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Article

# The sound of consumption: The electromagnetic soundwalk as anti-method

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**Abstract**

This article proposes the electromagnetic soundwalk as an *anti-method* for consumer research, a compositional practice that listens to the infrastructural residue of market environments without aiming to interpret, represent or explain. Using a handheld electromagnetic detector, the walk transposes imperceptible emissions into audible frequencies, revealing the operational murmur of retail systems. These include devices such as wireless payment systems, contactless terminals, touch-screen tablets and digital signage, technologies that organise and condition consumer experience, but do so silently, beneath the threshold of ordinary perception. These electromagnetic emissions trace the infrastructures that shape and facilitate consumption yet remain formally outside marketing discourse. The soundwalk stages a form of methodological estrangement, where listening becomes a way of staying with systems that persist without expressive form. While rooted in soundwalking traditions, the project diverges from immersion or participation. Positioned within the sonic turn in consumer research, the paper reframes sound as residue, an ambient trace of logistical systems. For marketing, this is a speculative proposition. For sound studies, it is an example of compositional listening used to breach an adjacent field. What results is not a soundwalk for its own sake, but an acoustic method for hearing how consumer systems continue, quietly and without reward. The first section of the paper adopts a speculative and affective tone, free of citation, to evoke the experiential register of the method. Subsequent sections develop the theoretical and methodological foundations in a more conventional academic voice.

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## 1. What is the sound of consumption?

Consumption has sounds, but they are not always the ones we are trained to notice. The sonic dimension of market life includes music in branded environments, product jingles, advertising voiceovers and consumer expressions of preference or dissatisfaction. These are the audible, communicative and affectively charged sounds of consumption, sounds that are meant to be heard, and often meant to mean something. But consumption also has another sonic layer: one that is ambient, infrastructural and often unnoticed. The quiet hum of refrigeration units, the low whirr of ventilation ducts, the low-frequency buzz of LED signage or the electromagnetic emissions of routers, scanners and kiosks. These sounds do not seek attention. They do not speak to the consumer or represent brand identity. Yet they are as central to consumption as the objects and messages they support. They are part of what makes consumption possible, the background operations of market systems, rendered audible only through different modes of listening.

To speak of 'the sound of consumption', then, is not to identify a stable acoustic category, but to acknowledge a field of competing sonic forms:

The sounds we hear and the ones we do not.

The sounds we make, and the sounds machines make on our behalf.

Sounds that are full of meaning and emotion, and sounds that are purely functional.

Sounds designed for listening, and sounds that resist interpretation.

And sometimes, the absence of sound itself, the silence of systems designed to feel seamless and frictionless.

The electromagnetic soundwalk proposed in this paper aims to shift attention: from the sounds of consumption that speak to us, to the ones that continue regardless of whether we are listening.

### 1.1. Why we listen to what we are not meant to hear

Much of consumer research tends to listen for voices. It tunes in to what people say, what brands communicate and how meaning circulates through speech, text and image. Even in sonic research, listening tends to focus on experiences that are emotionally expressive, semantically rich or socially shared. This includes the acoustic branding of retail spaces, the music of everyday life and the affective atmospheres of consumption. These are sounds we are *meant* to hear, designed to be noticed, interpreted and enjoyed.

But every system also produces signals it does not intend for us. These may be functional, residual or entirely indifferent to human perception. In consumer environments, this includes the buzzing of electronic interfaces, the electromagnetic chatter of networked devices or the sub-audible hum of energy infrastructure. These

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sounds are not part of the consumer's experience in any designed sense. They are not expressive, nor are they communicative. They are simply *there*, active, infrastructural and operating beneath the threshold of cultural attention.

To listen to what we are not meant to hear, then, is to engage in a practice of epistemic disalignment (an intentional non-alignment with the setting's normative listening cues). It is to occupy a methodological stance that refuses to follow the logic of insight, meaning or message. The point is to acknowledge that consumption depends on systems that do not speak, but still shape what is possible: what can be bought, accessed or interacted with.

The electromagnetic soundwalk is a way of listening that embraces this disalignment. Using inductive microphones to convert electromagnetic emissions into audible sound, the soundwalk brings attention to the inaudible workings of the consumer environment. It invites us to hear not the message of the market, but its murmur, its indifference, its ongoing, infrastructural presence. In doing so, it challenges the assumption that research must always listen for insight, revelation, or meaning. It proposes, instead, that there is value in listening poorly, or rather, listening in a way that lets the failure to understand become the method itself. Where many soundwalks aim to activate awareness and invite participatory engagement with space, this walk turns away from spatial relation and towards infrastructural friction.

Such listening is compositional, not passive. Here, the term composition is not used in the musical sense of harmony or arrangement, but to describe the process of assembling sound, space and movement into a form that draws attention to the underlying systems of consumption. In this sense, composition is a method: a way of making infrastructural presence perceptible through listening and movement. It is a practice of arranging attention, of dwelling with noise, of refusing to reduce the sonic to the symbolic. It tunes into the dissonance between what consumer systems produce and what consumer research is prepared to hear. And in doing so, it asks us to consider: *What else have we not been listening to, not because it is silent, but because it does not speak in the right key?*

This is not a call to uncover hidden meanings or extract latent insights. It unsettles the very assumption that research must listen for something. It leaves us suspended in an awareness that what we call listening is shaped by what systems are permitted to say, and what we are trained to hear.

To listen without reward, without narrative, without data, represents a recalibration of what research is allowed to register. In consumer research, intelligibility is often measured by legibility: a consumer speaks, expresses and reveals something interpretable. Even when the subject is affect or atmosphere, we are trained to draw meaning from it, to resolve its ambiguity into insight.

But what if we resist that resolution?

What if we listen to remain inside the ambient operation of systems that are too infrastructural, too indifferent or too ordinary to speak? What if we listen without pondering meaning? The electromagnetic soundwalk exposes consumer infrastructure, the signal beneath the platform interface, the electrical murmur that makes the touchpoint possible.

This is literal, an epistemic confrontation. It is a practice of dwelling in the inaudible realm of the market, the circuits, protocols and vibrations that do not ask to be heard, but which nonetheless compose the very conditions under which hearing becomes possible.

In this sense, listening becomes a form of methodological sabotage. It breaks the implicit contract of consumer research: that we will attend to what is said, shown or felt in recognisable terms. The electromagnetic soundwalk tunes instead into the residues and emissions of systems that are not for us, but that condition our possibilities.

It stages a non-consensual intimacy with the infrastructure of consumption.

This intimacy is with systems, not individuals.

No conversations are recorded, no subjects observed.

And it is this intimacy – awkward, opaque, unresolved – that becomes the method.

Yet, to remain with this unresolved proximity, this listening that yields no findings is a deliberate stance. The electromagnetic soundwalk refuses the demand for insight. It resists the imperative that research must always produce results that are communicable, useful or actionable. It moves away from research as extraction and towards research as estranged composition.

This is what we call an anti-method.

Anti-method is not the absence of method. It is a method that operates against the grain of methodological expectation. It is a refusal of resolution, of legibility, of interpretive capture. In place of coding, it offers ambience. In place of data, residue. In place of clarity, hum.

The anti-method attends to infrastructures of consumption that neither express nor persuade. It hears the market as a system of operation, an environment of signals, flows and circuits that persist beneath attention.

This is an argument for listening beyond meaning's limits. It's about staying open to other experiences or sensations that sound might offer, things that are not easily put into words or neatly explained.

The anti-method acknowledges that much of consumption now unfolds in non-narrative zones: in interfaces that register our presence without speaking to us, in networks that modulate our access without announcing their terms, in systems that structure behaviour while remaining acoustically, semantically and visually passive.

Listening to these systems and letting their refusal to speak shape the practice of inquiry is itself a form of inquiry. It is method. Just not the kind we are accustomed to. It operates outside the conventions of research-as-explanation.

The anti-method is lived, not applied.

It emerges through attunement, not through direction.

It lingers near sense without demanding it.

The electromagnetic soundwalk becomes both instrument and interruption: a rupture in what consumer research allows itself to notice.

And what it hears, finally, is not the consumer.

It is the system continuing, humming, indifferent.

## 2. Situating the walk: Listening without reward

This project turns to sound studies as a means of breaching the limits of consumer research. Where dominant paradigms in marketing and consumer theory continue to rely on representational and affective models (images, voices, stories and meanings), this work seeks an alternative mode of engagement. One that does not ask what consumption says but instead listens to how it is held together. Infrastructurally. Indifferently. Often inaudibly. To do so, it becomes necessary to rethink what listening is and what it can do, as a compositional mode of attention, a way of staying with systems that do not speak and that resist incorporation into the familiar architectures of understanding. Recent work in consumer research

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has marked what Patterson and Larsen (2019) describe as a 'sonic turn', emphasising sound as an embodied, affective and ecological dimension of consumption. This project responds by contemplating what it means to listen to consumption, and by experimenting with how such listening might be done.

Sound studies provide a vocabulary for this rethinking. Voegelin (2010) frames listening as speculative and unstable: a form of presence that instead of stabilising, lingers, absorbs and transforms. For Cox (2011), sound is material rather than representational, something that acts, interrupts and reconfigures. LaBelle (2010) adds that sound is also spatial, infrastructural and relational, an active force that organises how environments are experienced, even in the absence of meaning. These perspectives matter here beyond their pertinence to sound studies, because they offer tools for making consumer systems perceptible in ways that resist symbolic capture. This shift from meaning to materiality also finds traction in the tradition of soundwalking. In Hildegard Westerkamp's work (Westerkamp, 2007), the walk is a reorientation of the sensorium, not a survey: an invitation to hear what usually recedes. McCartney (2002) expands this into a feminist practice of situated listening, one that foregrounds memory, power and the politics of space. Drever (2002) reframes the soundwalk as a kind of sonic ethnography: a practice of embedded, reflexive co-presence.

Yet, while these approaches extend the field of what listening can be, they remain concerned with relationality, with tuning in, with connection, with presence. The current project diverges. It uses listening to expose infrastructural misalignment, not to deepen relation. This electromagnetic soundwalk does not attune the researcher to human subjects or cultural voices. It brings them into proximity with non-communicative systems (circuits, protocols, emissions) that structure consumption while remaining formally outside its narratives. This is a mode of inquiry that offers exposure. A contact with systems that do not address the listener, that do not want to be heard and that persist without expressive form. This is what it means to listen without reward, to stay within the hum of a world that continues, indifferent to interpretation.

In sum, this project approaches sound as a means of encountering the systems that organise consumer life. The electromagnetic soundwalk redirects attention away from voices and meanings towards circuits and signals. It offers a mode of knowing grounded in proximity and exposure, remaining with the quiet operations of infrastructure that shape how we move, buy and behave.

## 3. Methodological orientation

This section outlines the conditions and compositional logic of the soundwalk undertaken for this project. Instead of presenting a method to be generalised or applied, it describes a situated act of listening which is not undertaken to collect information, but to remain with systems already operating. Thus, listening, as practised in this project, is an active, situated engagement with the material conditions of infrastructure. It follows Oliveros's (2003) understanding of deep listening as a mode of attunement that extends awareness to the full sonic field, including those signals outside the threshold of ordinary perception. Nancy (2007) frames listening as an affective condition: to listen is to resonate, to be made porous by sound. Infrastructural listening operates in this register, but with a technical orientation, it remains alert to emissions that register not as presence, not as content. Voegelin (2010) argues that listening is generative, producing knowledge that is contingent and embodied rather than representational. This aligns with our approach, which attends to operational signals that structure retail space while evading sensory legibility. Sound, in this context, is systemic. O'Keeffe (2015) suggests that soundwalks can surface how space is socially constructed through acoustic cues. The present work builds on this, but attending to the inaudible emissions of consumer technologies. These signals condition what can be accessed, purchased or avoided.

### 3.1. The electromagnetic soundwalk

By 'soundwalk', we refer to a practice of listening-in-motion, where movement through space becomes a method for attending to acoustic or inaudible phenomena (Drever, 2020; Westerkamp, 2007). Informed by the work of Westerkamp, the World Soundscape Project and recent expansions of the practice into interdisciplinary contexts (Adams and Bruce, 2008; Martin, 2018), the soundwalk in this project treats movement as a compositional gesture and attention as a mode of attunement. It draws on approaches that use soundwalking to engage with sociopolitical and infrastructural conditions (Aletta et al., 2019; Carras, 2019; Deluca and Hausknecht, 2023), and extends beyond the mapping of acoustic environments. Our walk is spatially improvised, guided by bodily orientation and electromagnetic density. In this sense, soundwalking here participates in a lineage of work that views walking as an embodied epistemic encounter with place, atmosphere and the inaudible operations of consumer systems (Findlay-Walsh, 2018; Norman, 2012; O'Keeffe, 2015). As Eadie (2021) notes, such improvisational soundwalks foreground listening as an active, affective and situated practice, one that attends to both absence and presence, noise and silence. This emphasis on lived, participatory listening aligns with Schafer's original proposition that soundwalking could recalibrate our relationship to the sonic environment (Truax, 2021).

Electromagnetic soundwalking has an established place in sound art. Christina Kubisch's *Electrical Walks*, developed since the early 2000s, invite listeners to explore the hidden emissions of urban systems, surveillance cameras, neon signage and wireless routers, through inductive headphones that convert electromagnetic fields into audible frequencies (Kubisch's, n.d.). Her practice foregrounds discovery, immersion and the musical potential of electromagnetic space. Other artists working in the tradition of spatialised radio and spectrum-based composition have similarly treated electromagnetic fields as material for aesthetic intervention (Black, 2010). This project draws on that technique, but with a different orientation. Where Kubisch invites interpretive listening, the present work, as noted, remains with signals that do not speak. It listens to infrastructure to dwell within its refusal.

The walk was conducted in a Sephora retail store in central Barcelona, a hyper-designed retail environment calibrated for affective coherence and sensory control. Sephora, as a retail site, is undeniably shaped by gendered spatial dynamics. Studies in consumer culture have shown how retail atmospheres are often designed to reflect, reinforce or contest gendered expectations through visual, spatial and affective cues (Borghini et al., 2009; Filice et al., 2019; Petersson McIntyre, 2018). While this essay does not focus on gender directly, it is worth noting that Sephora is not a neutral retail environment. Spaces like this are coded through aesthetic, affective and commercial logics that shape who is addressed, and how. Listening to the space's electromagnetic emissions disrupts this sensorial choreography, bringing to the surface what the environment excludes or renders inaudible.

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Like many high-density retail spaces, Sephora contains a dense layering of electromagnetic emissions: security gates, digital price displays, illuminated shelving, mobile scanners, tablet screens, in-store Wi-Fi routers and LED signage, all emitting electromagnetic waves continuously, without notice. The specific site was selected following a series of preliminary soundwalks in various commercial locations across Barcelona. Sephora stood out as particularly dense in terms of electromagnetic emissions, making the site sonically rich for our soundwalk. It also resonated conceptually: Sephora's sensory saturation, its immersive visual and affective environment, coexists with an infrastructure of signals not intended for perception. This disjunction between visibility and audibility, chatter and silence, made Sephora a compelling environment in which to develop a soundwalk concerned with inaudible influence.

While the project has involved similar walks in other locations, this account focuses on a single site. It is a compositional demonstration of method. It used a compact electromagnetic receiver known as ETHER. Unlike narrow-band inductive sniffers that require close proximity to low-frequency emissions, ETHER captures a wide range of electromagnetic interference without tuning or filtration. Its designers describe it as an 'anti-radio', a device built to receive what traditional radios suppress: ambient signals, operational residue and infrastructural noise. While not designed for research, its capacity to render unintended emissions audible proved well suited to a method concerned with exposure rather than clarity.

The presence of the recordist is embedded in the conditions of the walk, expressed through orientation, hesitation and bodily attunement to electromagnetic presence. This was a solitary drift through a commercial environment, guided less by layout or signage than by the density of inaudible signal. Movement was shaped by contingencies, pauses when signal activity intensified, subtle shifts to avoid individuals or devices likely to introduce interference and efforts to remain discreet and unobtrusive. The walk unfolded through embodied discernment rather than formal method. Such practice aligns with Pink's (2009) account of the body as a site of sensory knowing, and with Haanpää et al.'s (2022) understanding of walking as both an epistemic and affective practice. Murphy (2022) emphasises embodiment as emergent, situated and affectively charged, less a static position than a relational process of becoming. In this sense, the soundwalk is an improvised navigation through atmospheres and thresholds. The body of the recordist is not foregrounded but remains present through what Manning (2016) describes as a 'minor gesture', a compositional sensitivity that operates below the threshold of performance or deliberate intervention.

No formal permission was sought. The listening focused on device emissions rather than persons, and it was carried out quietly, in situ, without engaging staff or customers or altering the space. We treated this as minimal-risk, non-human-subjects work: no intelligible speech, images or identifiers were recorded, and the researcher kept clear of point-of-sale interactions. The ethical decision was assumed directly by the researcher, whose task was to remain near the system's operations while avoiding implication of individuals.

Two recordings were produced. One track (Audio track 1 https://lecliche.bandcamp.com/track/anti-radio-sephora-no-ambient-sound) captured only electromagnetic emissions, the other (Audio track 2 https://lecliche.bandcamp.com/track/anti-radio-soundscape-sephora) combined those emissions with ambient sound from the store. Neither version is treated as data. Instead, both are held as compositional artefacts, registrations of systems that continue regardless. Soundwalk traditions often emphasise sensitivity, relationality or immersion, whether in acoustic ecology (Westerkamp, 2007), feminist situatedness (Mccartney, 2002) or compositional ethnography (Drever, 2002). Westerkamp's work, particularly in *Kits Beach Soundwalk*, seeks to rebalance the listener's relationship with urban space, restoring the 'tiny sounds' drowned out by infrastructural and authoritarian noise (Kolber, 2002). Carras (2019) likewise frames soundwalking as an experiential path towards participatory engagement and aesthetic attention to place. This project diverges from those aims. The walk is not attentive in the sense of tuning in; it is attentive in the sense of staying near what cannot be absorbed. It does not map space, narrate experience or produce insight. It converts emissions into sound, then refuses to decode them. That is the work. That is the anti-method.

The electromagnetic emissions we attend to are not neutral by-products of consumer activity. They are signals produced by devices whose very presence forms part of a system designed to influence. From LED displays and interactive tablets to in-store Wi-Fi routers and contactless payment terminals, these infrastructures are not merely responsive to consumer demand; they are instruments of persuasion. As Packard (1957) famously argued, the environments of consumer life are saturated with techniques of 'hidden persuasion', designed not only to reflect desire but to manufacture it. These systems do not passively follow consumer preferences; they actively shape them.

We understand consumer infrastructure as a persuasive ensemble, an array of signals, devices and interfaces configured to capture attention, shape spatial practice and guide behaviour, not merely as functional support. These technologies condition the terms of consumption through affective cues, architectural control and encoded rhythms of interaction (Berlant, 2016; Larkin, 2013). The logics of these systems (visibility, access and legibility) are never neutral. As Star (1999) reminds us, infrastructures determine what actions are possible, by whom and under what conditions. Even the seemingly silent emissions captured in our soundwalk – buzzes, pulses and flickers – are traces of a broader orchestration of desire. This aligns with longstanding critiques of consumer culture as shaped by strategic efforts to induce compliance and docility (Herman and Chomsky, 2012). Consumption is not the sole driver of infrastructure; rather, infrastructure and consumption are co-constitutive. Therefore, what we listen to in the soundwalk is not incidental emissions. They are the ambient signals of a system designed to modulate behaviour through aesthetics, atmosphere and the quiet imperatives of embedded technology.

### 3.2. A practice of anti-method

Although this project offers no steps, no analytic framework and no promise of insight, this is deliberate. But neither is it without structure. The walk enacted here is governed by a compositional logic: to remain close to systems that are active but non-communicative, present but not expressive. This is what is meant by anti-method, a refusal of method's conventional ambition to produce knowledge. Where practice-based research typically emphasises situated creativity, experiential reflection or emergent understanding (Haseman, 2006; Nelson, 2013), anti-method withholds these aims. It listens without leaning forward. It

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composes without seeking resolution. It accepts that what surrounds us may remain unresponsive, because it was never designed to address us. As Zećo (2021) observes, listening and recording are always entangled in the sociopolitical and material conditions of place. This project remains with that entanglement, refusing to translate exposure into explanation. In this respect, the electromagnetic soundwalk is a way of walking with indifference, to record without interpreting, to remain proximate without narrating and to let method become a kind of exposure rather than an instrument of explanation.

The provocation is to work with what is there, even if it does not speak back. It is an attempt to make the invisible visible, but not the inaudible meaningful. It does not follow a fixed set of research steps. It does not aim to produce clear insights, though they might arise nevertheless. We choose to listen, we stay close. We accept that some systems operate without addressing us. We walk and listen simply to be present with what is normally ignored.

### 3.3. Composing with indifference

The term composition is used here in a broad, performative and epistemic sense. Following Bolt (2004, 2007), composition is understood as a form of thinking-in-action, an emergent process through which knowledge is generated by engaging with materials, spaces and affects in situ. The soundwalk described here aims to compose with and through the infrastructural signals it encounters, as a situated articulation. This is what LaBelle (2006) might call an 'acoustic territory', shaped by the technologies, architectures and movements of consumer space. Drawing also on Haseman's (2006) account of performative research, composition here becomes a method for staging inquiry through practice, rather than reporting findings after the fact. It is not detached from the body but intimately linked to the situated listening of the recordist, whose movements and sensorium co-produce the resulting trace. This resonates with Findlay-Walsh's (2018) notion of *compositional listening*, in which perception becomes already entangled with composition, a process of listening that configures how sound, place and subjectivity are woven together. It also aligns with Rodgers' (2010) feminist accounts of composition as responsive, embodied and materially entangled. What is composed, then, is more than a sonic artefact; it is a relation, a mode of proximity to systems that resist conventional forms of knowing.

The two recordings made during the walk in Sephora are meant as compositional traces. What they record is infrastructural presence: emissions, interference, digital residue, not ambience in the aesthetic sense. The electromagnetic-only recording renders the store as circuitry, without footsteps, music or voices. What remains is a kind of tonal debris: pulsing, crackling and oscillating signals without context. These sounds are unexpressive. They are functional artefacts, bystanders to systems in operation. The recording offers no sense of space, no spatial cues and no atmosphere. It listens in a register outside address. The second recording, captured with ambient microphones simultaneously, produces something stranger. Here, the electromagnetic emissions are folded into the store's designed sonic environment. Music plays, promotional videos loop and customers move in and out of the frame. Yet the electromagnetic signals do not integrate. They sit alongside the ambience, tonally incompatible, a second system made audible but not communicable. The recording does not cohere. It holds its elements in unresolved relation.

This is the compositional condition of the walk. It is a sonic friction, not a unified field recording, not a soundscape composition, not an immersion in place. It is a doubling of presence. One channel addresses the consumer. The other does not. One is shaped to be heard. The other leaks.

To compose in this way is to hold in parallel two modes of sonic life, only one of which is sanctioned, recognised or designed to make sense. The recordings are interruptions. They remain entangled with the space, unable to smooth over their own dissonance.

This stance aligns loosely with existing non-representational and performative approaches to research. Haseman (2006) argues that practice can function as research without explanation, communicating directly through form. Thrift (2008) proposes a non-representational theory in which affect, movement and atmosphere replace structures of meaning. But where such work often retains the hope that something might emerge or be felt, anti-method pulls more gently away. It belongs less to methodology than to gesture. Its closest companions may be found in the slow, atmospheric writing of Berlant (2011), Stewart (2007) or Blackman (2012): work that composes with affect and interruption, without resolving either. It is refusal as compositional stance.

## 4. How this soundwalk contributes

This soundwalk contributes a way of listening to consumption that does not extract, decode or enrich. It listens *otherwise*. It composes with the residues of market systems and lets them stand, as presence, not as data. It brings consumer research into contact with something it rarely approaches directly: the operational surfaces of consumption. These systems, verification protocols, interfaces and point-of-sale infrastructures shape every retail experience but are rarely encountered as audible form. Schrimshaw (2018) describes the infrastructural emissions as part of the 'tone of prime unity', a sonic unconscious that underwrites experience while remaining largely imperceptible. The walk registers its acoustic residue. It does not reveal how the system works. It offers a way of hearing *that it does*. For marketing and consumer research, the contribution is a shift in posture. It is about the background conditions of exchange, and what happens when we stop filtering them out. It offers a way to stand beside the systems that shape consumer life, not to humanise them but to hear how inhumanly they operate. To hear design as flow control, not as message. To hear marketing in its circuits rather than its slogans.

For sound studies, this walk may offer a modest reorientation. Not towards immersion or place-making but towards sonic contradiction: layered signals that do not align, sounds that do not ask to be heard, recordings that hold together only through tension.

Electromagnetic listening has been explored for decades, both in artistic practice and in commercial sound design. Devices like the one used here are widely available. What is proposed, then, is a conceptual contribution, not a technical one. A reorientation. A decision to treat this listening practice as a way of thinking with systems. Eadie (2021) frames soundwalking as an improvisational act that resists methodological clarity and instead opens space for contingent, situated attunement. This project echoes that logic by composing with uncertainty.

The contribution lies in how this walk has been situated: as a method of inhabiting the acoustic byproducts of consumption. What is offered is a mode of research that treats interference as composition, and composition as a way of registering what

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marketing systems do, not just in what they say, but in how they operate, quietly, continuously and often imperceptibly. Delucia and Hausknecht (2023) describe socially engaged sound practice as a form of learning-in-process, where knowledge emerges through exposure, not through instruction. This project aligns with that logic, conditions of encounter, not findings.

For marketing scholars, it is a provocation. It is not a replacement for consumer insight or experiential research. It is a suggestion that research might sometimes begin with what is emitted and ignored. That we might attend to infrastructures as material conditions that shape the possibility of consumption itself.

This is a call to listen differently, not an argument against meaning.

That difference may not convince everyone. But it may create a pause, a delay in what is assumed to matter, a hesitation before reaching for understanding.

And in that pause, this soundwalk finds its place.

**Supplementary material.** To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771825100988.

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