

Song Preferences among Online Singers During the Pandemic

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Abstract — A significant consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the abrupt halting of face-to-face singing sessions. This resulted in using other online platforms, such as Zoom and Facebook. This study determines the song preferences among online singers during the pandemic. The study used key informant interviews to find which songs online singers prefer to sing. Additionally, focus group discussions were conducted to gather the narratives of band members. This study involved 27 respondents, comprising 17 males and 10 females. The factors that affected the choice of songs by the online singers are the following; the preference of the listeners because the goal of a singer is for the audience or listeners to enjoy their music; online singers need to convince more listeners by singing the genres of their preferred songs because this translates to more stars which eventually result in more income or cash gifts.

Online singers must consider the songs that are popular with their target audience's generation. In doing so, the singers would gain a lot of views, stars, likes, and hearts. The singer's interests and preferences are also considered because this is an effective strategy for music artists to maintain a strong presence on social media and keep their audience engaged. Further, online singers would prefer to sing songs that are popular in their province. Time element dictates the genres of songs that online singers or band groups should consider, such as songs that are trending or "IN" in a month or year. Finally, listeners prefer songs that convey lessons and values to learn because these songs have the potential to impact their lives.

Meanwhile, the genre of songs most preferred by online singers and listeners is country music. Generally, most listeners prefer country songs, especially those that are popular and regularly played on the radio and Facebook. Additionally, listeners appreciate and enjoy local songs or indigenous music because they remind them of their cultural heritage. Lastly, listeners enjoy the new and popular songs that are regularly played in mass media, such as pop, folk, reggae, and hip-hop. Ultimately, online singers and listeners appreciate the values and life lessons conveyed through the songs. Accordingly, most songs that singers choose to sing nowadays convey values such as harmony, unity, love, forgiveness, integrity, resilience, generosity, and hard work.

Keywords — *Song preferences, Online singers, Pandemic, Themes, Values*

I. Introduction

Review of Literature

The Study of Folk Music: A History

Volkslied ('folksong'), as a term, was coined by the German cultural philosopher, theologian, and writer Johann Gottfried Herder (1778) and established by his publication 'Stimmen der Völker in Liedern'. Among its characteristics, he posited the necessity of its production by

‘communal composition’ and an aesthetic of ‘dignity’. German scholars have extensively debated the ontological status of the concept, its characteristics and delimitations, and the effectiveness of its replacement by the term ‘traditional’

The study of folk music has developed differently in various countries, influenced by distinct historical contexts and intellectual perspectives. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the emphasis across Europe and in America was on folksong texts, which were analyzed as literature and therefore fell within the purview of literary studies; in some areas, such as Germany, this perspective remains strong. During the 20th century, folksong and folk music became a subject within *Ethnomusicology*, folklore and folklife studies, sociology, and popular music studies.

In the United States of America, state folklore societies were established in the early 20th century, dedicated to collecting folk songs from the Old World, particularly Child ballads. A large number of regional textual collections were compiled until the 1950s, encompassing an eclectic range of items, including imported and native narratives, lyric songs, parlor songs, game songs, instrumental music, and Negro songs (Myers, 1993). John A. Lomax (1948), born in Texas, collected songs from cowboys, miners, stage drivers, freighters, and hunters, and later, with his son Alan, Negro’ songs (see LOMAX family). In 1933, the two ‘discovered’ the black American blues singer and guitarist Leadbelly (1885-1949) and recorded much of his repertoire for the Archive of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress (founded in 1928).

Members of the Society for Ethnomusicology, founded in Philadelphia in 1955, included a strong contingent of sociocultural anthropologists who related the structure of all kinds of music to social organization and who had turned their attention to problems of social change rather than stability as in Sharp's homogeneous model. Efforts continued, however, to delimit folk music. Bruno Nettl (1965) distinguished between the styles and repertoires of ‘folk music’, existing in societies that had urban professional music sometimes called ‘art’ or ‘classical’ music, and ‘tribal music’ or, as he perceived it, the music of non-literate cultures. Nettl adopted an evolutionary perspective, viewing ‘folk’ and ‘tribal’ music as part of an earlier stage of musical development and the communal creation of folk music.

Cecil Sharp's (1907) definition of folk music began to come under sustained attack. The interaction of orally transmitted music with broadsides, song sheets, and manuscript or printed texts in Britain and North America became an issue. The implied notion of a bounded, homogeneous, and unchanging community was in line with the

blossoming functionalist academic models of Sharp's time. In the first half of the 20th century in Europe, folksongs were identified and classified using functionalist models, such as those that were part of annual or life-cycle rituals or work songs. Within anthropology, tribes were similarly analyzed using functionalist models, which were soon to be recognized as having limited value.

The Romanian folklorist Constantin Brăiloiu (1970) scathingly identified past folk music theories as romantic, and the static models of functionalism and structuralism in Western academic disciplines were augmented in the second half of the 20th century by post-structuralist, interpretive, and postmodern perspectives. In China, a recent functionalist definition has linked folk music among different ethnic groups to local sexual customs (Yang Mu, 1998).

FOLK MUSIC IN THE PHILIPPINES

Regarding the case of folk music in the Philippines, unfortunately, only a handful of studies have been conducted on native folk music. Composed of the output of the three parts of the population: first, in the south, Mohammedan Moros in the Sulu group of islands (including Palawan and Jolo) and in Mindanao; second, the Christian peoples, Visayans in the middle isles of the archipelago, Tagalogs mostly in southern and central Luzon, and the Ilocanos mostly along the western and northwestern coasts, all of whom we think of as the real Filipinos; and third, the non-Christian tribes, Benguets, Bontocs, Tinguians, Ifugaos, and Kalingas, collectively known as Igorots, inhabit the Cordilleras, or the high mountain ranges of north-central Luzon. The historical background of each is quite different. It is necessary to examine this aspect before the character of their music can be fully appreciated. At the most remote date, it seems that the racial stock of each must have been of common origin. This has been commonly accepted as Malay, although the most recent observations of research professors from Michigan who are exploring the burial caves point to an even more ancient population of Chinese lineage (Griffin, 1924)

As narrated by the Music Supervisors' Journal (1924), the ancient Malay population migrated across the land bridge from what is now Malaysia. Settling the islands, mountains, and valleys, and being separated from intimate contact with each other by tropical forests, they split up into "peoples," a natural division that accounts for many differences in customs and dialects today. Perhaps coincident with the expansion of Malay habitation came Chinese and Formosan traders. Their road along the northwest coast (in what is now the Ilocano provinces) was a beaten highway even by the time the Spaniards had gained a foothold there in the late 1500s. Long antedating the same movement in Europe, the very same movement of Muslims who left off the trade routes to the East and sent Columbus across the western seas swept eastward through southern Asia, conquering Borneo, and there established a Muslim domain at the very doors of the Philippines. By the time the Spaniards sailed into Manila Bay, the Mohammedans also had begun to establish their domains that far north. Spain had the Moors at her Iberian front door and the Moros at her Philippine back door.

All the more credit, therefore, to certain specific aspects of Spain's colonization, which was rapid and effective. The Filipinos soon helped in the constant vigil against raids from the Moros and Spaniards, and their culture also took a firm hold on the Filipino people, who, through long-standing trade with China and Formosa, had themselves acquired and developed a relatively high degree of civilization. However, Spanish methods of raising standards were quicker, more thorough, and better organized, because they were what we would today call "mail-fisted." Attest

to the evidence of permanent Spanish culture in Mexico, Central, and South America for corroboration of the magnificent job the Spaniards did in the Philippines.

This is the background of the islands until the Americans arrived in 1898. During the three centuries of Spanish sovereignty over the vast majority of the population, Spanish rhythms and cadence had become an integral part of the people's life and expression. A song antedating the Spanish conquest gives the flavor of their ancient singing. It tells of "Bankaw, the Hero." The melody is almost a chant, which rises to heights of impassioned fervor, for example.

FOLK MUSIC AND CULTURE

Folk song bears testimony to the past. Events such as war, community relationships, seasons, rites and rituals, belief systems, moral norms, occupational behavior, leisure time, or the total cultural and social milieu of the people are preserved and kept alive in this genre of oral tradition. The folk song thus flourished among the rural folk, as it was the product of a less affluent community. In other words, folk songs were kept alive among the simple, rustic people, as they were their unsophisticated product, known best by the term "toem" (Ryan, 1999). Folk songs are very valuable ethnological materials as they open windows on traits of individual personal systems of society to the outside world other than their own.

Indigenous music can be instrumental or vocal, and this musical tradition marked rites of passage and life-cycle events for the early Filipinos. In celebrations, instrumental playing is standard, whereas solo instrument playing is typically reserved for courting or personal entertainment. The Islamic music tradition, which is part of the broader ethnic tradition, is primarily based on the practices of the pre-Islamic cultures of the southern Philippines (Anupol, 2007).

Ethnic music in the Philippines originated from different groups and is based on the appreciation of native instruments, which are used in various ritual and worldly activities of these peoples. These native instruments are generally grouped into wind instruments, chordophones or stringed instruments, idiophones or percussion instruments that are struck with a hammer, against each other, or another object like the hand, and membranophones or percussion instruments using animal skins or membranes. Nevertheless, ethnic music was not only made by playing instruments but also by using the voices of the people. Like the instruments, vocal music concretely and vividly expresses and transmits a great variety of thoughts, beliefs, lifestyles, characters, and ways of life of the native peoples. Singing is a central component of life among the people. Historically, people sang solo or in groups, depending on the composition of the song, with or without accompaniment and lyrics. Improvisation was very prominent, and music was created with minimal knowledge of music theory (Osai, 2017).

The diversity of ethnic musical traditions arises from several significant historical events. The Philippines had proto-Malays as the first inhabitants, followed by settlers from the mainland and insular Southeast Asia. The separate regional settlements in the country were a result of this

wave of migration. The Chinese, Malay, Indonesian, and Arab merchants started dynamic trading with the people of Mai (now Mindoro). Through trade, merchants not only exchanged goods but also shared religious and social ideas. Indian culture was very much evident and had a strong imprint on the Island of Sulu in the 14th century. Various communities adopted this new religion, which very much influenced their culture and music (Anupol, 2007).

Most Filipinos possess knowledge of more than one instrument, and many are now in other countries to acquire a broader education in music. The Filipinos in the countries of Southern Asia are generally musical leaders. In the United States, many Filipinos have organized circles that feature musicians who have graduated from conservatories with honors and provide excellent music for special occasions. Stringed instruments and pianos are popular among the rising generation, while the use of the harp has declined. The Filipinos have been said to be very quick at comprehending music coming from outstanding artists, composers, and musicians (Yamio, 2011). Today, music is a part of a well-rounded education for Filipino youth. Both public and private higher-level educational institutions are adequately providing for their development through separate departments or colleges, as well as in terms of the courses of instruction. Thus, there are musical conservatories in leading colleges and universities in Manila and other principal Philippine cities. This is in recognition of the importance of music in modern education.

In Allan Dela Cruz's dissertation (2019), he collected and analyzed the content, themes, and virtues embedded in indigenous Ilocano songs in the Northwestern part of Cagayan province, Philippines. These folksongs are expressions of Ilokanos' thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as shown in the folksongs on love for humanity and the natural world. The themes are focused on being proud, happy, and thankful for the quality of life they have, for any beautiful thing, for the love of family, and for the gift of nature. The dominant virtues traced include faithfulness, idealism, optimism, industry, humility, unity, pride, love, and respect. The preservation and conservation of these folksongs are possible through collecting and documenting, transforming these songs into various media (printed and electronic), and establishing a folksong museum that could serve as a center for folksong knowledge transmission. The government and the academic community should help support the conservation of authentic Ilokano folksongs that are often forgotten.

This study also aims to explore the themes, factors, and influences of folksingers, folk houses, and folk house goers in the province of Benguet.

Music Livestreaming

One of the respondents of Nardi revealed that "It's a very surreal feeling to feel connected but know that it's kind of a prosthetic, virtual connection. And I wonder what effect that's going to have on us. I mean, we were already attached to our devices, and this is just making us more attached. Now we're going to depend on these to bring our art to the public," Nardi, S. (2020).

Africano, one of the respondents in Nardi's study, explained that musicians thrive on live performance. They feed off an audience, often finding the courage to push themselves in new directions while onstage. That kind of give and take is something that might not be possible in a virtual space. Nardi, S. (2020).

In the initial wake of bans on mass gatherings, some venues [offered live-streaming of performances](#). However, even these formats have been suspended as those sites have closed. Now, artists are [going directly to fans](#) from their own homes, using services like Twitch and Instagram TV, among others. This is not new, but the pandemic has expanded the audience available, and record labels are facilitating it by providing live-streaming equipment to performers. Streaming platforms have also enabled new monetization methods, including memberships to artist channels that allow early or exclusive access to content, as well as virtual gatherings and paid commenting features. Stefan Brambilla Hall (2020).

Now, like everyone else, musicians find themselves in relative isolation. Some are finding new ways to hustle, connecting with fans through live-streaming and online subscription services. Others have chosen to embrace the silence. WGLT caught up with some area performers to find out what life is like without an audience. Nardi, S. (2020).

Increase in Income from Music Livestreaming

In China, Tencent Music Entertainment released data about the impact of these measures. Tsai Chun Pan says that, through its program, Tencent Musicians, “More than 80% of the musicians receiving exclusive income incentives saw their income increase by over 50%, while more than 40% of the artists reported their income increased by 100% or more.” Stefan Brambilla Hall (2020).

These new ways for musicians, labels, and venue providers to engage with followers might be a strategy for stronger long-term connections with audiences. The industry is getting behind such efforts: Vivendi, for example, has [developed a platform for artists to perform, engage with fans, and share content](#)—it makes no money from the platform itself, but indirectly benefits from royalties and sponsorships. Verizon is [working with partners such as Live Nation Entertainment to organize virtual events](#) and video series. Stefan Brambilla Hall (2020).

In addition, the integration of songwriters, composers, and post-production engineers in the music development process is not expected to change, although more work may be conducted remotely. Artists and labels will maintain close relationships with streaming platforms, venue operators, and event promoters to distribute their music. Stefan Brambilla Hall (2020).

A [December 2020 report from the Nashville Chamber of Commerce](#) showed the significant impact of the coronavirus on the famous music city's industry. 74% of musicians said they had experienced unemployment since March 2020 and saw their annual income plunge by \$10,000 to below \$36,000 a year.

Vance, D., Shah, P., and Sataloff, R. (2021). The Wisconsin Council of Churches has released guidelines on church music during the COVID-19 pandemic. This council recommended using recorded music rather than live music; using piano, electronic keyboard, organ, stringed, or percussion instruments rather than wind and brass instruments; having outdoor worship to allow for greater space for social distancing, improved ventilation, and encouraging singing sacred music at home.

Henderson, M. (2021). Musicians surveyed said they had turned to digital platforms but that it was difficult to get attention due to oversaturation in the online market, and that electricity and internet connectivity issues frustrated their streaming experience. Kenyan artists turned to online and homegrown platforms like [DundaLive](#) and [Mdundo](#), which helped mitigate pandemic losses through strategies like ringtone downloads.

For a musician, hustling means booking shows and getting yourself out there, night after night. Live performances are the best way to generate revenue and cultivate a loyal fan base. But social distancing has put a stop to live shows for the foreseeable future, obliterating everything from small local gigs to multi-city tours. Nardi, S. (2020).

Objectives of the Study:

Generally, this study aims to identify the factors that influence the choice of songs by online singers and to determine the genres they prefer. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to seek:

1. To identify the factors that affect the choice of songs by the local online singers.
2. To identify the genre of songs that online singers and listeners prefer most.
3. To identify the values and life lessons that are promoted by the songs that online singers prefer to sing.

II. Methodology

Locale of study

The study was conducted in La Trinidad, Benguet. Before the pandemic, some participants performed in folk houses in Baguio City and La Trinidad, Benguet, with their respective bands. However, when their groups disbanded during the pandemic, they formed separate bands and began performing online. La Trinidad is one of the municipalities in Benguet where most folk house establishments are located, but were locked down during the pandemic. Their activities only resumed their regular operation in 2023, when face-to-face meetings were allowed.

Respondents of the study

There were 27 participants in the study, mostly Kankanaey and Ibaloi singers, who transitioned to online or live streaming during the pandemic, using Facebook and YouTube as their platforms. Some of these bands that performed online or had live-streamed their performances were newly organized groups, although there were original band members that remained intact during the pandemic. When the folk house establishments had been closed and the national IATF had declared lockdowns, most singing groups parted ways. Some members of the band were so creative that they put up their YouTube and Facebook channels in collaboration with other artists and performed online. Other original members of the band relocated to other places or returned home to their hometowns, where they pursued other activities or established their businesses. This means that the original band members who performed before the pandemic were not the same as the ones who performed online. Others collaborated with other singers to form their online bands, while others became guest singers on the Facebook or YouTube channels of well-known singers. That is why other online bands are typically composed of only 2, 3, or 4-6 members. The following are some of the bands that performed online: Virgy and Friends Apit Na Der; Isko and Friends; 4 Degrees; Tara Kids; Desiree Aglasi Band; Acoustic duo-Selina Joycee and Elexir, Fritz and Prynne; Kultura; Talaw; Virgy and Benson; Various artists; Cordillera Duo; Topyu; and many more. This explains why the number of online bands and online singers increased significantly during the pandemic, as they could do it on their own, which does not require a large group to practice. After learning of the financial advantages of having a YouTube channel, most singers used these platforms to improve their income. When asked which is better between Face-To-Face performances and online singing, most participants confessed that online singing is more lucrative than face-to-face performances. Others, however, admitted that their take-home pay depends on the popularity of their bands and the number of followers. Besides, there was less hassle, as they could record and post as many songs and performances as they wanted, and their posts would earn as long as there were viewers and followers.

Data Collection

Key Informant Interviews (KII) were the primary tool used in conducting the study and gathering data. Open-ended guide questions were utilized to ask follow-up questions that would further elicit the needed information to supplement the data derived. Interviews were conducted in venues convenient to the participants, such as after their performances, in their practice areas, or at restaurants, as the case may be. Note-taking was used to gather their responses, which were recorded using cellular phones and other available devices. Likewise, photographs were taken for documentation with the participants' permission.

Research Design

For this study, informal interviews were conducted with online singers who are mostly Kankanaeys and Ibalois from Benguet. A few online singers were from Mountain Province but

have been residents of Baguio City and Benguet for a long time. An open-ended questionnaire was prepared to facilitate the conduct of the interview and gather data. This was intended to give the researchers the chance to ask follow-up questions if the answers were so generic. Purposive sampling was used to identify key informants, considering that the intended respondents had videos on the YouTube and Facebook channels. Likewise, the referral method was utilized to track the whereabouts of other online singers.

Data Analysis

After the raw data was collected and transcribed, the thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data obtained. The researchers did not encounter difficulty considering that the guide questions were organized thematically.

Research Ethics

For the safety of both the researchers and the participants, respondents would be given an informed consent form with a disclaimer on the Data Privacy Act. Informed consent implies that participation is voluntary; therefore, participants are free to participate or not.

III. Results and Discussion

1. Factors that affected the choice of songs by the local online singers

Singing songs generally always comes with a theme related to the occasion. However, while singing love songs on any occasion may be common to entertain the crowd as the number of songs fits all occasions and audiences, it is better, or maybe a must, to consider the following factors:

a. Preference of the listeners. One crucial factor that affects local online singers is the audience's or listeners' preferences. Accordingly, one of the goals of musicians, especially online singers, is for others to listen and enjoy their music. Hence, it is essential to know the preferences of the listeners. It is paramount to know what is popular, trending, or “*in*” among different groups of audiences, as this hooks them to listen to or, at the very least, they can relate to it. For online singers, adjustment and flexibility may be the key to selling their song choices to the audience. Singers also try to consider the songs they are comfortable with, and this could be one way for them to introduce new genres to their listeners, which would eventually help disseminate new songs to some listeners. It is worth noting that before the pandemic, other listeners may not have had the time to listen to music due to their hectic schedules, but they had more time to do so during the pandemic, as attending school or work had been suspended. On the other hand, singers may sing a variety of songs in ordinary times, although the audience usually requests those popular songs. Due to this, it is essential to know which is popular among different generations and ages/ages since this helps hook audiences to listen. This was especially true when the various bands

started using Facebook Live, as we were unable to perform face-to-face due to the pandemic. We would need to adjust to who our audiences are and what they prefer. On the other hand, we would still play our preferred music and share it with our bandmates, which helps broaden our song choices and even opens us up to new genres.

b. Number of Views and Stars Sent. Online, the primary consideration when singing would be the number of views and stars received from viewers and listeners. Ultimately, economic incentives are the primary concern for online singers. Hence, it is impractical for them to be singing their personal preferences if, during the performance, only a few listeners would advertise the songs that they sing. As one participant puts it, “We always consider the preferences of our listeners. Hence, what is considered “IN”, whether new or old songs, and the songs that we can comfortably perform as a band, should be the priority. When more listeners are convinced to listen to the genres of their preferred songs, it will translate to more stars and eventually result in more income or more cash gifts. We needed to gain a lot of views and stars; this is why listeners’ song requests were prioritized. As the participants say, More listeners translate to more stars or cash gifts. This is also one way for us to establish a connection with our listeners, as we entertain them and grant their requests, which in turn attracts additional followers. Establishing a good personal relationship (PR) with listeners leads to more subscriptions and followers. This implies that, regardless of how talented and skilled a singer is, if they fail to accommodate the requests of most of their listeners, their audience will gradually decrease.

c. Generation of listeners/type of audience. Another factor that online singers considered was the generation of listeners. Some songs fit one generation to the next, such that singers must consider the songs that are popular among their generation. In doing so, the singers would gain a lot of views, stars, likes, and hearts. That is precisely the reason why the songs requested by listeners are prioritized over what the singers love to sing. As online singers, prioritizing the audience's choice of songs gives singers an advantage, as it entails gaining more stars, which eventually translates to additional income. It should also be kept in mind that, foremost, online singing is about the mastery of popular songs, as well as the songs that singers prefer to sing. A common adage says, “Practice makes perfect,” and if the singers master the singing of said songs, then they have the confidence to sing, thereby attracting more listeners. In other words, songs must be varied so that listeners of different generations will be entertained. Catering to the various age groups or generations of listeners would be beneficial. Singers or performers have to be sensitive to the audience listening to their music. To attract more listeners, performers must be flexible by singing songs from different genres, catering to the varied age groups of their audience. In one way, listeners from all walks of life would be entertained, and this would lead to a larger audience.

d. Singers’ Interests and Preferences. Central to online singing is the preference of band members and lead singers. One primordial consideration in online singing is the preference of singers and band members. With the many genres and titles of songs composed by musicians and song composers around the world, we have to admit the fact that singers have their preferences.

This is precisely the reason why folk houses hire different bands who are identified with their genres of songs to perform alternately. Similarly, online singers are associated with specific genres of songs; hence, listeners have choices to make when it comes to the types of songs they prefer to listen to. However, it is worth noting that one factor in online singing is the interest or preference of the singers. As they say, you give what you have. This could be attributed to the fact that no voice fits all genres.

As beautifully described by one participant, he said, “As a singer-songwriter from the local scene, my musical background and influences are the primary factors that guide my choice of songs to perform or write. I believe that artists should always follow their interests and preferences, as this allows them to express their genuine thoughts and emotions. Although I do consider my listeners' preferences to be important, it is secondary to my creative vision”. This approach is an effective strategy for music artists to maintain a strong online presence and keep their audience engaged. By allowing their fans the opportunity to request songs and perform them, artists can build a deeper connection with their listeners.

e. Popular Songs. One goal of being a musician is for others to listen to and enjoy their music. Due to this, it is essential to know which is popular among different generations/ages, as this hooks audiences to listen or participate. The participants recounted that their band started doing Facebook Live as they had not been doing live performances due to the pandemic; hence, they needed to adjust to the audience and what they preferred. On the other hand, we would still play our preferred music and share it with our bandmates, which helps broaden our song choices and even opens us up to new genres. As revealed by the local singers, they prefer to sing songs that are popular in their province and that most of their people enjoy listening to.

f. “Song that is ‘In’/Trending. Time dictates the genres of songs. When one sings for the audience, they must consider songs that are considered “In” during that month, year, or generation of listeners. That means that what may be considered “In” or trending during the 70s may not be as popular during the 80s, 90s, 2000s, or 2020s. Preferences for music genres change depending on the listeners' tastes and preferences. Aside from time and age, the generation of music listeners dictates what songs are preferred.

g. Lessons learned from the message of the songs. To avid listeners, one significant factor that sways their interest in listening to music is the lessons learned from the songs. Listening to music is not just for the sake of listening. While only a minimal number of listeners may view the lesson of the song, this factor remains a significant influence. Listening to the meanings of the songs may impact one’s life. Hence, it is not only the sounds of the songs but what counts most is the meanings and lessons that a listener would learn from every song. With these thoughts, singers would be guided to play songs that have significant lessons for the audience.

2. Genres of songs

2. a. Genres of songs that online singers prefer to sing

Online singers have various preferences when it comes to song genres. However, the participants admitted that several factors influenced their decisions about which genre of songs to perform. To them, audience preferences and occasions would always dictate which songs they would perform. Otherwise, the number of listeners and followers would be affected if the audience's preferences and requests were not taken into account. Accordingly, online singers have tried to adjust by singing genres that they believe are loved and are always requested by online listeners. While online singers certainly have a personal preference for the genre of music or songs, their profession as musicians and performers is always incumbent upon the music preferences of listeners. On this occasion, they are celebrating. Hence, even if listeners initially prefer to sing songs of a particular genre, their favorites always play an essential role. This implies that, regardless of how much they love specific song genres, it is always the audience that dictates the genres of songs they would perform. Otherwise, only a few listeners would patronize and follow their Facebook and YouTube channels. As narrated by the participants, the following are the genres of songs that they prefer:

a. Country Music. Generally, Cordillerans love country music. Fong (2007) stated that “With human experiences becoming mostly visual, the trend for all music now is also to become visual. Contemporary Cordillera country music is also into the music video bandwagon”. This explains why Cordillerans were also fans of Online or live-stream concerts and online performances, and this platform is popular, especially now that almost every person, including toddlers, possesses a gadget. Singers love country music, whether in Ibaloi, Kankanaey, or any other Cordillera language. With the kind of songs that are played on radio stations every day and the songs that are played in most folk houses, online singers are tempted to sing country songs. Besides, listeners love to request country songs from singers, and this pressure forces the performers to accommodate their requests. This may be attributed to the fact that during the time Americans were in the country, people had been exposed to country songs introduced by Westerners (Fong, 2007). Besides, it is the singers who popularized country songs during their online set. One participant expressed that “Most fans of online singers during the pandemic belonged to the older age bracket, hence, their music taste matches the old music (Country). Besides, they are the ones who have work and money, so they can afford to give love gifts, some in the form of cash sent through GCash, while others send stars.

Fong further stressed that “not only has country music become a primary source of pleasure and entertainment, it has also been used to help people and promote specific causes. For instance, many indigent patients have been recipients of concert proceeds, mostly by local country musicians. Country music has also been used to raise funds for chapels and other public buildings. This augurs well for a more cause-oriented future of the local music industry. (Fong, J.B. 2007).

Furthermore, participants provided various reasons for their preference for country songs, such as: “This genre (Country songs) is what my band would prefer to sing since this is what is popular and what most of our audience would prefer to listen to.” Likewise, one participant admitted that country music is what most of my followers want me to sing, and it is my preference as well. Hence, for online singers to attract more listeners and eventually gain more followers and receive more stars, they must satisfy the requests and preferences of their listeners. This implies, therefore, that as the singers perform online, they must learn “to go country”. Additionally, participants noted that during the pandemic, country music was among the most popular genres performed by singers to entertain the public. This may be attributed to the notion that most country songs are not just soothing to the ears but have therapeutic effects on the listeners.

b. Pop and OPM. While country music may be considered one of the preferred genres being performed by the participants, Pop and OPM are also their favorites. Young and old singers need to familiarize themselves with or master other genres that are popular among the younger audience if they want to capture the attention of young viewers. With the widespread availability of gadgets among people, regardless of age bracket, coupled with applications such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube, as well as mass media like radio and television, music enthusiasts can listen to various song genres of their choice.

c. Indigenous/ Cordillera Songs. From the time that Cordillera music became popular among households due to the local and Indigenous songs composed by local composers, radio stations and folk houses have become sources of learning about Cordillera and Indigenous songs. With these media, Cordillera and indigenous songs gained popularity. Besides, even the non-schooled residents prefer to listen to Cordillera and Indigenous music as they are easy to understand. Kankanaey and Ibaloi songs were frequently requested to be played even by non-Kankanaey or non-Ibaloi listeners. As emphasized by one participant, “I am a songwriter in our group and I composed more on Indigenous, Folk songs, and my co-band members also prefer country music”. In this manner, he introduces himself with his new songs to the listening public.

d. Spiritual/Gospel Songs. During the contagion (COVID-19), when everyone was clinging to dear life or fearing for their lives, spiritual songs appeared to be the protection, defense, and the cure to the problem. These are the reasons why spiritual songs gained popularity during the pandemic. This holds even for people who consider themselves atheists or non-believers. As narrated by one participant, she said, “*During the pandemic, I found that pop, country, and spiritual songs were predominantly therapeutic.*” *Inspirational themes and gospel tunes served as a means for people to maintain hope and hold their heads high.*

2.b. Genres of songs that online listeners most prefer, as observed by online local singers.

Music enthusiasts are not satisfied with simply playing songs they love on Spotify, a YouTube channel, or any other means using their gadgets. They would also want to watch and listen to live performances through online means or live streaming by their favorite local singers.

If one opens the YouTube channels of the local artists, it is surprising to see thousands of followers requesting their favorite songs to be sung. Their appreciation of the songs being sung through hundreds or thousands of likes, hearts, and words of appreciation such as “wow”, “I love that song”, “more of that kind”, “awesome”, “All songs you are singing are my type. Nicy-nice really!”, “Love this song! Great cover by sir Topyu & sir Bryan, “Wow, the Keith Urban of Cordillera. Awesome cover, it reminds me of the 168 Folkhouse. Love the song. It was sung beautifully!!! Not everyone can sing as perfectly as this duo. The guy's voice is superb!!!”, “Good eve, country, ayos, my favorite song since high school. Thanks for sharing, bro,” and the like. These imply that the listeners love the genres of the songs being sung by online singers. The following genres are the favorites of online listeners as observed by the singer-participants:

a. Country Songs. Whether in English or the local languages, country genres are the most requested and preferred by online listeners. That is exactly the reason why singers must learn many country songs, especially those that are famous and regularly played on radio stations and other media. While the participants generally emphasized that their listeners preferred Country songs, they could not deny the observations that the teens are also into Indigenous, pop, and reggae music. As observed obviously by one participant, “*Depende ngo no teens, ket pop, aunty jen uncles, Country ngem amin met ketde agree no Indigenous songs*” (It depends. If they are teens, they love Pop, if they are old, they prefer Country, but everybody, whether young or old, loves Indigenous songs). This was corroborated by another respondent, who stressed that “We should be flexible to cater to the different audience, although Country, Pop, and Indigenous are often requested.” It was found that participants commonly identified these as the songs that their online listeners request most frequently. Another respondent stressed that “Most people in our place prefer country, especially the adults and old. As for the young ones, they would prefer pop and reggae mostly”. This is why one singer joked that “Cordillera equals country music, folk music, and Indigenous music”. Older people were used to listening to the songs of Don Williams, Merle Haggard, George Strait, Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, Carrie Underwood, Shania Twain, and others. Consequently, most song requests for Country music come from them.

This pushed the singers to be versatile and flexible when it came to the songs they prepared for live performances on Facebook, to be ready for whatever genre of songs their audience would request. “

b. Indigenous Songs. Indigenous Cordillera music is gaining popularity and becoming widespread not only in the Cordillera Region but also in other regions, such as those nearby and worldwide, where Igorots reside. In some social media posts, we see Igorots or Cordillerans singing local songs from the Cordillera. In some Live Facebook concerts or performances by local singers, we read comments and requests from other people for the singers to do Indigenous songs. This was also observed by local singers as their audience regularly requested popular Cordillera Indigenous songs such as Sissiwit, Soyosoy di Dagem, Sabong ni Bahong, and other locally composed songs. While listeners also prefer different songs, it cannot be denied that local songs

will always take precedence over other English country songs. This may be due to the observation that most listeners are not professionals but are high school or elementary graduates. Additionally, most of the audience is Igorot, who enjoy country music and Indigenous music.

c. Pop music has become popular among the teens and younger generations nowadays. This may be attributed to their exposure to mass media, where pop songs are frequently played. Watching on television and YouTube channels made them appreciate popular songs like pop, R&B, and Reggae. Hence, their exposure to these means played a significant role in shaping their interest in this type of music, unlike the oldies of the past who were only exposed to radio and cassette tapes due to the inaccessibility of these gadgets, especially in far-flung areas. According to one participant, the most trending genres of music in recent years were pop and reggae. Hence, we hear comments from the youth that country songs are suited for the oldies and that they appreciate pop songs more.

Another participant revealed that the volume of listeners determines which genre of songs they would perform. *“No shahel dan naka online jen teen agers ket pop eh banatan me, wara metlang eh country ken Indigenous jen love songs.”* (If more teenagers are listening or viewing our performances, then we go pop although we still play once in a while Country and Indigenous music). On the other hand, another participant has a different observation. He said: *“It is sad to say but most Cordillerans don't appreciate other genres. Jay mindset nga uray nalaing jay singer nu han nga country weno local song kanta na ket awan kanu amo nan”*. (Their mindset is that despite the performer's skill in singing, if the songs that he sings are not Country or locally composed Country or Indigenous songs, then he is not a good singer”. One respondent noted that most international online viewers tend to prefer pop music over other genres.

d. Folk, Reggae, and Hiphop. Online singers recalled that folk, reggae, and hip-hop are among the other genres requested to be played online by their listeners. Although these specific genres were not frequently asked, they noticed that a few listeners and followers did mention these genres in their Facebook and YouTube chats. As recounted by the participant-singers, *“Online viewers from abroad, mostly Cordillerans, request country and folk songs which we rendered with gusto. In return, they would send stars and/or cash as their token of appreciation”*. One participant even recalled that he got more stars when he started singing Country and Folk music.

A participant confessed that their listeners and followers are also starting to love “Reggae” because they prefer upbeat songs. Hence, the singers revived the old songs, be it English, Tagalog, or Cordillera songs, but they performed them in “Reggae” style. This implies that music lovers in the Cordillera are up to date with the new genres. According to one singer-participant, *“Those millennials from the countryside prefer old country songs whenever they are farming or just simply relaxing, but millennials from the City prefer songs that are popular because most of them love joining the hype and present trend”*. Exposure and accessibility are then crucial to keep people informed about new progress, whether in music or any field that advances knowledge and skills.

4. Values and Life lessons promoted by the songs. Songs always convey values, messages, and life lessons to the listeners. This is essentially why music lovers listen intently to these songs and even have them played repeatedly, as they impact their lives or are soothing to their ears due to the meanings they convey. The reason a particular song remains and is played for an extended period is the value and lesson it communicates to every listener. Here, the values and life lessons are culled from the songs performed by the singer-participants. Accordingly, most songs that singers choose to sing convey values such as harmony, unity, love, forgiveness, integrity, resilience, generosity, and hard work. These were appreciated by the listeners, as evidenced by the reactions and emojis they wrote in the comment sections. Singers are like teachers and other professionals and individuals because they teach people life lessons through the songs that they sing. As the common adage claims, “Singing is twice talking” because it leaves a significant impact on the emotions of the listeners and in their minds. Songs attract people to listen intently because of the lessons they bring.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion is drawn:

In this study, several factors influence the preferred choice of songs by singers and listeners. The singers prioritize the preferred songs of the listeners to have more viewers. The songs viewers have requested will be converted into heart-shaped gifts and cash donations. Likewise, in terms of song preferences, the following are considered: number of views or stars sent online, generation of listeners, singers’ interest and preference, popular songs, songs that are “in” or trending, and values and lessons learned from the message of the song. Furthermore, the genres of songs most preferred by singers and listeners at the top of the list are country songs, indigenous songs, local songs, and new songs, including pop, folk, reggae, and hip-hop. More importantly, the songs that are most preferred convey values and life lessons.

V. Recommendations

A study on the effects of music on life, relationships, and concern for humanity and the environment among music enthusiasts should be proposed and conducted.

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