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Music Discovery on Online Streaming Platforms

The Role of Consumers' Subjective Expertise

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ABSTRACT

Title: "Music Discovery on Online Streaming Platforms: The Role of Consumers' Subjective Expertise."

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Streaming platforms have radically changed the way in which consumers listen to new music, as the process of discovery slowly shifted from an indirect exposure to songs to an increasingly interactive play between users and platforms. Customers are constantly supplied with services offering new releases as well as unexplored artists or genres, that aim at incentivizing and facilitating the consumption and discovery of new contents.

The following study aims at investigating the effect of subjective expertise on streaming platforms users' consumption preferences. It is argued that the potential knowledge offered by a platforms' service interacts with consumers' different levels of expertise, affecting willingness to discover new music. Subsequently, the study explores the effect of subjective expertise on two motivational variables, namely, variety seeking and need for uniqueness.

In order to test the hypothesis a survey was conducted in which participants were presented with a fake playlist offering two types of potential consumption knowledge (breadth and depth). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the knowledge conditions, as well as a novice or expert condition in which subjective expertise was manipulated. The results showed that novice and expert consumers' preferences in willingness to discover differ significantly according to the type of consumption knowledge offered by the service. No differences in variety seeking behaviors were found, even though expert consumers appear to be more inclined to seek for uniqueness when listening to music on streaming platforms.

Keywords

Music Discovery; Subjective Expertise; Streaming Platforms; Consumption Knowledge; Variety Seeking; Need for Uniqueness

SUMÁRIO

Título: "Descoberta de Música em Plataformas Online de Streaming: O Papel do Conhecimento Subjetivo dos Consumidores."

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As plataformas de streaming mudaram radicalmente a forma como os consumidores ouvem música nova com o processo de descoberta a passar lentamente de uma exposição indireta a canções para uma relação interativa entre utilizadores e plataformas. Aos consumidores são constantemente oferecidos serviços com novos lançamentos bem como artistas e géneros não explorados, que visam incentivar e facilitar o consumo e descoberta de novos conteúdos.

Este estudo visa investigar o efeito do conhecimento subjetivo nas preferências de consumo dos utilizadores de plataformas de streaming. É debatido que o conhecimento potencial oferecido por um serviço de uma plataforma interage com os diferentes níveis de conhecimento dos consumidores, afetando o desejo de descobrir música nova. Adicionalmente, este estudo explora o efeito do conhecimento subjetivo em duas variáveis motivacionais, a procura de variedade e a necessidade de singularidade.

De forma a testar a hipótese, foi realizado um questionário no qual os inquiridos foram expostos a uma lista de reprodução falsa, oferecendo dois tipos de potencial conhecimento de consumo (amplo e profundo). A cada participante foi atribuído, aleatoriamente, uma das condições de conhecimento bem como a condição de principiante ou especialista, em que o conhecimento subjetivo foi manipulado. Os resultados mostram que que as preferências dos consumidores principiantes e especialistas na vontade de descobrir diferem significativamente de acordo com o tipo de conhecimento de consumo oferecido pelo serviço. Não foram encontradas diferenças no comportamento de procura de variedade, embora os consumidores especialistas mostrem maior desejo de unicidade quando consomem música em plataforma de streaming.

Palavras-chave

Descoberta de música; Conhecimento subjetivo; Plataformas de streaming; Conhecimento de consumo; Procura de variedades; Necessidade de singularidade

To Mom, Dad, and Cri.

I owe you everything,

Thank you.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of music streaming platforms has brought a disruptive change in the music industry, regarding the way in which artists had to reinvent themselves in order to get closer to their fans, and how consumers adapted their consumption habits to an increasingly all-inclusive service, capable of delivering new content ubiquitously and at any time.

From a consumer perspective, the effects of streaming adoption on music consumption had positive implications on the long-run, due to a greater accessibility to a wide variety of contents, which has inevitably led customers to the exposure of new music on a broader scale than on other consumption channels (Datta, Knox, & Bronnenberg, 2017; Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2015). Besides the ease of access to libraries averaging more than thirty million songs, the limitless potential of interactive streaming also derives from the discovery and promotion tools offered by the platforms. This potential has been captured mostly by emerging artists exploiting the collection of fan insights in order to analyze the latest trends, keep track of their appearances, and strategically position themselves in the market (Vidmajer, 2020). This to say that, from all-time classics to newborn genres, consumers are systematically exposed to a diverse number of inputs that shape what has now become the experience of music consumption.

Given such premises, facilitating music discovery has become the major competitive advantage of the top-ranked streaming platforms in terms of the number of subscribers and the library's width. The new customer-centric approach of the services offered, such as the customized platform-generated playlist connecting new music titles with the users, has created an alternative system in which new potential experiences are directly delivered to the consumer. In this scenario, the user is brought to decide whether to adopt or not a specific playlist containing a set of songs ideally near its tastes.

Although consumers appreciate customized products, it is unlikely that a platform-generated playlist always meets the preferences of users with different levels of discernment or expertise within the music domain, as the paper will explain later on. As the set of alternatives increases, an individual's capacity to establish whether a specific experience can maximize its utility plays an important role in the process of decision making (Meyer et al., 1997). The concept of sampling the experiences based on one's perceived knowledge within a domain (Clarkson, Janiszewski, & Cinelli, 2013), founds fertile ground in the world of streaming platforms, as it affects how the new online audience approaches music discovery when an algorithm-based service is selecting the alternatives for them.

1.2 Problem Statement

The main objective of this research is to understand the relationship between a consumer's level of expertise within the music domain and his consumption behavior on streaming platforms. More precisely, it aims at investigating how consumers with different levels of perceived knowledge react to a service in which the experience of discovering new music has been customized according to their listening habits. Therefore, it argues under which circumstances an expert (novice) consumer will be willing to adopt a platform-generated playlist as a mean for music discovery. The problem statement can be summarized as follow:

How is music consumption on streaming platforms, and, more precisely, the discovery process of new content, affected by the subjective, self-assessed knowledge of consumers?

From the problem statement the following research questions were formulated:
RQ1: How is the willingness to discover affected by the level of subjective expertise?
RQ2: How does the type of consumption experience offered affects willingness to discover?

Furthermore, the study includes two motivational variables, namely, variety seeking and need for uniqueness. The purpose is to highlight how, based on the level of subjective expertise, these dimensions of consumer behavior differ when navigating on streaming platforms. The following research question was formulated:
RQ3: Is there a difference in need for uniqueness and variety seeking between consumers with different levels of subjective expertise?

1.3 Dissertation Outline

The following dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter gives a general overview of the context of the analysis, concluding with the research questions upon which the study was developed. Subsequently, the literature review aims at building a strong theoretical background for the study, presenting the evidence from prior literature regarding the role of consumer expertise both in the utilitarian and the hedonic domains, as well as a theoretic framework for the two variables included in the study, namely, variety seeking and need for uniqueness. The methodology section will explain in detail the techniques used to gather the data for the analysis. The results chapter presents the tests used to validate the hypothesis that will lead to the discussion of the main findings in the last chapter. The final chapter also includes some advice for managerial use and the limitations of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Music Discovery: The Role of Online Streaming Platforms

During the last decade, the music industry has gone through a rough change in the way consumers approach music consumption, considering how the switch from material to digital audio contents has radically changed their discovery and purchase behaviors.

A disruptive change from ownership-based to streaming-based business models has involved this copyright-related industry (Datta, Konx, & Bronnenberg, 2018), leading, therefore, to a redefinition of the primary sources of revenues, as well as the main variables affecting consumption at an individual level.

The introduction of music streaming platforms has consistently affected the way in which people listen to music, facilitating and speeding access to music content without the need to download audio files (Aguiar, 2017). Therefore, streaming services can be seen as an ulterior step forward to the process of dematerialization of music, which, as previously mentioned, definitively replace the ownership of the purchased song or album with a streaming service giving complete access to a vast and variegated library of digital contents (Datta et al., 2018).

Prior literature has debated on the effects of streaming services on the recorded music industry, and, more precisely, on the impact that these might have on right holders' revenues, arguably leading to a decrease of the latter by shifting the distribution channel from licensed downloading music platforms, to streaming platforms offering bundled selling (Aguiar, 2017; Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2015).

The concept of bundled selling is central to the streaming platforms' analysis, as it appears to be the mean by which these technologies have altered the industry's revenue model, besides substantially affecting consumers' discovery behavior. According to Aguiar and Waldfogel (2015), a consumer's decision to purchase a bundled service strictly depends on the perceived value of the songs offered, rather than on the selling price of the single song. Thus, by their nature, streaming platforms consistently reduce the cost of additional variety (Datta et al., 2018), therefore stimulating the discovery of new content and the acquisition of consumption knowledge.

The concept of variety in the music industry has been widely discussed in previous literature, pointing out the industry's limits in supplying people with a satisfactory level of alternatives.

According to Rosen (1981), performing arts industries, in which the acquisition of knowledge is crucial for a better appreciation of their products, are likely to be affected by what is called

the superstar phenomenon, namely, the concentration of a large share of audience around a small number of artists. Superstardom affects the process of music discovery as it has been defined by Crain and Tollison (2002) as a "market device that economizes on learning costs", meaning that consumers may be influenced by popular choices if the latter are shared by a consistent number of individuals. Therefore, if on one hand it reduces the time spent searching and discovering new music, on the other it reduces one's breadth of variety and depth of knowledge. Indeed, according to Adler (1985), superstardom can emerge from individuals' lack of knowledge or prior experiences within an industry, that lead to consumers' imitation behaviors in order to acquire consumption capital (Rosen, 1981; Crain & Tollison, 2002; Datta et al., 2018). Moreover, according to Lacher and Mizerski (1994), consumers tend to experience new music releases based on the width of their knowledge, therefore, the searching and learning costs increase as the degree of expertise decreases.

As previously mentioned, streaming platforms represent indeed an important technology for music discovery and a service capable of enhancing an individual's experiential knowledge. According to Datta et al. (2018), breadth of variety increases through streaming platforms, reducing the concentration of listeners around a restricted number of artists, songs, or genres. As the cost of additional variety reduces and the assortment of content increases, customers will discover music at a higher rate (Datta et al., 2018). Moreover, superstar consumption and the repeated listening of own personal favorites decreases substantially, enabling the discovery of new valuable content (Datta et al., 2018).

2.2 Consumer Expertise and Prior Knowledge

One of the reasons keep people motivated in consuming new products, evaluating alternatives, and expanding their set of experiences within a specific product category is undoubtedly the continuous and ongoing process of learning and acquiring knowledge, both as a mean to increase one's ability in problem-solving, and as a way to enhance one's self-confidence in decision-making.

Previous literature on consumer expertise has extensively covered how this phenomenon can be operationalized. Alba and Hutchinson (1987) described consumer knowledge as a result of the influence, both direct and indirect, of stimuli aimed at increasing product familiarity through product-related experiences, as well as "the ability to perform product related tasks" (expertise).

In this sense, it is intuitable that consumers, in a way or another, have already been exposed to information regarding a product class, developing an indistinct set of experiences on which to base future information search (Bettman & Park, 1980; Brucks, 1985).

However, although several studies have reported a negative correlation between the level of prior knowledge and the need for product information, claiming that a high level of expertise will lead to information overload, latest studies have demonstrated that consumption knowledge encourages information search, as the cognitive effort to process those information decreases as knowledge increases (Brucks, 1985; Johnson & Russo, 1984; Punj & Staelin, 1983).
Prior knowledge represents a crucial element in sampling novel products or experiences from information stored in an individual's memory (Brucks, 1985; Clarkson, Janiszewski, & Cinelli, 2013). Hence, the construction of a well-structured product class knowledge and increasing product familiarity will certainly have the benefit of reducing the time and the effort spent in making decisions (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Hoyer, 1984; Payne, 1976).

2.2.1 Hedonic versus Utilitarian: The Role of Expertise

The majority of theories on consumer expertise and the acquisition of consumption knowledge mainly focused on the evaluation of tangible attributes within a specific product class (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).
The search for information, as well as the reduced cognitive effort due to increasing product familiarity and automaticity (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987), are described as processes enacted to gain proficiency and reduce frustration when completing an utilitarian task. On the contrary, several theories argue that the acquisition of knowledge operates differently in the utilitarian and hedonic context (Alba & Williams, 2012; Murray & Bellman, 2011). More precisely, Murray and Bellman (2011) introduced the human capital model (Ratchford, 2001) within the domain of hedonic consumption. They argued that the acquisition of expertise and proficiency would enhance the value of an experience, increasing consumer's desire for an activity, while utilitarian efficiency mainly reduces the amount of time spent in completing a task (Murray & Bellman, 2011; Stigler & Becker, 1977; Becker, 1993; Ratchford, 2001).

The idea according to which prior knowledge and expertise serve as a vehicle for a better appreciation of novel experiences, finds a solid foundation in Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) study. It argues that an individual's learning process affects its so-called "Intervening Response System," namely, its cognitive structure, its attitudes and emotions, and its consumption behavior. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the development of consistent prior

knowledge constitutes a definite competitive advantage for a consumer when making choices, even though concerning hedonic experiences. Hence, a composed set of past experiences helps to build an individual's "experiential consumption knowledge" (Clarkson et al., 2013). Therefore, it is argued that, as the level of expertise and product-related experiences increase, consumers strategically project their choices to enhance future experiences, within or between product categories (Clarkson et al., 2013).

2.2.2 Objective versus Subjective Knowledge

According to prior literature, there are mainly three ways in which consumer knowledge can be classified: objective knowledge, what a consumer actually knows; subjective knowledge, or self-assessed, what a consumer thinks he knows; and prior experiences or usage experiences with a product (Brucks, 1985; Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Park, Mothersbaugh, & Feick, 1994).

Brucks' (1985) first distinction between these types of product class knowledge, also highlights some main differences in their operationalization. First of all, it is crucial to distinguish true expertise from simple product familiarity, since familiarity is the result of the exposure to any kind of product-related encounter. In contrast, expertise implies a certain degree of proficiency in product-related tasks (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000). Therefore, as Brucks (1985) asserted, experience-based measures, like familiarity, are hardly relatable to consumer behaviors, unlike objective and subjective knowledge.

Substantial differences between objective and subjective knowledge have been outlined in previous studies (Brucks, 1985; Park & Lessig, 1981; Rudell, 1979; Selnes & Gronhaug, 1986; Flynn & Goldsmith, 1999). On the one hand, objective knowledge appears to facilitate how consumers process product-related information (Rudell, 1979), meaning that high levels in this dimension are associated with lower cognitive effort. On the other hand, Park and Lessig (1981) supported the idea that subjective knowledge provides a better understanding of consumers' systematic biases, as well as decision-making based on heuristics. Indeed, subjective knowledge is a stronger motivator of purchase behaviors than objective knowledge (Selnes & Gronhaug, 1986).

In consumer research literature, these two measures have been frequently used together, and the constructs have been shown to be variably correlated (Flynn & Goldsmith, 1999; Raju, Lonial, & Mangold, 1995; Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 1997). It is, however, necessary to keep in mind that the determinants of objective and subjective knowledge, as previously discussed,

sharply differ, and occasionally diverge, meaning that, objective and subjective measures are often subject to miscalibration. For instance, accuracy and confidence are two dimensions of expertise that can be affected by diverse factors (i.e., experience); thus, the influence of a factor on one dimension or another is certainly a source of miscalibration (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000).

According to Park and Moon (2003), the utilitarian or hedonic nature of a product affects an individual's approach to consumption. Since the hedonic value of a product is strictly connected to the feelings and emotions it arouses (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Park & Moon, 2003), it would be quite a difficult task to measure it through concrete and objective attributes. On the contrary, these product experiences carry a very subjective meaning for the consumer and an ideological value (Park & Moon, 2003). Moreover, hedonic involvement is strongly characterized by motivational aspects besides subjectivity (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Park & Young, 1983; Park & Moon, 2003). As motivation and subjectivity are likely to be higher in hedonic products, and the involvement related to these two factors is more likely to be connected with subjective knowledge (Park & Moon, 2003), the following study will rely on subjective knowledge as main measure of consumer expertise.

2.2.3 Selecting Consumption Experiences

The process by which consumers select novel experiences has been analyzed under many circumstances in prior literature. From a general point of view, consistent with previous studies, an individual shape his choices and preferences with regard to his favorable, or unfavorable, past experiences (Meyer et al., 1997; Lowenstein & Prelec, 1993; Simonson, 1990).
More precisely, according to Meyer et al.'s (1997) dynamic utility maximization models, consumers are unconsciously aware that the utility deriving from novel experiences is related to prior knowledge. Therefore, a "dynamic utility-maximizer" could choose an unfamiliar option over a familiar option according to the potential new knowledge he will benefit from, given the experience-related information it will use as a benchmark for evaluation (Meyers et al., 1997).

In the previous paragraph, it was said that subjective knowledge mainly relies on heuristic cues for the evaluation of a product, thus exposing consumers' to biased judgments. According to Hoeffler, Ariely, and West (2006), the search process of an individual is highly influenced by the first choice he makes in a new environment, namely, the starting point. The reasons why the starting point of novel experiences consistently affect future decisions are strictly connected to the concept of anchoring, an association-bias for which consumers select experiences

according to their perceived favorability, influenced by non-informative starting points (Hoeffler et al., 2006; Chapman and Johnson, 1999; John, Scott, & Bettman, 1996). The favorableness of early experiences, indeed, represents the turning point for consumers choice sampling, hence the reluctance to experiment unfamiliar options when it is perceived to be higher the profitability of familiar ones (Meyer & Shi, 1995). Therefore, the learning process reduces the number of alternatives from which to sample when the outcome is uncertain, thus narrowing the set of considered experiences within a domain (Hoeffler et al., 2006).

Consumers' attitude towards novel experience is intuitively different from one person to another. Presumably, one's level of prior knowledge within a product class determines the width of the evoked set of experiences among which to choose (Wirtz & Mattila, 2003).
Regarding the amplitude of choices taken into consideration from an individual, it is argued that a consumer with a lower level of expertise within a product category will tend to consider a wider range of alternatives than a more experienced one (Hoeffler & Ariely, 1999). An expert consumer shows a higher understanding of the product domain, which leads to a more efficient recognition of an attribute's importance and relevance, as well as the correlation between attributes (Hoeffler & Ariely, 1999; West, Brown, & Hoch, 1996).

The different degree to which consumers discern product classes and sample novel experiences, according to their level of expertise, represents the basis of this study. It is argued that the choices a person makes within a product category, are more or less oriented and refined as its consumption knowledge increases. This concept has been deeply explored in prior research by Clarkson, Janiszewski, and Cinelli (2013), according to which the choice of a novel experience is a function of a consumer's experiential knowledge. More precisely, a novice consumer who has a little knowledge about a certain product category will benefit more from clustering a wider and more diverse set of novel experiences (*breadth of knowledge*), therefore increasing its experiential consumption and enhancing appreciation for potential future experiences (Clarkson et al., 2013). Conversely, an expert consumer will undoubtedly apply major discernment in choosing among alternatives, sampling from a narrower set of experiences, ideally near its preferences, to refine its existing experiential knowledge (*depth of knowledge*) (Clarkson et al., 2013).
Based on these theories, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H*$_1$: Experts are more willing to discover new music than novices, when depth of knowledge is offered by a playlist on streaming platforms. Novices are more willing to discover new music than experts, when breadth of knowledge is offered by a playlist on streaming platforms.*

⇒ ***H*$_{1.1}$***: Experts are more satisfied with the playlist offered in a depth of knowledge condition, while novices are more satisfied with the playlist offered in a breadth of knowledge condition.*

2.3 Variety Seeking

Consistently with the theories concerning experiential learning and the development of a defined knowledge within a product class, prior literature has investigated on the motives that lead a consumer to seek variety in his consumption habits. The reasons why an individual chooses variety are certainly multiple. However, the linkage between variety-seeking and the level of expertise within a domain has not been investigated into deep. In this study it is discussed that variety-seeking tendencies differ according to a consumer's perceived level of expertise.

First of all, variety-seeking has been previously defined as an aspect of consumer behavior, according to which an individual regularly or occasionally switches away from a product consumed in prior occasions (Ratner, Kahn, & Kahneman, 1999; Kahn, Kalwani, & Morrison, 1986: Givon, 1984). The wide range of theories on consumers' variety-seeking behavior have widely discussed the role of intrapersonal factors, such as experience satiation, as motives that drive changes in consumption habits (Ratner et al., 1999; Kahn, 1995; McAlister & Pessemier, 1982). Therefore, it is argued that the level of satiation, and, consequently, an individual's need for new stimuli, leads to the consumption of new items not experienced yet (Faison, 1977), or, to the alternation between stable preferences and new products (Ratner et al., 1999; Kahn, Ratner, & Kahneman, 1997; Herrstein & Prelec, 1991; Sevilla, Lu, & Kahn, 2018).

However, in the attempt to maximize consumption utility when choosing among different and new alternatives, it has been argued that individuals do not necessarily make choices that maximize their enjoyment, meaning that seeking variety at the expense of preferred and already experienced choices will derive less utility (Ratner et al., 1999).

Regarding consumers' willingness to switch among novel and less preferred experiences, this study argues that consumers' level of expertise, within a specific domain, also plays an important role in defining this aspect of consumption behavior. More precisely, it is argued that

one's knowledge, more or less defined of a product class, will influence the number of new alternatives taken into consideration when sampling novel experiences.

As previously mentioned, preference stability within a domain is connected to the number of product-related experiences a consumer had (Hoeffler & Ariely, 1999). The extent to which an individual includes variety in his consumption habits is related to the strength of its preferences and the positivity of previous experiences.
It has been shown that novices in a product category should consider a broader range of items than more experienced customers, in order to construct their preferences, and therefore sample from a diverse set of novel alternatives to enhance future appreciation of consumption experiences (Hoeffler & Ariely, 1999; Clarkson et al., 2013).
Therefore, the proposed study argues that consumers' choice for patterns of increasing utility (Ratner et al., 1999; Lowenstein & Prelec, 1993; Ross & Simonson, 1991) and comparison between less-enjoyable novel experiences and familiar options (Ratner et al., 1999; Schwarz & Bless, 1992), will be impacted by one's level of expertise. Thus, variety-seeking might also be affected by preference stability as a result of the expertise that a customer has within a specific domain. Therefore, while novices will gain more utility by acquiring knowledge-enhancing consumption capital, experts will present more stable preferences than novices, hence, a limited need for variety due to their refined knowledge and major discernment.
Consistently, these assumptions lead to a second hypothesis:

***H_2**: Novices have a higher tendency to seek variety than experts when navigating through music on streaming platforms.*

⇒ ***$H_{2.1}$**: Novices will perceive a playlist offering breadth of knowledge to be more aligned with their desired variety, while experts will perceive a playlist offering depth of knowledge to be more aligned with their desired variety.*

2.4 Need for Uniqueness

Consumers' need for uniqueness has been defined as the tendency to pursue "differentness relative to others" through the acquisition of consumer goods capable of enhancing one's self-image (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). Accordingly, this "counterconformity motivation" (Nail, 1986) arises as an automatic mechanism when individuals feel overly similar to others (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Tian et al., 2001). Moreover, prior literature argues that, besides

shaping a desired self-image through differentiation, consumers who manifest higher need for uniqueness tend to avoid undesired identity inferences about them (Berger & Heath, 2007).

A key element of consumers' need for uniqueness is self-image enhancement, which leads to the transference of particular meanings and values to a product, as part of a personal internal process of the consumer (Tian et al., 2001). However, previous studies also suggest that the extent to which an individual adopts uniqueness-seeking behaviors strongly depends on the pertaining domain. More precisely, some areas of interest are more likely to be seen as symbolic of identity (Berger & Heath, 2007), therefore, consumers are more driven to differentiate their tastes from those of others in order to fulfill their desire to be unique within a specific product category (Tian et al., 2001).
Coherently with this theory, hedonic consumption represents a fertile ground for the development of a consumer's self-image. Lacher (1989) identified three main reasons behind the consumption of visual and performing arts: *emotional stimulation*, *cognitive stimulation*, and *situational factors*. Due to these characteristics, the bond that an individual creates with these types of experiences is strictly personal and can easily communicate things about their user (infer identity), thus increasing the need for uniqueness in its consumption habits. The domains in which there is a highly sensitive and emotional attachment are often characterized higher need for diversity, which leads to counterconformity behaviors and "avoidance of similarity" (Tian et al., 2001; Berger & Heath, 2007).

According to Holt (1995), consumers may fulfill their desire to be unique by establishing expertise within a specific domain. Typically, these domains of knowledge include experiences in which the more you know, the more you will enjoy consuming them (West et al., 1996; Crain & Tollison, 2002; LaTour & LaTour, 2010; Clarkson et al., 2013). The following study aims at understanding whether there is a difference in uniqueness-seeking behaviors between consumers with different levels of expertise, and, more precisely, if these differences translate into avoidance of similarity, namely, "the loss of interest in, or discontinued use of, possessions that become commonplace in order to move away from the norm and reestablish one's differentness" (Tian et al., 2001). Therefore, if divergence from the majority is more likely to arise in domains that a consumer perceives as personally important (Campbell, 1986; Kernis, 1984; Berger & Heath, 2007), it is assumed that there have been frequent past experiences that enabled the acquisition of consumption capital and the definition of a more refined knowledge within that domain. On the other hand, as explained in the previous paragraphs, the lack of information can lead to the acquisition of consumption capital through the selection of popular

choices in order to minimize search costs (Adler, 1985; Rosen, 1981; Crain & Tollison, 2002; Datta et al., 2017). Therefore, low expertise will lead to imitation behaviors aimed at learning from others rather than diverge.
In order to explain the relationship between level of expertise and need for uniqueness, the third hypothesis was formulated as follow:

***H_3**: Experts show a major tendency to seek for uniqueness than novices when listening to music on streaming platforms.*

Experts will tend to perceive a service offering depth of knowledge to be unique, as it falls closer to their preferences, therefore, adopting a playlist in line with one's self-image would make inference about their identity in a desirable way.

⇒ ***$H_{3.1}$**: Experts will perceive a playlist offering depth of knowledge more unique than novices.*

2.5 Hypothesis Overview

The first hypothesis studies the relationship between self-assessed subjective knowledge and the type of consumption knowledge offered. The potential knowledge that a consumer acquires from a particular experience, such as a platform-generated playlist, affects the willingness to adopt that service as a tool for music discovery. If the playlist offered is in line with the customers' preferences, according to its level of expertise, the level of satisfaction will increase as well, which leads to the formulation of the first sub-hypothesis. Specifically, experts are expected to show more willingness to discover new music and higher satisfaction than novices when depth of knowledge is offered by a playlist on streaming platforms. Novices, on the other hand, are expected to show more willingness to discover new music and expect higher satisfaction than experts, when breadth of knowledge is offered by a playlist on streaming platforms.

The second and third hypothesis aim at demonstrating the relationship between two motivational variables, namely, variety-seeking and need for uniqueness, and consumers' level of expertise. Based on the theoretical background, the study assumes that novice and expert consumers will have different motivational goals regarding variety and uniqueness. Accordingly, experts are expected to show low variety seeking tendencies due to their perceived well-defined preferences, while seeking for more uniqueness in order to shape a desired self-

image. Novices, on the contrary, will manifest higher variety seeking tendencies in order to acquire consumption knowledge to shape their preferences and sample future experiences, while adopting popular choices in order to gain consumption capital, therefore, showing a low need for uniqueness.

Finally, two sub-hypotheses were formulated in order to study the effect of consumers' subjective expertise and consumption knowledge type (breadth and depth) on two cognitive variables, namely, perceived variety and perceived uniqueness. The following study assumes that consumers' different motivational goals previously described, in terms of uniqueness and variety, translate into different perceptions accordingly to the type of consumption knowledge offered by the service.

In this scenario, experts will perceive a playlist conveying depth of knowledge as not too variegated, which, according to the second hypothesis, corresponds with the right amount of variety this class of consumers seek when sampling a new experience. On the other hand, the opposite assumption was made for novices. More precisely, since novices seek for more variety than experts, they will tend to perceive a service offering breadth of knowledge as highly variable and, therefore, show more satisfaction than experts with the variety offered.

Similarly, a knowledge refining playlist will be perceived by experts as more unique since it better reflects their self-image. In order to differentiate their tastes from those of other consumers, as well as make an identity statement, experts will perceive a playlist delivering depth of knowledge as a better indicator of uniqueness. Since it has been hypothesized that need for uniqueness is a peculiar characteristic of knowledgeable consumers, the assumption wasn't made for novices in the breadth of knowledge condition.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The following chapter presents the methodology used to give significant evidence to the objective of this dissertation, and the processes used to explain and validate both the research question and the hypothesis.

As stated in the research question, the main goal of this study is to understand customers of music streaming platforms' consumption preferences when navigating through new music content, and, more precisely, the effect of their perceived knowledge on music discovery. Moreover, the analysis aims at demonstrating how different levels of subjective knowledge are related to a customer's need for variety and uniqueness, and still, how these variables affect the perceived quality of the service offered by the platform when delivering customized songs' selection through its playlists.

In order to implement the experimental design, the first stage of the study consisted in an exploratory research throughout the relevant literature in the field of interest. The main purpose, besides the formulation of theoretically driven hypothesis, was to gain insight regarding the operationalization of the variables applied in the explanatory research. Indeed, as the paper will explain later on, the proposed methodology takes inspiration from the study conducted by Clarkson, Janiszewski, & Cinelli (2013), using its relevant findings as a solid foundation for the assessment and analysis of the dissertation's problem statement previously discussed.

3.2 Research Design

The study follows a 2 (Novice versus Expert) x 2 (Breadth of knowledge versus Depth of knowledge) between-subject design. The main choice was to manipulate, rather than simply measure, the expertise independent variable to infer a major causal attribution and reduce respondents' overconfidence when self-assessing their knowledge, following previous studies (Clarkson et al., 2013).

In this cross-sectional design, the independent variables are meant to be the level of expertise shown by the respondents through the manipulation, and the breadth or depth of knowledge condition to which the participants are randomly exposed. The main purpose of this design is to validate the main effect that expertise has on customers' willingness to discover new music on streaming platforms, according to the type of knowledge they are offered to experience. Further details on the two conditions will be explained in the procedure.

The survey (Appendix 1) is composed by six sections and distributed in English. In the first section the respondents were presented with the expertise manipulation, and randomly assigned to a novice or expert condition. As previously said, the objective of this task was to alter the respondents' perception of their subjective knowledge.

In the second section, respondents were presented with the service offered by the streaming platform, namely, a new format of customized playlist, whose characteristics regarding the songs' selection differed according to the breadth or depth of knowledge condition to which participants were randomly assigned.

Sections from three to five were used to measure, respectively, participants willingness to discover new music on streaming platforms, their tendency to seek for variety in music consumption, and their need for uniqueness in the selection of songs or genres. The sixth and last section focused on demographic questions concerning age, gender, and level of education.

3.2.1 Procedure and Measures

As previously mentioned, the first section of the survey had the main objective to manipulate the subjective, self-assessed, knowledge of the participant, according to one of the two conditions that were randomly assigned.

In the expertise manipulation, the respondents were presented with a short description of the reasons why they have been chosen for this particular study (Clarkson, Janiszewski, & Cinelli, 2013). As a first part of the manipulation, the information provided aimed at increasing or decreasing an individual's self-confidence in assessing its level of expertise. In order to succeed in this task, respondents in the novice condition were told that a regular user of music streaming platforms has a *"base level of knowledge about music playlists"*, while in the expert condition they were told that a regular user of music streaming platforms has a *"substantial amount of knowledge about music playlists"*.

Subsequently, respondents were asked to assess their level of expertise in music. However, before completing this task, they were asked to answer to a biased scale that could alter their perceived expertise (Tormala & DeSensi, 2008). The proposed measure consists in a 5-point bipolar scale, which, in the novice condition, was anchored at "*do not consider myself an expert – somewhat consider myself an expert*", "*do not define myself an expert – somewhat define myself an expert*", "*do not consider myself an expert – somewhat consider myself an expert*". On the other hand, in the expert condition, it was anchored at "*somewhat consider myself an expert – definitely consider myself an expert*", "*somewhat define myself an expert – definitely define myself an expert*", "*somewhat consider myself an expert – definitely consider myself an*

expert". The scale used in the manipulation was taken from prior research by Clarkson et al. (2013).
In order to assess subjective expertise, a 9-point bipolar scale (anchored at *"Not much at all"- "A lot of"*) was used to measure participants' knowledge, expertise, understanding, and information in the music domain (Clarkson et al., 2013).

Following the manipulation, all participants were evenly and randomly assigned to one of the two knowledge conditions, namely, breadth and depth. This block consisted in a small scenario in which participants were asked to imagine they are navigating on a music streaming platform (Spotify) in search of new songs or genres to listen to. Participants were then introduced to the service offered by the platform which consisted in a fictitious daily customized playlist (Open Ocean) delivering new content according to the customer's preferences in music genres.
The playlist was presented accordingly to one of the two conditions and differed in the type of songs' selection offered. In the breadth condition, the platform offered *"A playlist containing a selection of 30 new songs from different artists in a variety of music genres"*, while in the depth condition, the platform offered *"A playlist containing a selection of 30 new songs from different artist in your preferred music genre"*. Moreover, in order to specify the knowledge potential of the experience, which has been shown to positively affect the user's perception of the product (Clarkson et al., 2013), additional information was given in the two conditions. Thus, for the breadth of knowledge customers were told that "*The playlist has been designed in order to offer a novel experience towards the discovery of new music genres"*, while for the depth of knowledge they were told that *"The playlist has been designed in order to offer a novel experience capable of enhancing your knowledge within a specific genre".*

The remaining section presented a series of constructs used to measure three dependent variables: willingness to discover, variety seeking, and need for uniqueness. The scales used from this point on did not vary between the two conditions. The psychological and behavioral measures used to assess participants' attitude toward music consumption were adapted from validated scales of previous researches, while their reliability was tested in a pre-test and in the main study. Each psychometric scale is then followed by product-related measures in order to assess users' preferences in the four conditions.
The items in this part of the survey were presented in a 9-point Likert scale (where 1is *"Strongly Disagree"* and 9 is *"Strongly Agree"*).

The construct used to measure customers' willingness to discover was partially adapted from prior studies. More precisely, it had a total of seven items in which the second, the third, and the fourth item constituted a separate scale used in a previous experiment by Clarkson et al. (2013). The scope of this construct was to understand the extent to which the experience offered would stimulate the consumer to increase its consumption of novel experiences on streaming platform, stimulate the search of new music, and broaden or refine his consumption knowledge. The level of satisfaction was measured on a 3-items scale, each corresponding to one of three dimensions (satisfaction, pleasure, happiness), and measured on a 9-point Likert scale (where 1 is "*Not at all satisfied"* and 9 is "*Extremely satisfied*").

The second variable under exam, variety seeking, was measured through an adaptation of the VARSEEK-scale by van Trijp and Steenkamp (1992). The original construct, composed by eight items and focused mainly on the food industry, was reduced to six items and adapted to the music domain. The proposed scale turned out to be quite suitable for the scope due to its short form and versatility. Moreover, participants were asked questions regarding the perceived variety of the playlist on a 3-items scale, in order to assess the suitability of the latter to their consumption preferences.

The last block of the survey focused on the customers' need for uniqueness. This dependent variable was measured through and adaptation of the CNFU scale (Ruvio, Shoham, & Brenčič, 2008) a short form of the NFU scale (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). However, since the original CNFU scale develops on four dimensions, the only dimension that was used in this study is the one regarding avoidance of similarity, as it pertains to the topic under exam. Thus, respondents were presented with a 4-items scale aiming at investigating the degree to which consumers tend to diverge from the majority, accordingly to their level of expertise.
Finally, they were asked to answer to a 4-items scale regarding the perceived uniqueness of the service offered by the platforms, and the extent to which this might differentiate their tastes from those of other users.

3.2.2 Pilot Study

The main study was preceded by a pilot study conducted on a sample of 79 respondents. The main purpose of the pre-test was to preventively investigate the feasibility of the research and the reliability of the measures adopted.
First of all, it was fundamental to verify the efficacy of the expertise manipulation in the field of the study, namely, music streaming platforms.

The results of the pilot study demonstrated that, even though respondents were presented with the biased scale, the difference in the means of subjective expertise between novices ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.37$) and experts ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.14$) was not statistically significant ($t(77) = .367$, $p>.05$). Hence, in order to strengthen the effect of the manipulation in the main study, participants were briefly presented with a short introduction to the scope of the research, providing them with relevant information regarding the sample chosen for the analysis, as shown in the procedure.

With regard to the constructs used, Cronbach's alphas were tested to measure the scales' reliability. More precisely, the pre-test included the VARSEEK scale, the CNFU scale, and the construct used to measure willingness to discover. The alphas are reported in the results (Table 1), and the scales mentioned resulted reliable.

3.3 Data Collection and Sample

In order to collect data and keep track of the number of respondents per condition, four different surveys were distributed through a randomizer survey. The four conditions were evenly and randomly assigned to the participants.

The sample included 180 Mechanical Turks paid to participate in the study. From a total of 200 responses, 20 were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete answer, and in order to have an even distribution of the conditions among participants. The final sample was composed by 180 complete responses, 45 responses for each of the four conditions.

With regard to demographics, the majority of the participants had an age between 25-34 years (46%), followed by the range between 18-24 years (24%), and 35-44 years (19%). The remaining responses showed an age above 44 years (11%).

The percentage of male respondents was higher than female with a percentage of 57% over 43%. More precisely, 63% of males answered to the novice condition over 37% of females, while 50% of males answered to the expert condition over 50% of females.

As it comes to the level of education, the majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree (49%), followed by a master's degree (30%), and high school diploma (17%).

4. RESULTS

The following chapter will present the statistical analysis conducted in order to verify the hypothesis previously stated. Moreover, for the proposed analysis the significance level used was $\alpha = 5\%$.

4.1 Measure Reliability

The scales reliability for the constructs used in this study was already assessed in the pre-test. However, some of the scales' items were subject to changes before the launch of the main study and needed further verification. The final scale's reliability is presented in the table below.
As demonstrated, all the constructs presented a Cronbach's alpha above .70, which indicates a high reliability of the measure used. The only exception was Perceived Variety, with an alpha equal to .30. However, the responses obtained appeared to be consistent with the purpose of their application, hence used in the analysis.

CONSTRUCTS			
Scale	**Source**	**Alpha**	**Items**
Expertise Biased Scale (Novice)	Clarkson et al. (2013)	.912	3
Expertise Biased Scale (Expert)	Clarkson et al. (2013)	.940	3
Subjective Expertise	Clarkson et al. (2013)	.961	4
Willingness to Discover		.905	5
Satisfaction		.932	3
VARSEEK	Van Trijp & Steenkamp (1992)	.812	6
Perceived Variety		.30	3
CNFU	Ruvio et al. (2008)	.949	4
Perceived Uniqueness		.70	4

Table 1: Constructs

4.2 Manipulation

The starting point of the analysis was the assessment of the manipulation's results (Appendix 2). As previously mentioned, the main objective of the manipulation was to alter respondents' perception of their level of expertise, attenuating overconfidence in self-assessing their degree of knowledge in music domain. Thus, it was crucial for the continuation of the study to understand whether the manipulative scale used had the desired effect, increasing or decreasing the perceived expertise accordingly to the two conditions.

In order to do so, the subjective expertise scale was recoded into an average score for each respondent. Subsequently, an independent sample t-test was launched with expertise (Novice-Expert) as independent variable.

As expected, the results highlighted differences in means between novices and experts, with participants in the novice condition (M = 5.79, SD = 2.14) reporting lower expertise than those in the expert condition (M = 6.79, SD = 1.63). The difference between means was statistically significant [t(166.349) = 3.52, p = .001]. It was possible to conclude that the manipulation sorted the desired effect, giving a clear distinction of the perceived level of expertise between the two groups.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1: Willingness to Discover

The first hypothesis of the study aimed at investigating the impact of the level of expertise on consumers' willingness to discover new music on streaming platforms, according to the different types of knowledge, namely breadth and depth, offered through a service of customized, platform-generated, playlists. As already mentioned, this first part of the analysis represented a concrete application of previous findings by Clarkson, Janiszewsky, & Cinelli (2013) to the service of music streaming and their impact, within the latter, on users' preferences for the consumption of novel experiences.

***H_1**: Experts are more willing to discover new music than novices, when depth of knowledge is offered by a playlist. Novices are more willing to discover new music than experts, when breadth of knowledge is offered by a playlist.*

In order to study the effects of the two independent variables on respondents' predisposition to navigate throughout new content, a 2-way ANOVA was launched (Appendix 3), with expertise (Novice – Expert) and knowledge type (Breadth – Depth) as factors.

The between-subjects analysis showed no main effects of expertise and consumption experience type on the dependent variable. Meaning that, singularly, there is no direct effect of the respondents' level of expertise on their willingness to navigate through music on streaming platform. Indeed, the marginal means for expertise showed no significant difference [F(1,176) = .009, p = .99] between novices (M = 7.076) and experts (M = 7.073). Likewise, the knowledge condition itself didn't present statistically significant results [F(1,176) = .005, p = .992] between breadth (M = 7.076) and depth (M = 7.073).

As predicted, despite no main effect was detected, the interaction effect between the two variables on the dependent variable, "expertise x knowledge type", was statistically significant [F(1, 176) = 8.409, p = .004]. Hence, in the depth of knowledge condition, experts (M = 7.40, SD = 1.20) showed a greater predisposition to adopt the playlist as a mean to discover new music than novices (M = 6.74, SD = 1.84) [F(1, 88) = 4.057, p = .047]. On the other hand, in the breadth of knowledge condition, novices (M = 7.41, SD = 1.09) showed a higher preference than experts (M = 6.74, SD = 1.84) [F(1, 88) = 4.361, p = .040] (Appendix 3). It was possible to conclude that the effect of expertise on willingness to discover strictly depends on the type of consumption experience offered, or on the type of consumption knowledge offered by the service.

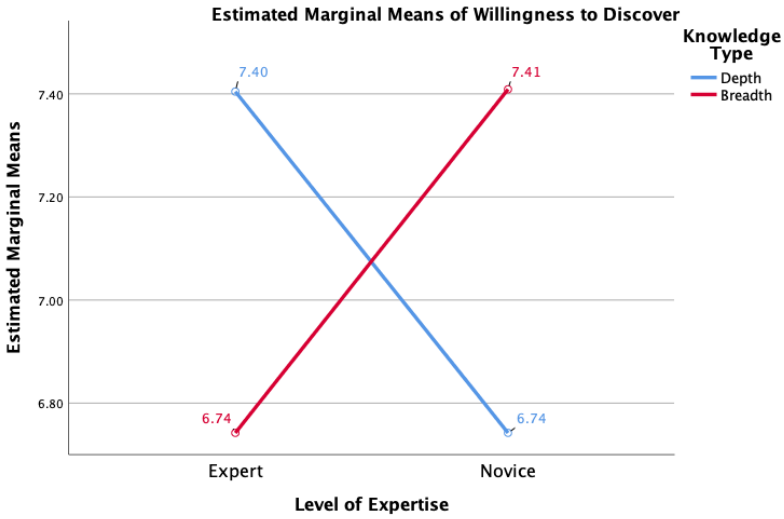

Figure 1: Disordinal Interaction Effect on Willingness to Discover

4.3.1.1 Hypothesis 1.1: Users' Satisfaction

The first sub hypothesis represents an additive effect of the results obtained for the users' willingness to discover previously discussed. Therefore, taking into account the different preferences of novices and experts for the novel experiences offered by the platform, the following analysis argues that the interaction between level of expertise and consumption experience will affect customer's satisfaction for the service proposed.

***H**1.1: Experts are more satisfied with the playlist offered in a depth of knowledge condition, while novices are more satisfied with the playlist offered in a breadth of knowledge condition.*

As previously mentioned, the level of satisfaction has been measured with a 3-items scale. It develops on three dimensions (satisfaction, pleasure, and happiness), thus, before launching the pertaining test, an average score was calculated for each respondent.

The interaction between the two independent variables was measured with a 2-way ANOVA, with level of expertise and consumption knowledge type as factors (Appendix 4).

Analogously to the first hypothesis, no significant main effect of expertise on the level satisfaction presented. However, overall, experts (M = 6.200) showed a greater level of satisfaction than novices (M = 6.089), regardless of the type of experience offered. Nevertheless, the difference in means was non-significant [F(1, 176) = .259, p = .611].

Regarding the type of consumption experience offered, respondents in the breadth condition (M = 6.181) showed a slightly higher level of satisfaction than respondents in the depth condition (M = 6.107). However, these results didn't show significance [F(1, 176) = .115, p = .735].

Regarding the interaction, as predicted, it was possible to observe a more substantial difference between the preferences of the two groups when interfaced with different stimuli. The interaction was statistically significant [F(1, 176) = 5.974, p = .016], meaning that the level of satisfaction depends on a consumers' level of expertise and the type of consumption knowledge offered. However, experts showed a higher level of satisfaction in the depth condition (M = 6.43, SD = 1.23) than in the breadth condition (M = 5.97, SD = 1.65) although not significantly [F(1, 88) = 2.244, p = .138]. Conversely, novices manifested a higher preference in the breadth (M = 6.939, SD = 1.12) over depth (M = 5.785, SD = 1.76) condition, although this difference was marginally significant [F(1, 88) = 3.825, p = .054] (Appendix 4).

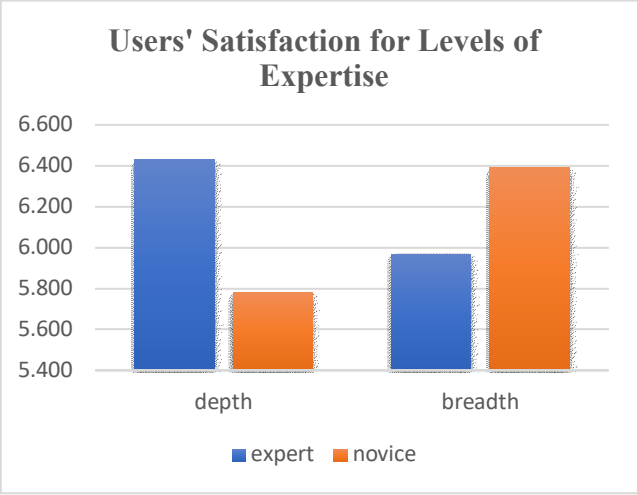

Figure 2: Users' Satisfaction for Levels of Expertise and Knowledge Type

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Variety Seeking

The second hypothesis aims at investigating consumers' tendency to seek for variety when navigating through new music on streaming platforms. Once again, the main objective was to determine whether there is a relevant difference between novices and experts within this aspect of consumption behavior.

***H_2**: Novices have a higher tendency to seek variety than experts when navigating through music on streaming platforms.*

In order to validate this hypothesis, a One-way ANOVA was launched with expertise as independent variable (Appendix 5). An average score for variety seeking was calculated for each respondent, using the VARSEEK-scale above mentioned. The scale was developed in order to be independent from the type of consumption experience offered, as a measure of one's overall habit in variety seeking.

However, the measures adopted didn't elicited the desired effect, and the respondents didn't show particular differences in their consumption behavior. More precisely, the difference between experts (M = 6.22, SD = 1.51) and novices (M = 6.29, SD = 1.36) regarding their inclination to explore different genres when looking for new music on streaming platforms, was non-significant [F(1, 178) = .107, p = .744]. Based on these results, it was not possible to confirm the second hypothesis.

4.3.2.1 Hypothesis 2.1: Perceived Variety

Despite no significant differences were found in consumers' variety seeking according to their level of expertise, it was still possible to consider an interaction effect between level of expertise and the consumption experience on respondents' perceived variety and their level of satisfaction with the type of genre variety offered.

***$H_{2.1}$**: Novices will perceive a playlist offering breadth of knowledge to be more aligned with their desired variety, while experts will perceive a playlist offering depth of knowledge to be more aligned with their desired variety.*

With the purpose of testing the interaction effect, a 2-way ANOVA was launched, with level of expertise and type of consumption knowledge as factors (Appendix 6).

As expected, no main effect of expertise and type of consumption experience were found. Overall, respondents rated the playlist as more variegated in the breadth condition (M = 6.41,

SD = 1.24) rather than in the depth condition (M = 6.06, SD = 1.34). However, the main effect was not statistically significant [F(1, 174) = 3.242, p = .074].
Likewise, the level of expertise didn't show a significant main effect [F(1, 174) = 1.888, p = .171], with experts (M = 6.37, SD = 1.27) perceiving the service as generally more varied than novices (M = 6.10, SD = 1.32).

The interaction effect was found to be statistically significant [F(1, 174) = 5.887, p = .016]. More precisely, the estimated marginal means presented a consistently higher rating of experts (M = 6.43, SD = 1.21) over novices (M = 5.70, SD = 1.38) in the depth condition. This difference resulted statistically significant [F(1, 88) = 6.99, p = .010]. Conversely, novices (M = 6.51, SD = 1.13) appeared to be more sensitive than experts (M = 6.31, SD = 1.34) to the variety offered in the breadth condition. However, this difference resulted non-significant [F(1, 86) = .573, p = .451] (Appendix 6).

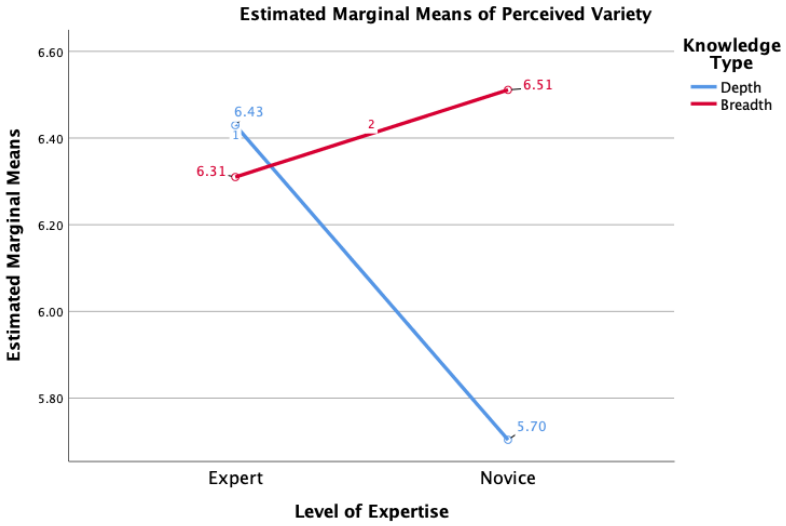

Figure 3: Disordinal Interaction Effect on Perceived Variety

4.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Need for Uniqueness

The third hypothesis introduces consumers' need for uniqueness. The main objective was to investigate how this aspect of consumption behavior differs between the two groups under exam when sampling experiences on music streaming platforms.

H*$_3$: Experts show a major tendency to seek for uniqueness than novices when listening to music on streaming platforms.*

A One-way ANOVA was launched in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the consumption behavior of the two groups under exam (Appendix 7). However, before running the test, an average score for participants' need for uniqueness was calculated using the CNFU scale previously described.

As predicted, the two groups showed differences in their need for uniqueness, anticipating a different degree of diverging attitude when listening to music on streaming platforms. As a matter of facts, experts (M = 5.45, SD = 2.46) showed a higher inclination than novices (M = 4.37, SD = 2.35) for behaviors concerning avoidance of similarity and divergence from the majority in music domain. The differences above stated resulted to be statistically significant [F(1, 177) = 8.933, p = .003], confirming the third hypothesis of the study.

Moreover, further analysis tested whether there were differences between the two groups within the two knowledge conditions (breadth and depth). It was possible to highlight that, while in the breadth of knowledge condition novices (M = 4.76, SD = 2.35) and experts (M = 5.38, SD = 2.35) didn't present statistically significant differences [F(1, 87) = 1.538, p = .218], in the depth of knowledge condition, experts (M = 5.52 , SD = 2.59) and novices (M = 3.98, SD = 2.31) expressed, respectively, the highest and the lowest preference for need for uniqueness, and the means' difference was statistically significant [F(1, 88) = 8.755, p = .004].

4.3.3.1 Hypothesis 3.1: Perceived Uniqueness

Furthermore, the third objective of this study was also to relate this consumption attitude specifically to the service offered by the platform. Thus, a sub hypothesis was formulated in order to investigate on whether these differences in need for uniqueness translated into diverging perceptions in the two consumption experiences, therefore giving major evidence to the previous hypothesis.

***$H_{3.1}$**: Experts will perceive a playlist offering depth of knowledge more unique than novices.*

As in the first two hypothesis, in order to evaluate the influence of level of expertise and consumption knowledge on perceived uniqueness, a 2-way ANOVA was launched, with expertise and knowledge type as factors (Appendix 8). Moreover, an average score for perceived uniqueness was calculated for each respondent with items 1, 2, and 4 of the scale. Item 3 was used in a separate analysis.

Despite a significant influence of the level of expertise on consumers' need for uniqueness, as demonstrated in the third hypothesis, users' perceived uniqueness appears to be not directly correlated to the level of expertise, which, instead, depends on the interaction between the latter and the type of experience offered. In fact, the results presented no significant main effect of expertise on perceived uniqueness [F(1, 176) = 2.638, p = .106], with experts (M = 6.674, SD = 1.58) showing a slightly higher positive perception than novices (M = 6.285, SD = 1.66). Similarly, the type of consumption experience offered didn't have a significant main effect [F(1, 176) = .106, p = .746]. However, the breadth of experience (M = 6.441, SD = 1.66) was generally perceived as more unique than the depth of experience offered (M = 6.519, SD =1.60).

Conversely, the interaction between the two factors was statistically significant [F(1, 176) = 5.899, p = .016]. What conveyed from the analysis was a sensibly higher uniqueness perceived from experts (M = 6.92, SD = 1.25) in the depth condition compared to novices (M = 5.956, SD = 1.88). This difference was shown to be statistically significant [F(1, 88) = 8.246, p = .005]. On the other hand, in the breadth condition, novices (M = 6.61, SD = 1.34) perceived the playlist to be more unique than experts (M = 6.42, SD = 1.83), however, it didn't result any significance [F(1, 88) = .322, p = .572] (Appendix 8).

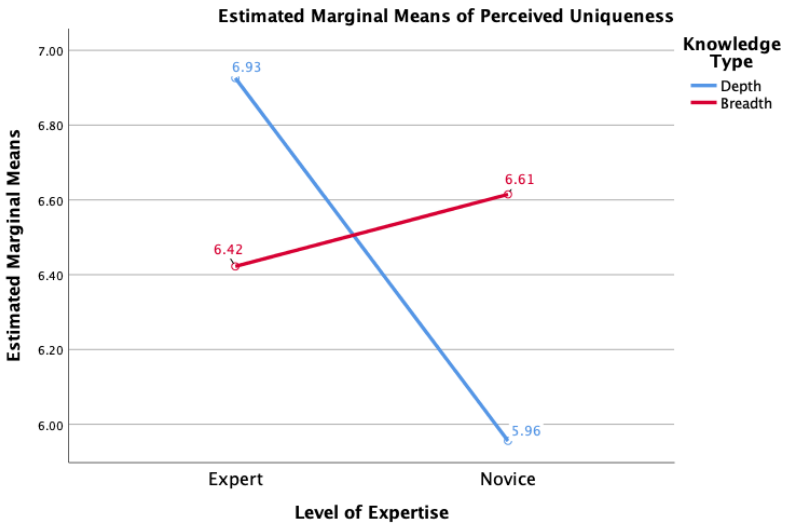

Figure 4: Disordinal Interaction Effect of Perceived Uniqueness

Alongside with the effects of the interaction on perceived uniqueness, further analysis aims at demonstrating to what extent, according to the type of consumption experience offered, novices and experts perceive the playlist as more or less commercial. The following test was proposed

in order to gain further evidence of experts' perception of a platform-generated playlist. The more they perceive the playlist as commercial, the less they will consider it as unique.
In order to do so, item 3 from the perceived uniqueness scale was isolated and used as dependent variable. The same process was used in this analysis, and a 2-way ANOVA was run (Appendix 8).

Unlike the previous results, there was no significant interaction effect between the two variables on the dependent variable [$F(1, 176) = .468$, $p = .495$], meaning that users' judgement on a playlist's lack of uniqueness partially prescind from the type of consumption knowledge offered. As a matter of fact, the latter didn't present a significant main effect [$F(1, 176) = 2.266$, $p = .134$], therefore, there were no relevant differences between the preferences expressed in the breadth ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 2.207$) and depth ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 2.214$) condition. On the other hand, expertise had a significant main effect [$F(1, 176) = 6.760$, $p = .010$], with experts ($M = 6.111$, $SD = 2.08$) perceiving, overall, the platform's service as more commercial than novices ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 2.82$). This last finding is in line with the results from hypothesis 3, according to which experts have a higher tendency to seek for uniqueness when listening to music on streaming platforms.

4.4 Further Analysis

4.4.1 Mediation Analysis

In order to further investigate the relationship between consumers' perceived uniqueness and perceived variety and their level of expertise, as well as the mediation effect of these two independent variables on willingness to discover new music, two tests of mediation analysis were conducted. The purpose of this study was to better understand if, besides the direct effect that the level of expertise had on willingness to discover, the effect was also explained by the operation of a possible mediator. Therefore, the following analysis falls as exploratory, meaning that the choice of the mediators simply follows the track of the previous hypothesis, assuming that a consumers' perceived variety or uniqueness regarding the service offered can provide an auxiliary explanation of the relationship between expertise and willingness to discover.

4.4.1.1 Mediator: Perceived Uniqueness

The first mediator analyzed was consumers' perceived uniqueness presented in the third hypothesis. The analysis was conducted using Process' Model 4 function (Appendix 9), which accounts for a simple single mediator.

The first model was significant [$F(1, 177) = 10.41$, $p < .01$], with an R^2 of 5%. The regression presented the results for the effect of the independent variable, level of expertise, on the mediator, which was significant ($t(177) = 3.22$, $p < .01$), and correlated by a positive effect of .1952. Therefore, it was possible to conclude that path 'a' of the mediation model is statistically significant, and that level of expertise positively predicts consumers' perceived uniqueness.
Regarding willingness to discover, the model was still statistically significant [$F(2, 176) = 89.38$, $p < .001$] with an R^2 equal to 50%. The impact of the mediator on the dependent variable was statistically significant [$t(176) = 12.89$, $p < .001$], with a positive effect of .6732, which led to the validation of path 'b' of the model. Moreover, the effect of the level of expertise on the dependent variable with the introduction of the mediator was not statistically significant [$t(176) = .4021$, $p > .05$], and had a low positive effect of .0174 (path c'), therefore indicating the presence of a complete mediation.
Finally, the total effect model (path c) [$R^2 = 3\%$, $F(1, 177) = 6.48$, $p < .05$] showed a significant positive impact of expertise on the dependent variable of .1488 [$t(177) = 2.54$, $p < .05$].

In order to verify the impact of perceived uniqueness as a mediator on the total effect of expertise on willingness to discover, it was necessary to compare path c and path c'.
Path c is the total effect of the level of expertise (independent variable) on willingness to discover (dependent variable), which was equal to .1488. Path c' is the direct effect of expertise on willingness to discover, when perceived uniqueness (moderator) is introduced, which was equal to .0174. The indirect effect of variable X on Y is given by the difference between path c and c', which was equal to .1314. The mediation was statistically significant, since the bootstrapping confidence interval did not include zero [95% CI = (.0327; .2338)].
In conclusion, the results suggest that expertise successfully predicts perceived uniqueness, which seems to increase according to the level of expertise, which in turn leads to a higher willingness to discover new music.

4.4.1.2 Mediator: Perceived Variety

Once again, in order to verify perceived variety's mediation effect on the relationship between level of expertise and willingness to discover, Process' Model 4 was launched (Appendix 10).

The first model was statistically significant [$F(1, 175) = 12.64$, $p < .001$] with an R^2 of 7%. The effect of expertise on the mediator (path a) was also statistically significant [$t(175) = 3.55$, $p < .001$] and had a positive effect of .1703. Again, path 'a' of the mediation model was statistically significant, with the level of expertise affecting customers' perceived variety.

Regarding the effect of the mediation on willingness to discover, the model was statistically significant [$F(2, 174) = 46.68$, $p < .001$], with an R^2 of 35%.
The impact of the mediator on willingness to discover (path b) was significant [$t(174) = 9.167$, $p < .001$], and had a positive effect equal to .6994. On the other hand, as for perceived uniqueness, the effect of expertise with the introduction of the mediator resulted non statistically significant [$t(174) = .5676$, $p > .05$], therefore suggesting the presence of a complete mediation. Moreover, expertise had a low positive effect (.0284) on willingness to discover (path c').
The total effect model (path c) was significant [$F(1, 175) = 6.317$, $p < .05$] with an R^2 of 3%, and the level of expertise showed a significant [$t(175) =$, $p < .05$] and positive impact on willingness to discover of .1475.

The comparison between path c and path c' confirmed the presence of a complete mediation. Indeed, the total effect model, namely, the effect of expertise without the influence of a mediator on willingness to discover, showed a relevant impact on the latter (.1475). Conversely, the introduction of the mediator consistently reduced expertise's effect of the dependent variable (.0284). Therefore, the indirect effect of the independent variable through the mediator, given by the difference between path c and path c', had a positive effect of .1191, and the bootstrapping confidence interval did not include a zero [95% CI = (.0469; .1997)], implying that the analysis was significant. Similarly, with the results of the first mediation, expertise had a positive predictive effect on perceived variety. As the perception of variety increases, customers will be more prone to discover new music on streaming platforms.

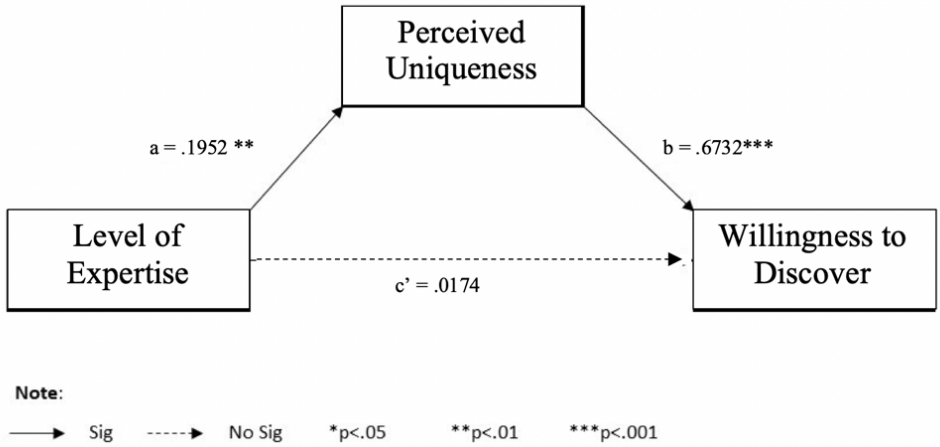

Figure 5: Mediation Model – Mediator: Perceived Uniqueness

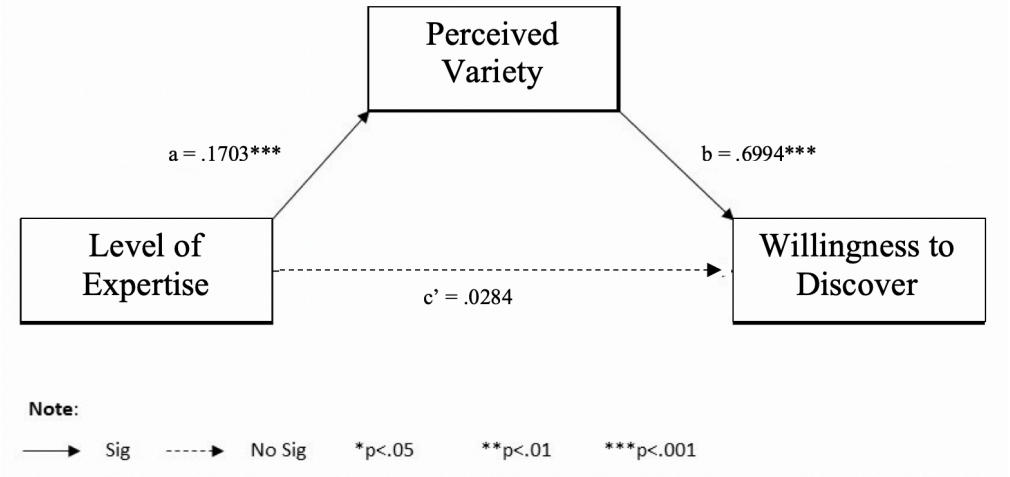

Figure 6: Mediation Model – Mediator: Perceived Variety

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Main Findings and Conclusion

Overall, consumers' willingness to discover new music cannot be analyzed by singularly considering the level of expertise or the type of consumption experience offered. As stated in the previous chapter, one's level of expertise does not, by itself, affect its willingness to discover on streaming platforms.

The present study aimed at explaining how consumers with different levels of subjective knowledge react to the stimuli offered by a platform's service, and whether these stimuli serve as an incentive to adopt a playlist delivering new unexperienced content. Since streaming platforms have an interactive interface which enables individuals to freely navigate throughout a vast library of songs and artists, it is not an easy task to track their browsing journey while directly linking it to their level of expertise. Therefore, the proposed study was not able to demonstrate a direct linkage between expertise and music discovery.

The relationship between level of expertise and knowledge type, however, showed positive effects. It was possible to confirm how presenting participants with different stimuli, which differed in terms of variety of offering, led to dichotomous responses in terms of preferences and satisfaction as a function of consumers' expertise.

First and foremost, regarding willingness to discover, a service or playlist offering breadth of knowledge had a major impact on novices rather than experts. Thus, novices were more prone to adopt a playlist ranging between a variety of different genres as a mean to enhance their consumption knowledge. The following results add, indeed, major evidence to the theories concerning the formation of preferences previously discussed, as consumers with low levels of expertise tend to space between differentiated alternatives in order to acquire consumption capital. On the other hand, experts are more likely to adopt a playlist offering depth of knowledge as a tool for music discovery. The choice, in this case, indicates the consumers' intention of not deviating from their preferences in terms of genres, but rather refine their knowledge within a category they feel confident.

The interaction between the independent variables showed similar effects on consumers' satisfaction towards the service offered. It was possible to see how different levels of expertise react in terms of happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction, namely, the three dimensions used to measure one's overall level of satisfaction, regarding the type of genres' assortment proposed. However, despite a clear interaction effect, the results obtained for the level of satisfaction are

not as consistent as for the first hypothesis, thus, although moving in the same direction, this variable requires further investigation.

Additionally, this study investigated on whether there is a difference in variety seeking tendencies on streaming platforms between consumers with different levels of expertise. According to previous literature, exposing an expert consumer to a highly variegated set of alternatives is likely to lead to choices overload. On the other hand, a novice consumer would gain a higher utility by sampling from a larger set of alternatives, and, therefore, would be majorly incentivized in seeking variety. However, the present study didn't find a direct linkage between expertise and variety seeking, concluding that expertise is not an independent variable capable of explaining the differences in need for variety between consumers discovering music on streaming platforms.
Conversely, experts and novices showed significant differences in the way they perceived the variety of genres offered by the service. More precisely, a significant difference showed up in the depth of knowledge condition, with experts appearing to be consistently more sensitive than novices to the variety offered, meaning that they perceived the playlist to be slightly variegated, and, in addition, more satisfied. No significant differences were found in the breadth of knowledge condition, with the participants being almost equally sensitive to the stimulus proposed.

Despite the relatively scarce literature studying the relationship between consumers' need for uniqueness and their level of expertise, this study brings evidence that there is, indeed, space for empirical research within this topic. The study highlights how an individual's degree of self-assessed knowledge affects its need for uniqueness. When a customer shows confidence regarding his level of knowledge within a specific domain, it is more likely that mass-diverging attitudes arise. It has been demonstrated how experts are more likely to adopt behaviors inclined at avoiding similarity when listening to music on streaming platforms, thus affecting music discovery as well. Therefore, if on one hand a playlist in line with their preferences (depth of knowledge) will certainly be perceived as more unique, on the other hand knowledgeable consumers tend to perceive platform-generated playlists as commercial overall. Contrarily, novice consumers who are eager to acquire knowledge within the music domain are less reluctant to adopt popular choices.

Finally, an exploratory research was conducted in order to understand whether the effect of the level of expertise on willingness to discover was mediated by consumers' perception regarding the uniqueness and the variety of the service offered.
Since the purpose of the previous analysis was to gain evidence regarding how the level of expertise affects customer's perception, the mediation analysis partially bridges the results obtained in the second and third hypothesis with the first hypothesis.
It has been shown that both variables have a strong and positive impact on willingness to discover. Intuitively, as the level of uniqueness and variety perceived increases, the platform's user will be more willing to adopt the service, and, therefore, to discover new content. Analogously, the level of expertise appeared to be a strong predictor for both perceived uniqueness and variety, which could possibly mean that, as the level of expertise rises, consumers will have increasingly higher perception regarding the product offered. However, the results of the mediation analysis require further investigation and mainly serve as a basis for future studies, due to their exploratory nature.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The proposed study may be relevant in order to better understand the role of customer training within the domain of hedonic consumption. As previously discussed, the acquisition of consumption knowledge is crucial for an overall appreciation of the experiential journey of a customer.

From a practical point of view, delivering consumers with the right tools to enhance their subjective knowledge of a product would translate in an increasing familiarity with the brand and the service offered, as well as higher returns in terms of loyalty and retention.
Therefore, as in the case of streaming platforms (music, films, etc.), the way in which stimuli are presented to the customers, according to their degree of knowledge, represents a viable strategy for marketers who are implementing learning experiences.
In this direction, providing users with information regarding the type and amplitude of consumption capital they will acquire from using a service would certainly be a communication strategy aimed at incentivizing trials of new alternatives, stimulating discovery, and expanding the evoked set from which to sample future experiences.

Moreover, increasing customers' familiarity with a product, and, consequently, their level of confidence in approaching new consumption experiences and novelty seeking, would have a positive impact on reducing satiation and identifying an optimal stimulation level. As streaming

platforms are defined as discovery tools, one of their main objectives is to facilitate discovery of new content by reducing familiarity seeking and satiation, while controlling for consumers' optimal stimulation level. Therefore, as these dimensions might differ according to the level of expertise, marketers should take into account this trade-off when addressing customized advertisements and services, such as playlists, to the platforms' users.

5.4 Limitations and Further Research

Although giving empirical evidence on how consumers' level of expertise affects some aspects of music consumption on streaming platforms, several limitations have to be considered.

The data used in the analysis was collected through an online survey. Some of the major constraints of this study derive from the data obtained through this method, which might have affected the reliability of the responses. In fact, since one of the objectives of the survey was to alter participants' self-assessed knowledge within a domain characterized by high individual involvement, some of the answers obtained might have been driven by an excess of confidence or given according to society standards. Even though the manipulation was designed to contain this bias, some of the scores where higher or lower than expected, therefore, it still has to be considered as a limitation.

Furthermore, due to time constraints, the sample included 180 Mechanical Turks and requires the following considerations. First of all, 180 participants are still a small sample for the collection of reliable data. In fact, the presence of randomized conditions consistently reduced the number of participants per condition (45). In second place, the age and nationality of the participants appeared to be too variegated, therefore, non-representative of a specific target, which might have led to non-homogeneous data and broad conclusions. A more specific target of people will be necessary for future studies.

The scenario presented to the participants was a simplification of reality, therefore, it didn't represent a real experience on streaming platforms. The playlist proposed merely described the characteristics of the service with the type of variety offered in order to keep people's judgement as unbiased as possible. However, this might not accurately represent what people expect from a platform-generated playlist, or, more precisely, may have led to an incorrect perception of the type of variety offered, especially when no specific information regarding the songs offered are shown.

Finally, another limitation of the study concerns the hypothesis regarding variety seeking. The Perceived Variety scale didn't present a high reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha equal to .30. Despite the positive results obtained, the development of a more reliable scale is crucial for the implementation of future studies.
Variety seeking behaviors appeared to be non-related to the level of expertise, in particular, to consumers' subjective knowledge. As subjective knowledge is strictly related to an individuals' self-confidence, and overconfident behaviors are more likely to manifest in domains like music, future research should study the relationship between level of expertise and variety seeking by assessing an individual's objective knowledge, which is certainly a more reliable measure of one's actual knowledge.

The hypothesis presented in the study mainly focused on the differences between novices and experts regarding their consumption habits on streaming platforms. Future research should focus mainly on the differences within these two groups of consumers, especially when it comes to cognitive variables such as perceived variety and perceived uniqueness. Perhaps, it would be useful to better understand to what extent experts (novices) prefer an experience offering depth (breadth) of knowledge, and what are the determinants underlying their choice (i.e. social enhancement, self-image motives).

The mediation analysis gave positive results, which are, indeed, exploratory and could serve as a basis for the implementation of future studies. Perhaps, further research could focus the attention on actual need for uniqueness and variety seeking, rather than perceived uniqueness and perceived variety, shifting from cognitive to motivational variables, and use these two variables as possible mediators. As a suggestion for a future research design, researchers could manipulate these mediators and use the manipulation as a condition (i.e. high-low uniqueness) in order to see to what extent these variables concretely predict willingness to discover.
Moreover, there is scarce evidence on whether subjective expertise affects the decisions when a consumer's preferences are publicly displayed. As most streaming platforms incorporate a social networking function, in which listeners' rotations can be openly seen by other users, a step forward to this analysis would certainly be the use of social influence as a condition, in order to see how consumers' choices change when subject to public scrutiny.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey

Start of Block 2: Novice Manipulation

Q3 As previously mentioned, the scope of this study is to better understand individuals' consumption preferences when making choices in music, more precisely, when navigating through new music content on online streaming platforms (Spotify, SoundCloud, Amazon Music, etc.). We are interested in your participation as a considerable amount of market research has consistently shown that a regular user of music streaming platforms, compared to the general population, has a base level of knowledge about music playlists. Consequently, for the topic of music playlists, users of music streaming platforms are an excellent population to test how individuals with relatively low knowledge make evaluations.

Q5 Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Do not consider myself an expert	○	○	○	○	○	Somewhat consider myself an expert
Do not define myself an expert	○	○	○	○	○	Somewhat define myself an expert
Do not label myself as an expert	○	○	○	○	○	Somewhat label myself as an expert

End of Block: Novice Manipulation

Start of Block 2: Expert Manipulation

Q3 As previously mentioned, the scope of this study is to better understand individuals' consumption preferences when making choices in music, more precisely, when navigating through new music content on online streaming platforms (Spotify, SoundCloud, Amazon Music, etc.). We are interested in your participation as a considerable amount of market research has consistently shown that a regular user of music streaming platforms, compared to the general population, has a substantial amount of knowledge about music playlists. Consequently, for the topic of music playlists, users of music streaming platforms are an excellent population to test how individuals with relatively high knowledge make evaluations.

Q5 Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Somewhat consider myself an expert	○	○	○	○	○	Definitely consider myself an expert
Somewhat define myself an expert	○	○	○	○	○	Definitely define myself an expert
Somewhat label myself as an expert	○	○	○	○	○	Definitely label myself as an epxert

End of Block: Expert Manipulation

Start of Block 3: Expertise Score

Q7 Please indicate your level of expertise in music.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Not knowledgeable at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very knowledgeable
Not much expertise at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	A lot of expertise
Not much understanding at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	A lot of understanding
Not much information at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	A lot of information

End of Block: Expertise Score

Start of Block 4: Breadth Condition

Q9 Imagine that you are in search of new music to listen to, and that you want to go further your frequent rotations in order to expand your set of consumption experiences. However, searching for new music on your own is not a quick task, and, for this reason, you decide to give a look to the variegated set of playlists offered by the platform. Still, you are unsure of whether the selection of songs might fit with your tastes. In order to facilitate your searching process, Spotify has developed a new format that creates a daily playlist based on your most preferred genres. The playlist is called Open Ocean, and, according to your frequent rotations and consumption preferences, it offers you: "A playlist containing a selection of 30 new songs from different artists in a variety of music genres. The playlist has been designed in order to offer a novel experience towards the discovery of new music genres."

End of Block: Breadth Condition

Start of Block 4: Depth condition

Q9 Imagine that you are in search of new music to listen to and that you want to go further your frequent rotations in order to expand your set of consumption experiences. However, searching for new music on your own is not a quick task, and, for this reason, you decide to give a look to the variegated set of playlists offered by the platform. Still, you are unsure of whether the selection of songs might fit with your tastes. In order to facilitate your searching process, Spotify has developed a new format that creates a daily playlist based on your

most preferred genre. The playlist is called Open Ocean, and, based on your frequent rotations and consumption preferences, it offers you: A playlist containing a selection of 30 new songs from different artists in your preferred music genre. The playlist has been designed in order to offer a novel experience capable of enhancing your knowledge within a specific genre."

End of Block: Depth condition

Start of Block 4: Discovery/Satisfaction

Q11 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
I'm willing to try this playlist (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This playlist would allow me to increase music exploration (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This playlist would allow me to seek changes in my music preferences (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This playlist would allow me to try something just for the sake of novelty (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will increase my music knowledge (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The playlist will increase my depth of knowledge (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The playlist will increase my breadth of knowledge (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q23 Please rate the following dimensions regarding the experience provided by the playlist from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 9 (extremely satisfied).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Overall, I feel satisfied with the playlist proposed (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The playlist proposed offers a pleasurable experience (48)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm happy with the type of experience offered to me (49)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Discovery/Satisfaction

Start of Block 5: Variety seeking

Q15 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
When I listen to music, I like to try the most unusual songs from a new music genre, even if I am not sure I would like them (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
While choosing a playlist, I like to try out new genres (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think it is fun to try out songs from a music genre one is not familiar with (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am eager to know what kind of genres other people listen to (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Select strongly agree (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I prefer to listen to songs from music genres I'm used to (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am curious about songs from music genres I'm not familiar with (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q23 Please consider the playlist proposed to you. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
The selection of songs is highly varied (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The selection of songs is slightly varied (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The proposed playlist offers the type of variety I'm looking for (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Variety seeking

Start of Block 6: Uniqueness

Q19 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
When a playlist I listen to becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often try to avoid songs or playlists that I know are listened by the general population (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As a rule, I dislike songs or playlists that are customarily listened by everyone (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The more common place a song or playlist is among the general population, the less interested I am in listening to it (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q21 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree								Strongly agree
The proposed playlist may add some uniqueness to my music preferences (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The playlist's selection format will allow me to discover unique music contents (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I perceive the proposed playlist rather commercial (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The proposed playlist would differentiate my music tastes from those of other users (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Uniqueness

Start of Block: demographics

Q17 Gender

○ Male

○ Female

Q19 Age

- ○ Under 18
- ○ 18 - 24
- ○ 25 - 34
- ○ 35 - 44
- ○ 45 - 54
- ○ 55-64
- ○ >65

Q21 Education

- ○ Less than high school
- ○ High school graduate
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Other

End of Block: demographics

Appendix 2: Manipulation

Expertise Score Descriptive for Expertise Condition

Group Statistics

	exp_dummy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
expscore	expert	89	6.7978	1.63540	.17335
	novice	90	5.7944	2.14292	.22588

Independent Sample t-test for Expertise Score

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
expscore	Equal variances assumed	7.393	.007	3.518	177	.001	1.00331	.28516	.44056	1.56606
	Equal variances not assumed			3.524	166.349	.001	1.00331	.28474	.44115	1.56547

Appendix 3: Hypothesis 1 – Willingness to Discover

Test of Between-Subjects Effects for Willingness to Discover

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: wilcore5

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	19.867[a]	3	6.622	2.803	.041	.046
Intercept	9008.598	1	9008.598	3813.024	.000	.956
knowl_dummy	.000	1	.000	.000	.992	.000
exp_dummy	.000	1	.000	.000	.992	.000
knowl_dummy * exp_dummy	19.867	1	19.867	8.409	.004	.046
Error	415.815	176	2.363			
Total	9444.280	180				
Corrected Total	435.682	179				

a. R Squared = .046 (Adjusted R Squared = .029)

Estimated Marginal Means for "Expertise x Knowledge Type"

4. knowle_dummy * exp_dummy

Dependent Variable: wilcore5

knowle_dummy	exp_dummy	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
depth	expert	7.404	.229	6.952	7.857
	novice	6.742	.229	6.290	7.194
breadth	expert	6.742	.229	6.290	7.194
	novice	7.409	.229	6.957	7.861

Interaction Analysis for Willingness to Discover

ANOVA

willscore5

knowle_dummy		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
depth	Between Groups	9.867	1	9.867	4.057	.047
	Within Groups	214.009	88	2.432		
	Total	223.876	89			
breadth	Between Groups	10.000	1	10.000	4.361	.040
	Within Groups	201.806	88	2.293		
	Total	211.806	89			

Appendix 4: Hypothesis 1.1 – Level of Satisfaction

Test of Between-Subjects Effects for Satisfaction

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: satscore

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	13.602[a]	3	4.534	2.116	.100
Intercept	6795.756	1	6795.756	3171.827	.000
exp_dummy	.556	1	.556	.259	.611
knowl_dummy	.247	1	.247	.115	.735
exp_dummy * knowl_dummy	12.800	1	12.800	5.974	.016
Error	377.086	176	2.143		
Total	7186.444	180			
Corrected Total	390.689	179			

a. R Squared = .035 (Adjusted R Squared = .018)

Estimated Marginal Means for Satisfaction

4. exp_dummy * knowle_dummy

Dependent Variable: satscore

exp_dummy	knowle_dummy	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
expert	depth	6.430	.218	5.999	6.860
	breadth	5.970	.218	5.540	6.401
novice	depth	5.785	.218	5.355	6.216
	breadth	6.393	.218	5.962	6.823

Interaction Analysis for Satisfaction

ANOVA

satscore

exp_dummy		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
expert	Between Groups	4.746	1	4.746	2.244	.138
	Within Groups	186.099	88	2.115		
	Total	190.844	89			
novice	Between Groups	8.301	1	8.301	3.825	.054
	Within Groups	190.988	88	2.170		
	Total	199.289	89			

Appendix 5: Hypothesis 2 – Variety Seeking

Descriptive Statistics for Variety Seeking

Descriptives

VARSEEK

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
expert		90	6.2241	1.51834	.16005	5.9061	6.5421	2.83	9.00	
novice		90	6.2944	1.36344	.14372	6.0089	6.5800	2.50	8.83	
Total		180	6.2593	1.43936	.10728	6.0476	6.4710	2.50	9.00	
Model	Fixed Effects			1.44297	.10755	6.0470	6.4715			
	Random Effects				.10755[a]	4.8927[a]	7.6258[a]			-.02066

a. Warning: Between-component variance is negative. It was replaced by 0.0 in computing this random effects measure.

ANOVA for Variety Seeking

ANOVA

VARSEEK

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.223	1	.223	.107	.744
Within Groups	370.623	178	2.082		
Total	370.846	179			

Appendix 6: Hypothesis 2.1 – Perceived Variety

Test of Between-Subjects Effects for Perceived Variety

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: perceived_var

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	18.079[a]	3	6.026	3.713	.013	.060
Intercept	6925.167	1	6925.167	4266.789	.000	.961
knowl_dummy	5.262	1	5.262	3.242	.074	.018
exp_dummy	3.064	1	3.064	1.888	.171	.011
knowl_dummy * exp_dummy	9.555	1	9.555	5.887	.016	.033
Error	282.409	174	1.623			
Total	7226.556	178				
Corrected Total	300.488	177				

a. R Squared = .060 (Adjusted R Squared = .044)

Estimated Marginal Means for Perceived Variety

4. knowle_dummy * exp_dummy

Dependent Variable: perceived_var

knowle_dummy	exp_dummy	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
depth	expert	6.430	.190	6.055	6.804
	novice	5.704	.190	5.329	6.079
breadth	expert	6.310	.194	5.927	6.694
	novice	6.511	.190	6.136	6.886

Interaction Analysis for Perceived Variety

ANOVA

perceived_var

knowle_dummy		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
depth	Between Groups	11.857	1	11.857	6.999	.010
	Within Groups	149.077	88	1.694		
	Total	160.933	89			
breadth	Between Groups	.889	1	.889	.573	.451
	Within Groups	133.332	86	1.550		
	Total	134.221	87			

Appendix 7: Hypothesis 3 – Need for Uniqueness

Descriptive Statistics for Need for Uniqueness

Descriptives

nfu

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
expert		89	5.4551	2.46526	.26132	4.9357	5.9744	1.00	9.00	
novice		90	4.3778	2.35633	.24838	3.8843	4.8713	1.00	9.00	
Total		179	4.9134	2.46425	.18419	4.5499	5.2769	1.00	9.00	
Model	Fixed Effects			2.41110	.18021	4.5578	5.2691			
	Random Effects				.53865	-1.9307	11.7576			.51531

ANOVA for Need for Uniqueness

ANOVA

nfu

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	51.932	1	51.932	8.933	.003
Within Groups	1028.976	177	5.813		
Total	1080.908	178			

Appendix 8: Hypothesis 3.1 – Perceived Uniqueness

Between-Subjects Effects for Perceived Uniqueness

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: perceived_nfu

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	22.293[a]	3	7.431	2.881	.037	.047
Intercept	7557.408	1	7557.408	2929.967	.000	.943
exp_dummy	6.806	1	6.806	2.638	.106	.015
knowl_dummy	.272	1	.272	.106	.746	.001
exp_dummy * knowl_dummy	15.215	1	15.215	5.899	.016	.032
Error	453.965	176	2.579			
Total	8033.667	180				
Corrected Total	476.259	179				

a. R Squared = .047 (Adjusted R Squared = .031)

Estimated Marginal Means for Perceived Uniqueness

3. exp_dummy * knowle_dummy

Dependent Variable: perceived_nfu

exp_dummy	knowle_dummy	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
expert	depth	6.926	.239	6.453	7.398
	breadth	6.422	.239	5.950	6.895
novice	depth	5.956	.239	5.483	6.428
	breadth	6.615	.239	6.142	7.087

Interaction Analysis for Perceived Uniqueness

ANOVA

perceived_nfu

knowle_dummy		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
depth	Between Groups	21.186	1	21.186	8.246	.005
	Within Groups	226.109	88	2.569		
	Total	247.295	89			
breadth	Between Groups	.835	1	.835	.322	.572
	Within Groups	227.857	88	2.589		
	Total	228.691	89			

Between Subjects Effects for Item 3 Perceived Variety Scale

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? - I perceive the proposed playlist rather commercial

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	45.067[a]	3	15.022	3.164	.026	.051
Intercept	5825.422	1	5825.422	1227.122	.000	.875
exp_dummy	32.089	1	32.089	6.760	.010	.037
knowl_dummy	10.756	1	10.756	2.266	.134	.013
exp_dummy * knowl_dummy	2.222	1	2.222	.468	.495	.003
Error	835.511	176	4.747			
Total	6706.000	180				
Corrected Total	880.578	179				

a. R Squared = .051 (Adjusted R Squared = .035)

Estimated Marginal Means for Level of Expertise

2. exp_dummy

Estimates

Dependent Variable: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? - I perceive the proposed playlist rather commercial

exp_dummy	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
expert	6.111	.230	5.658	6.564
novice	5.267	.230	4.813	5.720

Appendix 9: Mediation Analysis – Perceived Uniqueness

Run MATRIX procedure:

***************** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5 *****************

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****
Model: 4
Y: wilcore5
X: expscore
M: percnfu3

Sample
Size: 179

****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
percnfu3

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2357	.0555	2.5228	10.4104	1.0000	177.0000	.0015

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.2407	.3989	13.1390	.0000	4.4535	6.0278
expscore	.1952	.0605	3.2265	.0015	.0758	.3146

****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
wilcore5

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7099	.5039	1.2176	89.3811	2.0000	176.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.5988	.3894	6.6732	.0000	1.8303	3.3674
expscore	.0174	.0433	.4021	.6881	-.0680	.1028
percnfu3	.6732	.0522	12.8929	.0000	.5702	.7763

Test(s) of X by M interaction:

F	df1	df2	p
.2455	1.0000	175.0000	.6209

************************** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL ****************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
wilcore5

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.1880	.0353	2.3542	6.4834	1.0000	177.0000	.0117

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	6.1271	.3853	15.9021	.0000	5.3667	6.8875
expscore	.1488	.0584	2.5462	.0117	.0335	.2642

********** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **********

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
.1488	.0584	2.5462	.0117	.0335	.2642	.0955	.1880

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
.0174	.0433	.4021	.6881	-.0680	.1028	.0112	.0220

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
percnfu3	.1314	.0514	.0327	.2338

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
percnfu3	.0844	.0314	.0215	.1437

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
percnfu3	.1660	.0630	.0424	.2851

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

------ END MATRIX -----

Appendix 10: Mediation Analysis – Perceived Variety

Run MATRIX procedure:

********** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5 **********

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****
Model: 4
Y: wilcore5
X: expscore
M: percvar

Sample
Size: 177

****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
percvar

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2596	.0674	1.5778	12.6447	1.0000	175.0000	.0005

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.1550	.3156	16.3324	.0000	4.5321	5.7780
expscore	.1703	.0479	3.5559	.0005	.0758	.2648

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
wilcore5

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5909	.3492	1.6068	46.6824	2.0000	174.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.5191	.5061	4.9780	.0000	1.5204	3.5179
expscore	.0284	.0500	.5676	.5710	-.0704	.1272
percvar	.6994	.0763	9.1678	.0000	.5488	.8499

Test(s) of X by M interaction:

F	df1	df2	p
7.6893	1.0000	173.0000	.0062

********** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL **********
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
wilcore5

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.1867	.0348	2.3693	6.3174	1.0000	175.0000	.0129

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	6.1243	.3868	15.8342	.0000	5.3610	6.8877
expscore	.1475	.0587	2.5134	.0129	.0317	.2633

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
expscore	.1867

********** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **********

Total effect of X on Y path c

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
.1475	.0587	2.5134	.0129	.0317	.2633	.0944	.1867

Direct effect of X on Y path c'

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
.0284	.0500	.5676	.5710	-.0704	.1272	.0182	.0359

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
percvar	.1191	.0393	.0469	.1997

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
percvar	.0762	.0230	.0320	.1210

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
percvar	.1507	.0460	.0628	.2383

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

------ END MATRIX -----