social	Not interesting for new audiences	
Not as good as the live concert		
Less involvement	Curated experience	
CE: Connection audience-performer		
CE: Connection between audience members	Live collective experience (Ritual)	
CE: Creates an atmosphere		
CE: Cinema live streams	Live collective experience (Cinema live streams)	
CE: Easily distracted		
CE: Shareable	Live collective experience (Socializing)	
CE: Watch with friends		
		Collectiveness
IE: No direct contact with performers		
IE: Not part of a group	Digital individual experience (Feels distant)	
IE: Not the complete experience		
IE: Feedback via social networks	Digital individual experience (Liveness)	
IE: Intimate	Digital individual experience (Less pressure, more relaxed)	
IE: Share with friends		

CODES	GROUPS	THEMES
Availability and price of tickets	Intellectual mode	Modes of consumption
Program and/or performer		
Social	Luxurious mode (trendiness)	
Curiosity	Educational mode	
Work	Practical mode	
CV: Artistic digital creativity	COVID-19	COVID-19
CV: Free content		
CV: Digital presence of art organizations		
YouTube	Digital streaming platforms	Digital streaming platforms
Sydney Opera House		
Spotify		
Met Opera On Demand		
Medici.tv		
Instagram		
Facebook		
Concertgebouw		
Berlin Digital Concert Hall		
All of Bach		
Violin	Musicians	Musicians
Piano		
Conductor		
Clarinet		
Cello		
Bass		
Work related	Contact with music	Contact with music
Friends influence		
Family influence		
Early age		
Work	Reasons to attend a concert	Reasons to attend a concert
Program and/or performer		
Curiosity		

Appendix C ("Call for action" message in social networks and interview guide)

"Are you interested in classical music and its role in the digital era? Have you used digital concert streams yourself? We are looking for participants who would be interested to collaborate as interviewees for a Master thesis research under the supervision of Dr. Janna Michael (from Erasmus University Rotterdam), about the perception of classical music concerts through live stream platforms. If you are interested, please contact Agustin Benitez to receive more information. Your help in this study will be highly appreciated."

Interview guide

Interviewer: Agustin Benitez Ochoa

Date and time:

Location:

Interviewee

Alias: _____

Age: _____

Occupation: _____

State or province: _____

- I would like to learn a little more about your relation with classical music. Can you tell me how you first got in contact with it?
- Could you tell how often do you visit classical music concerts and under which circumstances?
- I would like to know your general opinion about the digital live stream platforms and their implementation in classical music.
  - Which platforms have you tried and how often do you experience them?
- Could you please describe what kind of emotions do you feel when experiencing a live stream concert?
- In what ways is the medium or platform affecting this emotional response? Positively and/or negatively?
- In comparison to a live performance, which pros and cons could you find in a live stream concert?
- How relevant or influential would you consider to be part of an audience in contrast to experiencing a live stream concert only by yourself?
- I would like to understand your position towards the live stream platforms and if you consider that these are impacting the classical music perception in some way?
- Thanks for your participation in this interview, do you have some questions, or would you like to add something else?