Abstract

Listening to music may seem like a random, habitual activity to some, yet research is beginning to suggest that individuals alter their preference for music subconsciously based on their emotional state. The digital music streaming industry is growing exponentially and the need to keep up with consumer value expectations is increasing. This project seeks to establish a better understanding of emotionally-induced streaming intentions and selections of music listeners. The research population of interest is Western, Generation Z, university student, music listeners. Two outcomes of emotionally-induced music decision-making are analyzed: playlist selection and song selection. The four basic human emotions (BHEs) of sadness, anger, fear, and happiness are examined in listeners as effect variables with respect to listener playlist selection and song selection. Data collection was conducted in an interview setting with auditory emotional stimuli to assist participants in recalling these four BHEs. In each emotional category, participants made emotionally-primed playlist selections, short-clip selections, expressed short-clip skipping intentions, and open-ended song selections. The intention for the playlist selection was to determine if individuals select emotionally-primed playlists with the intention of emotional regulation or alteration. Emotional preference for the musical characteristics of tempo, mode, and rhythm were also analyzed. Conclusions were drawn for each emotion individually. Individuals experiencing a sad emotion intended to regulate their music by listening to slow songs with a strong rhythm. Individuals experiencing anger attempted to regulate their emotion by listening to fast songs with a weak and unpredictable rhythm. Individuals experiencing fear aimed to alternate their emotion while listening to slow, major songs with a strong and predictable rhythm. Individuals experiencing a happy emotion sought emotional regulation by listening to fast, major songs with a strong and predictable rhythm. The findings from this research will help improve digital music streaming suggestion algorithms by better understanding how BHEs and emotional preferences influence streaming playlist selection and song selection.

Keywords: Basic Human Emotions (BHEs), Streaming Intentions, Streaming Selections, Digital Music Streaming, and Emotional Regulation