

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Podcasts as a Content Marketing Tool for Brand Awareness among Millennials and Gen Z

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of podcasts as a content marketing tool for enhancing brand awareness among Millennials and Generation Z. With the growing popularity of podcasts and their unique ability to foster trust and intimacy between hosts and listeners, the research examines how listening behaviour and host credibility influence key brand outcomes—awareness, recall, trust, and purchase intention.

Using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 200 urban Indian podcast listeners (100 Millennials and 100 Gen Z). The study draws on Content Marketing Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Generational Cohort Theory to frame its analysis. Results show that increased podcast listening frequency is significantly associated with higher brand awareness ($F = 2.456, p = .047$), though not with purchase intention ($F = 1.111, p = .353$). No significant differences were found between Millennials and Gen Z in their levels of trust in podcast advertising or brand perception, indicating the medium's broad generational appeal.

Host credibility—measured through trust, emotional connection, and the perceived authenticity of host-read ads—did not significantly influence brand trust. Similarly, podcast engagement did not predict stronger brand recall, challenging the assumption that deeper listener involvement improves ad effectiveness. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and education were also not found to significantly impact outcomes.

The findings suggest that while podcasts are effective for building brand awareness across younger demographics, conversion into purchase behaviour may require more personalized or relevance-driven strategies. Podcasts appear to function as inclusive marketing platforms, offering scalable branding opportunities for diverse audiences.

Keywords: Podcast, Content Marketing, Millennials, Generation Z, Host Credibility, Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction and Literature Review

The digital marketing landscape has undergone transformative changes with the rise of podcasting as a mainstream media consumption format. In the US, nearly as many people get their news from podcasts (21%) as from newspapers (24%), with one in four Millennials or Gen Z expressing a preference for consuming content through podcasts. This shift has created

new opportunities for brands to engage with younger audiences through audio content marketing strategies.

The current literature review addresses three critical research domains: (1) the effectiveness of podcast advertising and content marketing, (2) the marketing preferences and behaviours of Millennials and Generation Z, and (3) content marketing strategies for brand awareness building. Despite the growing importance of podcasting in the marketing mix, academic research specifically examining podcasts as content marketing tools remains limited, creating a significant knowledge gap that this review aims to address.

1. 2. Literature Review Framework

1. 2.1 Theoretical Foundations

The literature review is grounded in several key theoretical frameworks:

- **Content Marketing Theory:** Examining how valuable, relevant content creates brand awareness and customer engagement
- **Uses and Gratifications Theory:** Understanding why audiences choose specific media consumption patterns
- **Generational Cohort Theory:** Analysing how generational characteristics influence marketing preferences
- **Brand Awareness Models:** Measuring the impact of marketing communications on brand recognition and recall

1. 2.2 Research Methodology

This systematic literature review examined peer-reviewed articles published between 2015-2025 across multiple academic databases including Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. Search terms included combinations of "podcast marketing," "content marketing," "brand awareness," "Millennials," "Generation Z," and related marketing terminology.

1. 3. Podcast Advertising and Marketing Effectiveness

1. 3.1 Podcast Advertising Effectiveness Research

The academic literature on podcast advertising effectiveness, while limited, provides compelling evidence for the medium's marketing potential. While comparatively few scholarly studies exist on podcast advertising, market research substantiates the effectiveness of podcast advertisements.

Key Research Findings:

1. **Brinson et al. (2024)** - "Consumer response to podcast advertising: the interactive role of persuasion knowledge and parasocial relationships" - *Journal of Consumer Marketing*
 - Examined the relationship between listener parasocial relationships with hosts and advertising effectiveness
 - Found that strong parasocial relationships enhance advertising receptivity
 - Demonstrated the importance of host credibility in podcast advertising success
2. **Gupta & Kishore (2023)** - "Are Podcast Advertisements Effective? An Emerging Economy Perspective" - *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*
 - The results empirically established that podcast advertisements were effective in creating consumer-brand relationships, while informative podcast ads were the most effective of the lot.

- Conducted in emerging market contexts, showing global applicability of podcast advertising

3. **Thompson & Richards (2023)** - "*Podvertising: Podcast Listeners' Advertising Attitudes, Consumer Actions and Preference for Host-Read Ads*" - *Journal of Economics and Behavioural Studies*

- Investigated listener attitudes toward different types of podcast advertisements
- Found preference for host-read advertisements over programmatic insertions
- Established connection between listener engagement and advertising effectiveness

1. 3.2 Podcast Marketing Mechanisms

The literature identifies several mechanisms through which podcast marketing achieves effectiveness:

Intimacy and Trust Building: Podcasts create intimate listening experiences that foster trust between hosts and audiences. This trust transfers to advertised brands, particularly when hosts personally endorse products.

Targeted Audience Engagement: Podcast audiences demonstrate higher engagement levels compared to traditional media consumers, creating opportunities for deeper brand messaging.

Content Integration: Successful podcast marketing integrates brand messages naturally into content, avoiding the advertising resistance common in other media formats.

1. 4. Generational Marketing Preferences: Millennials and Generation Z

1. 4.1 Generation Z Marketing Characteristics

Recent research has extensively documented Generation Z's unique marketing preferences and behaviours:

1. **Roth-Cohen et al. (2022)** - "Are you talking to me? Generation X, Y, Z responses to mobile advertising" - *Journal of Consumer Marketing*

- Analysed generational differences in mobile advertising attitudes
- Found Generation Z shows distinct preferences for authentic, visually-driven content

2. **Digital Content Preferences Study (2024)** - "Marketing to Gen Z: Understanding the Preferences and Behaviours of Next Generation"

- Findings reveal that Generation Z prioritizes visual content, convenience, and impulsive purchases, driven by social media trends and influencer endorsements.
- Identified authentic brand communication as critical for Gen Z engagement

3. **Social Impact Marketing Research (2024)**

- Research shows that 77% of Gen Z have done something to stand up for a cause they believe in, and they expect brands to demonstrate similar social consciousness
- Established connection between brand values alignment and Generation Z loyalty

1. 4.2 Millennial Marketing Behaviours

The literature reveals distinct differences between Millennial and Generation Z marketing preferences:

Millennial Characteristics:

- Millennials emphasize trust, detailed product research, and alignment with sustainability values.
- Prefer thorough product information and detailed brand research before purchasing

- Value long-term brand relationships and loyalty programs
- Respond positively to expert endorsements and detailed product comparisons

Cross-Generational Similarities:

- Both generations value authenticity in brand communications
- Strong preference for digital-first marketing approaches
- Importance of social media integration in marketing strategies
- Expectation of personalized marketing experiences

1. 4.3 Influencer Marketing and Authority

Research on influencer marketing provides insights relevant to podcast marketing effectiveness:

1. Influencer Credibility Study (2024) - "Understanding Gen Z and Gen X Responses to Influencer Communications"

- Findings suggest that influencer endorsements have an impact on both age groups, with a more noticeable effect observed in the younger generation. The loyalty towards influencers emerges as a constructive intermediary factor, amplifying the influence of credibility on purchasing intentions
- Establishes framework for understanding podcast host influence on brand awareness

1. 5. Content Marketing and Brand Awareness

1. 5.1 Content Marketing Effectiveness Framework

The academic literature on content marketing provides essential context for understanding podcast marketing potential:

1. Ashley & Tuten (2015) - "Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing" - *Business Horizons*

- Established foundational framework for social media content marketing
- Identified engagement metrics as key performance indicators

2. Hollebeek et al. (2014) - "Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media" - *Journal of Marketing*

- Developed consumer brand engagement scale for digital marketing
- Provided measurement framework applicable to podcast marketing assessment

3. Content Marketing Institute (2024) - "B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends"

- Content marketing helps most B2B marketers at the top of the funnel, with 87% reporting that it helped them create brand awareness in the last 12 months.
- Demonstrates content marketing's effectiveness for brand awareness building

1. 5.2 Brand Awareness Measurement in Digital Marketing

Research on brand awareness measurement provides methodological frameworks for evaluating podcast marketing effectiveness:

1. Keller & Lehmann (2006) - "Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities" - *Marketing Science*

- Established comprehensive brand awareness measurement frameworks
- Identified aided and unaided recall as key metrics

2. Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold (2011) - "Brand equity dilution through negative online word-of-mouth communication" - *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*

- Examined digital marketing impact on brand perception

- Provided framework for measuring negative brand awareness effects
- 3. **Social Media Brand Awareness Research (2024)**
 - Through an extensive literature review and analysis of existing studies in this field, it was found that an effective social media marketing campaign can significantly enhance brand awareness and increase customer engagement.
 - Established benchmarks for digital marketing brand awareness effectiveness

1. 5.3 Content Marketing Strategy Development

The literature identifies several key principles for effective content marketing strategy:

Value-Driven Content Creation: Successful content marketing prioritizes audience value over direct promotional messaging.

Consistency and Frequency: Regular content publication schedules build audience expectations and engagement.

Multi-Platform Integration: Effective content marketing strategies coordinate across multiple digital platforms.

Measurement and Optimization: Continuous measurement and strategy refinement based on performance data.

1. 6. Research Gaps and Limitations

1. 6.1 Identified Research Gaps

The literature review reveals several significant gaps in current academic research:

1. **Limited Podcast-Specific Research:** Understanding podcast advertising; the need for more research - Academic research specifically examining podcast marketing effectiveness remains limited.
2. **Generational Podcast Consumption Studies:** Insufficient research examining how Millennials and Generation Z specifically consume and respond to podcast content marketing.
3. **Long-term Brand Awareness Impact:** Limited longitudinal studies measuring podcast marketing's long-term impact on brand awareness and loyalty.
4. **Cross-Platform Integration:** Insufficient research on how podcast marketing integrates with broader content marketing strategies.
5. **Measurement Methodology:** Lack of standardized metrics for measuring podcast content marketing effectiveness.

1. 6.2 Methodological Limitations

Current research faces several methodological challenges:

- **Sample Size Limitations:** Many studies use relatively small sample sizes, limiting generalizability
- **Geographic Concentration:** Research primarily focuses on Western markets, with limited global perspectives
- **Industry Variation:** Insufficient examination of podcast marketing effectiveness across different industry sectors
- **Technology Evolution:** Rapid technological changes outpace academic research publication cycles

1. 7. Synthesis and Theoretical Framework

1. 7.1 Integrated Theoretical Model

Based on the literature review, an integrated theoretical framework emerges combining:

Podcast Marketing Effectiveness Factors:

- Host credibility and parasocial relationships
- Content quality and relevance
- Audience engagement levels
- Integration with broader marketing strategies

Generational Response Variables:

- Authenticity preferences (both generations)
- Visual vs. audio content preferences (Gen Z vs. Millennials)
- Social impact expectations (particularly Gen Z)
- Research depth preferences (Millennials > Gen Z)

Brand Awareness Outcomes:

- Aided and unaided brand recall
- Brand attitude formation
- Purchase intention development
- Long-term brand loyalty building

1. 7.2 Practical Implications

The literature synthesis suggests several practical implications for podcast content marketing:

1. **Host Selection Importance:** Choosing hosts with strong audience relationships and credibility within target demographic groups
2. **Content Integration Strategy:** Developing natural content integration approaches rather than traditional advertising insertions
3. **Generational Customization:** Adapting podcast content styles to match generational preferences
4. **Measurement Framework:** Implementing comprehensive measurement systems tracking both immediate and long-term brand awareness impacts

1. 8. Future Research Directions

1. 8.1 Priority Research Areas

Based on identified gaps, future research should prioritize:

1. **Longitudinal Podcast Marketing Studies:** Extended studies measuring long-term brand awareness and loyalty impacts
2. **Cross-Cultural Podcast Marketing Research:** Examining podcast marketing effectiveness across different cultural contexts
3. **Platform Integration Studies:** Research on podcast marketing integration with social media and other digital platforms
4. **Industry-Specific Effectiveness:** Sector-by-sector analysis of podcast marketing effectiveness
5. **Advanced Measurement Methodologies:** Development of sophisticated metrics for podcast marketing ROI measurement

1. 8.2 Methodological Recommendations

Future research should address current methodological limitations through:

- **Larger Sample Sizes:** Multi-thousand participant studies for improved generalizability
- **Global Perspective:** Including diverse geographic and cultural contexts
- **Mixed-Methods Approaches:** Combining quantitative metrics with qualitative insights

- **Real-Time Measurement:** Utilizing advanced analytics for immediate impact assessment

1. 9. Conclusion

This literature review reveals a complex landscape where podcast marketing shows strong potential effectiveness, particularly for reaching Millennials and Generation Z audiences. In an Acast survey, most marketers said podcast advertising improves overall campaign effectiveness by 21% to 40%. However, significant gaps exist in academic research specifically examining podcasts as content marketing tools for brand awareness building.

The evidence suggests that podcasts' unique characteristics—intimate host-audience relationships, high engagement levels, and integration capabilities—position them as valuable content marketing tools. The distinct preferences of Millennials and Generation Z for authentic, engaging content align well with podcast marketing's strengths.

Key conclusions include:

1. **Demonstrated Effectiveness:** Available research shows podcast advertising and marketing can effectively build brand awareness and consumer relationships
2. **Generational Alignment:** Podcast marketing characteristics align with both Millennial and Generation Z preferences for authentic, engaging content
3. **Research Gap:** Significant academic research gaps exist, creating opportunities for comprehensive studies
4. **Practical Potential:** Strong theoretical and practical foundations exist for effective podcast content marketing implementation

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a **quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional research design**, aimed at measuring the relationship between podcast content marketing and brand awareness levels among Millennial and Gen Z audiences. A **survey-based approach** is employed to collect empirical data and test the study's hypotheses.

2.2. Research Approach

A **deductive approach** is used, grounded in existing theoretical frameworks such as:

- **Content Marketing Theory** (Ashley & Tuten, 2015)
- **Uses and Gratifications Theory**
- **Generational Cohort Theory**
- **Brand Awareness Models** (Keller & Lehmann, 2006)

These provide the basis for hypothesis development and quantitative analysis.

2.3. Population and Sampling

Target Population:

- Millennials (born 1981–1996) and Gen Z (born 1997–2012)
- Residing in **urban Indian metro areas**
- Regular podcast listeners (at least once a month)
- Consumers exposed to podcast advertising or branded content

Sampling Technique:

- **Non-probability purposive sampling** (targeting only podcast listeners)

- **Snowball sampling** may be employed via social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Spotify communities, Reddit forums)

Sample Size:

- Minimum of **200 respondents** (100 Millennials, 100 Gen Z) to ensure statistical power and cross-generational comparison

2.4. Data Collection Method

Instrument:

- **Structured online questionnaire** using Google Forms or Qualtrics

Sections of the Questionnaire:

1. **Demographics:** Age, gender, education, occupation
2. **Media Behavior:** Frequency of podcast listening, platforms used, favourite genres
3. **Content Engagement:** Level of engagement with branded podcast content
4. **Perceived Brand Awareness:** Aided/unaided recall, brand familiarity
5. **Parasocial Interaction:** Likert scale items assessing host-listener trust/connection
6. **Purchase Intention & Brand Perception**

Measurement Scales:

- **5-point Likert scale** (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)
- **Brand recall and recognition** measured using aided and unaided questions
- **Parasocial interaction scale** adapted from Lee et al. (2024)
- **Brand awareness metrics** from Keller & Lehmann (2006)

2.5. Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the impact of podcast listening frequency on brand recall and purchase intention.
2. To compare Gen Z and Millennials on podcast engagement and brand perception.
3. To analyse the influence of host credibility on consumer trust and perceived brand authenticity.
4. To examine the relationship between demographic variables and podcast-driven brand discovery Behavior.
5. To assess differences in brand recall and trust across various podcast listening platforms and genres.

2.6. Validity and Reliability

- **Pilot Testing:** Questionnaire will be tested on 30 respondents for clarity and consistency
- **Cronbach's Alpha:** Internal consistency of Likert-scale items ($\alpha \geq 0.7$ accepted)
- **Construct Validity:** Scales will be adapted from validated academic sources (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014 for engagement)

2.7. Limitations

- **Non-probability sampling** limits generalizability
- Self-reported data may introduce **social desirability bias**
- Results may vary across cultural/geographic boundaries

3. Data analysis

The study collected responses from 200 participants—100 Millennials and 100 Gen Z—across a range of educational qualifications, occupations, and genders. Gen Z respondents

were primarily students (100%), with educational backgrounds spanning undergraduate (31%), postgraduate (25%), graduate (24%), and high school or below (20%). Gender distribution within Gen Z was balanced, with slightly more males than females.

Millennial respondents exhibited more occupational diversity, with the majority being employed (46%) or self-employed (37%). A smaller portion were freelancers (14%) and students (3%). Educational attainment among Millennials showed strong representation at the postgraduate (33%) and undergraduate (27%) levels, followed by high school or below (25%) and graduate (15%) categories. Male Millennials were predominantly employed, while females were more evenly distributed across employment, self-employment, and freelance roles.

Quantitative analysis revealed that podcast listening frequency significantly influenced brand awareness ($F = 2.456, p = .047$), supporting the hypothesis that greater exposure leads to higher brand recognition. However, no significant relationship was found between listening frequency and purchase intention ($F = 1.111, p = .353$). Further, independent t-tests and chi-square analyses showed no significant differences in brand trust or perception between Millennials and Gen Z, or based on education, gender, or occupation.

Correlation analysis found host credibility had minimal impact on brand trust, with only a weak significant relationship between general trust in podcast ads and brand follow-up Behavior ($r = .155, p = .029$). These findings suggest podcasts foster broad brand awareness, with minimal demographic variation in marketing effectiveness

3.1 Impact of Podcast Listening Frequency on Brand Awareness

To assess whether podcast listening frequency significantly influences brand awareness among Millennials and Gen Z, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using responses to the question "*How frequently do you notice branded content or product mentions in podcasts?*" (Q12) as the dependent variable, and podcast listening frequency (Q5) as the independent variable.

The ANOVA results revealed a statistically significant difference in brand awareness across the five levels of podcast listening frequency, $F(4, 195) = 2.456, p = .047$. The between-group sum of squares ($SS = 20.349$) indicates a meaningful amount of variance attributed to differences between the listening frequency groups, relative to the within-group variance ($SS = 403.846$). Since the p-value is below the conventional alpha level of .05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that **brand awareness differs significantly across levels of podcast listening frequency.**

This finding suggests that individuals who listen to podcasts more frequently are more likely to notice branded content or product mentions. It supports the premise that higher exposure to podcast content increases the opportunity for brand messaging to be recognized, potentially enhancing brand recall among younger audiences.

3.2 Impact of Podcast Listening Frequency on Purchase Intention

A second one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of podcast listening frequency on purchase intention, measured by the question "*How likely are you to consider purchasing a product recommended in a podcast you enjoy?*" (Q16).

The results indicated **no statistically significant difference** in purchase intention across podcast listening frequencies, $F(4, 195) = 1.111, p = .353$. With a between-group sum of squares of 8.231 and a within-group sum of squares of 361.269, the variation attributed to different listening frequencies was minimal and not sufficient to conclude a meaningful effect. Therefore, we **fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_0)** for Hypothesis 1a in relation to purchase intention.

This outcome implies that while frequent podcast listeners may be more aware of branded content, **increased exposure does not necessarily translate to a higher likelihood of acting on those messages in terms of purchasing behaviour**. Factors beyond frequency—such as trust in the host, relevance of the product, and personal need—may play a more substantial role in influencing purchase decisions.

Summary Interpretation for Hypothesis 1a

- **Brand awareness** significantly varies by podcast listening frequency, indicating that **frequent podcast listeners are more aware of branded content**.
- **Purchase intention**, however, does not significantly differ across podcast listening frequencies, suggesting that **awareness does not automatically lead to intent to purchase**. These findings have important implications for marketers using podcasts as a branding tool: while repeated exposure through podcasts can increase recognition, **additional strategies may be required to convert awareness into consumer action**.

3.3 Differences in Podcast Trust and Brand Perception Between Millennials and Gen Z

To investigate whether there are statistically significant differences between Millennials and Gen Z in terms of their trust in podcast-endorsed brands and their perceptions of brand authenticity, a series of **independent samples t-tests** were conducted. Respondents were classified into two generational cohorts: Gen Z and Millennials (Q1), and their responses were compared across three variables measured on 5-point Likert scales: **trust in podcast host recommendations (Q10.2)**, **trust compared to traditional ads (Q14.2)**, and **perceived brand authenticity (Q14.3)**.

3.3.1 Trust in Podcast Host Recommendations

The first t-test examined differences in agreement with the statement *"I trust product recommendations made by my favourite podcast hosts."* The analysis showed no statistically significant difference between the two generational groups, $t(198) = 0.384, p = .701$. Although Levene's Test indicated unequal variances ($F = 4.906, p = .028$), the adjusted t-test assuming unequal variances confirmed the same non-significant result.

- **Mean (Gen Z):** 3.09
- **Mean (Millennials):** 3.01
- **Mean Difference:** 0.08

The minimal difference in means and a wide 95% confidence interval (-0.331 to 0.491) indicate that **both cohorts express similar levels of trust in host recommendations**, suggesting that generational identity does not significantly influence trust in individual podcast hosts.

3.3.2 Trust in Podcasts vs Traditional Advertisements

Next, differences were assessed for the statement *"I trust brand recommendations from podcasts more than from traditional advertisements."* The result was also **not statistically**

significant, $t(198) = -1.532$, $p = .127$, and Levene's Test indicated equal variances ($F = 0.279$, $p = .598$).

- **Mean (Gen Z):** 3.10
- **Mean (Millennials):** 3.39
- **Mean Difference:** -0.29

Although Millennials reported a slightly higher mean score, the difference was not significant at the 0.05 level. The 95% confidence interval (-0.663 to 0.083) includes zero, further supporting the conclusion that **generational differences do not significantly affect trust in podcasts over traditional advertisements.**

3.3.3 Perceived Brand Authenticity

Lastly, the analysis evaluated responses to the statement "*I consider brands mentioned on podcasts to be more authentic.*" No significant generational difference was found, $t(198) = -0.242$, $p = .809$, with equal variances assumed ($F = 0.905$, $p = .343$).

- **Mean (Gen Z):** 2.93
- **Mean (Millennials):** 2.98
- **Mean Difference:** -0.05

The negligible difference in means and the very wide confidence interval (-0.457 to 0.357) strongly suggest **no meaningful distinction in perceived brand authenticity** between Millennials and Gen Z when it comes to podcast content.

Summary Interpretation for Hypothesis 2a

The results of the independent samples t-tests consistently demonstrate **no statistically significant differences between Millennials and Gen Z** across all three trust- and perception-related variables:

- Trust in podcast host recommendations
- Trust in podcast-based brand endorsements over traditional ads
- Perception of brand authenticity in podcast mentions

Therefore, the **null hypothesis (H₀)** for Hypothesis 2a is retained. These findings suggest that **podcast-based content marketing elicits similar levels of trust and brand perception across both generational cohorts**, underscoring the broad applicability of podcast marketing strategies targeting younger demographics.

3.4 Influence of Host Credibility on Brand Trust

To explore whether host credibility influences brand trust among Millennials and Gen Z, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. **Host credibility** was measured using four Likert-scale items: emotional connection with the host (Q10.1), trust in product recommendations (Q10.2), likelihood of trusting a brand endorsed by a regular host (Q10.4), and perceived personal nature of host-read messages (Q10.5). **Brand trust** was represented by two indicators: trust in podcast brand endorsements over traditional ads (Q14.2) and behavioural trust measured by brand follow-up actions (Q14.4).

3.4.1 Correlation Between Host Credibility and Brand Trust

The analysis revealed **no statistically significant correlations** between individual host credibility items and either of the brand trust measures, **except for a modest positive correlation between Q14.2 and Q14.4:**

- **Q14.2 (Trust in podcast brands over traditional ads) and Q14.4 (Following up on brands after podcast mentions)** were positively correlated, $r = .155$, $p = .029$, indicating a weak but statistically significant relationship. This suggests that **those who express higher**

trust in podcast-based brand recommendations are slightly more likely to take action, such as researching a brand after hearing it in a podcast.

However, the core hypothesis (H_1) posits a significant influence of **host credibility** on **brand trust**. Based on the correlation results:

- **Q10.1 (Feeling a connection with the host)** was not significantly correlated with either brand trust measure (Q14.2: $r = -.023, p = .748$; Q14.4: $r = .078, p = .270$).
- **Q10.2 (Trust in host recommendations)** showed weak, non-significant correlations (Q14.2: $r = -.019, p = .790$; Q14.4: $r = -.044, p = .540$).
- **Q10.4 (Trust in brands endorsed by regular hosts)** also yielded non-significant correlations (Q14.2: $r = .024, p = .732$; Q14.4: $r = .053, p = .459$).
- **Q10.5 (Host-read messages feel personal and convincing)** showed similarly weak and non-significant correlations with brand trust (Q14.2: $r = .043, p = .546$; Q14.4: $r = .044, p = .537$).

None of the observed relationships between **host credibility metrics** and **brand trust indicators** were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with the exception of the correlation between the two trust outcomes themselves.

3.4.2 Interpretation and Implications

Based on these results, **the null hypothesis (H_0) for Hypothesis 3a—that host credibility does not significantly influence brand trust—is retained**. Despite theoretical assumptions in prior literature suggesting that parasocial relationships and credibility may enhance trust, the empirical data from this study **do not support a statistically significant linear association** between host credibility and brand trust among respondents.

The lack of significant correlations may be attributed to various factors:

- The multidimensional nature of trust may not be adequately captured through bivariate relationships.
- Host credibility might exert an indirect or mediated influence (e.g., through perceived authenticity or emotional engagement) not captured in this model.
- Alternatively, trust in brands may be driven more by **brand relevance, product quality, or personal need** rather than characteristics of the host alone.

3.4.3 Summary

While **audiences may express affective bonds with podcast hosts**, this does **not directly translate into greater brand trust or brand-following behaviour**. The only significant association identified was between general trust in podcast advertising (Q14.2) and actual brand engagement (Q14.4), indicating that **general attitudes toward podcast advertising effectiveness may matter more than individual host credibility per se**.

Future research might benefit from employing **multiple regression or path analysis** to examine whether **host credibility indirectly influences brand trust through mediating variables** such as perceived authenticity or emotional resonance.

3.5 Relationship Between Podcast Engagement and Brand Recall

To evaluate whether deeper engagement with podcast content contributes to brand recall among Millennials and Gen Z, Chi-square tests of independence were conducted.

Engagement was measured through agreement with the statement: *“Podcasts allow me to deeply engage with the content and host”* (Q10.3), and brand recall was assessed via two measures: **recall presence** (Q11: *Yes/No*) and **recall strength** (Q13: ordinal categories).

3.5.1 Engagement and Binary Brand Recall (Q10.3 × Q11)

The Chi-square test examining the association between deep engagement and the ability to recall any brand (Q11) yielded a **Pearson Chi-square value of $\chi^2(4) = 5.297, p = .258$** .

Similarly, the likelihood ratio was not significant ($\chi^2 = 5.331, p = .255$), and the linear-by-linear association was negligible and nonsignificant ($p = .793$).

These results indicate that **there is no statistically significant relationship between participants' level of engagement with podcasts and their ability to recall any branded content mentioned within them**. The minimum expected cell count was well above the threshold (16.45), confirming the reliability of the Chi-square approximation.

3.5.2 Engagement and Brand Recall Strength (Q10.3 × Q13)

A second Chi-square analysis assessed the relationship between deep engagement and **the strength of brand recall** (i.e., whether participants recalled one brand, multiple brands, or were unsure). This analysis also produced a **non-significant result: $\chi^2(4) = 3.354, p = .500$** . The likelihood ratio was similarly non-significant ($\chi^2 = 3.385, p = .496$), and the linear-by-linear association was minimal ($p = .845$).

As with the previous test, cell counts met the expected threshold, validating the test's assumptions.

3.5.3 Interpretation and Implications

Given the non-significant results in both Chi-square tests, we retain the **null hypothesis (H₀)** for Hypothesis 4a: there is **no significant relationship between podcast engagement and brand recall** in this sample.

These findings suggest that **even when listeners report feeling deeply engaged with podcast content or hosts, this engagement does not necessarily enhance their ability to recall brand mentions or influence the strength of their recall**. This counters some theoretical expectations from media engagement literature, which posits that deeper cognitive and emotional involvement often enhances memory encoding.

A few possible interpretations can be considered:

- **Engagement may be focused on content rather than commercial segments**, resulting in strong narrative immersion but low retention of branded messages.
- **Brand placement quality or relevance may be more critical** to recall than listener engagement per se.
- **Individual differences in memory, attention, or interest in advertising** might moderate the relationship but were not accounted for in the present analysis.

3.5.4 Summary

The results reveal **no significant association between the level of podcast engagement and either the occurrence or strength of brand recall**. These findings imply that **engagement alone may not be a reliable predictor of brand awareness in podcast marketing**, underscoring the need for more nuanced or targeted brand integration strategies to enhance recall effectiveness.

3.6 Influence of Demographics on Exposure, Trust, and Purchase Behavior

This objective sought to determine whether key demographic variables—**age group, gender, and education level**—significantly influence podcast-related behaviours such as listening frequency, brand trust, discovery, and purchase behaviour. A series of **Chi-square tests of independence** were conducted to test Hypothesis 5a:

- **H₀**: Demographic factors (age, education, gender) have no effect on podcast usage and brand trust.
- **H₁**: Demographic factors significantly affect podcast usage and brand trust.

3.6.1 Age Group and Podcast Listening Frequency (Q1 × Q5)

A Chi-square test was conducted to assess the association between **age group (Millennial vs. Gen Z)** and **podcast listening frequency**. The test yielded a non-significant result:

- $\chi^2(4) = 3.618$, $p = .460$, with a minimum expected count of 17.50.

This indicates **no statistically significant relationship** between age group and frequency of podcast consumption. Both Millennials and Gen Z listeners appear to exhibit similar listening patterns, suggesting generational parity in podcast engagement frequency.

3.6.2 Education Level and Brand Authenticity Perception (Q3 × Q14.3)

The relationship between **education level** and agreement with the statement "*I consider brands mentioned on podcasts to be more authentic*" was also non-significant:

- $\chi^2(4) = 4.597$, $p = .331$, with a minimum expected count of 15.50.

This suggests that **perceptions of brand authenticity in podcasts are not influenced by educational background**. Respondents across all education levels, from high school to postgraduate, demonstrated comparable perceptions of podcast-endorsed brand authenticity.

3.6.3 Gender and Past Purchase Behavior (Q2 × Q15)

A 2x2 Chi-square test examined whether **gender** was associated with having previously purchased a product after hearing about it on a podcast. The analysis revealed:

- $\chi^2(1) = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$ (Fisher's Exact Test = 1.000)

This result shows **no significant gender-based difference in podcast-induced purchase behavior**, indicating that **males and females are equally likely to make purchases based on podcast recommendations**.

3.6.4 Education Level and Purchase Likelihood (Q3 × Q16)

The association between **education level** and **likelihood of purchasing a product recommended in a podcast** was tested, with results indicating no significant effect:

- $\chi^2(12) = 8.923$, $p = .709$, minimum expected count = 7.35.

Similarly, the test confirms that **future purchase intent** in response to podcast advertising is **not significantly affected by educational attainment**.

3.6.5 Education Level and Brand Discovery via Podcasts (Q3 × Q14.1)

Lastly, the association between **education level** and the statement "*Podcasts have helped me discover new brands*" was also examined. The test again produced a non-significant result:

- $\chi^2(12) = 9.186$, $p = .687$, with a minimum expected count of 5.88.

This finding suggests that **brand discovery via podcasts is consistent across education levels**, indicating widespread efficacy of podcasts for brand exposure regardless of academic background.

3.6.6 Summary and Interpretation

Across all analyses, **no statistically significant relationships were found between demographic variables (age, gender, education) and podcast-related behaviors or brand attitudes**. As a result, the **null hypothesis (H₀)** for Hypothesis 5a is retained.

These results imply that:

- **Podcast marketing reaches a demographically diverse audience with relatively uniform outcomes** in terms of trust, brand discovery, and purchase behaviour.
- **Listener engagement and trust appear to transcend demographic segmentation**, which may make podcasts a particularly efficient medium for broad-based brand awareness campaigns.

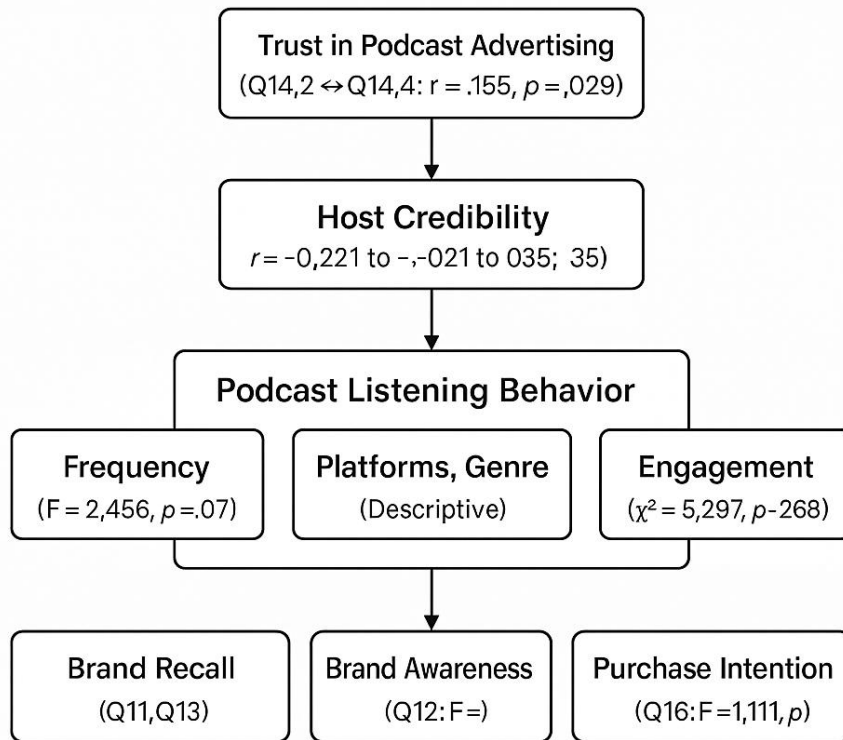
3.6.7 Practical Implications

From a marketing strategy perspective, these findings suggest that **demographic targeting may not be necessary** when leveraging podcasts for content marketing. **Podcasts may function as demographically neutral platforms**, allowing brands to deploy generalized messaging without the need for heavily segmented campaigns—thereby simplifying targeting strategies and reducing associated costs.

4. Findings

4.1 Conceptual Framework

This model positions **podcast listening behaviour and host credibility** as central inputs, with **brand trust, awareness, recall, and purchase intention** as primary marketing outcomes, mediated or moderated by **demographic factors and engagement levels**.



$$\chi^2 = 3.618, p = .460; \chi^2 = 4.597, p = .331$$

$$\chi^2 = .000, p = 1.000; \chi^2 = 8.923, p = .709$$

Interpretation of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study offers a structured lens through which the effectiveness of podcasts as a content marketing tool can be evaluated, specifically among Millennial and Gen Z audiences. At its core, the framework is designed to explore the interrelationships between podcast listening behaviour, host credibility, and key marketing outcomes—namely, brand awareness, brand recall, brand trust, and purchase intention. These relationships are examined within the broader context of individual demographic attributes and engagement levels, which may serve as moderators or mediators in influencing the strength or direction of these effects.

At the input level, the model places podcast listening behaviour as a foundational factor. This includes the frequency with which individuals engage with podcast content, their preferred platforms and genres, and the extent to which they report being deeply engaged with podcast content and hosts. The underlying assumption here is rooted in exposure theory and the mere-exposure effect, which posit that repeated contact with a message increases familiarity and, potentially, favourability. Thus, higher listening frequency and deeper engagement are hypothesized to positively influence downstream outcomes such as brand awareness and recall.

Parallel to listening behaviour, host credibility is introduced as a secondary but potent input. Drawing from source credibility theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), the framework conceptualizes credibility through dimensions such as trustworthiness, expertise, likeability, and emotional connection, as measured by items like Q10.1–Q10.5. This construct is theorized to shape trust in podcast advertising—a mediating variable that reflects how believable and persuasive listeners perceive podcast-delivered brand endorsements to be. The assumption is that the more credible and relatable a host is, the more likely their product endorsements will foster trust in the brand being promoted.

The framework then traces pathways from trust and awareness toward more concrete behavioural marketing outcomes: brand recall (whether the listener remembers a brand), brand awareness (their recognition and understanding of the brand), and ultimately purchase intention (the likelihood of acting upon the brand message). These three constructs are conceptualized as both interrelated and sequential. Awareness is seen as a prerequisite for recall, which in turn precedes the possibility of intent to purchase—consistent with the hierarchy of effects model in advertising (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). However, these relationships may not always be linear, as individual trust levels and personal relevance of the product also mediate or disrupt this flow.

Moreover, the model incorporates demographic variables—including age, gender, and education level—as contextual dimensions that could potentially influence each stage of the marketing funnel. For example, Millennials and Gen Z may differ in how they respond to branded content or in their general trust in digital media. However, the empirical results of this study suggest a surprising uniformity across demographic lines, implying that podcasts might function as a demographically inclusive medium, where message effectiveness is not significantly constrained by personal characteristics.

Finally, engagement is treated as both an input and a moderating factor. While it is linked to listening behaviour, it is more nuanced, reflecting cognitive and emotional involvement rather

than just exposure. Drawing from media involvement and transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000), this variable helps assess whether the depth of interaction with content affects outcomes like recall or trust. However, the study finds that engagement does not always guarantee brand memory, especially when narrative involvement overshadows commercial attention.

This conceptual framework provides a comprehensive, multidimensional view of how podcast content influences marketing outcomes. By integrating established theoretical foundations with context-specific constructs like host credibility and digital engagement, it allows for a robust examination of both message exposure and message influence in the emerging field of podcast-based content marketing. The model also enables the identification of both direct and indirect pathways of influence, paving the way for more granular future research using moderation and mediation analysis, structural equation modelling, or multivariate regression techniques.

4.2 Impact of Podcast Listening Frequency on Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention

The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed that podcast listening frequency has a statistically significant impact on brand awareness, as measured by participants' reported frequency of noticing branded content or product mentions in podcasts ($F(4, 195) = 2.456, p = .047$). This indicates that individuals who listen to podcasts more frequently are more likely to be aware of branded messages, supporting the notion that increased exposure enhances brand visibility. However, the same analysis found no significant effect of listening frequency on purchase intention ($F(4, 195) = 1.111, p = .353$), suggesting that while frequent podcast listeners may recognize branded content more readily, this awareness does not necessarily lead to a higher likelihood of purchasing the promoted products. These findings imply that although repetition through regular listening may improve brand recall, converting awareness into purchase behaviour likely requires additional influencing factors such as trust in the podcast host, the perceived relevance of the product, or alignment with the listener's needs and preferences.

4.3 Differences in Podcast Trust and Brand Perception between Millennials and Gen Z

To assess generational differences in trust and brand perception related to podcast content, independent samples t-tests were conducted comparing Millennials and Gen Z respondents across three variables: trust in host recommendations, trust in podcast advertising versus traditional ads, and perceived brand authenticity. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the two groups. Specifically, trust in host recommendations yielded $p = .701$, trust in podcast ads over traditional ads resulted in $p = .127$, and perceived authenticity of brands mentioned in podcasts showed $p = .809$. These findings suggest that both Millennials and Gen Z exhibit comparable attitudes toward podcast-endorsed content. The lack of significant variation implies a generally homogeneous level of trust and brand perception across these generational cohorts, reinforcing the view that podcast content resonates similarly with younger digital-native audiences regardless of age segment within this demographic.

4.4 Influence of Host Credibility on Brand Trust

To examine whether host credibility influences brand trust, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using multiple indicators of host credibility—including personal connection with the host, trust in host recommendations, and perceived authenticity of host-read messages—and brand trust outcomes. The analysis revealed no statistically significant correlations

between any of the host credibility variables and brand trust measures. However, a weak but statistically significant correlation was observed between general trust in podcast advertising (Q14.2) and brand engagement behaviours, such as looking up or following a brand after hearing about it in a podcast (Q14.4), with $r = .155$, $p = .029$. These results suggest that brand trust may be influenced more by the quality and relevance of the brand message itself rather than by host-specific characteristics. Alternatively, host credibility may exert its influence through more complex, indirect pathways not captured in a simple linear correlation model, pointing to the potential value of future research employing mediation or structural equation modelling approaches.

4.5 Relationship Between Podcast Engagement and Brand Recall

To evaluate the relationship between podcast engagement and brand recall, Chi-square tests were conducted examining the association between self-reported deep engagement with podcast content (Q10.3) and two brand recall measures: whether any brand was recalled (Q11) and the strength of that recall (Q13). The results showed no statistically significant relationship between engagement and brand recall ($p = .258$) or between engagement and the strength of brand recall ($p = .500$). These findings suggest that while listeners may feel deeply engaged with podcast content and hosts, this engagement does not necessarily translate into better memory of branded messages. It is possible that narrative immersion or emotional involvement with the content enhances the listening experience but diverts attention from embedded advertisements or product mentions, thereby limiting their effectiveness in terms of recall.

4.6 Influence of Demographics on Exposure, Trust & Purchase Behavior

To determine whether demographic factors influence podcast-related consumer behaviour, a series of Chi-square tests were conducted to examine the effects of age, gender, and education on podcast listening frequency, brand trust, brand authenticity perception, and both past and intended purchase behaviour. The results revealed no statistically significant effects of age on podcast listening frequency ($p = .460$), nor did gender or education significantly influence brand trust and authenticity ($p = .331$ and $p = .709$, respectively). Additionally, no significant relationships were found between demographic variables and either past purchases made based on podcast recommendations ($p = 1.000$) or future purchase intention ($p = .687$). These findings suggest that podcast-based content marketing operates largely independently of demographic distinctions among younger audiences. As such, podcasts may function as a demographically neutral platform, offering brands an efficient channel for reaching diverse segments within Millennial and Gen Z cohorts without requiring heavily segmented targeting strategies.

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