

«Dematerialization», technology and listening experiences in musical consumption practices

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The paper analyses the consequences of musical objects' «dematerialization» on the actual listeners' consumption practices. «Dematerialization» of cultural artefacts and its reduction to electronic information regards, in the musical domain, the shift from the fixed materiality of audiotape or compact disc toward the use of digital formats and online music distribution. While this shift, occurred during the last ten years, has been partially addressed from an economic and productive point of view, its consequences on socio-cultural level and consumer practices still need to be fully addressed.

This paper will focus on some of the questions connected with the change in material culture of music on the basis of the empirical data consisting of 25 in-depth narrative semi-structured interviews with young Italian (15-30 yo) digital music listeners. On a theoretical level, the paper draws upon a «theory of practice», which considers practices rather than individuals as the crucial unit of investigation, in doing so enabling to better understand how changes in music material culture produce consequences on the whole set of musical listening activities and experiences.

More specifically, the paper will consider how change in the material culture of music affects the ways people listen to music, cultural values and meanings given to the music, people's musical experiences and tastes; moreover it will consider the ways in which listeners' meanings and values contribute in the shaping of the actual uses of digital music technologies. The paper ends underlining the mutual interaction of the material, the cultural and the cognitive dimensions in the process of reshaping of musical consumption practices.