

How Would You Like Your Alternative Music? New Media and Cultural Capital in Transition

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to question the changing aspects of musical preferences under the influence of new media and communication technologies with a particular focus on the complex subgenre of alternative music, drawing upon a small-scale audience analysis study in Istanbul. During the past few decades, from the standpoint of audience analyses within the sociology of music, interest in rock music, especially among younger generations, has been largely deemed as a component of identity construction and a means of displaying an anti-main stream taste in music marked by a countercultural attitude. Given the fact that one's taste in music has been an indicator of social status with its relationship to one's level of cultural capital, interest in alternative music as part of the rock music sphere in Turkey, as elsewhere in the world, has been considered as a symptom of an interest in the off-the-beaten-path culture fragments. However, in our contemporary era, with the advent of new media, cultural preferences including musical choices have been predominantly affected by what is presented as alternative by the interactive mechanisms of diverse new media. This paper thus addresses the function of new media tools in the reconfiguration of alternative music among young adult listeners in Istanbul. Employing a qualitative research method, this study draws upon information from 17 in-depth interviews with listeners in Istanbul who reported alternative music as their favorite genre. From an interdisciplinary point of view, this paper aims to reevaluate the meaning and representation of alternative music under the transformative impact of new media in Turkey and to redefine the musical experiences and practices of young adult alternative music listeners in Istanbul.

Key words: alternative music, rock, indie, new media, musical preferences, cultural capital

Alternatif Müziğinizi Nasıl Alırdınız? Yeni Medya ve Dönüşen Kültürel Kapital

Özet

Bu makalenin ana amacı, yeni medya ve iletişim teknolojilerinin etkisiyle müzik tercihlerinin değişen yönlerini, karmaşık bir alt tür olan alternatif müziğe odaklanarak, İstanbul'da gerçekleştirilen küçük ölçekli bir dinlerkitle analizi çalışması üzerinden sorgulamaktır. Geçtiğimiz on yıllarda, müzik sosyolojisi alanındaki dinlerkitle analizleri açısından, özellikle genç dinleyiciler arasında rock müziğe olan ilgi, yaygın olarak kimlik oluşum sürecinin bir

bileşeni ve karşıt kültürel tavırla imlenen ana-akım müzik karşıtı bir müzik zevkini sergileme aracı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bireyin müzik zevkinin kültürel kapital düzeyi ile ilişkili olarak toplumsal statü göstergelerinden biri olduğu düşünüldüğünde, rock müzik alanının bir parçası olarak alternatif müziğe ilgi, dünya çapında olduğu gibi Türkiye’de de, herkesin-bildiğinin-dışında kültür katmanlarına olan ilginin belirtileri olarak düşünülmüştür. Ancak günümüzde, yeni medya araçlarının gelişmesiyle, müzik tercihlerini de içeren kültürel beğeniler, çok çeşitli yeni medya araçlarının etkileşimli mekanizmaları tarafından alternatif olarak sunulanlardan dikkat çekici bir biçimde etkilenmektedir. Bu çerçevede makale, İstanbul’da genç yetişkin dinleyiciler arasında alternatif müziğin yeniden yapılandırılmasında yeni medya araçlarının işlevi konusunu ele almaktadır. Niteliksel araştırma yöntemlerinin kullanıldığı bu çalışma, İstanbul’da yaşayan ve alternatif müziği en beğendikleri tür olarak ifade eden on yedi görüşmeci ile gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlardan elde edilen bulgulardan yararlanmaktadır. Bu makale, disiplinler arası bir bakış açısı ile, yeni medyanın dönüştürücü etki alanında Türkiye’de alternatif müzik kategorisinin anlam ve temsillerini yeniden değerlendirmeyi, ve buna paralel olarak, İstanbul’da genç yetişkin alternatif müzik dinleyicilerinin müzikal tecrübe ve pratiklerini yeniden tanımlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: alternatif müzik, rock, indie, yeni medya, müzik tercihleri, kültürel kapital

Introduction

From a sociological point of view, one’s taste in music has long been considered as an indicator of one’s social status and cultural identity. Consequently, taste in certain genres such as symphonic music or opera along with many other artistic preferences that are deemed as part of high culture, have been considered as a reflection of a high level of cultural capital, whereas popular music including several different genres like pop and rock’n’roll have been thought as significant examples of popular culture. As a matter of fact, the components of popular music have always been in dispute since the genres and styles listed as popular have been continuously transforming, interlinking with each other, and moreover borrowing many technical and aesthetical features from the sphere of art music. Alternative rock music, as part of rock music genre, suggests an explicit ideological similarity with rock music’s attitude, but simultaneously implies a subtle criticism towards rock music that have been commercialized over the past decades. Rock music, like other genres within the popular music sphere, with its close relationship to youth and leisure has been represented, mediated and used within mass communication.

In order to analyze this alternative music sphere, the first part of this paper highlights the prominence of cultural capital in defining aesthetic, cultural and musical preferences. The following section offers a reconceptualization of alternative music in Turkey regarding the elusive balance between western and non-western musical preferences as representations of

cultural capital. The article then gravitates towards the impact of new media on the presentation, distribution and reception of alternative music with an emphasis on the categorizations and social positioning of music spheres and the components of taste in the post-industrial era. Finally, drawing upon the data gathered from in-depth interviews conducted among young adult alternative music listeners in Istanbul, the article seeks to analyze the ways the listeners interact with alternative music scene and to put forth the changing communicative embedding of musical preferences.

Theoretical Framework, Scope and the Method of the Study

This article bases the study of alternative music preferences mainly on two literatures. The first is research on an expanded interpretation of the concept of ‘cultural capital’ mainly inspired by the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1979, 1990), and followed by more recent reinterpretations of taste. As part of this cultural preference, the distinction between music spheres both from sociological and ethnomusicological perspectives is also presented in order to better designate the content of rock and alternative music. The second body of literature comprises of the evaluation of new media and communication technologies and the analysis of their appropriation of music.

This paper uses the data of in-depth interviews with 17 informants who reported preferring alternative music over other genres, described themselves as good listeners and frequent concertgoers. In accordance with the target of alternative rock, the interviewees consist of young adults. Since the definition of young adulthood is oftentimes ambiguous, this study is based on United Nation’s age cohort of youth and young adults. Thus, the informants between the age cohort of 18-32 years old were asked questions about their motives in liking alternative music and their ways of using social media for structuring their musical experiences and practices. Among 17 informants living in Istanbul who reported alternative music as their favorite genre, 8 of them were university students (2 fine arts, 2 communication faculty, 3 humanities and social sciences and 1 architecture faculty students), 4 white-collar workers in private sector, 2 graduate students and doctorates and 2 self-employed (1 photographer, 1 translator) young adults. Their names are kept anonymous and representative pseudonyms are used when directly citing their answers. The in-depth interviews were conducted between September and November 2013.

This study, employing a qualitative research method having a particular focus on alternative music listeners with a specific age cohort in Istanbul, and a simultaneous focus on

their usage of the new media technologies when engaging in a musical activity, does not intend to extract a generalized evaluation on musical preference for alternative music in Turkey. Yet, with an elaborate and detailed approach to the interpenetrated relationship between new media and music, it aims to put forth the changing motives and enlarging content and altering context of cultural capital and its multifaceted and problematic relation to musical preferences among young Turkish alternative music listeners.

Sociology of Musical Tastes and Cultural Capital

Musical preferences have long been among the research focuses of sociology of culture. Starting with Weber (1958) and his theory of rationalization in music, early theorists' interest in the representation, distribution and reception of music constituted the preliminary works for contemporary audience analyses. Georg Simmel, in this sense, contributed an early research on musical communities and taste groups; Etzkorn (1964) explains how Simmel searched for the social meaning in music and how in his early works, all types of musical expressions are examined in terms of their communicative function in social life. In addition, Turley (2001) indicates that the birth of musical community approach derived from Weber's work in sociology of music, where Weber evaluated economic, social, spatial, cultural, and even climatic variables in his socio-musicological analysis. From the previous mid-century onwards, this framework evolved into a more detailed analysis of different music cultures, their significance in societies and into the analysis of particular social actors involved in a given music culture, primarily the musicians and the audience. This engendered an interest in discovering the motives behind particular taste in a particular music genre. Among other Frankfurt School theorists, T. W. Adorno (1991; 1994; 2002), with his unique concepts including "regressive listening", "pseudo-individualization", "the fetish character of music", "typology of listeners" and the like, shaped truly the comprehensive framework of sociology of music. Starting from the 70s, the emergence of new musical youth subcultures, like punk, metal and hip-hop altered the direction of this discipline while many scholars simultaneously continued to explore the impact of technological developments and abrupt social changes within popular music studies. Hence, the emphasis on the social components of music scenes in the metropolis reflecting directly the political economy of the city life, stressed the decisiveness of particular interests and preferences in music, thus marked the significance of one's cultural capital in analyzing taste.

Cultural capital, a term coined by Bourdieu (1979, 1990), along with economic capital and social capital, is one of several components of *habitus*, and determines the degree of agents' preferences, methods and achievements in a given field. Here, *habitus*, refers to “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures; as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). Within this system, which determines in general terms, the life-style of a social actor, cultural capital reveals a key concept to help explicate the musical preferences. Cultural capital, in its embodied, institutionalized and objectified forms, refers to cultural possessions at an agent's disposal, including educational qualifications and other cultural competences such as the ability to engage with prestigious cultural forms. In this sense, our taste in music as part of our *habitus* happens to be a principal indicator of our cultural capital. Several studies have shown that musical preferences provide a means of distinguishing between social groups and that musical preferences correspond to different lifestyle choices. Musical taste therefore becomes an important symbolic indicator for social stratification. Accordingly, divergence between tastes in fine arts and in popular culture is a marker of social class and status hierarchy (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978; Lamont and Fournier, 1992; Gans, 2008). Thus, this relationship between social status and musical preferences or aesthetic taste in general, generated a split between highbrow and lowbrow distinctions of tastes.

On the other hand, given the fact that musical preferences are socially conditioned, music has always been under the influence of culture industries and communication technologies. Therefore, more recent studies begin to question the split between highbrow and lowbrow music cultures by suggesting new forms of distinction. As a prominent example, the “omnivore thesis” (Peterson, 1992) indicates a shift from fewer elite musical genres to selective consumption from a wider array of genres. Similarly, studies that suggest an eclecticism concerning especially the upper class musical preferences (Van Eijk, 2001; Peterson and Kern 1996; Coulangeon, 2005) have altered the approach that links the upper class to a taste for highbrow culture and the lower classes to lowbrow culture. This interpenetration of cultural spheres, along with fragmented and postmodern approaches to art and particularly to music sphere have reformed the definition of numerous sub-genres, and redefined the limits of them as specific music cultures. Alternative music, as a sub-genre of rock music, sets an example for this situation in Istanbul, since a large number of its listeners critical of popular music sphere steer for non-mainstream music, which they deem as

alternative music. In this sense, for instance, if the listeners are interested specifically in alternative rock music, there is likely to be a penchant to liking, for instance, ethnic music because of its classification under the world music section, as an alternative to the products of popular music industry. The latter complicates the determination of one's cultural capital, given the omnipresence of new media technologies that facilitated the access to various different, so to speak, non-popular music genres.

A Possible Reconceptualization of 'Alternative Music' in Turkey

The conceptualization of the elusive balance between highbrow and lowbrow styles, the distinction between *serious* and *popular* (light) music spheres, as defined by (Adorno, 2002), and the widely accepted distinction between *art*, *folk* and *popular* music spheres (Tagg, 1982, p.41) in terms of the composition, distribution and reception of music, can be used to classify music genres, including alternative music. Since rock music is offered to large masses, composed especially of teenagers and young adults by culture industries' mechanisms, much like pop music, its representation, distribution and consumption may display certain characteristics defined as lowbrow cultural pieces.

On the other hand, it differs from pop music sphere with its social content, constituting a domain of alternative to mainstream politics, and a hidden potential for resistance. Hebdige (1979) in his milestone book for subculture studies, and many other scholars, have all emphasized the anti-establishment idea that lies beneath musical subcultures. However, in our contemporary era, partly because of the interlinked spheres of highbrow and lowbrow cultures that are more bewilderingly under the influence of new communication technologies, alternative rock, like other sub-genres of rock, can be found, liked, shared, therefore consumed amazingly fast.

Conceptualizing alternative rock as a music genre also requires contextualizing the expression of cultural processes of differentiation. When defining alternative rock, Wicke, (1995, p. 81-82) states that, the fact that mass culture provides the same things for everyone, the same images, the same sounds and the same everyday objects does not mean that everyone uses these in the same way, therefore it is a widespread misconception to see rock music as an expression of the protest of young working-class people in capitalist societies against the constraints of their social existence. *Indie* music, which will be covered more in the following parts of this article, as a genre which is often used as a substitute of alternative music, according to Bannister (2013) is primarily about young White men, aspiring to the

class of salaried intellectuals, uncomfortable with the conventional gendered identities offered by the dominant strands of popular culture. But as indie became a 'global' genre and a more defined market, this necessarily entailed some standardization and codification of its 'difference' (Bannister 2013, p.60).

So, the general conceptualization of this genre may not totally correspond to its perception in Turkey, mainly because of the long-term outcome of modernization processes of the last two centuries, which essentially led to a redefinition of different musical genres, and 'the ways of life' accompanied by them. The modernization process had begun during the Tanzimat Period of the late-Ottoman Empire starting from 1839, marked by the attempts of reappropriation of western artistic styles along with many cultural reforms and developments during the founding decade of the Republic. This situation led to an echoing impact of ever-shifting preferences for certain cultural and musical styles, adding up to the more recent social changes during the previous decades. That is why, it is not substantially accurate to define alternative as a genre preferred by working-class youth or as a prominent subculture in Turkey.

The significance of alternative music in Turkey seems to find its positioning in accordance with its relevance to the western world. First of all, rock music with all of its sub-styles happened to emerge mainly throughout the USA, and the continental Europe, and given the fact that during many decades the rock songs or movements, which turned out to be the voice of many young generations around the world, originated from English-spoken countries. Therefore, apart from the emotions evoked by its tune, it requires a certain level of English to fully grasp this genre and to respond to rock music. For this very reason, the perception of alternative rock in Turkey slightly differs from the western countries. A similar difference might as well be seen in any non-English speaking country. So, the younger generations who have the opportunity to learn English at earlier periods of their education are more likely to discover musical youth cultures, including, numerous rock music related subcultures. In this case, because of this change in the social ranking of rock music in Turkey, its positioning between lowbrow or highbrow culture groups gets even more complicated. As a result, it turned out that in order to fully understand and internalize what is offered by a universal alternative music culture necessitates a good level of English; therefore a relatively good school education followed consecutively and innately by a high level of cultural capital.

Nevertheless, the underlying attitude brought about by the idea of seeking an alternative to mainstream can be noticeably found among many different –not necessarily rock- listener

types in Turkey. Yet, the monopolization of the new media in the reconfiguration of musical preferences that lead to a whole new understanding of listening practices, multiplied the ways to receive alternative music. In other words, the new media did not only replace the previous sources of music listening, including quite the latest ones, such as music TV channels, but also reorganized the behavioral patterns in the face of any given music genre.

The Components of Musical Preferences in the Age of New Media

Starting with the prominent criticism of the ‘culture industry thesis’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979), and the critical theory of Frankfurt School in a broader sense, along with other schools like Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies, and numerous influential scholars have all questioned and criticized the ways the popular culture, including the popular music industry, circulated the standardized cultural goods, creating a docile but passive audience, through mid to late 20th century. Today, within our contemporary post-industrial society (Bell, 1973), the new media replaced the traditional communication technologies of the earlier culture industries, and with its omnipresence and easier access, have nowadays become extremely effective more than ever. But what makes this new media ‘new’?

The new media, from the standpoint of music industry, allowing an instant and interactive communication, have significantly increased the level of communication between the musicians and the listeners as well as the interaction among the audience, and thus altered the ways that music is presented, distributed and experienced. Breitrose (1982) explains that the new media offer an opportunity to masses to interact with masses, and to have an access to the information they wish to have, while previous technologies only could enable the user or the receiver to communicate with other people. So, interactivity and convergence are among the main characteristics of the new media. The growth of information technologies and the emergence of the culture of real virtuality that are organized around electronic media, as described by Castells (1996), contributed to the rise of the ‘Network Society’, also suggested by the title of his book. This new type of society, replacing the previous collective conscience and socio-cultural patterns of everyday life, gave the opportunity, and at the same time, started implicitly to advise people to present themselves overtly and visibly. This changed the whole idea behind the question of ‘why do we listen what we listen to?’.

The new media offers an interdisciplinary field, including mainly communication studies, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, literary theory, semiotics, art history and

criticism, while offering also an academic area of study, which deals with the form, content and socio-cultural implications of various media and communication technologies. The concept of new media is defined as ‘the means of mass communication using digital technologies such as the Internet’ by the website of Oxford Dictionaries. Instead of looking up at the printed version of this dictionary, checking its website from the following link; <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>, sets itself an example for its transforming power on everyday life behavioral patterns. This seemingly quite useful feature of the new media might however break down because of the abundance of data, and as a result, the inconsistency of the information that it contains. Similarly, many music genres are presented through diverse different ways and within diverse different spaces of the new media.

Within the framework of Internet as the cornerstone of the new media, blogs, feeds, podcasts, community portals and social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc., are the examples of new media that exhibits various musical structures and practices. When compared to the previous electronic music distribution technologies, it can be seen that the classification of cassette tapes, record players or MD and MP3 players seems to remain different than new media tools, especially in terms of their lack of real-time creative participation and interactive user feedback option, even though they were also chronologically compatible with the post-industrial society’s new communication technologies. Thus, the new media, inevitably under the substantial influence of globalization, presenting in fact innumerable digital data, have become capable of determining the aesthetics and the preferences, where the music cultures have also turned into a specific part of a new, social class context-free and stand-alone cyber culture.

Results and Discussions: Alternative Music as a Metamedia?

According to ethnomusicologist Merriam’s model (1964, p.32), musical analysis involves study on three analytic levels; conceptualization about music, behavior in relation to music and music sound itself. This model can be applied to the analysis of the usage and the function of music within new media and can be read simultaneously as the study of “music in culture” and “music as culture”, because not only new media have created a cyber music culture on its own, but also changed the ways of musical practices in a culture of a given society. These practices necessitate a mutual relationship, a dialogue between the listeners and the media sources that offer music, just like metamedia, a term coined by McLuhan (1964),

which offer an integrated look at the form and the content beyond the mutual link of its components.

In this sense, the first findings of the interviews conducted to reveal the representation of alternative music among young adult listeners in Istanbul exposed that the whole dynamics of interpersonality of music cultures have been constantly reduced to the simple act of *liking*, *following* and *sharing* a musical piece, or even to a moment or a text that is somewhat related to music. This extravagant value attributed to the representation of music, instead of its unique existence, has given music cultures more ephemeral characteristics and created blurred boundaries between different genres.

Concerning the musical community of alternative rock, all of our interviewees stated that they keep up with the alternative music scene from the Internet. The top three new media sources to discover alternative music were reported consecutively as follows: first of all, online MP3 music streaming services (such as Fizy, Soundcloud, Spotify, Tunein), and then Youtube, and finally, interactive online music databases and social networks (like Grooveshark, Last.Fm or MySpace). Among these three closely similar categories of music streaming, apart from Youtube which is a broadcasting and video-sharing website, all others are specifically reserved for music. Moreover, they all have different interaction facilities, which offer their audience to leave comments or ask questions on the reserved areas of the interface. 15 interviewees out of 17 stated that they have at least one application in their smartphones for music streaming, and that they most use it when they have spare time on public spaces. Waiting for someone at a café or somewhere else, and the time that is spent at public transportations were indicated as the two important outdoor spaces, whereas in indoors, for example when they are at home or work, they expressed that they shift to their laptops or tablets. Alternative rock, like many other genres, thus becomes accessible to its audience on these new media tools aside from MTV and other music TV channels as well as radio stations. The last two communication tools only offered a limited interactivity; for instance, demanding the following songs via e-mail, text messaging, calling and going online and leaving a message, or twitting, whereas the music streaming tools of the new media propose an opportunity to be a live part of an ongoing musical conversation.

Just like any other music genre, alternative rock demands from its listeners an active participation that can be realized in many different ways, such as going to the concerts and buying records. This way it can become a part of everyday life and gives its listener an object of interaction with other people. Concomitantly, it becomes a constituent of identity, a cursor

of resemblance and differentiation, and a means to distinguish oneself from ‘the other’. In this sense, it would be useful to examine the degree of a genre to build a musical community or a scene. Musical communities refer to a particular population group whose composition is relatively stable, but, musical scenes refer to a cultural space within which a wide range of musical practices co-exist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization. (Straw, 1991, cited in Shepherd 2003, p.74). Thus, these new media tools and the new ways of participating in music seem to replace alternative scene with smaller, fragmented and multilayered cyber alternative music communities.

Alternative rock and other related styles that are circulated by culture industries as part of popular music sphere have recently become a research area within popular music studies as an interlinked part of sociology of music. As Tagg (1982) points out, this research area focuses on the affective identities, attitudes and behavioral patterns of socially definable groups with an emphasis on the record-buying, music-registering, TV-watching and video-consuming public. So, these interactive music listening practices need to be added to the previous list of musical behaviors. As a matter of fact, the preferences for alternative reveal a significant social stratification indicator, because of the fact that the behavioral pattern of upper classes is oftentimes characterized by a tendency towards highbrow arts and a denunciation of popular music and the products of mass culture.

New alternative music: Transformation of the unfamiliar other

In order to examine the taste cultures of interviewees who reported alternative rock as their favorite genre, they were asked about what alternative music, as a term, meant for them. The responses were rather concentrated on the multiple meanings of the word alternative in Turkey, rather than on rock music and thus confirm the relevance of eclectic musical preferences.

Interviewee B3, 27 years old, female, account executive, emphasized the difficulty to find an alternative way of approaching to music. By the term approaching to music, she stressed that she was referring to the impossibility of staying outside of mainstream. The latter concept was sometimes referred to as being ‘underground’, or being ‘authentic’, both of which are highly problematic notions, if not being part of the real art sphere. This meant for musicians, being independent from music production industries and their late-capitalist logics, and being freed from the impositions of the same industry for listeners. Such an attitude

corresponds actually to the definition of indie, or independent label, which is sometimes used as a substitute of alternative rock, as mentioned in the previous part. However, today, the appropriation of all genres, including indie, by the media, can typically be observed in diverse different ways and with different methods. In other words, nowadays, not only publicities on TV and other visual media, but also many different small-scale commercials and banners on diverse websites as well as social media interfaces, make use of music pieces that are streaming online and free of sharing. So, the criticism towards rock music that emerged with the commercialization of rock anthems of the 60s and 70s mainly because of their usage in ads, which, to a certain extent, also contributed to the rise of alternative rock –alternative, not only in terms of the composition and performance techniques of classic rock, but also from the standpoint of their representation and distribution-, seems to be dissolving in the ubiquitous presence of new media tools.

The search for not-mainstream and non-popular and a genuine sound was the main and common motive of all of the interviewees who preferred alternative rock. This very motive seems also to direct these listeners to seek for more alternatives. Here, our interviewees also cited progressive rock and punk, along with jazz (especially with its listeners at their late twenties and early thirties) as their other preferred genres, the genres that matched up actually with the counter attitude that lies beneath alternative rock. Yet, quite interestingly, world music was mentioned as an alternative genre by 12 interviewees. Interviewee A2, 25 years old, male, graduate student, whose favorite genre is indie rock says that; ‘It is to me a sub-genre of rock music, an alternative to rock of the previous decades, but still an example of rock. African music with a strong rhythmic structure and different instruments is a more alternative music to me. A real alternative! And I like it a lot. So, I rather prefer using indie, not alternative rock’. Similarly, Interviewee D1, 26 years old, female photographer claimed that she only considers ethnic music and world music as a real alternative to what we have within music industry today.

The preference for world music thus mainly originated from the will to discover unpopular and little known music and musicians. The fact that the interviewees used significantly the word alternative to define world music interestingly melded into a specific musical understanding. Besides, the term world music has been a controversial category in Turkey as elsewhere in the world, also within the domain of ethnomusicology, especially during the last few decades. There are of course many different styles, genres and forms classified under this problematic term, which display the intermingling of different music-

cultural traditions. Along many definitions of world music which connote traditional, folk, ethnic or roots music, the term refers to the music composed and performed by indigenous musicians of a specific geographic region, which are part of virtually every culture and society on the planet (Nidel, 2005, p.2). Consequently, world music may be seen as a slippery term, open to many interpretations, yet it seems to lack the precision to accurately apply to any specific music tradition. However, one thing that is explicitly observable is that bands and albums that are classified under the topic of world music do not take place within various top-ten or top-forty charts. This fact positions world music outside the domain of western music, thus indicates that the term refers mostly to the music of non-English speaking countries.

In addition to the fact that many new media channels and websites stream today world music too, and the category of world music as a contemporary musical genre seems to be even more problematic, especially in an age when indigenous traditions in all parts of the world are being forced into a dynamic accommodation with western popular music. As a result, it turns out that, for a regular audience who is bored with mainstream music and popularized underground genres such as punk or heavy metal and who is searching for a brand new alternative, world music seems to be a brand new ‘alternative’ opportunity.

No Alternative Music: All you need is to follow, share and like!

Taking into consideration that taste in music is not only closely related to a series of social agents and structures within the mechanism of culture industries but also, especially in our contemporary era, is directly relevant to the decision-making process of marketing professionals of the new media, highbrow and lowbrow taste cultures have been interpenetrated due to their similar distribution and consumption mechanisms. The new music listening patterns, which include certain paths, such as downloading, following, sharing or liking, may also be adopted as a means of membership in virtual social classes that are represented on the web. It then has become more difficult to explore what binds musical communities other than their instantaneous taste in music.

The new media creating new musical practices changed above all, the level and the means of participating in music scenes, including alternative music. The interviewees stated that the new media is their main tool to discover about any music genre. They agreed on the fact that finding out about new alternative bands, musicians, albums and their upcoming performances depend first and foremost on the deliberate usage of the web. Being part of a musical community then started to become participating virtually in that music sphere.

Interviewee A4, 29 years old, female, HR specialist, and Interviewee A9, 28 years old, male IT software developer both named many online tools and radio stations as Jango, Fizzy and Tune-in, and other alternative rock podcasts as the easiest and the best way to listen to this genre, emphasizing the advantage of its availability at all times. Indeed, compared to the music televisions or radio stations, podcasts and thematic online live music streaming sites eliminate and make ready playlists for their subscribers or followers. In addition, this new way of listening practices are way different than buying records –which also evolved from vinyl to CD over decades- and does not give the listener anything tangible, but web-based audio-reality.

The utility of the web was also mentioned in keeping up with the local and international concerts and gigs. Peer groups and the Internet were reported as the top two means of musical communication. A similar response accentuating the capacity of social media was observed especially among newly graduated younger professionals in Istanbul around their mid-twenties who reported going to alternative rock concerts at least few times a year as one of their habitual cultural activity. They were also the ones to emphasize the necessity of speaking at least a certain level of English, as a way of experiencing certain western music styles other than pop music, which accordingly implied a related level of cultural capital.

These new ways of discovering, listening and participating in a music scene are represented nowadays through three major new media acts: liking, following, and sharing. These acts seem to be internalized by a large audience who wish to reach the musical pieces of a preferred genre. On the other hand, the interviewees vaguely complained about certain dysfunctions of the new media that they confront from time to time. They were discontented about the language used by some users or subscribers, especially concerning the comments or suggestions on the audio or video music files that include certain slang and swearwords. But they agreed that this sort of obnoxiousness was remarkably less within alternative music scene, also on the web, especially compared to its both local and foreign popular music counterparts. It is possible to interpret this pattern of acts of online cursing or expressing resentment as a collective communication gap. Moreover, interviewees around their late twenties and early thirties were partially concerned about the reliability of certain musicians or albums on the web. This concern may be expanded to a certain criticism of the new meaning of going to a concert. For instance, when they check the news about alternative music concerts on Facebook, the ratings; the number of likes and the number of people who claimed ‘attending’ or ‘maybe attending’, is capable of creating an instant and a temporary

affective link between the music and its listeners. Also, uploading of live performances on one's social media account necessitates recording it on usually a smart phone during some time in the course of the concert. The next step of this recording on a 'telephone' is sharing, after uploading the file on the web. Sharing oftentimes is followed by an odd activity; constantly checking the number of 'likes' received.

This repetitive cycle engendered by the utilization of the new media highly virtualized the musical practices of all genres including alternative music. In other words, this particular path of engaging in the virtualization of music needs to be followed by the listeners of all other genres as well. In addition to the postmodern approach to highbrow and lowbrow culture spheres, the transforming influence of the new media on musical preferences slowly started to leave no room for alternative action schemes. That is to say, a pop music listener and an alternative rock music listener, as well as the listeners of many other genres, are getting drawn into a similar pattern of listening habits by the new communication technologies. Finally, one of its long-term outcome becomes visible when the reflection of behavioral patterns of the non-mainstream music seekers, including alternative rock listeners, start to emerge into the fashion and hype of a commercialized alternative, which sounds itself internally contradictory. An example could be the endless interest of the bohemian bourgeoisie in 'authentic' and 'alternative' sounds, which requires a detailed analysis of another study. Here, it would be useful to remember Attali's concept of noise (1985, p.19), which is the predictor of new cultural possibilities, a prophecy of a new social order and the breakdown of an old one.

Conclusion

This article, mainly aimed at discovering about the current representation of a specific music taste as part of one's cultural capital under the influence of new media technologies in Turkey, focused only on young adult listeners having reported a preference for alternative music in Istanbul. Therefore, despite of the capacity of giving unique insights about the components of one's taste in music, the limited number of interviewees, their age cohort, their more or less similar economic capital does not allow to make generalizations about the meaning and representation of alternative music in Turkey. Moreover, this article does not intend to make musicological evaluations or detailed technical analyses on alternative rock music.

Rather with an emphasis on behavioral patterns about musical preferences, after examining the diverse ways of understanding and conceptualizing alternative music, this article concluded that alternative music in Turkey may not always be directly refer to alternative rock, and there is more than one way to deem a music genre as alternative, which actually corresponds to the fragmented understanding of music in the postmodern era. Another finding was that alternative rock, because of its widely accepted western character, which mainly derives from the ‘western’ world, requires a certain level of cultural capital from a certain point of view that is closely linked to a competence of English, which itself is also highly under the influence of new media technologies of the post-industrial society. As a result, today, the understanding of the scope of alternative music seems not to be limited within rock music, and seems to be transforming into a broader music sphere, composed of many hybrid or semi-alternative styles.

This paper intends to make a contribution to the analysis of two very comprehensive interrelated topics, taste in music as part of cultural capital and the influence of new communication technologies, and aims to open up further discussions on this topic. The questions about our musical preferences do not only constitute the backbone of sociological analyses of a particular audience of a given genre, but also are part of everyday life conversations. Therefore, this paper offering an analysis with specific highlights, suggests that various different usages, strategies and mechanisms of new media reverse the myth of alternative rock, so long as taste in music is experienced online.

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