



Cultural Categories of Distribution of Iranian National Music

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ABSTRACT

Among the three main domains of production, distribution and consumption, Iranian national music has specifically received little attention from contemporary researchers. Music has a special place in the Iranian culture since it is shaped by historical and biocultural experiences of this society. But in recent years, Iranian national music has not only lost its social influence but the audience and its social functions as well. Usually, music is distributed in Iran through its producers after obtaining official licenses and reviewing the content of a musical piece. Since Iranian national music is different in contents and requirements compared to other countries, using Western theories to understand its distribution mechanism in Iran may not be very helpful. Also, no research has been done so far to understand the socio-cultural aspects of the distribution mechanism of Iranian national music. This research seeks to establish a comprehensive understanding of this field with a heuristic approach as well as by using the systematic grounded theory. Data were collected via an in-depth interview technique, coded and categorized with three open and axial as well as selective instructions. 23 concepts and 8 categories were extracted from the data. Finally, using the paradigm model, the grounded theory is presented in the form of a story and visual model.

Keywords: Iranian national music, music production, music distribution, Grounded Theory

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INTRODUCTION

Considering an incredibly diverse views in the cultural domain, it is very difficult to provide a clear definition of the same. However, some common elements in the existing definitions can be referred to as values, beliefs, patterns or norms, symbols and actions. In this article, when we talk about cultural categories, we are actually referring to these key elements in relation to a particular subject, for example music. Among the different types of music in Iran, only national music, which is the product of historical and biocultural experiences, has distinctive features of Iranian culture (Mirzamani, Saadabadi, & Rezaian, 2015, 1).

National music is a concept invented at the end of the nineteenth century (Doering, 1992, 374) and includes all types of folk (traditional) music created within the political borders of Iran. The present article focuses on how national music in Iran during the last decades encountered with a decrease in social influence and audience. In fact, it involves numerous factors, one of which is its supply or distribution in Iran which, of course, is a complex process.

The supply or distribution of music in Iran includes: sending the work to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, reviewing and controlling the contents of the work, announcing their acceptance to the musician or requiring him to make corrections and then return it for another review and finally issuing the distribution license. It can be said that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and relevant departments have the actual say in the distribution of an appropriate music. In other words, the final decision on the type of music and whether its content is suitable for consumers is with the official cultural apparatus. It is interesting to note that although this music does not conflict with the cultural goals of the Islamic Republic, in practice it has encountered with a decrease in the social influence. Of course, this issue has several reasons, part of which is related to the official cultural policy of the country.

PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to discover cultural categories governing the distribution of national music in Iran. This can help to get out of the current critical situation while creating a comprehensive understanding of the distribution process of Iranian national music.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses an exploratory approach (grounded theory) to explain the factors affecting the distribution of Iranian national music. Among other approaches, data-based theory and systematic data-based theory have been taken into account. These approaches eventually lead to developing and presenting a paradigm model

(Saldena, 2016, 14). In the process, the researcher is required to use three specific steps of open, axial and selective coding (Iman, 1397, 70). The final paradigm consists of the following six parts:

- 1) The main category or central phenomenon which is the basis of the process.
- 2) Causal conditions that affect the main category.
- 3) Strategies or actions resulting from the main category.
- 4) Underlying conditions that affect the implementation of strategies.
- 5) Intervening conditions or general contextual factors that hinder the implementation of strategies.
- 6) Effects and consequences of adopting the strategies

Open coding is the process of separating raw data and assigning basic concepts to them (Mohammadpour, 1398, 288). Axial coding is the one that links categories and creates new categories (Lindolph and Taylor, 2013, 317). Selective coding, according to Strauss and Corbin, is to achieve a paradigmatic model, and this is when a researcher has perfected his work of homogenizing meanings and concepts (Faraskhah, 1397, 186). In this study, the data collection was done through specialized interviews and continued until the acquired data did not lead to a new concept and did not change the final theory.

FINDINGS

Iranian national music publishers have been constantly seeking to strengthen the production and distribution of artistic or non-economic music. They believe that the only way to preserve and save national music is to produce certain genres of Iranian music, such as instrumental or solo improvisation even if it leads to financial losses. In their view, Iranian music is ignored in the country by the mass media, and foreign publishers, in practice, prevent its entry to the world market for various reasons, including economic and political sanctions on the country. On the other hand, efforts of musicians to attract more audience have only led to the promotion of just one form of Iranian music, namely Tasnif (a kind of Persian popular song). This has led to a reduction in the diversity and uniformity of music albums released in recent decades. Iranian musicians still emphasize that there is necessity to produce music albums as a whole. In their opinion, the meaning of Iranian music with single tracks uploaded on the Internet cannot be transmitted to the audience or consumer. Finally, it should be noted that official cultural institutions do not allocate a share of taxes paid by citizens to support artistic and original Iranian/national music. It seems that there is no desire to support music in general and Iranian national music in particular, in cultural programs and documents.





CONCLUSION

The research results show that Iranian national music is going through a very dangerous situation. The distribution of this music is on the verge of serious crisis and there is growing possibility of removing it from the cultural consumption basket of Iranian society. Artists' access to new media spaces, direct communication with the audience, the insignificance of obtaining official licenses from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and other such issues, somewhat reduce the existing barriers to the distribution of this music. However, the production still faces many obstacles. The lack of economic support for producing this music has caused many musicians to give up their profession and pursue other jobs. This is especially true about young musicians. There is a serious risk that they will leave the music production cycle.

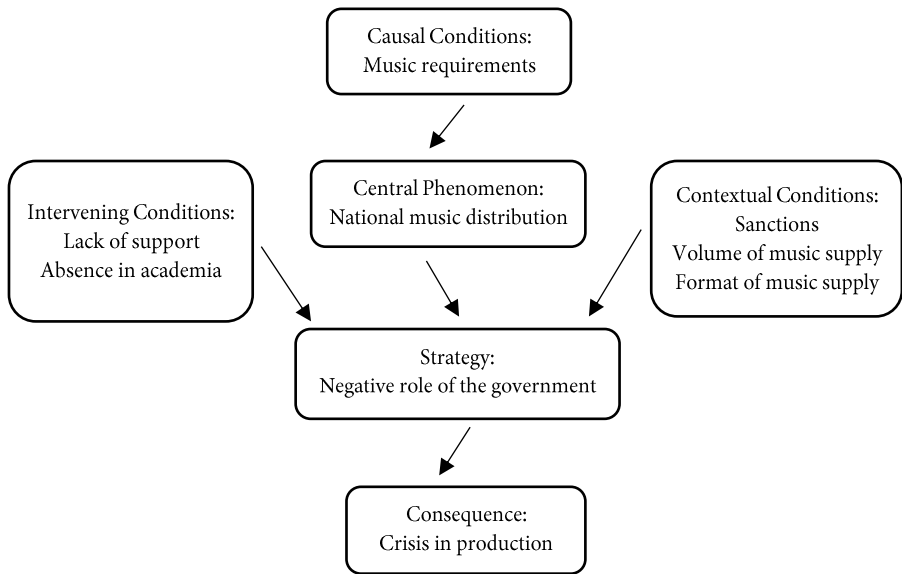


Figure 1. Model obtained based on grounded theory

NOVELTY

There is very little research done in the field of Iranian music to discover the reasons behind the decrease in its social influence. In this paper, researchers have paid more attention to consumers or audience and little to the reasons, motives and concerns of activists in the music industry.

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Iranian Cultural Research

Abstract