Between Innovation and Ethical Concerns: Conditional Acceptance of AI-Generated Music Among Young Malaysian Social Media Users

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ABSTRACT

The increasing circulation of AI-generated music on social media has created new opportunities for musical experimentation while raising questions about the role and rights of human creators. This qualitative study examines the conditions under which young Malaysian listeners accept or resist AI-generated music. Six social media users aged 21–25 participated in semi-structured interviews, and the documented interview material was examined through a focused thematic interpretation. Three related patterns were identified: the appeal of novelty and musical choice, the continuing importance of human expression and active listening preferences, and ethical reservations about consent, originality and attribution. Participants were willing to listen to music that sounded appealing or suited a particular online setting, but such enjoyment did not necessarily indicate an enduring preference or approval of the way a recording had been produced. The study develops conditional acceptance as an interpretive account of three considerations: listening value, the legitimacy of creative participation and the fairness of production practices. Rather than treating acceptance and rejection as fixed opposing positions, the findings show how these evaluations can coexist within individual accounts. The article contributes to research on digital music reception by distinguishing incidental exposure from deliberate preference and musical enjoyment from ethical endorsement. Implications are discussed for responsible music production, platform transparency and audience literacy.

Keywords: AI-generated music; conditional acceptance; Malaysian youth; social media; artistic authenticity; consent; qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Background

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly visible in contemporary music production and circulation. Tools capable of producing instrumental passages, arrangements and synthetic voices now sit alongside established practices of composition and recording. At the same time, short-form video and music-streaming services have changed how young listeners encounter unfamiliar songs. Music is often heard in the background of a video, during everyday browsing or through a recommendation, rather than through a deliberate search for a particular artist. These changes raise questions about how listeners judge musical quality and the people or technologies involved in making it.

Enjoying an AI-generated song does not necessarily mean endorsing every aspect of its production. A listener may appreciate a catchy melody while preferring human performers, or may welcome AI-assisted composition while objecting to the imitation of a singer's voice without permission. Treating acceptance as a simple yes-or-no response risks obscuring these differences. This is particularly important in social media settings, where encountering a recording, listening briefly and actively seeking it out are distinct forms of engagement.

Empirical research suggests that responses to AI music depend on what listeners are asked to evaluate. Bagratuni et al. (2025) identify curiosity and human-like qualities as relevant to the reception of AI-generated singing. Chia et al. (2025) show that information about whether music is labelled as human- or AI-generated can affect, but

does not uniformly determine, audience judgements. Arenal et al. (2026) likewise draw attention to the different concerns of music users and practitioners across the digital music value chain. Ethical scholarship adds questions of attribution, consent and the interests of musicians whose work may be used in automated production (Morreale, 2021). Together these studies suggest that musical enjoyment, perceived creativity and approval of production practices should not be assumed to be identical.

Research in Malaysia can extend this discussion by attending closely to the terms listeners themselves use to describe acceptance. The present study examines six young social media users' accounts of AI-generated music, with particular attention to how novelty, artistic identity and ethical concerns inform their choices. Its focus is deliberately narrower than a general assessment of awareness or technical understanding: it investigates why the same person may welcome certain uses of AI while objecting to others.

Problem Statement and Research Objectives

The study addresses three questions: (1) What makes AI-generated music appealing to young Malaysian social media users? (2) How do listeners distinguish music encountered incidentally from music they actively prefer? and (3) How do artistic and ethical concerns shape the limits of their acceptance? The aim is to develop a contextual qualitative explanation of these judgements, not a population estimate of AI-music adoption.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

AI-Generated Music, Creativity and Artistic Authenticity

Music-generation systems employ a range of computational techniques, making 'AI-generated music' a broad rather than uniform category. A system used to suggest harmonies under a composer's direction differs from one used to generate a complete track or reproduce a familiar vocal identity. Boden's (1998) account of computational creativity helps distinguish novelty from judgements of artistic worth, while Hertzmann (2018) places questions of machine-made art within wider relationships among human intention, authorship and interpretation. These approaches are valuable because creative legitimacy is not settled solely by a recording's technical polish.

Music is also evaluated through the history and identity associated with performers. A voice may be prized not only for its timbre but for the experiences listeners associate with its singer. Thus, a convincing synthetic performance may be musically enjoyable while still provoking questions about emotional expression and ownership. For this analysis, artistic authenticity refers to listeners' perceptions of the contribution and presence of human artistry; it does not function as an objective acoustic test of whether a recording is 'real'.

Music Reception and Conditional Acceptance

Studies of audience reception provide a useful starting point for examining these judgements. Bagratuni et al. (2025) found that curiosity and features resembling human singing played roles in acceptance. Chia et al. (2025) explored the influence of AI and human authorship labels on listeners' evaluations of pop music and reported outcomes that challenge a uniformly negative view of AI-labelled music. These findings suggest that attitudes cannot be inferred from the mere knowledge that a system was involved in production.

Arenal et al. (2026) broaden the focus by considering both artists' and users' experiences within music streaming. Their work is relevant to the present study because audiences can appreciate the availability of new musical material while musicians question its consequences for creative work. An analysis of acceptance therefore benefits from distinguishing the finished sound, the production process and the treatment of human contributors.

Digital Platforms and Everyday Listening

Digital platforms influence the conditions under which music is encountered. Bonini and Gandini (2019) describe how editorial choices and automated recommendations shape discovery, while Prey (2018) examines the commercial logic of personalised music services. These studies show why the appearance of a song in a feed should not automatically be interpreted as an active preference. Short-video audiences may listen because a

sound suits an image, mood or passing trend, even when they have no intention of following the artist or replaying the work.

The distinction between incidental exposure and deliberate musical preference is useful for interpreting interview accounts. It is not proposed here as a behavioural measure: the study did not collect platform activity logs or streaming histories. Instead, the analysis examines how participants describe the music they encounter and the music they choose to seek out.

Ethical Responsibility, Consent and Attribution

Questions of performer consent and the use of existing creative material are central to debates about AI music. Morreale (2021) examines the ethical and political implications of automated music creation, particularly the distribution of recognition and control. Floridi and Cowls (2019) provide a broader account of justice, responsibility and transparency in AI systems, and UNESCO (2021) places ethical governance within a human-centred framework. Applied to music, these perspectives help explain why listeners may distinguish between acceptable experimentation and uses they consider unfair to artists.

Such responses are ethical evaluations made by listeners, not legal findings about an identified recording. A participant's concern about vocal imitation may be meaningful for understanding trust and perceived legitimacy even when the interview does not establish whether copyright infringement occurred. This analytical distinction is maintained throughout the findings.

METHOD

Research Approach and Dataset

This article draws on six semi-structured interviews undertaken in 2026 within a supervised qualitative research project at Universiti Malaysia Perlis. The wider project examined exposure to AI-generated music, perceptions of artistic value, and reasons for acceptance or rejection among young social media users. The present analysis addresses the conditions influencing acceptance and resistance. It uses anonymised interview extracts and thematic coding maps from the same dataset; no additional interviews were conducted for this article. The originating study is identified in the reference list.

The interview materials include participant identifiers, a demographic summary, source-language interview extracts and coding maps generated through NVivo. For this article, these materials were organised around the research questions rather than treated as a new, independent interview dataset. The analysis does not claim access to complete audio recordings or re-estimate coding frequencies. This boundary is important when interpreting differences among the six participants.

Informants

Six participants were selected purposively on the basis of their experience of AI-related music circulating on social media. They were aged between 21 and 25; five were women and one was a man. Their educational backgrounds included IGCSE, diploma and degree-level study. Such sampling was appropriate for exploring accounts of experience and judgement but was not designed to represent all Malaysian youth. Participants are identified as P1–P6 throughout the article. Table 1 summarises the sample and the position contributed by each participant to the analysis.

Participant	Age	Gender	Education	Illustrated position
P1	21	Woman	IGCSE	Enjoyment may coexist with discomfort about copied voices.
P2	22	Woman	Diploma	Values novelty; explicitly accepts AI music within limits.
P3	23	Woman	Degree	Prefers human artists; questions authenticity.
P4	25	Man	Diploma	Describes familiarity without active searching.

P5	24	Woman	Degree	Reports little audible difference in some productions.
P6	24	Woman	Degree	Supports creative assistance; demands credit and guidelines.

Table 1. Participant characteristics and perspectives represented in the analysis.

Interview Focus and Analytical Material

The available interview guide addressed several related aspects of AI-generated music: how participants first came across it on social media; what they understood about its production; how they evaluated artistic originality and the place of human emotion; and the reasons that made them more or less willing to accept it. These topic areas permitted discussion of both the musical result and the practices used to create it. They also provided scope for participants to distinguish between a song they happened to hear and a recording they would choose to seek out. The available materials record participants' accounts rather than a standardised listening experiment. No audio examples were rated blind, and interviewees were not observed using music-generation software. The study therefore addresses meanings and judgements expressed in conversation. Its account of acceptance should be read in relation to those conditions of data collection, rather than as a measure of actual streaming behaviour or objective detection of AI-produced sound.

Selection and Analysis of Interview Material

The thematic material relating to authenticity and acceptance was reviewed using explicit inclusion criteria. Extracts were retained when participants explained why they would listen to, seek out, avoid or evaluate AI-generated music; when they introduced a condition concerning the role of human creators, consent or attribution; or when they offered a contrasting view that complicated an emerging interpretation. Statements about technical awareness were considered only where they helped explain a judgement about acceptance. Page-level source locations were recorded for each quoted extract.

The selected accounts were compared across three broad categories: reasons for acceptance, reasons for rejection, and ethical concerns. Particular attention was paid to cases that did not fit a simple positive-versus-negative interpretation. P4, for example, described growing familiarity with music appearing on social media but no intention to search for it deliberately. P5 valued convincing sound production, whereas P3 placed greater weight on human performers. These contrasts helped refine the interpretation rather than being treated as exceptions to exclude.

The procedure was guided by qualitative thematic-analysis principles (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). It involved repeated reading of the available extracts, comparison of stated positions, examination of competing explanations and development of an integrated account. Because the analysis was undertaken from the documented interview material rather than the complete audio archive, it does not claim a fresh, exhaustive coding of every interview. The final categories are presented as an interpretation of the evidence, not as statistically established constructs.

Translation and Researcher Reflexivity

Interviews were conducted in Malay, with occasional English expressions. For international readers, the extracts appear in English translation only. Translations were compared with the verbatim passages retained in the written study record; comparison against the original audio recordings was not available. Participants are identified consistently as P1–P6, and the corresponding page locations in the research record are provided together in Table 2 to support verification.

Researcher interpretation can be influenced by prior interests in music technology, digital media and the rights of artists. Reflexive attention was therefore directed to the possibility of treating every ethical reservation as outright rejection. The analysis also sought instances of approval, ambivalence and ordinary listening

convenience. This approach helped maintain the differences in emphasis among individual accounts, including statements that challenged the preferred interpretation.

Trustworthiness and Interpretive Checks

Credibility in this focused analysis was pursued by reading favourable and unfavourable statements alongside one another, tracing each reported quotation to its documented source page and preserving the link between an individual participant and the interpretation made of their words. The comparison did not rely solely on the most vivid quotations. P1, P2 and P6 provided examples of acceptance subject to conditions, P3 described a clear preference for human performers, P4 differentiated habitual exposure from purposeful listening, and P5 emphasised enjoyment of well-produced sound. These positions were kept distinct rather than combined into an artificial consensus. The coding diagrams were treated as an aid to organising the account, not as evidence that the relationships had been tested causally. Reflexivity was also important because discussions about AI and artistic rights can encourage an analyst to privilege ethical opposition. Attention to enjoyment, technological curiosity and indifferent listening helped check that tendency. The original audio recordings and a full independent coding audit trail were not available to this article's authors; accordingly, claims of renewed transcription verification, intercoder reliability or independently demonstrated saturation would not be warranted. These constraints are stated to clarify the evidence on which the interpretation rests.

Research Ethics

The research record describes confidentiality measures and the use of participant identifiers. However, the documents available for preparing this manuscript do not contain an ethics-approval reference or sufficient information to establish whether the original consent covered journal publication of translated extracts. These matters require confirmation from the research team before submission. No additional identifying details are disclosed in the present article.

FINDINGS

Participants' responses were organised around three connected aspects of acceptance: the attraction of new musical options, preference for particular forms of human artistry, and ethical conditions concerning the treatment of creators. The thematic arrangement is illustrated in Figure 1, followed by close analysis of the accounts. The figure summarises the relationships among the source categories; its arrows denote thematic grouping rather than causation.

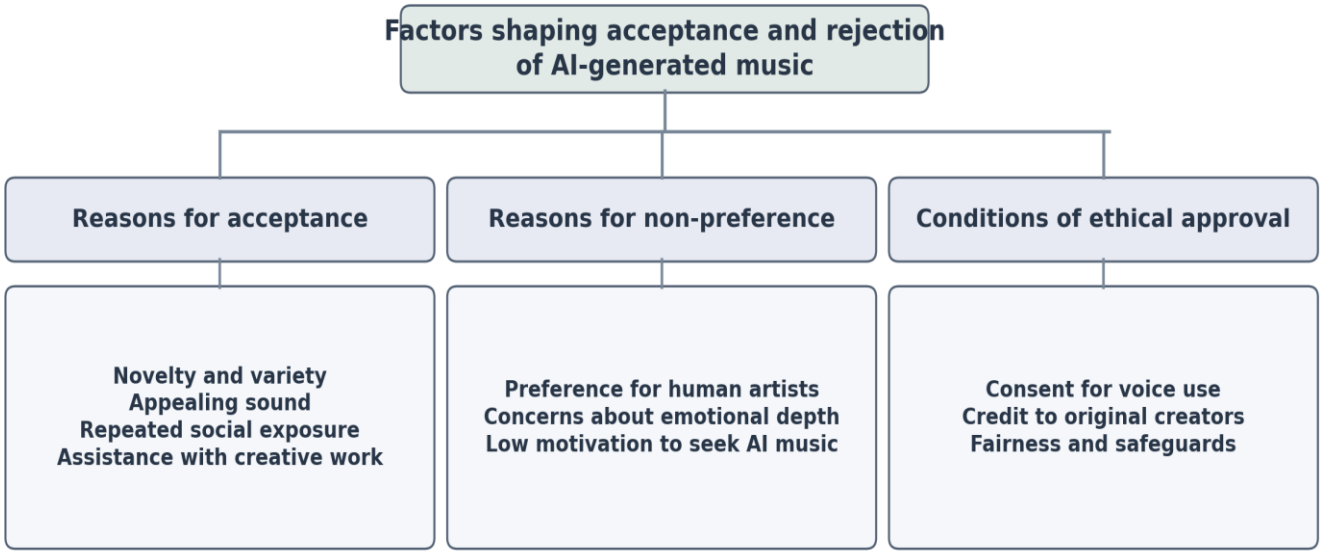


Figure 1. Thematic map of factors shaping acceptance and rejection of AI-generated music (adapted from the 2026 study coding map, p. 51). Arrows indicate thematic membership, not causation.

Musical Novelty and Expanded Choice

P2 approached AI-generated music as a source of additional choices rather than as a substitute that must displace familiar performers. The possibility of discovering unfamiliar sounds made the technology attractive, while social media appeared in the account as a convenient setting in which those sounds become visible.

"I am more inclined to accept AI music because it offers many new choices. Sometimes it can produce music that is unusual and different from what we normally hear. Social media also helps us discover new things quickly." *(P2)*

What is affirmed here is variety. The participant does not claim that AI-generated music is artistically superior or that any means of generating it would be acceptable. This account is consistent with the importance of curiosity in Bagratuni et al. (2025), but the comparison should not collapse the different research designs: P2 provides a contextual account of what seems attractive, whereas Bagratuni and colleagues modelled acceptance among a substantially larger survey sample. The present observation is narrower and more specific.

AI as an Aid to Creative Experimentation

P6 expressed support for AI as an aid to ideas and experimentation. This is not an unconditional endorsement of automated music creation. The speaker specified a role for AI within a creative process, suggesting that the perceived purpose of using the technology influences how it is judged.

"I can accept AI music as a new technology, especially if it is used to support the creative process—for example, to explore ideas or experiment with new sounds. Social media helps introduce it to people quickly." *(P6)*

P6's account creates a distinction between assistance and displacement. The interview offers no direct evidence that this participant personally composed music using generative software. Instead, the statement identifies a kind of use that seems artistically defensible. That emphasis on creative intention aligns with broader discussions of the human roles surrounding computational creativity (Boden, 1998; Hertzmann, 2018). It also helps explain why support for a tool cannot be equated with support for every output produced with it.

Exposure Without Active Preference

P4 described exposure to AI music as a process of becoming accustomed to something regularly encountered on social media. Yet elsewhere the same participant stated that they would not deliberately search for it. Read together, these remarks expose an important difference between finding something ordinary and actively wanting it.

"I accept AI music because I keep encountering it on social media. Once I am used to hearing it, it starts to seem normal, particularly when a song is trending." *(P4)*

"But I would not actively look for AI music. If it comes up in my feed, I listen; if not, I do not really mind." *(P4)*

This pair of statements is especially revealing because a familiar track need not become a preferred track. P4's account does not supply listening logs or demonstrate a measurable exposure effect. Instead, it shows how one user distinguishes everyday encounter from deliberate choice. Work on the visibility of music within digital platforms provides a relevant context (Bonini & Gandini, 2019; Prey, 2018), but cannot be used to infer the mechanics of P4's individual feed.

Human Artistry and Sound Quality

Not all participants approached generated music with the same assumptions about emotional expression. P3 was reluctant to seek it out and explicitly preferred recordings associated with human performers. This represents a

preference grounded in perceived artistic meaning, not evidence from an experiment establishing that human and AI music can always be distinguished by ear.

"To be honest, I am not particularly interested in AI music. I might hear it when it appears on social media, but I do not search for it. I prefer songs by actual artists." *(P3)*

P5, by contrast, described difficulty distinguishing between the two sources when the finished track sounded convincing. Including this account guards against an overly consistent picture of artistic scepticism. The contrast also shows that judgements about sound and judgements about human creative identity can vary substantially across interviewees.

"Honestly, I do not hear much difference. If it sounds good, I listen. Sometimes I cannot tell AI music from human music at all, especially when the production is polished." *(P5)*

P5's observation should not be transformed into a claim about objective recognition accuracy; no blind identification test was administered. It does, however, demonstrate a counter-position to P3's emphasis on human artistry. The presence of both accounts strengthens the interpretation that different criteria are used to assess a track. Chia et al. (2025) similarly caution against assuming that the perceived AI label will necessarily reduce every aspect of a listening response.

Consent as a Condition of Acceptance

Ethical reservations did not always result in a rejection of AI music as a whole. P1 articulated discomfort at the prospect of an artist's voice being used without permission, suggesting that such a practice could reduce an otherwise favourable interest. P2 went further, explicitly linking openness to a stated limit.

"But if it becomes excessive, or an artist's voice is used without permission, I would feel uncomfortable. It seems unfair to the artist, and it might make me less interested." *(P1)*

"Ethically, using an artist's voice without permission seems problematic. Without safeguards, it could affect the music industry. So I accept it, but only within certain limits." *(P2)*

The words "within certain limits" are central. P2 is not merely alternating between positive and negative statements; the participant identifies a condition under which a generally useful or interesting technology becomes objectionable. P1's discomfort follows the same logic. Neither remark establishes that a specific named track was unlawful. The participants express a fairness criterion directed towards the treatment of performers, not a legal finding about copyright or voice rights.

Attribution and Responsible Use

P6 raised a related issue about the source material on which AI music may depend. The concern concerned proper credit and the need for guidelines, rather than a refusal to engage with the technology under any circumstances.

"I am concerned about copyright and originality. If AI relies too heavily on other people's work without giving credit, that could be a problem. I accept it, but guidelines are needed." *(P6)*

This passage links legitimacy to accountability. The participant is not offering a forensic assessment of a particular model's training data; instead, the statement describes a standard of fair treatment. Together with P1 and P2, it indicates that some listeners who recognise AI's potential also expect consideration for musicians whose voices or works might be used. Morreale (2021) provides a broader scholarly account of why creative labour and the distribution of benefits are central to the politics of AI music.

Cross-Case Synthesis

The six accounts do not form a ranking from positive to negative. P2 combines openness to novel music with an explicit requirement for ethical limits. P6 values AI-assisted creativity while asking for credit and guidance. P4

describes ordinary exposure without deliberate searching. P3 prioritises human performers, P5 reports less audible difference than others, and P1 accepts musical appeal while opposing unconsented vocal imitation. Their variation is analytically useful: conditionality is not a single, uniformly held belief, but a way of recognising that participants refer to different objects when they say they accept or reject "AI music".

Case	Engagement or artistic assessment	Ethical or limiting consideration	Source page(s)
P1	Enjoys appealing music; recognises pleasing sound.	Unconsented use of an artist's voice creates discomfort.	49, 54
P2	Values variety and unfamiliar sounds.	Expresses acceptance only within ethical limits.	52, 54
P3	Prefers human singers and emotionally grounded work.	Questions authenticity; objects to unconsented imitation.	53
P4	Becomes familiar through trending platform content.	Will not actively search for AI music.	51, 53
P5	Finds some AI recordings difficult to distinguish by sound.	No separate ethics conclusion is attributed here.	45
P6	Supports experimentation and creative assistance.	Calls for attribution, guidelines and care with source works.	52, 55

Table 2. Cross-case synthesis of positions illustrated by the six interviews; the absence of a statement is not treated as evidence of agreement.

Patterns Across Individual Cases

The comparison across six accounts reveals differences in the object of evaluation rather than a uniform division into supporters and opponents. P2 emphasised the breadth of musical choice and also raised the issue of performer consent. P6 welcomed AI as an aid to experimentation but wanted clearer principles for crediting creative work. P4 described becoming used to AI music through social media without developing an active wish to find it. P3's preference for human performers contrasted with P5's willingness to listen whenever the music sounded convincing. P1 likewise focused on listening appeal while expressing discomfort about unapproved voice imitation. These combinations are important because they locate conditionality within participants' own accounts: people could be positive about a particular use or quality of AI music while reserving judgement about others. They do not establish that every participant evaluated every consideration equally. Rather, the six cases contribute different examples that together illustrate the limits of treating a positive listening response as a complete statement of technological or ethical approval. This interpretation also leaves room for a genuinely sound-centred response, such as P5's, without assuming that the participant necessarily had or lacked a settled view on consent and attribution.

DISCUSSION

Understanding Conditional Acceptance

The findings suggest that the language of acceptance can conceal several different judgements. Participants distinguished songs that sounded pleasant from songs they would actively search for, and some differentiated artistic assistance from the unauthorised imitation of a performer. These responses should not be arranged on a single line from enthusiasm to rejection. They are better understood as assessments of different features of the same practice: the listening experience, the place of human creativity and the fairness of the production process.

Three questions summarise the framework suggested by these accounts. First, does the recording have listening value—does it sound appealing, distinctive or suited to a particular context? Second, is the creative process regarded as legitimate—does it involve human direction or expressive contribution that the listener values? Third, is the process ethically acceptable—are consent, credit and fairness sufficiently respected? Figure 2 represents these as related considerations rather than sequential steps or measurable thresholds. A positive judgement about sound need not settle the other two.

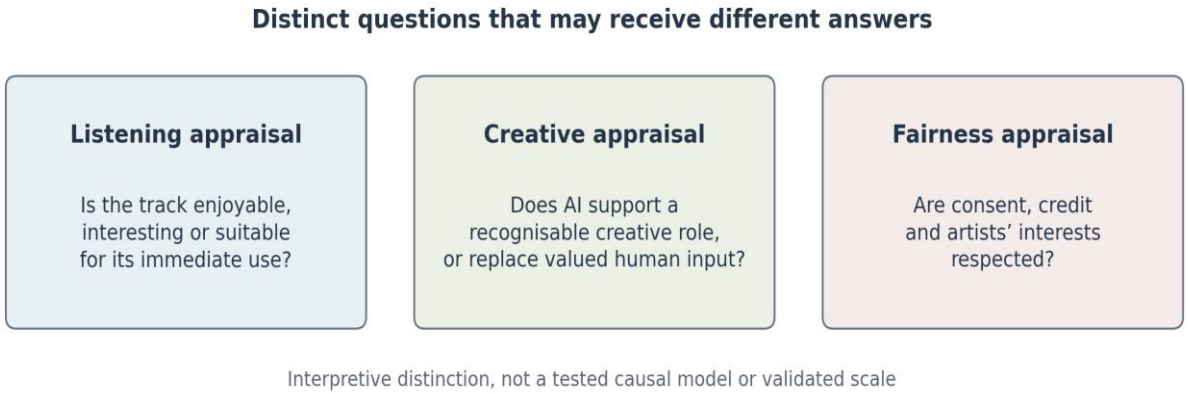


Figure 2. Three considerations informing conditional acceptance of AI-generated music. Authorial interpretation of the interview material; the diagram does not represent a tested causal model.

The analytical contribution lies in separating questions that are frequently combined when discussing attitudes toward AI music. For instance, P1's enjoyment of an attractive sound coexists with reservations about vocal imitation; P6's openness to experimentation is accompanied by concern about attribution. This account can be read alongside the reception research of Bagratuni et al. (2025) and Chia et al. (2025), while adding closer attention to the terms on which young listeners describe their own approval.

Listening, Preference and Platform Discovery

P4's account provides a particularly clear example of the difference between encountering music and choosing it. Repeated appearances in a social media feed made AI-generated tracks feel familiar, but P4 did not describe an intention to seek them out. This distinction matters because a song can circulate widely without acquiring the kind of attachment implied by a stable musical preference. Work on platform gatekeeping and recommendation systems supplies a useful context for this observation (Bonini & Gandini, 2019; Prey, 2018), although these interviews do not establish how any individual feed was organised.

Listening through a video or a social feed may satisfy a brief purpose rather than express endorsement of a musician or a production method. The evidence therefore supports a distinction between incidental encounter and active preference as an interpretive category. It does not establish a measured pattern of platform behaviour. This limited but important distinction should inform future reception studies that seek to define acceptance more precisely.

Creative Value and Human Authorship

P3's preference for human performers shows that emotional connection and recognisable authorship remain important to some listeners. P5's emphasis on polished sound complicates that position: a convincing musical result may be enjoyable even when the listener is uncertain who made it. Neither position invalidates the other. Together they show that listeners may adopt different standards depending on whether they are judging a short audio encounter or the artistic identity associated with a recording.

The contrast also speaks to the findings of Chia et al. (2025), in which authorship labels did not produce a uniform pattern of negative evaluation. In the present interviews, apparent disagreement can be understood in terms of what was being judged: sound quality, emotional expression or the contribution of a human musician. This helps explain why favourable listening responses may coexist with scepticism about artistic authenticity.

Ethical Boundaries and Practical Acceptance

P1, P2 and P6 did not describe ethical concerns as grounds for rejecting every use of AI in music. Rather, their accounts identify practices they regard as unfair, especially the unapproved use of a singer's voice and inadequate acknowledgement of creative work. P2 explicitly accepted AI music 'within certain limits', and P6 asked for

guidelines. These statements indicate that consent and attribution may function as conditions of acceptance, not merely as reasons for opposition.

These concerns connect listeners' everyday judgements with wider debates about power and responsibility in creative AI (Morreale, 2021; Floridi & Cowls, 2019). They do not establish whether a particular generated recording infringes legal rights. Their significance is that audiences may evaluate the fairness of a production process independently of whether they enjoy its result.

Contribution to Music Reception Research

The present findings contribute most clearly at the level of how acceptance is described. In studies organised around a general willingness-to-use question, a favourable response may be interpreted as an attitude toward the whole technology. The accounts considered here suggest that the object of acceptance needs to be specified: one listener may approve of an AI-generated soundtrack for a brief video, another may accept AI as part of a composer's workflow, and another may reject the use of a recognisable voice without permission. Bagratuni et al. (2025) and Chia et al. (2025) provide important evidence about the reception of AI-labelled or AI-generated performances, but the interview accounts reveal how everyday listeners qualify their responses with reference to purpose, artistry and fairness. Arenal et al. (2026) and Morreale (2021) further demonstrate why the experiences of consumers and the interests of creators should be considered together. The contribution here is not a claim that these considerations have never appeared in scholarship. It is a more precise explanation of how they operate simultaneously in a small group of Malaysian listeners' accounts. Future work can test whether the distinctions hold when participants encounter different forms of AI involvement and receive clearer information about human contribution and performer consent.

Implications

For music creators, the findings point to the value of making the role of AI understandable. A clear distinction between AI-assisted composition, fully generated tracks and licensed synthetic vocals may help listeners make informed judgements. This is a recommendation derived from perceived concerns, not a claim that disclosure has already been shown to change listening behaviour. For platforms, the study highlights the importance of distinguishing circulation metrics from deliberate musical endorsement.

For education, AI music provides a familiar case through which to discuss algorithmic discovery, the contribution of human creators and the boundaries of acceptable imitation. Such activities can build on AI-literacy competencies described by Long and Magerko (2020). Discussions should distinguish an individual's experience of a convincing sound from questions about authorship and permission.

Further studies could combine interviews with listening diaries or stimulus-based comparisons to examine how attitudes change when participants know whether a track was generated, assisted or performed by a human artist. Such research could also investigate how performers, producers and rights holders understand the forms of consent and credit that listeners call for.

Limitations

This study involved six purposively selected young social media users and therefore does not support population-wide claims. Its analysis draws on documented extracts and coding maps rather than a complete audio archive. The findings concern participants' stated perceptions; platform exposure, sound-recognition accuracy and legal status were not independently measured. These features limit generalisation but permit close examination of the reasons participants gave for their judgements.

A further consideration is the pace of development in generative music and platform governance. The relationships among sound quality, authorship and ethical approval may change as tools and professional practices evolve. The contribution of this inquiry is to identify meaningful distinctions within a particular set of accounts and to provide questions for subsequent research with wider samples and additional methods.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that young listeners' responses to AI-generated music are neither uniformly favourable nor uniformly hostile. Participants were drawn to novelty, musical variety and creative assistance, yet some continued to prefer human performance or objected to particular uses of synthetic voices and existing works. The same interview could contain enjoyment and reservations, depending on what aspect of the music-making process was under consideration.

Conditional acceptance offers a way of describing these responses without reducing them to a binary decision. Listening value, creative legitimacy and ethical acceptability were analytically distinct considerations in the accounts examined. A pleasing song did not necessarily become a preferred song, and interest in technological possibility did not always extend to approval of imitation without consent. This interpretation contributes to discussions of AI music reception by foregrounding the specific conditions listeners attach to their judgements.

Declarations

Data availability. The analysis uses anonymised interview extracts and thematic maps from a supervised university research record (2026). Access to underlying materials is subject to the originating research team's and institution's data-governance requirements.

Ethics and consent. Confidentiality practices are described in the originating record. The existence and scope of institutional ethical approval and permission to republish translated excerpts must be confirmed by the responsible research team before journal submission; neither is asserted without documentary evidence.

Funding and competing interests. Funding status, author contributions and competing-interest declarations must be completed and approved by all authors before submission.

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