



vinyl

records

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Research

Functional Uses

Vinyl records are meant to be used to play music on a turntable. The turntable spins the record and a needle traces the grooves of the record vibrating back and forth to create sound. (1) Some uncommon uses for vinyls typically occur when the vinyl is no longer playable. Some uses include: bowls, clocks, planters, coasters, wall art, and tables. (2)



History

Vinyl records can be dated back to the 1940s but before them there were phonograph cylinders made of wax that featured grooves inscribed with sound similar to how the vinyl works today. After those were shellac records which instead were made of a mixture of shellac, cotton fiber, and filler materials. After those were lacquer discs which were more durable but not suited for mass production at the time. (3)

The first vinyl long-playing record was launched in the 1930s but did not become popular until 1948 when Columbia Records created PVC LPs. This way of creating vinyl is still widely used today. (4)



Cultural

Vinyl records have a strong association with older generations as that used to be the primary way to listen to music. They symbolize the history and tradition of contemporary music culture. While most people prefer to listen to their music on phones now, people who collect vinyl are more invested in the vinyl as a whole work of art. (5)

Environmental Impact

Before the vinyl can become mass-produced the lacquer master must be produced which is an aluminum play covered in a thick layer of lacquer. Then a machine cuts the record turning the sound into grooves. There is a special engineer called a cutting engineer who ensures that there is space in between the songs. Next, a stamper disc is made which can then be used to stamp the vinyl. The vinyl starts as a

blob of vinyl and is pressed by the stamper disc to create the LP. (6) Vinyls are not biodegradable but as said in the functional section many people will up cycle vinyls in a variety of ways. Hundreds of millions of vinyls are produced each year and while they can be recycled they are more often donated or end up in landfills. (7)

Observation

Controlled Observation

The controlled setting I used was a home of a vinyl record collector from Reddit. The vinyls were used for playing music and displaying both of which the user feels happy with. There is no unique object usage in this case that surprised me. Some pain points in using this object are the upkeep. Vinyls are very fragile and require specific storage and cleaning to make them last longer.

Furthermore, certain turntables can warp your vinyl depending on the placement of speakers.

Uncontrolled Observation

I have observed vinyls in a variety of uncontrolled environments, such as in record stores, rooms of friends, and even frats by certain DJs. The main use in this case is still for the vinyls to produce music however, the types of music and upkeep of the vinyls varies greatly. A friend of mine painted an old vinyl to use for decor, while another friend I know meticulously cleans and stores their vinyls in a way that keeps them pristine. Some unique

uses I have seen are ways people up cycle vinyls, such as artwork, tables, coasters, bowls, and more. The pain points in this case remain mostly the same as the controlled environment, but in the case of up cycling the vinyls, there comes more challenges. The material of vinyls can be quite fragile, so when trying to warp its shape or change its purpose, one has to be careful not to break the vinyl altogether.

Photo Ethnography



Here are pictures of my own vinyls hanging on the wall. They are used for decoration in this case and only the outer covers are visible, not the LPs themselves.



Above is a picture of all my vinyls not hanging as can be seen they come in a variety of different colors with different album art and actual vinyl colors.

Interviews

Questions

To gather more information on how people perceive vinyl records I conducted an interview of 7 people and asked them the following 10 questions.

1. How do you use vinyl records or how often do you see it used?
2. If you do not use vinyl records why is that?
3. What is an early memory of seeing vinyl records?
4. What are other ways you have seen vinyl records used?
5. What is a notably bad or frustrating experience with vinyl records?
6. What is a notably positive experience with vinyl records?
7. Where do you think vinyl records are most often sold?
8. What kind of person do you think typically owns vinyl records?
9. Do you have a favorite album on vinyl that you own or want to own?
10. What do you think goes into the upkeep of vinyl records?

Laynie

She does **not personally use vinyl records** but she does see them used as decoration or used in newer record players on line. She does not use them because the actual record players are quite expensive and she uses streaming services for music.

The earliest memory she has of vinyl records was when she was little, maybe 5 or 6 and her grandma would play her favorite record on her record player in the kitchen. She just remembers dancing around the kitchen with her while it was playing.

She has seen them **used as decorations quite often or used for different crafts**. She knows through others that it is quite frustrating when the records get scratched, or when they do not play the music clearly. She noted a good experience with vinyl records is walking around music stores and getting to see all of the older albums that had originally come out on vinyls. She likes looking at vinyl covers and seeing the creative side of artists when choosing a vinyl cover. She would say they are most often sold in music stores, or maybe even grocery stores like Target



and Walmart sell newer vinyls. She believes someone who owns vinyl records may be a little older, someone who is a musician themselves or who has passion for creativity and art. If she could own any album on vinyl she would want to have the Happier Than Ever by Billie Eilish. To her knowledge the upkeep of vinyls is to keep them protected when moving them and just ensuring they are dust free and kept inside the sleeve.

Overall, I found she knew a bit more about vinyl records alternate uses the most since her mom is a very crafty person. She noted other crafts such as coasters and bowls which surprised me.

Bekah

She has seen an increase in using vinyl for the **unique sound quality** of the vinyl and sees at least one TikTok a day featuring a vinyl record or record player. She does **not personally own a record player** because of the cost of it. She first saw a record player at her pap's house when she was a kid but does not recall actually hearing it played.

In terms of other vinyl record usage, she has also seen it used for decoration. In her own experience she has not had a bad experience with vinyl records and due to not owning a record player has had little experience with them at all but she did enjoy shopping for How To Be A Human Being by Glass Animals on vinyl as a gift for her girlfriend for her birthday (me).

She mostly sees vinyl in vintage music stores but has seen it more and more in bookstores and music stores. She **does not have a particular person in mind who owns vinyl** and believes it to be a very wide range of people who simply appreciate the indie aesthetic of it. She would love to own Bury The Hatchet by the cranberries on vinyl and believes



the upkeep of vinyls to be very hard including keeping them clean, dry, scratch-free, and stored properly in sleeves.

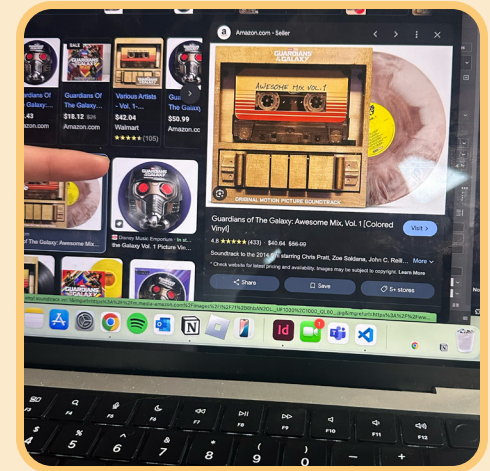
Overall, it surprised me that she believed vinyl collectors to be such a wide range of people rather than being able to put a label on it.

Mattox

While she **does not personally have a record player** or any vinyl records she has experienced the usage of one through friends, family, and social media. She most typically sees vinyl records used for playing music but has also seen them used as decoration on walls.

In her experience, the scratching of records and lack of portability have been a negative however the sound quality has been a huge positive. She would like to own vinyl records but due to her living in Florida and the lack of portability of a record player she has not purchased one if she did she would want to own movie soundtracks such as the **Guardians of the Galaxy soundtrack**.

She has seen records at Target, Walmart, and record stores and in her experience the **people buying records are usually Taylor Swift fans or generally people into music with the money and room**. As far as her knowledge of record maintenance goes she knows they have to be cleaned of dust, not bent, stored like books, and kept in sleeves.



Above is a picture of Mattox pointing to the record she would want. The Guardians of the Galaxy Soundtrack.

Overall this interview as my first one done gave me a lot of insight into what an average person of my age knows about vinyl records. I was most surprised at her having the notion that people who collect vinyl records are Taylor Swift fans most of the time and did not consider that.

Morgan

She **does not own a record player nor did her parents own one** growing up, but her roommate whom she shares a room with (me) owns one. Since she did not grow up owning a record player or even seeing vinyl records much she never had much of an interest in them, in fact the **first time she can even recall seeing vinyl records is in a movie** her parents made her watch (unknown what movie it was).

She has seen vinyl records used as decoration but does not believe them to be very multi-functional. A frustrating experience with vinyl records she has had is when her roommates have skipped but she has had a positive experience with the sound quality and overall vibe playing a vinyl record has. She has seen vinyl records mainly sold at older bookstores and more recently target.

The type of person she thinks owns a record player is based on generation, older people own them since it was the only way of listening to music and today people more into music and the arts own them. She plans to one day own Reputation (Taylor's Version) on vinyl, however it is



not yet released and she noted she wants the Patterns album by Kelsi Ballerini due to the pretty colors of the vinyl. She would use the records for decoration. To her knowledge vinyl records need to be cleaned and stored in a way that prevents breaking and scratching.

Overall the most interesting thing about this interview was seeing how she did not have much experience with a record player or vinyl records until I bought one and played it in her room. **It was intriguing to see how my own collection journey impacted her knowledge.**

Kaley

She **does not personally use vinyl records for listening to music** due to not owning a record player but has a few old records up on her wall as decoration. She used to see a lot of vinyl records around her grandparents house as they had a vintage record player. In her experience the scratch of vinyl records has been a negative experience but **being able to stream old Taylor Swift albums without supporting Scooter Braun has been a positive experience.**

She has seen new albums on vinyl sold at Target and other big retailers, but older vinyls are usually sold at thrift stores and vintage stores. She believes the typical vinyl owner is someone who is very interested in music more so than a typical person!

She would like to own every Taylor Swift album on vinyl one day. Her knowledge of vinyl upkeep is that they have to be cleaned and kept in a space that prevents them from being scratched, bent, or broken.

Overall, this interview **tied in nicely with Mattox's when she stated that she believed a lot of**



found a huge positive in being able to stream old Taylor on vinyl without supporting Braun.

Michelle

She believes the main use of vinyl records is to play music and has seen a **recent resurgence in the popularity of them**. She does not have a record player and therefore does not buy vinyl records anymore, but has a few records from when she was a kid.

She **started using vinyl records in the 70s and had a little record player**. She has seen records used in **artwork and decoration**. She specifically noted going to Knoxville and seeing them hung on the wall of a restaurant. A notably frustrating experience she had was when the records would scratch easily, when they would skip, and how she could not jump and dance around the room because it would cause skipping. She noted that a positive experience was being able to listen to music she liked as back then she would have to wait for the radio to play a song she liked if she did not own it on vinyl.

She thinks all types of people own record players such as the elderly who grew up with it and generation Z. **She noted the popularity of them now seems to come from Taylor Swift**. Her favorite record is Steve Miller



Band. She recalls listening to it in my Dad's frat house room when he used to go to Penn State. To her knowledge vinyl records are very delicate and need to be kept in their sleeves away from dust and scratches.

Overall, it was interesting to see a different generational perspective of record players. My mother seemed to have much more exposure to vinyl records when she was a kid. I found it interesting that her frustration was not being able to jump around due to records skipping and how she would put a penny on the needle of the player in order to minimize this issue.

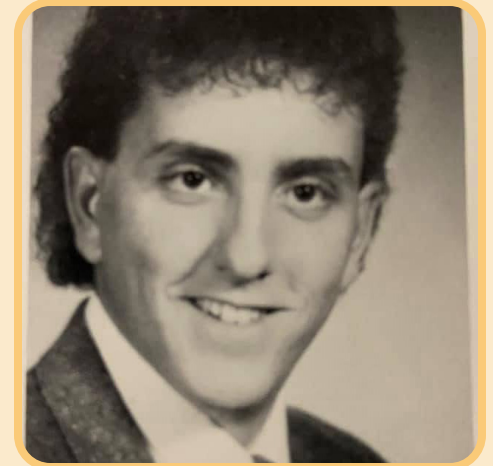
Joe

He **does not see vinyl records used much at all anymore** but when he does he sees them used with a record player to play music. He does not personally own many or use them due to digital ways of listening to music being much easier in his day to day life, but **he used to use them often when he was a brother of Lambda Chi Alpha in 1987-1988** at Penn State on the weekends.

He has only seen vinyl records used to play music and in his experience the scratching noises were unpleasant but the sound is very unique. He only sees them sold at record stores or stand alone by artists on their websites.

He believes the **typical person who owns vinyl records is members of Gen X (age 45-60)**. He personally owns the Steve Miller Band greatest hits and it is his favorite record. His knowledge of upkeep is that vinyl records have to be kept clean and stored in a way that does not warp them.

Overall, this interview surprised me since he does not know of the resurgence of vinyl records especially since I (his daughter) started collecting them.



Audience

Research

Based on my personal research and interviews, I have found that the typical audience for vinyl records has changed a lot over the years. In the past, vinyl records were something marketed towards everyone as that was the only way to listen to music. As music modernized and digital listening became more prevalent, vinyl records became targeted more towards older individuals who still owned record players.

Finally, today, vinyl records are marketed towards anyone who is a big fan of a particular artist or music in general. It has become a sort of collectible merchandise that a lot of artists release alongside their albums. This is an advertisement for the **Lover Live From Paris heart-shaped vinyl** posted by TaylorNation on Instagram. The advertisement uses emphasis by having the



vinyls and album title take up most of the page, making your eyes immediately drawn to them. It uses the classic lover pastel background featured in a majority of merchandise for

Lover by Taylor Swift which also helps to make it stand out on their feed against the monochromatic color scheme of Taylor's current album The Tortured Poets Department. The physical vinyl disks being in the advertisement shows that they are not advertising this as much to re-promote Lover but rather to advertise a vinyl record as an exclusive collectible form of merchandise rather than your main way of listening to music. This is further supported by the vinyl being in limited stock making it feel as the more exclusive.

This supports my observation that today vinyls are advertised more for their collectible aspects rather than being pushed as the main way to listen to music. In the digital age of music, it is no longer optimal to listen

to music on vinyl when you have so much access to music at your fingertips but you also lose a lot of the art that goes into making an album. as the album art, lyric books, exclusive posters, and disk colors that you get with a vinyl.

My Audience

After conducting my research, I decided to advertise vinyl records to younger people in Generation Z. This means my audience is people of any gender, ages 12 to 27. I do not want to limit my advertising to those with record players but rather advertise it as a work of art surrounding an album.

Final Interviews

Questions

To gather more information specifically on my target audience and their day to day life.

1. Do you like to collect merchandise for music artists you enjoy?
2. What are your thoughts on retro trends resurfacing, such as vinyl records, Polaroid cameras, and vintage fashion?
3. How do you typically listen to music, and why specifically that way?
4. Is there anything you collect?

5. How important is visual design to you when it comes to merchandise?

6. Do you like to show your interests through decor in your room?

7. How much does social media influence your interest in music, art, or collectibles?

8. Do you prefer owning physical versions of things (e.g., books, albums, movies), or do you prefer digital access? Why?

Zak

Zak **collects merch for his favorite artists, mainly wearable merch** such as hoodies and t-shirts; occasionally, he will branch out into a poster. Having merchandise from his favorite artists reminds him of the good feelings he gets while listening to their music. He mainly collects merch from **Lana Del Rey and Ethel Cain**.

He believes the resurfacing of **vintage trends is mainly just a social media trend but does have the potential of staying around** because it creates this connection between kids and parents who grew up with these trends. He also believes a lot of this trend promotes reducing screen time, something we as a generation could care to do more.

He **listens to his music on Spotify** due to it being a very convenient method of listening to music. Zak is a big collector and **collects a wide range of things, such as clothes, books, perfumes, and even video games** across different brands and companies. He also inherited a stamp collection from his uncle, which he adds to when he gets the chance.

When purchasing merchandise, **aesthetic is incredibly important** to him and the main reason he will buy things. Even if a product has good reviews, he is more likely to pick the product with better aesthetic.

He expresses himself a lot through the decoration of his room and feels it is important to his mental health to wake up and come home to a place that feels so authentically him. **Social media has been a huge influence on his interest** in music, books, etc. If he sees someone he likes reading or listening to an album, he will read that book or listen to that album and go on to recommend it to his friends. **Finally, he prefers to own physical copies of only his favorite books and albums** due to digital copies being cheaper.

Overall, I found a lot of this interview to be interesting, especially how heavily he relies on aesthetic when it comes to selecting products. It taught me a lot about how my audience interacts with merchandise and collectibles when they have the digital copies right at their fingers.

Mauri

Mauri collects **merch from her favorite artists in the form of t-shirts, hoodies, CDs, and vinyls.** Most of her merch is from Taylor Swift, as that is her favorite artist with a variety of merch. She also believes that the **resurfacing of vintage trends is a social media trend**, and this happens every so often; however, she loves her Polaroid camera and vinyl and does not care whether or not they go out of trend.

Her **main way of listening to music is through Spotify** due to its convenience and cost. She has **recently started collecting vinyl records** despite her lack of a record player. She appreciates the artwork behind them and being able to own something that physically shows her admiration for the artists.

She also **collects Taylor Swift merchandise and used to collect merchandise from content creators in the past.** When it comes to aesthetics, she also finds it incredibly important and refuses to buy things she does not like the look of since she likes to display or wear a lot of her merchandise. She believes that it is **important to decorate her room in a way**

that expresses her interest and said her room is currently filled with Taylor Swift. Social media is how she mostly finds shows and music to listen to through social media. While she collects vinyls, she prefers digital copies of albums due to it being easier to listen to, and **she does not at present own a record player or CD player.**

5 However she finds it easier to read physical copies of books.

Overall, this interview was interesting to see since Mauri owns vinyl records but no record player. She owns them solely for the aesthetic and artistry of the vinyls which is an approach I want to take when advertising them.

Mood Board

Once I completed my interviews I created a mood board that captured the visualization of my audience and how I want to advertising records to them. I wanted it to feel retro in a way that is trendy. I researched trendy poster designs, patterns, and colors that felt retro in a modern way.



User Personas



Aspen

Age: 21

Major: Visual Arts

Job: Student

Goals & Needs

Aspen collects records mainly of her favorite indie bands. She loves indie and alternative culture and believes her record collecting is a huge part of that.

Pain Points

She struggles with the upkeep of her vinyl records and does not have a lot of money to buy new records since she is a student.

Music Platform

Spotify

Favorite Artists:

Lana Del Rey
The Cranberries
Glass Animals

Introvert



Extrovert

Logic



Creative



Aiden

Age: 20

Major: Finance

Job: Student

Goals & Needs

Aiden is a DJ at his frats parties and recently got into mixing actual vinyl records instead of playing Big Booty Remix on YouTube and calling it his own.

Pain Points

Learning to mix vinyl records has been very time consuming. He also worries about his vinyl's getting ruined by his brothers during the parties.

Music Platform

Sound Cloud

Favorite Artists:

Kendrick Lamar
The Weekend
Tyler the Creator

Introvert



Extrovert

Logic



Creative



John

Age: 50
Major: Math
Job: Actuary

Goals & Needs

John just wants to listen to his music on the radio or on his phone while he works out. He had records when he was a kid but no longer keeps up with artists as much.

Pain Points

He believes that vinyl records take up a lot of space and require too much upkeep. While he has favorite artists he would not consider himself a super fan.

Music Platform

Pandora

Favorite Artists:

Jimmy Buffet
Steve Miller
Eagles

Introvert



Extrovert

Logic



Creative



Evia

Age: 22
Major: Biology
Job: Student

Goals & Needs

Evia is a HUGE Taylor Swift fan and started collecting all the different variants of her albums on vinyl! She loves using her records as decor.

Pain Points

She does not actually own a record player to play her Taylor Swift records. Furthermore, she does not know how to properly clean or store her albums.

Music Platform

Apple Music

Favorite Artists:

Taylor Swift
Harry Styles
Sabrina Carpenter

Introvert



Extrovert

Logic



Creative

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