CultureCase

How people understand social exclusion at music concerts

This research was conducted by **Stijn Daenekindt** at **Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands**

Summary

This paper tackles the question of why people feel that some concerts are exclusive and excluding. The data comes from a survey of people in Belgium which included questions about attitudes towards classical and pop/rock concerts. Ultimately the paper concludes that 'the way culture is consumed—or how people think that culture should be consumed—shapes social exclusion at cultural settings' such as music concerts.

The study is based on a 2009 survey of 3,144 people in Flanders

Regardless of whether they were regular concert-goers, half the people were asked about 'classical concerts' while the other half were asked about 'pop or rock concerts'. Specifically, they were asked if they excluded some people, whether they have 'nothing at all for me' or 'something specifically for me', whether you had to know anything about the music, whether it required a lot of concentration, if it was boring, and whether it was relaxing.

Whether people think concerts are socially exclusive depends on their attitude to concert-going in general

Some people see concert-going as an intellectual exercise of learning and self-improvement. Other people see concert-going as a fun and enjoyable exercise that should not be taken too seriously. This division shapes people's attitudes to the question of social exclusion at concerts.

Not everybody can relax and enjoy concerts as something fun

This is because a certain degree of familiarity and experience is needed to know “the rules”: when to applaud, how to behave, what to wear, etc. This is true regardless of the genre of music, or whether an artform is generally considered “high-” or “low-brow”. However, the research suggests that people’s education levels are a key factor in determining whether they think classical music concerts should be approached with a relaxed sense of fun. It is less of a factor for rock/pop concerts.

Keywords

survey **audience** **Belgium** **music** **concerts**

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