

The Show Must Go On: Virtual Live Music Event Experiences during COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Often used as entertainment and ambience in various servicescapes, during COVID-19, live music experiences as the world knew it changed drastically. This article investigates the way young consumers engage with virtual live music events (VLME) during COVID-19, by using logistic regression modeling. We present factors that determine the probability to attend VLME during COVID-19, to attend VLME post-COVID-19, and the willingness to pay (WTP) for VLME. In the Internet age, VLME could represent a post-COVID opportunity for the cultural sector, if consumers consider it a real entertainment option, not only during a pandemic.

Keywords: Music, Consumer Behavior, COVID-19, Virtual Live Music Events, Willingness-to-Pay

INTRODUCTION

Digital virtual consumption (DVC) rose in many aspects during COVID-19, (COVID hereafter). Work and school went online and remote work became common. Similarly, many consumers were limited in accessing and interacting with various entertainment options (e.g., movie theaters, concerts, museums, and art galleries). In terms of music and concerts, traditionally live music performances are offered in conjunction with other consumption and service experiences such as at local pubs, restaurants, wine tastings, and craft festivals. However, live music performances are also offered as the primary offering at concerts, shows, and music festivals. On an everyday basis, many consumers engage with music through DVC options such as Spotify, YouTube, and Amazon music. Consumers consider music to be an important part of who they are in terms of their identity projects (Rentfrow and Gosling 2003).

With COVID restrictions, many businesses, restaurants and bars, but also larger concert venues, suddenly required physical distancing, limited or no capacity, and even closings. Therefore, limited marketplace live music offerings were available to consumers. Many artists from local troubadours to global singers and bands suddenly saw their livelihoods being challenged, as their ability to offer in-person shows were severely limited (Rendell 2020). Instead, some offered their music via virtual live shows referred to as “portal shows” (Rendell 2020) on social media and other digital platforms. Some of these events, called *virtual live music events* (VLME) here, were free, while others required pre-payments or tickets.

While a VLME is obviously different from a live or material consumption option, Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010) suggest that such virtual consumption can still fulfill consumption practices. While previous research on digital gaming worlds such as Second Life and World of Warcraft, the same liminality, the “in betweenness” of the material and the imaginary can be discussed in terms of VLMEs, as they can be considered as liberating and can help consumers escape from boredom, offer transformational spaces, and new forms of pleasure and experiences (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010). From a consumer behavior

perspective, music consumption rituals during COVID have increased due to its benefit to keeping up with exercise and entertainment rituals, as mood enhancement and to connect with others (Albinsson 2021; Vandenberg et al. 2020).

This article aims to investigate the motivating factors leading young US and Belgian consumers to interact with VLME during a pandemic. Specifically, we examine how these factors influence VLME's attendance during and post-COVID. We also examine factors that may impact consumers' willingness-to-pay for VLME. The research question that guides this exploratory research is:

RQ: What motivating factors influence young consumers to attend VLMEs?

We focused on younger consumers as adolescents and young adults between age 13-30 tend to listen to similar type of music, often played on the radio and accessed via streaming services (Hu 2016). In addition, 68 percent of 18-34-year-olds listen to music everyday (Statista 2019), on average 4 hours a day, often utilize social media, and music has shown to be used by marketers as a unifying factor for Gen Z (Hu 2016).

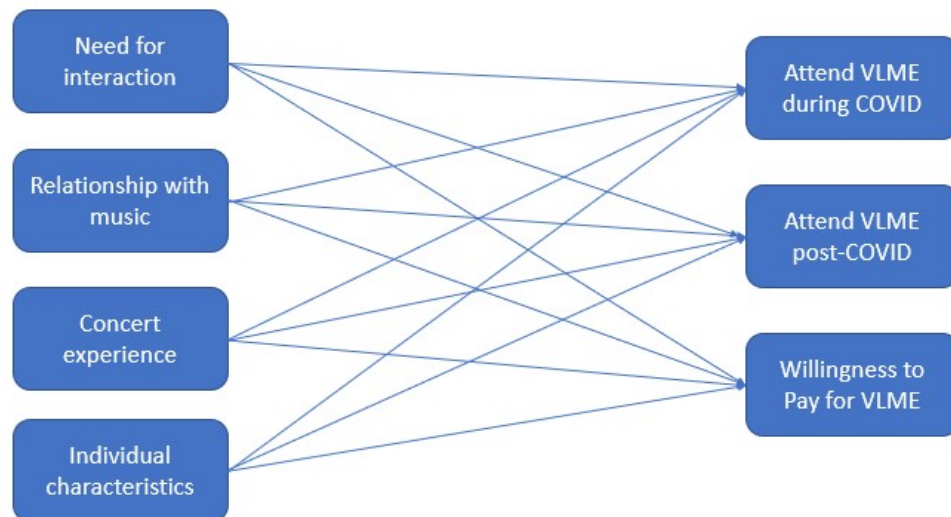
LITERATURE REVIEW

Bringing a Sense of Connectivity through Interaction

Virtual live streamed music events (referred here as VLME) are portal shows that can be “high production value events to amateur performances,” can include various genres and span from “professional, semi-professional and unsigned acts that make up the music industry” (Rendell 2020). Streaming sites such as Twitch.TV, Instagram, Facebook etc. host various artists' and bands' limited timed events either free or for a fee. Some have tip functions where the most generous givers sometimes are recognized at the end of the show (Rendell 2020). While some shows are recorded and streamed for some time after the live event, others are only live, which further highlights the exclusivity of the event as they become ephemeral (Rendell 2020). In addition, these events are digital virtual consumptionscapes which provide space for consumers (e.g., the audience and fans) to discuss “their favorite artists, genres and the fandoms themselves” (Rendell 2020). The online space can facilitate not only parasocial relationships but also between performers and audiences. VLME combine social media entertainment and online audience engagement (see Albinsson 2021; Rendell 2020). Live music events in general often take on ritual characteristics and generate social solidarity through what Durkheim (1995 [1912]) called ‘collective effervescence.’ Vandenberg et al. (2020) using Dutch virtual rave (e.g., electronic dance music) streams as context, recently investigated whether VLME can create social solidarity in the same way as pre-pandemic live music events did. They found that as the audience shares the stream simultaneously, the shared experience adds to the feeling of being part of something bigger, that you are part of a community for the duration of the event. While a virtual rave cannot mimic the experience of a collective energetic dance event, it was found to be a ‘ritual-turned-symbol’ for the participants (Vandenberg et al. 2020). Music can act as communication and function as a way to reduce negative emotions and anxiety and increase positive emotions and social belonging (Kneer and Rieger 2016). During VLMEs, musicians who are talking to the virtual audience, commenting in between songs, and thanking them for watching helps create social connections (Albinsson 2021; Rendell 2020). For example, in a qualitative study on American College students, Albinsson (2021) found that

informants interact with VLMEs to enhance the self by customizing their investment of the self through co-constructing of the self (Belk 2013). Sometimes this interaction was found to be a way of actualizing the impossible – seeing an artist live whom they would never be able to see in real life (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010). Based on our literature review we propose the below conceptual model, where four potential dimensions: need for interaction, relationship with music, concert experience, individual characteristics, may influence consumer behavior in terms of VLME consumption (see Figure 1). This exploratory, as previous literature does not provide a real consistent framework, will only make some exploratory predictions: (1) a potential negative effect of the “need for interaction” dimension on the three dependent variables, as interactions may de facto appear as less pronounced in VLME, discouraging people who need interaction; (2) a potential positive effect of “concert experience” on COVID and on post-COVID attendance, as experienced consumers in terms of concert and of VLME may even more easily understand and appreciate the VLME experience of social solidarity described in the literature (Vandenberg et al. 2020).

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Choice of Countries: US and Belgian Consumers’ Relationship with Music

Music plays an important role both in the USA and in Belgium. In 2017, according to AudienceNet, US consumers listed “listening to music” second to “view social media content.” US consumers have increased their spending on music entertainment (\$8 billion in 2020 from \$7.7 billion in 2019), as well as Belgian consumers (the music industry grew to €78.32 million in 2019 from €72.49 million in 2018) (Belgian Entertainment 2020).

In terms of consumers wanting live entertainment, music festivals are popular events. In 2017, the US topped festival spending with €578 million, closely followed by Belgium €542 million (Statista 2020). Millennials often take on debt to afford their music festival habits (Hoffower 2019), showing young consumers’ high interest and involvement with music experiences. We decided to collect data from the US and Belgium not just because they have the highest festival spending, but as Coachella (US) and Tomorrowland (Belgium) are continually listed as top

global festivals. In addition, they are the top most ‘Instagrammed’ music festivals in the world: Coachella, while ranked first (over 4.2 million hashtags), is followed by Tomorrowland (over 3.8 million hashtags), perhaps surprisingly as Belgium is a quite small country. Previous cross-cultural research in marketing has utilized data from the US and Belgium, two western countries, as their cultural differences, while different on some of Hofstede’s dimensions, e.g., power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term avoidance (Hofstede et al. 2005) seem to be non-trivial from a marketing perspective (see Ford et al. 2018). While Ford et al. (2018) studied the effectiveness of using brand-evoked nostalgia in US and Belgium, we find that the two countries are useful to study VLMEs due to the strong music interest and involvement (Voss et al. 2003).

METHOD

A Qualtrics questionnaire aimed at young US and Belgian consumers measured four dimensions: 1) need for interaction, 2) relationship with music, 3) concert experience, and 4) individual characteristics. These dimensions included a total of sixteen predicting factors used in logistic regression. Established Likert-scales were used where applicable (and single-item questions created by the authors for the others), anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). The Belgian questionnaire was translated to French and thereafter back translated to English as recommended in cross-cultural research.

The need for interaction was measured by three variables: the “need for human interaction” (X_1 = Interaction_human) adapted from Gurhan-Canli and Durairaj (2000); the “motivation to socialize during concerts” (degree to which a person is motivated to observe and interact with other people when attending a concert) (X_2 = Concert_Socializing) adapted from Noble et al. (2006); and the “need for interactions with the band during concert” (X_3 = Band_Interaction).

Relationship with music was measured by the respondent’s “music involvement” (X_4 = Music_Involvement) adapted from Voss et al. (2003) and by “music price sensitivity” (X_5 = Music_Price_sensitivity).

Concert experience was measured by the “number of concerts attended per year before COVID” (X_6 = Nb_concerts); the “type of concert attended” (binary X_7 = Small_Venue; binary X_8 = Large_Venue; binary X_9 = Festival); “concert involvement” adapted from Voss et al. (2003) (X_{10} = Concert_Involvement); and “having already attended VLME before” (binary X_{11} = Already_attended)

Individual characteristics: “Internet usage” (X_{12} = Internet_Usage) adopted from Mathwick and Rigdon (2004); “the possibility to immerse in music at home” (e.g., separate room, good sound) (X_{13} = Immerse); “the maximum capacity of an inside in-person live concert that the respondent is willing to attend post COVID pandemic, because s/he would not feel safe above this capacity” (X_{14} = Max_Capacity); “the feeling that in-person concerts are better than VLME” (X_{15} = Better); “trial of technology products” (innovativeness) (X_{16} = Innovativeness) adapted from Steenkamp and Gielens (2003).

Data Collection

We collected data in the US and in Belgium via an anonymous Qualtrics link distributed on social media, as most of the music streaming events were organized on, streamed, and shared via social networks. The US convenience sample (N=374) consisted of 59.6 percent females, 88.8 percent were between 18-29 years old (the remaining respondents, 11 percent, were between 30-69 years old and were excluded from the below analysis). The Belgian convenience sample (N=425) consisted of 52.5 percent females and 85.6 percent of the respondents were between 18-29 years old (the remaining respondents were spread over 30-69 and excluded from further analysis). The final US and Belgian samples are 332 and 364 respondents respectively.

Logistic Regression Modeling

To investigate the above RQ in the predictive models, we used binary logistic regression modeling. This method predicts the likelihood of the occurrence of an event based on a set of predictors, and is frequently used in marketing research (Akinci et al. 2007). The independent variables are used to estimate the odds of belonging to group “1” (for instance, having a willingness-to-pay higher than 0 for VLME). The analyses were run separately on each sub-sample (US vs. Belgian), to evaluate similarities and differences between young consumers’ VLME’s experiences in the two countries.

The indicator variable $Y_{POS,i} = 1$ (or=0) if respondent i plans to pay for online virtual concerts. The probability that s/he has a willingness-to-pay higher than 0 can be expressed as:

$$Prob(Y_{WTP,i}) = \frac{\exp(Y_{WTP,i}^*)}{1 + \exp(Y_{WTP,i}^*)}$$

Where $Y_{WTP,i}^*$ depends on several predictors:

$$Y_{WTP,i}^* = \beta_{WTP,i0} + \sum_{k=1}^K \beta_{WTP,k} X_{i,k} + \varepsilon_{WTP,i}$$

Other indicator variables were used, leading to other binary logistic regressions, estimated separately:

- $Y_{ATTEND_NOW,i} = 1$ (or=0) if respondent i plans to attend online virtual concerts now (during COVID).
- $Y_{ATTEND_POSTCOVID,i} = 1$ (or=0) if respondent i plans to attend online virtual concerts after COVID .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability analysis showed Cronbach’s alpha (α) coefficients all higher than 0.80. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the degree of multicollinearity among the predictors and show relatively low bivariate correlation coefficients (<0.70) for all pairs of variables.

Logistic Regression Results

To test the predictive models, we used the same predictors (see X_1 - X_{16} in Table 1). In all models listed above, the significant likelihood ratio test rejects the null hypothesis of all predictors in the model being zero. Table 1 presents the estimated parameters (represent the impact of a predictor on the likelihood of a respondent), the odds parameters (represents the magnitude of the effect) and the p-value attached to Wald statistics. Table 1 also shows Kruskal gamma and percentage of correct events and non-events when using the model to predict the belonging to each group. Overall, an adequate level of validity of each model was found. Due to space limitations, only results that are significant for at least one of the subsamples are presented in the text, for all others see Table 1.

Probability to Attend a VLME Now (during COVID)

The score is considered as “likely” if it exceeds 4 (so 5, 6, 7) (value = 1) and “not likely” if it is 4 or below (value = 0) (as 7-point scales were used). Respectively 30% of US respondents are likely to attend a VLME during COVID (101/332); 37% on the Belgian side (134/364).

Several variables related to **concert experience** turn out to have a significant impact on the probability to attend VLME during COVID: *in both subsamples*, having already experienced VLME has a strong positive influence on the likelihood of attending other VLMEs during the pandemic (US: β (beta)=0.99; $p=0.001$; Bel: $\beta=1.95$; $p<0.0001$). This is the strongest effect in both subsamples: having previously attended a VLME increases the probability of attending another VLME during the pandemic (it multiplies this probability by the odds estimates of 2.70 (US) and 7.01 (Belgium) respectively). Twenty-six percent of respondents in the US subsample have already attended a VLME, while this percentage increases to 38.46% in the Belgian subsample.

Also, concert involvement has a positive impact (US: $\beta=0.28$; $p=0.07$.; Bel: $\beta=0.30$; $p=0.03$): people who are highly involved in concerts are more likely to attend VLME, during the pandemic. Nevertheless, *in the US sample*, the number of concerts attended before COVID turns out to negatively influence respondents (US: $\beta=-0.27$; $p=0.03$): the more concerts respondents have attended in the past (so the more familiar they are with concerts), the less likely they are to attend a VLME now. Interestingly, concert frequency (number of concerts) leads to a decrease in the likelihood of attending VLME (multiplying it by the odds estimate 0.76) in the US sample, while concert involvement, which is an attitudinal measure on how important it is for the respondent to attend a concert, leads to an increase in the likelihood of attending VLME. Regarding concert experience, *US respondents* who were used to attend concerts in small venues (such as pubs) are more likely to attend VLME during a pandemic (US: $\beta=0.6$; $p=0.04$); this effect is quite strong, while there is no significant impact for respondents who are used to large venues. It may mean that VLME are a good alternative for smaller, more intimate, concerts (e.g., rendering/ aesthetics/ interactions may be similar), while it is not as appropriate for bigger venues (you may miss special effects, stage designs specific to some venues).

Regarding the “**need for interaction**” dimension, only enjoying socializing with other people during concerts in general turns out to have a significant impact (US: $\beta=-0.32$; $p=0.03$; Bel: $\beta=-0.20$; $p=0.08$). Respondents who enjoy socializing during concerts are less likely to attend

VLME during pandemics (a one-unit increase in enjoying socializing with other people multiplies the probability to attend VLME during a pandemic by the odds estimates of respectively 0.73 in the US sample and 0.82 in the Belgian sample). They seem to believe that the chat interactions during VLMEs are not sufficient.

For the “**individual characteristics**” dimension, only the maximum capacity that respondents are ready to accept for in-person concerts post-COVID has a significant impact *in both samples* (US: $\beta = -0.12$; $p = 0.04$; Bel: $\beta = -0.38$; $p < 0.0001$): people who are willing to tolerate a large capacity for in-person concerts post-COVID are less likely to attend a virtual concert now. If they feel safe attending inside concerts with a high number of people, they are less likely to attend a VLME now. It may mean that they prefer to wait and experience a regular concert, as they feel pretty safe about inside concerts. This effect is particularly strong for Belgians.

The other variables used to measure individual characteristics are only significant in one sample, showing differences between US and Belgian respondents. *On the Belgian side*, the possibility to immerse has a positive impact (Bel: $\beta = 0.16$; $p = 0.05$). People who can easily immerse themselves in music at home (e.g., good sound, separate room) are more likely to attend VLME during a pandemic. However, those who do not have good home conditions are reluctant to experience VLME, which means that being able to properly enjoy the experience with decent equipment is a necessary condition for attending VLME, for Belgian respondents. Not so surprisingly, US respondents who are deeply convinced that in-person concerts are better than VLME are more likely to develop a negative attitude towards VLME (US: $\beta = -0.37$; $p = 0.003$).

Probability to Attend an VLME Post-COVID

The score is considered as “likely” if it exceeds 4 (so 5, 6, 7) (value = 1) and “not likely” if it is 4 or below (value = 0). Respectively 18% (61/332) of US respondents and 19% on the Belgian side (68/364) are likely to attend VLME post COVID, which is significantly less than the proportion of respondents ready to attend VLME *now* during COVID (US: 30%; Bel: 37%).

Regarding “**concert experience**,” having already experienced VLME is the variable that has the strongest positive impact on the probability of attending VLME post COVID, *in both samples* (US: $\beta = 0.77$; $p = 0.03$; Bel: $\beta = 1.66$; $p < 0.0001$), as it multiplies it by 2.15 (US odds estimate) and 5.28 respectively (Bel odds estimate). In other words, respondents who are now used to VLME are clearly more likely to continue, even post COVID (they know what it is about). Also, *US respondents* who are used to attending local concerts in smaller venues are more likely to attend VLME after pandemics (strong impact in US sample: $\beta = 0.85$; $p = 0.02$), while there is no significant impact for respondents who are used to large venues or festivals.

The dimension “**need for interaction**” turns out to have more influence on the probability to attend VLME post COVID than it had on attending VLME during COVID, particularly in the US sample. *In both samples*, respondents who enjoy having interactions with the band in general are more likely to attend a virtual concert post-COVID (US: $\beta = 0.32$; $p = 0.06$; Bel: $\beta = 0.39$; $p = 0.001$). We would have expected that people who enjoy interacting with the band during a concert get frustrated in VLME as they are not physically present, but our results show the opposite. It may mean that young people who enjoy interacting with the band during a concert consider VLME as an opportunity to differently interact with the band (through likes,

comments, chat for instance, where they could get direct answer from the band, which is often unconceivable in regular in-person concerts). Young people are more used to online interaction and chatting, which makes this result credible. On the opposite, *on the US side*, enjoying interactions with others in general (“Interaction_human”) has a negative impact on the probability to attend VLME post-COVID (US: $\beta=-0.33$; $p=0.05$): respondents who enjoy interactions with other people in general are less likely to attend virtual concerts post-COVID. They certainly give importance to the social part of regular in-person concerts, which they can’t find in VLME. Another variable linked to the “interaction” dimension turns out to have a negative impact on this probability, in the US sample: enjoying socializing with other people during concerts makes these respondents less likely to attend VLME post-COVID (US: $\beta=-0.3$; $p=0.08$): they seem to consider that the interaction (with other members of the audience) that may be allowed in VLME is not sufficient.

While concert involvement did have a positive significant impact on the probability of attending VLME during COVID, it does not have any significant impact on declared intentions for the post-COVID period. But music involvement (part of our dimension “**relationship with music**”) does, *in the US sample*. It has a strong negative impact (US: $\beta=-0.41$; $p=0.04$), as a one-unit increase of music involvement multiplies by 0.66 the probability of attending VLME post-COVID. US respondents who are more involved in music are less likely to attend VLME post-COVID, probably not enough for music lovers, and maybe also because music lovers may feel that they will be less supportive for artists by attending VLME post-COVID than by attending regular in-person concerts (more lucrative for artists).

Our last dimension, linked to **individual characteristics**, shows several significant results. *For both subsamples*, respondents who are deeply convinced that in-person concerts are better than VLME are less likely to attend VLME post-COVID (US: $\beta=0.28$; $p=0.04$; Bel: $\beta=-0.48$; $p=0.0001$). Only *in the US subsample*, respondents who are willing to attend big capacity inside in-person live concerts post-COVID are less likely to attend VLME post-COVID (US: $\beta=-0.17$; $p=0.01$). If they feel safe with inside concerts with a high number of people, they may not see the point in attending VLME. It seems to show again that VLME are considered a temporary alternative to in-person concerts, not an option per se. Finally, people who prefer trying technological products (innovativeness) are less likely to attend VLME post-COVID (US: $\beta=-0.36$; $p=0.01$). This result is counterintuitive to what we had predicted and needs further exploration.

Probability to Have a WTP > 0 for VLME

Six levels of WTP were proposed. The WTP is considered as higher than 0 if it exceeds 0 (value = 1) and “null” if it is 0 (value = 0). The first level is \$0 (US: 28.61%; Bel: 24.18%), followed by \$1-15 (US: 22.39%; Bel: 33.52%), \$16-30 (US: 21.69%; Bel: 26.10%), \$31-50 (US: 16.87%; Bel: 11.26%), \$51-100 (US: 5.72%; Bel: 3.57%), and \$101 or more (US: 4.52%; Bel: 1.37%). Respectively 71% of US respondents (237/332) and 76% on the Belgian side (276/364) are thus ready to pay for VLME. It is good news for the music industry, which has to adopt a totally new approach in these pandemic days.

In both subsamples, having already attended VLME before has a strong positive impact on the likelihood of having a WTP higher than 0 (US: $\beta=1.54$; $p=0.0002$; Bel: $\beta=0.62$; $p=0.04$), as it

multiplies this probability by 4.65 and 1.86 (odds estimates, respectively in the US and Belgian samples). Respondents who have already attended VLMEs are more likely to pay for it, which means that they probably find value in these events. Also, regarding this **concert experience** dimension, *US respondents* who are heavy concert users in general (pre-COVID) are less likely to pay for VLME (US: $\beta=-0.28$; $p=0.03$), while *Belgian respondents* who feel involved in concerts are more likely to pay (Bel: $\beta=0.23$; $p=0.08$). The other variables linked to this dimension are not significant.

Individual characteristics show a negative impact of maximal capacity post-COVID, *in both samples* (US: $\beta=-0.30$; $p<0.0001$; Bel: $\beta=-0.37$; $p=0.004$). Respondents who are ready to attend large capacity regular in-person concerts in the future are less likely to be willing to pay for VLME, which is in line with previous results on the probability to attend VLME. For internet usage, there is a strong negative impact *in the Belgian sample only* (Bel: $\beta=-0.33$; $p=0.04$). The more respondents are used to the Internet, the less they are willing to pay for VLME. It may be explained by the fact that they may be used to look for open-source and free content on the web, and thus not willing to pay for music concerts. Also, only *in the Belgian sample*, the tendency for trying technological products (innovativeness) has a negative significant impact on how likely respondents are to have a WTP higher than 0 (Bel: $\beta=-0.21$; $p=0.05$). Respondents who like innovation are less likely to pay for VLME. This result is similar to the results found on attending post-COVID. *In the US sample*, respondents who feel that in-person concerts are better are less likely to be willing to pay for VLME (US: $\beta=-0.41$; $p=0.01$), which makes sense. This is a segmentation opportunity for music streaming services.

Concerning the “**interaction**” dimension, *both samples* show a positive impact of enjoying interactions with the band on the likelihood of having a WTP higher than 0, even though this effect is only marginally significant in the US sample (US: $\beta=0.25$; $p=0.08$; Bel: $\beta=0.26$; $p=0.01$). This is in line with the results obtained on the probability to attend VLME post-COVID. No other variable linked to this interaction dimension is significant in the US sample, but one of them is significant in the Belgian sample. *Belgian respondents* who enjoy interacting with others in general are more likely to be willing to pay for VLME (Bel: $\beta=0.27$; $p=0.05$). This specific tendency for interaction did not have any significant impact on the other DV's in the Belgian sample. As Belgian respondents have more experience in attending VLME, they may have had an opportunity to learn more ways of interacting with other concert attendees in a virtual format and therefore are more willing to pay for these events. Further analysis is needed to fully understand these relationships. Finally, the dimension linked to respondents' relationship with music does not influence WTP in our study.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study is one of the first large quantitative studies investigating young consumers' music consumption during COVID. Results show that significantly less US and Belgian young people are willing to attend VLME post-COVID than they are willing to attend VLME during the pandemic, and this aversion is stronger for Belgian respondents. This may suggest that VLME are mostly considered as a temporary alternative to in-person concerts. For instance, concert involvement turns out to have a positive impact on the probability to attend VLME during COVID (in both samples), but has no impact on the probability to attend VLME post-COVID; music involvement has even a negative significant impact on this probability. It

may mean that real music lovers are not ready to switch from in-person to virtual concerts when the option to attend a live performance is available. Same with young people who enjoy socializing during concerts: they are less likely to attend VLME, as they probably can't mimic the kind of interaction with other people that they are looking for.

This does not prevent the music industry from capitalizing on these VLME (in a hybrid form of concerts, for instance), as almost 20% of our respondents in both countries are still likely to participate in VLME post-COVID. If so, artists and concert producers may want to pay attention to the interaction that they create online between the band and the audience, as it is a clear influential factor on the probability to attend. Also, our results show that young people who have already tried a VLME are clearly more likely to attend such an event again, both during and post-COVID. In addition, these consumers are also willing to pay for the experience. These findings lead to practical implications for service providers in the music industry. For example, artists, bands or streaming sites could offer discounted or free tickets for VLME for first time attendees or as part of an album download as they are more likely to pay to attend again. In addition, streaming sites can promote audience engagement and participation by encouraging and allowing a so called “pay-it-forward” button on their sites for so-called ‘hitchhiking,’ which is a gift-giving act that entails consumers buying tickets for those who cannot afford to attend (Rendell 2020). Other influential factors, such as the possibility to immerse at home (which has a positive influence on probability to attend currently and post-COVID), or the maximum capacity of in-person concerts that respondents are willing to tolerate (which has a negative influence on WTP), are less easy to control, from an artist/concert producer point of view. Our results are only partly in line with the exploratory predictions made about the direction of the “need for interaction” impact and the “concert experience” impact, showing that more research is needed to better understand consumers perception, attitude, and willingness to attend VLME's in various post-pandemic contexts.

Table 1. Results

		US sub-sample (n _{US} =332)			Belgian sub-sample (n _B =364)		
		Attend VLME now	Attend VLME post-COVID	WTP	Attend VLME now	Attend VLME post-COVID	WTP
	Parameter	ML Est. <i>Odds</i> (Pr > ChiSq)	ML Est. <i>Odds</i> (Pr > ChiSq)	ML Est. <i>Odds</i> (Pr > ChiSq)	ML Est. <i>Odds</i> (Pr > ChiSq)	ML Est. <i>Odds</i> (Pr > ChiSq)	ML Est. <i>Odds</i> (Pr > ChiSq)
	Intercept	-0.59 (0.71)	2.86 (0.12)	3.81 (0.02)	-4.13 (0.01)	-0.87 (0.63)	4.11 (0.02)
Need for interaction	X ₁ (Interaction_human)	0.15 <i>1.16</i> (0.32)	-0.33** <i>0.722</i> (0.05)	0.20 <i>1.220</i> (0.16)	0.09 <i>1.09</i> (0.56)	-0.25 <i>0.78</i> (0.14)	0.27** <i>1.312</i> (0.05)
	X ₂ (Concert_Socializing)	-0.32** <i>0.73</i> (0.03)	-0.30* <i>0.742</i> (0.08)	-0.01 <i>0.995</i> (0.97)	-0.20* <i>0.82</i> (0.08)	-0.04 <i>0.96</i> (0.77)	0.03 <i>1.028</i> (0.81)
	X ₃ (Band_Interaction)	0.18 <i>1.19</i> (0.21)	0.32* <i>1.381</i> (0.06)	0.25* <i>1.284</i> (0.08)	0.13 <i>1.14</i> (0.22)	0.39** <i>1.47</i> (0.01)	0.26** <i>1.292</i> (0.01)
Relati onshi	X ₄ (Music_Involvement)	0.05 <i>1.05</i> (0.78)	-0.41** <i>0.663</i> (0.04)	-0.19 <i>0.828</i> (0.24)	0.11 <i>1.12</i> (0.47)	-0.23 <i>0.79</i> (0.19)	0.01 <i>1.01</i> (0.94)

	X ₅ (Music_Price_sensitivity)	-0.15 0.86 (0.13)	-0.15 0.863 (0.23)	-0.15 0.864 (0.15)	0.16 1.17 (0.13)	0.10 1.10 (0.43)	0.09 1.091 (0.39)
Concert Experience	X ₆ (Nb_concerts)	-0.27** 0.76 (0.03)	0.07 1.071 (0.63)	-0.28** 0.760 (0.03)	0.02 1.02 (0.89)	0.18 1.20 (0.19)	-0.14 0.865 (0.26)
	X ₇ (Small_Venue - binary)	0.60** 1.83 (0.04)	0.85** 2.329 (0.02)	0.40 1.487 (0.20)	0.28 1.33 (0.41)	-0.20 0.82 (0.63)	0.34 1.404 (0.37)
	X ₈ (Large_Venue - binary)	0.20 1.23 (0.65)	-0.58 0.558 (0.24)	0.27 1.311 (0.55)	0.43 1.53 (0.27)	0.25 1.29 (0.60)	0.07 1.071 (0.85)
	X ₉ (Festival - binary)	0.45 1.57 (0.13)	-0.21 0.809 (0.55)	0.31 1.363 (0.34)	0.43 1.53 (0.18)	0.07 1.08 (0.85)	-0.38 0.682 (0.24)
	X ₁₀ (Concert_Involvement)	0.28* 1.32 (0.07)	0.17 1.180 (0.38)	0.07 1.070 (0.65)	0.30** 1.35 (0.03)	0.25 1.28 (0.15)	0.23* 1.262 (0.08)
	X ₁₁ (Already_attended)	0.99** 2.70 (0.001)	0.77** 2.156 (0.03)	1.54** 4.655 (0.0002)	1.95** 7.01 (<.0001)	1.66** 5.28 (<.0001)	0.62** 1.857 (0.04)
Individual characteristics	X ₁₂ (Internet_Usage)	0.27* 1.31 (0.06)	0.27* 1.312 (0.10)	0.06 1.061 (0.66)	0.10 1.11 (0.51)	-0.13 0.88 (0.47)	-0.33** 0.72 (0.04)
	X ₁₃ (Immerse)	0.15 1.16 (0.22)	0.27* 1.308 (0.08)	0.19 1.205 (0.13)	0.16** 1.18 (0.05)	0.19* 1.21 (0.07)	-0.13 0.875 (0.15)
	X ₁₄ (Max_Capacity)	-0.12** 0.88 (0.04)	-0.17** 0.844 (0.01)	-0.30** 0.738 (<.0001)	-0.38** 0.68 (<.0001)	-0.13 0.88 (0.21)	-0.37** 0.688 (0.004)
	X ₁₅ (Better)	-0.37** 0.69 (0.003)	-0.28** 0.754 (0.04)	-0.41** 0.666 (0.01)	-0.07 0.94 (0.57)	-0.48** 0.62 (0.0001)	-0.18 0.838 (0.14)
	X ₁₆ (Innovativeness)	-0.17 0.85 (0.15)	-0.36** 0.700 (0.01)	-0.19 0.828 (0.12)	0.05 1.05 (0.67)	0.11 1.11 (0.38)	-0.21** 0.811 (0.05)
	Likelihood Ratio – Chi ² (Pr > ChiSq)	59.27 (<.0001)	51.70 (<.0001)	68.01 (<.0001)	125.14 (<.0001)	80.79 (<.0001)	58.99 (<.0001)
Model global validity	Gamma Kruskal	0.502	0.529	0.539	0.656	0.646	0.567
	%age of correct events and non events	68.1	83.1	74.1	74.7	79.1	75.3

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