Press release

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New challenges for the music industry? Germans are listening to less music than before COVID-19

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect Germans’ music consumption? A study just released by Janis Denk (Universität Hamburg, UHH), Prof. Alexa Burmester (KLU), Dr. Michael Kandziora (UHH) and Prof. Michel Clement (UHH) explores the pandemic’s effects on music consumption and music spending in Germany. One surprising outcome: the pandemic not only reduced the consumption of live music to virtually zero; in 2020/2021, Germans also listened to three hours less music per week in their own homes. Especially radio lost countless listeners, while “premium streaming” benefited from the situation. Consumers’ weekly spending on music was cut nearly in half. At the same time, they were perfectly willing to spend money on live music presented in online formats.

Germans are listening to less music than before the pandemic

COVID-19 had serious impacts on Germans' day-to-day lives. When it comes to music, all live events were canceled for several months, while many people also began working from home, which meant they no longer listened to the radio or other music during their commute. “Surprisingly, most Germans don’t seem to have compensated for this loss with more consumption at home,” explains Alexa Burmester, Assistant Professor of Applied Quantitative Methods at Kühne Logistics University. “On the contrary: in the winter 2020/2021, those surveyed only listened to 19 hours of music per week – three whole hours less than before the pandemic.” Possible explanations: for many people, there is a strong connection between listening to music and mobility – like listening to their car radio on the way to work. In addition, at home there is considerable competition from other forms of entertainment, like social media services or video streaming. Radio consumption alone dropped from ca. 10.5 hours per week to just eight hours.

A win for streaming providers – new formats could be advantageous

The only clearly recognizable winner: premium streaming providers. In this segment, consumption climbed to slightly more than two hours per week. “The digitalization trend in the music industry continued unabated throughout the pandemic,” says Prof. Burmester. “Subscriptions proved to be a stable source of revenue. In the future, we may see these providers – similar to what’s happened in video streaming – hike up their subscription prices to boost revenues.” Further, live music, which suffered the greatest losses, found new sources of revenue through digitalization: roughly one third of those surveyed had
already followed live musical performances online and said they would be willing to pay for such services – an average of seven euros per event. “Even though these new revenues aren’t yet enough to compensate for the losses, the industry could tap new target groups and revenues by, say, using hybrid formats,” says Prof. Burmester.

Additional information

For the study, ca. 3,300 participants were interviewed online on a six-month basis from 2018/2019 to 2020/2021. The results are representative of the overall German population. In order to determine the pandemic’s effect on music consumption, the answers of those respondents (ca. 600) who took part in all rounds of the survey were used.


Further resources:

- Downloadable KLU photo: Prof. Alexa Burmester, picture of KLU

About KLU

Kühne Logistics University – Wissenschaftliche Hochschule für Logistik und Unternehmensführung (KLU) – is a private university located in Hamburg’s HafenCity. The independent, state-certified university’s major research areas are Sustainability, Digital Transformation and Value Creation in the fields of Transport, Global Logistics, and Supply Chain Management.

KLU is one of very few private universities in Germany entitled to confer their own PhDs. The 2021 ranking of the Wirtschaftswoche identifies KLU as one of the strongest research universities in the field of Business Administration in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Comparing the research output per professor among all participating universities, KLU ranked 4th in Germany and 8th in the DACH region. In the latest CHE university ranking, KLU obtained the highest marks for all major criteria.

With one BSc and three MSc degree programs, a structured doctoral program, and a part-time Executive MBA, KLU offers its 400 full-time students a high level of specialization and excellent learning conditions. KLU has an international team of 27 professors who teach in English. In open, tailor-made management seminar series, industry specialists and managers alike benefit from the application of academic findings to practical issues.

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