

Typicality and its influence on adolescents' musical appreciation

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ABSTRACT

Background

Social identity emerges from feeling identified with and differentiated from others at the same time (Brewer, 1991). An effective strategy to achieve social identity is the individual's identification with subgroups (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). Unconventional musical substyles provide adolescents opportunity to reach a level of "optimal distinctiveness" (Abrams, 2009).

A musician's personality and lifestyle is communicated by images (Borgstedt, 2008). In the process, unconventional images further listeners' positive musical judgements (Cohrdes, Lehmann & Kopiez, 2012). Hence, both components become important when indicating a specific value of *typicality*. Typicality can be measured on a continuous scale with *conventionality* and *unconventionality* as bipolar endings.

Aims

We intend to determine indicators defining typicality in two categories: (a) the music and (b) the musician's image. Accordingly, a two-dimensional typicality scale has to be developed. By means of that scale, stimuli can be classified by their degree of typicality. This classification is important for the later use of it in different experimental conditions.

We hypothesize to detect various factors (e.g. originality, familiarity) with contrasting parameter values, clarifying each scale ending. Additionally, we expect different classes (representing groups of persons) having specific item parameters.

Method

First, a large number of typicality-related items was collected in a pilot study ($N = 28$, $M = 15.14$) by describing similarities and differences between songs.

Next, up-to-date pop songs and pictures of musicians were pre-selected by students ($N = 54$, undergraduates from Popular Music Studies). Twelve songs and images fulfilled the selection criteria (e.g. low popularity, genre-classification) and were utilized in the main study.

In the main study, adolescents ($N = 232$, $M = 15.51$) rated in an online survey the 24 stimuli in a randomized order. Subjects showed their appreciation of the songs according to the typicality-related items. Images were rated concerning peculiarity, authenticity, sympathy and personality (TIPI-G; Muck, Hell & Gosling, 2007).

Results

To assess essential factors clarifying the two dimensions of typicality (music and image), we used methods of Classical Test Theory (CTT) and Item Response Theory (IRT). 12 selective items concerning the typicality of music and 6 concerning the musician's image were detected. An ordinal mixed Rasch model helped to identify 2 classes of raters with different response sets. As a main result, we present the typicality of a musician's image standardized in terms of an iconographic scale.

Conclusions

A two-dimensional typicality scale allows to categorize musical judgments of adolescents. With the claim of optimal distinctiveness, musical judgments signify groups with shared attitudes. Results of Latent Class Analysis indicate characteristics of raters via different response sets and offer therefore a convenient opportunity to explore psychological groups.

Furthermore, an analysis of interaction effects between the two dimensions (music and image) is facilitated. An iconographic scale especially suits adolescent subjects and offers a non-verbal opportunity for the investigation of the social functions of music.

Keywords

adolescence, musical appreciation, image, typicality, optimal distinctiveness

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