

Monetization of Podcasts and Students' Media Behavior in the Digital Audio Environment

Monetización de los podcasts y el comportamiento mediático de los estudiantes en el entorno de audio digital

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Abstract

The chapter examines Generation Z listeners' attitudes toward podcast advertising and its potential influence on consumer behaviour. The aim of the study is to analyse the media behaviour of Generation Z podcast listeners and to identify their attitudes toward podcast advertising, its formats, the overall monetisation model, and its impact on consumer behaviour and the decision-making process. The research sample consisted of 402 respondents aged between 18 and 25 years. The findings demonstrated that the acceptance of podcast advertising within this target group is ambivalent. Its acceptance depends primarily on thematic relevance, natural integration into the content, and the form of placement. Respondents evaluated advertisements placed before the beginning of an episode more positively, whereas interruptive advertising was perceived more negatively. At the same time, the results revealed heterogeneity among respondents in terms of advertising acceptance and subsequent behaviour, with cluster analysis identifying four distinct groups: advertising-sensitive listeners, tolerant supporters of the creator, pragmatic or neutral listeners, and advertising-tolerant listeners. The findings also suggest that podcast advertising may primarily encourage product or brand search, while its direct effect on purchasing behaviour appears to be weaker. The contribution of these findings lies mainly in the practical design of communication and advertising strategies in the podcast environment with regard to the defined target group.

Keywords: advertising, communication strategy, Gen Z, monetisation, podcast

Resumen

El capítulo aborda las actitudes de los oyentes de la Generación Z hacia la publicidad en los podcasts y su posible influencia en el comportamiento del consumidor. El objetivo del estudio es analizar el comportamiento mediático de los oyentes de podcasts pertenecientes a la Generación Z e identificar sus actitudes hacia la publicidad en podcasts, sus formatos, el modelo general de monetización y su impacto en el comportamiento del consumidor y en el proceso de toma de decisiones. La muestra de investigación estuvo compuesta por un total de 402 encuestados de entre 18 y 25 años. Los hallazgos demostraron que la aceptación de la publicidad en podcasts dentro de este grupo objetivo es ambivalente. Su aceptación depende principalmente de la relevancia temática, de su integración natural en el contenido y de la forma de inserción. Los encuestados evaluaron más positivamente la publicidad situada al inicio del episodio, mientras que la publicidad interruptiva fue percibida de manera más negativa. Al mismo tiempo, los resultados evidenciaron heterogeneidad entre los encuestados en cuanto a la aceptación de la publicidad y el comportamiento posterior, identificándose mediante análisis de clúster un total de cuatro grupos diferenciados. Los resultados también sugieren que la publicidad en podcasts puede fomentar principalmente la búsqueda de un producto o una marca, mientras que su efecto directo sobre el comportamiento de compra parece ser más débil. La principal contribución de estos hallazgos radica en la configuración práctica de estrategias de comunicación y publicidad en el entorno de los podcasts, teniendo en cuenta el grupo objetivo definido.

Palabras clave: estrategia de comunicación, Gen Z, monetización, podcast, publicidad

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Theoretical Framework. 3. Methodology. 4. Analysis Results and Data interpretation. 5. Discussion and conclusion. 6. Acknowledgement. 7. References.

1. Introduction

In recent years, podcasts have become one of the fastest growing media. According to Minooka (2024), podcasts have evolved from simple audio formats created by enthusiasts into professional productions, reaching a wide audience and securing a stable place in the media landscape. Sullivan (2019) further argues that the growing popularity of podcasts created pressure for the development of sustainable monetisation mechanisms and revenue models. Podcasts began to be monetised mainly because they grew from a marginal format into a mass medium with a rapidly growing audience. This growth attracted brands and platforms, as podcasts offer an active audience and a high level of trust between listeners and presenters. Host-read advertisements, in particular, have supported the growth of advertising investment and the development of stable revenue models. The combination of wide reach, audience loyalty and trustworthy creators has thus naturally created the conditions for the development of monetisation (Brinson & Lemon, 2022). Research into business models in the broadcasting sector further suggests that media organisations are increasingly transforming their traditional revenue channels to respond to digital technologies and changing audience behaviour (Medina Ferreiro et al., 2022).

The growing popularity of podcasts is particularly evident among Generation Z, for whom podcasts have become a regular part of everyday media consumption. Previous research suggests that young audiences are generally open to podcast advertising when it is perceived as authentic, relevant to the content, and naturally integrated into the listening experience (Brooks et al., 2022; Moe, 2023). At the same time, podcasts represent an increasingly important environment for communication strategies aimed at younger audiences, making the understanding of their advertising acceptance and consumer responses particularly relevant. Despite the growing body of research on podcast advertising and podcast consumption among Generation Z, limited attention has been devoted to the relationship between

podcast monetisation strategies, advertising acceptance, and consumer behaviour within this specific audience segment. Furthermore, existing studies rarely examine the heterogeneity of Generation Z listeners and their attitudes towards podcast advertising. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyse the media behaviour of Generation Z podcast listeners and to examine their attitudes towards podcast advertising, its various formats, and its potential impact on consumer behaviour. The study is based on a questionnaire survey conducted among 402 respondents aged 18–25 years. To analyse the data, descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation analysis, and K-means clustering were applied. The contribution of this study lies in providing a more detailed understanding of how Generation Z perceives podcast advertising and podcast monetisation. In particular, the study identifies distinct listener segments based on their attitudes towards advertising, offering practical implications for communication and advertising strategies in the podcast environment.

2. Theoretical Framework

The growing popularity of podcasts and the increasing number of listeners have made this format an attractive advertising platform for brands. An important factor is the high level of trust between the listener and the presenter, which directly influences the success of the advertisement. Host-read advertisements, i.e. advertisements read directly by the presenter, work significantly better because listeners perceive them as more authentic and less disruptive than traditional formats. As Brinson and Lemon (2022) point out, the presenter's trustworthiness, credibility and authentic demeanour are key factors that encourage the audience's willingness to accept advertisements and, at the same time, create favourable conditions for the stable monetisation of podcasts. These findings are complemented by a broader view of the monetisation strategies used by podcasts today. Rowles and Rogers (2019) state that podcasts can generate revenue through multiple monetisation models. In addition to host-read advertisements, these include, for example, advertising spots placed in different parts of an episode (pre-roll or mid-roll), sponsorship, product placement, branded podcasts, and premium subscriptions. The combination of these approaches allows creators to generate sustainable sources of revenue, with the reputation and trust of the host playing a significant role in motivating brands to invest in podcast space. The placement of the advertisement within the episode is also an important factor. Pre-roll advertising appears at the beginning of the episode before the content itself, mid-roll advertising is inserted in the middle of the episode, and post-roll advertising is located at the end. Research suggests that the placement of an advertisement can influence its memorability and effectiveness, with mid-roll advertisements being less likely to be skipped, as the listener is already engaged in listening to the episode at that point (Bosshard et al., 2024). Another form of monetisation is product placement, i.e. placing a brand or product directly into the podcast content. In this case, the product appears as a natural part of the conversation or discussion, and its presentation may be linked to the personal experiences of the host or guests. Research shows that such brand integration can positively influence listeners' attitudes towards the brand and their purchasing intentions (Milovan et al., 2024). Branded podcasts are also becoming increasingly common, created either in collaboration with a brand or by the brand itself. In this case, the podcast serves as a tool for building the brand and a long-term relationship with the audience through thematic or educational content (Balasubramanian et al., 2006).

According to Moe (2023), native advertising, especially the host-read format, significantly distinguishes podcasts from traditional audio spots. When the presenter reads the advertisement directly during the episode, listeners often perceive it as more authentic, more naturally integrated and less disruptive than traditional advertising formats. The presenter's voice is already part of the content and listeners develop a more personal relationship with it. Consequently, the presenter's personal connection with the audience increases the credibility and acceptance of the advertising message. Brinson and Lemon (2022)

similarly emphasise that trust, credibility and authenticity are among the key factors influencing listeners' acceptance of podcast advertising. This type of advertising exploits the relationship between the host and the listener, where the listener perceives the presenter as a trusted "friend" rather than just a media personality, which in turn contributes to greater engagement and positive evaluation of the advertising content compared to traditional pre-recorded advertisements (Moe, 2023).

Taylor (2024) states that podcast advertising is an environment where the presenter's ability to appear credible and personal becomes a decisive factor for success, which is a fundamental difference from standardised audio spots used in traditional media. Native advertising, which is naturally embedded in media content, elicits more positive responses from audiences than traditional display advertising. When audiences perceive advertising as part of the content flow, it is less disruptive, more credible, and people are more willing to pay attention to it. In contrast, traditional advertisements that are clearly separated from the content appear more commercial, less credible, and elicit less willingness to accept the advertising message. Perceived authenticity plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of native forms (Moe, 2023).

In addition to the forms of advertising used in this space, it is important to emphasise that advertising in podcasts has its own specific characteristics. In the current media environment, there is a growing degree of scepticism towards traditional advertising, mainly due to increasing advertising saturation and consumers' long-term experience with exaggerated and opaque advertising claims (Kumar & Chandra, 2024). In podcast advertising, credibility is a key factor in the effectiveness of the advertisement itself. According to available research, the podcast host is cast in the role of an influencer who is seen by the audience as an authority and a friend they can trust, especially when they have a personal relationship with them (Brinson & Lemon, 2023). According to a study by Aenlle et al. (2023), podcasts act as a relational and intimate communication environment in which trust can be transferred to the host and content as well as to commercial messages, with trust being built primarily through perceived authenticity, voice exposure and conversational style, with these factors influencing social and interpersonal trust between the listener and the creator. This is a key difference from traditional audio (radio) advertising. Podcast advertising is typically characterised by a lower frequency of explicit brand naming in the podcast's narrative. The brand is thus present more implicitly, mediated by brand values rather than the product. The brand is expressed narratively through the selection and processing of content, the values and attitudes of the podcast, and the tone and style of the narration. Thus, it is not the visibility of the brand that comes to the fore, but the brand meaning (Fitó-Carreras et al., 2024). According to the authors of the same study, the credibility of podcast advertising is further enhanced by the intimate nature of the medium itself, which is fully consistent with the study by Aenlle et al. (2023). The specificity of podcast advertising is therefore the fact that its credibility does not stem directly from the authority of the brand itself and the frequency of exposure, but from the overall communication context. It is a continuous and voluntary relationship between the listener and the content and voice that mediates it. Advertising, when part of the podcast itself, is perceived as part of the narrative, not as an external disruptive element, which weakens the perception of advertising intent and strengthens its acceptability.

Podcast advertising can also influence listeners' trust in the promoted brand, based on the assumption that if podcast listeners trust the presenter themselves, they will transfer some of that trust to the products and services they recommend. Podcasts thus prove to be effective in increasing brand awareness, although according to the results, the credibility of the presenter alone is no guarantee of success. The relevance of native advertising and the alignment of the brand with the values of the audience have also been identified as factors (Padiya et al., 2025). According to the results of a study by

Brinson and Lemon (2023), it can be concluded that if the personality traits and values of the podcaster and the image of the presented brand match, listeners perceive the brand as more trustworthy and authentic. Therefore, if a brand collaborates with a popular, authentic podcaster who is appropriately chosen from the perspective of the brand's target group, it can not only increase awareness but also the credibility of the brand in the eyes of the audience itself (Nguyen et al., 2025). Podcast advertising thus has many advantages that stem from one basic principle: advertising is part of the narrative, not an external element (with the exception of advertising inserted by the platform, not the podcast itself).

Although the commercialisation of podcasts is natural in the current environment (advertisements and sponsors enable podcasters to produce content), monetisation also carries a significant risk. Listeners are willing to accept a certain amount of advertising when listening to a podcast, especially if they understand that they are supporting the podcast. However, if the advertising becomes excessive (too frequent, too long) or unrelated to the topic of the podcast, the audience may react negatively (Vilceanu et al., 2021). Excessive monetisation of content directly in the podcast, combined with possible advertisements within the podcast platform, can lead to a disruption of the concept of trust and intimacy in the parasocial relationship, which is constantly undermined by unwanted content. This is why, as with other media types, it is important to approach advertising communication in podcasts strategically.

Although the term podcast has been in use since 2004, it was initially a very niche medium. At first, it was considered more of an experiment than a medium. However, with the gradual spread of smartphones and podcast applications, in 2014 it became a mainstream topic, widely cited by the media and used in academic analyses (Minooka, 2024). Monetisation has accompanied podcasts almost from the beginning. The first signs were already visible in 2005, when Apple made iTunes available without the option of direct payment and paywalls. This forced early podcasters to focus on advertising as their primary source of income. With the gradual growth of platforms, relevant metrics began to be tracked and data for advertising sales was provided. After 2014 and the big podcast boom, monetisation became a strategic part of the media market, rather than just a side income for creators (Sullivan, 2019). Since 2014, podcasts have gained even more momentum and become a powerful media type, especially among younger generations.

Research by SiriusXM Media Insights (2025) shows that Generation Z approaches podcast consumption differently than older age groups. Their media behaviour is significantly influenced by the digital environment, which is dominated by mobile technologies and rapid switching between activities. They most often listen to podcasts on smartphones, with multitasking being a natural part of their media use. This mode of consumption is also related to their preference for fast-paced formats that can capture their short attention span. Research also shows that Generation Z accepts advertising in podcasts if it is presented authentically, is consistent in terms of values, and fits naturally into the style of the episode. They consider this method more important than traditional commercial forms of communication. Regular podcast listening is widespread among this generation, and many listeners declare their willingness to support their favourite creators, whether through interaction, sharing or financial contributions. This relationship between creator and listener plays an important role in the acceptance of advertising content. These findings provide an important basis for understanding listener behaviour, with similar trends confirmed by Edison Research. Edison Research (2025) findings show that Generation Z listens to podcasts extensively, with a significant proportion of Gen Z listeners in the US listening to podcasts at least once a month. Those who started listening earlier in life tend to spend more time listening to podcasts, while those who started later listen less. In addition, a significant proportion of Gen Z listeners say that podcasts help them with emotional balance and provide a sense

of community. The findings also suggest that Gen Z listeners use social media as their main gateway to discovering podcasts, with platforms such as YouTube or social media posts being among the most common ways they learn about new episodes. According to research by Nicolaou et al. (2024) focusing on Generation Z, the results show that podcasts are a significant part of their daily media behaviour. Out of a sample of 125 respondents, 77.6% of young people listen to podcasts. They most often consume them in shorter periods of time. Sixty-eight percent said they listen to podcasts for less than an hour a day, while 24.7 per cent listen for one to two hours a day. Only a small percentage of respondents reported longer daily listening, with approximately 6.2% listening for two to three hours a day and approximately one per cent listening for three to four hours a day. These results suggest that podcasts are primarily a complementary format of audio content for Generation Z, which they incorporate into their daily activities in short intervals. These findings show that podcasts have become a stable and natural part of Generation Z's everyday media life. Young people listen to them regularly, most often in shorter periods of time and alongside other activities, reflecting their multitasking and mobile media habits. At the same time, podcasts do not only serve an informational or entertainment function, but also provide a space for emotional balance, relaxation and a sense of community. Generation Z forms specific relationships with podcast creators, which also significantly influences their attitudes towards advertising. They accept advertising messages mainly when they come across as personal, authentic and fit naturally into the content of the episode.

Gen Z thus perceives podcasts not only as entertainment, but also as a source of information, learning and opinion forming. This medium helps Gen Z understand social issues, identity and current problems. They are also advantageous for them because they fit into the overall mindset of Gen Z. They allow for multitasking and can be consumed anytime and anywhere (Aulia et al., 2025). Available data show that interest in listening to the spoken word in the US has increased by 40% between 2015 and 2022 thanks to podcasts, with Generation Z showing an increase of up to 116% (Robert-Agell et al., 2022). Generation Z is unique in that it is the first generation to grow up surrounded by the internet and digital platforms, which has a direct impact on its media behaviour. According to the results of a survey of 1,908 respondents aged 18 to 25 in Spain, it is the youngest cohort (aged 18 to 21) that consumes news and entertainment primarily via the internet and is abandoning traditional media (Vidales & Rubio, 2021). Interestingly, according to the results of studies by Robert-Agell et al. (2022), Vidales & Rubio (2021), and Aulia et al. (2025), Generation Z prefers multi-platform, interactive, and especially visual podcasts. They prefer the traditional audio podcast format with video. According to Aulia et al. (2025), this is because video elements such as visible expressions and reactions of guests, animations, or spontaneous reactions during the interview increase understanding and create a deeper emotional connection. These findings suggest that if creators want to appeal to Gen Z, an emphasis on visuals and interactivity may be key.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Gen Z listens to podcasts mainly while doing other activities, so their time is often limited. Research on the preferences of university students in Greece showed that most young people do not listen to podcasts for hours a day, but rather occasionally. In their survey, 77.6 % of Generation Z respondents said they listen to some podcasts, but most often in the category of less than 1 hour per day. The average declared listening time was around 1 to 1.5 hours a day, with men reporting slightly longer daily listening times than women (1.6 hours vs. 1.3 hours on average). These figures suggest that podcasts are more of a complementary medium for young people. Podcasts are most often listened to while travelling, playing sports and learning (Nicolaou et al., 2024). The most common motivation for listening to podcasts is entertainment, as it is a pleasant way to spend time and relax, supported by positive emotions. According to research, they perceive podcasts primarily as a

medium that brings them joy, helps them escape from their responsibilities and makes time pass more quickly (McClung & Johnson, 2010). In terms of content, according to research by Nicolaou et al. (2024), Gen Z is mainly interested in entertainment, crime topics, comedy podcasts, or podcasts focused on personal development, education, pop culture and technology. This target group is least interested in news and analytical formats.

With a specific focus on advertising in podcasts for Generation Z, it can be said that this group of listeners prefers native advertising, which is directly part of the content and read directly by the presenter. According to research from 2022, it is extremely important for this type of advertising that the advertisement is thematically related to the content of the podcast. If the product (or brand) matches the theme of the programme and does not distract from the consumption of the episode's storyline, it improves the perception of the advertisement (Brooks et al., 2022). A clear preference for host-read advertisements is also documented in a study by Moe (2023), where listeners also consider them to be authentic, trustworthy and personal. The results showed that the listener's attitude towards advertising is closely related to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the presenter, as well as the feeling of a relationship with them. The stronger this relationship, the more favourable the attitude towards the advertisement itself and, consequently, the greater the willingness to act and reflect one's preferences in decision-making and purchasing behaviour. Saruga and Duarte (2024) also focused on examining the influence of parasocial relationships on attitudes towards advertising, arguing that these parasocial relationships weaken defence mechanisms against the persuasive nature of advertising and transform advertising into a personal recommendation from a trustworthy actor. Research shows that in such cases, listeners are less likely to activate situational advertising literacy, are less sceptical, and are more likely to seek further information about the brand or express an intention to purchase.

According to a study by Ritter and Cho (2009), attitudes towards advertising in podcasts are related not only to its form but also to its placement. Listeners tend to perceive podcast advertising as intrusive, especially when it interrupts content. Advertisements placed in the middle of a podcast cause a significantly higher feeling of disturbance and irritation than advertisements at the beginning. Also, the results showed that promotion in the form of sponsorship proved to be less disruptive than advertising spots.

According to Tonković Pražić and Devčić (2024), listeners' attitudes towards podcast advertisements also depend on the degree to which they are cognitively and affectively engaged with the podcast. The more listeners pay attention to the podcast and immerse themselves in it mentally, the more positively they perceive the products and recommendations that appear in it. Cognitive engagement has a significant impact on the perception of purchase value and product recommendations, while emotional connection to the podcast (feelings of joy, gratitude, pride) has a strong positive impact on purchase intent. In this sense, advertising functions as a recommendation rather than a pressure to buy, which again increases its credibility. However, the strongest effect is seen in the cognitive aspect rather than the affective one. According to Padiya et al. (2025), podcast advertising is effective in building brand awareness and brand recall.

The overall results show that Generation Z is open to podcast advertising. They are willing to accept it if the advertising is done correctly. This audience prefers advertising that is directly incorporated into the narrative, especially if it is delivered by a presenter they trust. Authenticity, credibility and content relevance are also key factors. Generation Z responds positively to advertisements that are relevant to the podcast topic and convey the presenter's personality, while rejecting inauthentic or distracting spots.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to analyse the media behaviour of Generation Z podcast listeners and to examine their attitudes towards podcast advertising and its potential impact on consumer behaviour. Specifically, the authors focused primarily on the level of acceptance of podcast advertising, listeners' preferences for its placement and form, and whether advertising stimulates interest in a brand or product or motivates listeners to search for it. At the same time, it also monitors respondents' attitudes towards various ways of monetising podcast content, especially advertising and paid content without advertising.

The target group of our research was Generation Z. The respondents were recruited in Slovakia through an online questionnaire created using Google Forms and distributed among university students during classes through a QR code. A convenience sampling approach was applied, targeting individuals aged 18 to 25 years who belonged to Generation Z. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifiable data were collected from respondents. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before completing the questionnaire and could withdraw from participation by not submitting the form. The collected data were used exclusively for research purposes and stored in anonymised form. The sample consisted of a total of 402 respondents aged 18 to 25. The research involved 233 women (58 %), 165 men (40.8 %) and a total of 4 people who identified as other genders. Podcasts are listened to by 274 respondents (68.2 % of the total), with 115 (28.6 %) listening at least three times a week. Only 60 (14.9 %) said they pay for some form of subscription to listen to podcasts. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire created in Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 38 items focusing on podcast consumption habits, attitudes towards podcast advertising, perceptions of podcast monetisation, and selected aspects of consumer behaviour. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents during university classes through a QR code, which enabled direct access to the online survey. Data collection was conducted between 20 January and 20 February 2026. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

Several methods were used to process the results. In the study, we used descriptive statistics as the basic step for processing our data, i.e. to describe the research sample and respondents' answers before correlation analysis. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic characteristics of the sample, determine the frequencies and percentage representation of responses, capture the distribution of respondents' attitudes, and summarise the evaluation (Kaur et al., 2018). In our case, these were mainly questions related to searching for products and brands based on podcasts, or responses related to individual statements about advertising in podcasts or monetisation models.

We used Spearman's correlation analysis to identify correlations and relationships between variables. This method is used to determine the relationship between two variables based on their ranks and can capture both linear and non-linear relationships (Zhang & Wang, 2023). In our study, we used it to determine the relationships between respondents' attitudes towards podcast advertising and their consumer behaviour. In particular, we analysed the relationships between the degree of acceptance of advertising, its perceived intrusiveness and the behaviour of respondents. We used this method because of the use of Likert scales in the questionnaire and the ordinal nature of the individual variables.

We used the K-means clustering method to segment respondents into groups based on the similarity of their attitudes. This method is used to cluster unlabelled data into groups based on their similarity, with the aim of making the objects within a cluster as similar as possible and, at the same time, making the individual clusters as different from each other as possible (Ikotun et al., 2023). In our study, we used this method to segment respondents according to their responses related to their perception of

advertising and monetisation models in podcasts. The aim was to identify different types of podcast listeners within a relatively broad age range of Generation Z and to examine whether they differ in their tolerance of advertising.

Based on the research objective, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the level of acceptance of advertising in podcasts and searching for a product or brand based on a podcast.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between the perceived intrusiveness of podcast advertising and searching for a product or brand based on a podcast.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between the perceived relevance of podcast advertising and searching for a product or brand based on a podcast.

H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between the perceived thematic consistency of advertising with podcast content and searching for a product or brand based on a podcast.

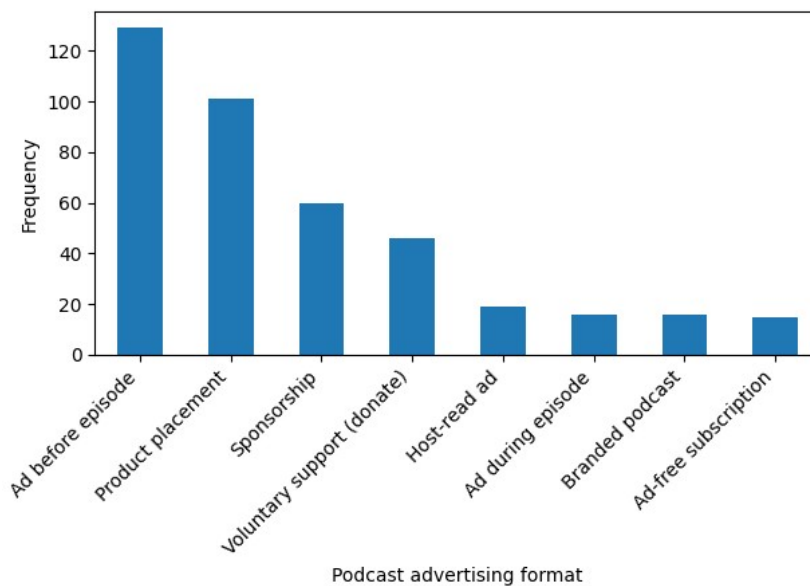
The hypotheses thus established make it possible to statistically verify whether the selected characteristics of podcast advertising are related to the behaviour of respondents. At the same time, they help to identify which aspects of podcast advertising may be most important in terms of marketing effectiveness.

4. Analysis and Results and Data interpretation

This chapter focuses on the results of a questionnaire survey, the aim of which was to analyse the media behaviour of the sample in the podcast environment and to identify their attitudes towards podcast advertising, as well as its potential impact on consumer behaviour. The analysis focused primarily on the acceptance and perception of advertising in podcasts, preferred forms of advertising communication, and the extent to which podcast advertising can stimulate interest in brands and products.

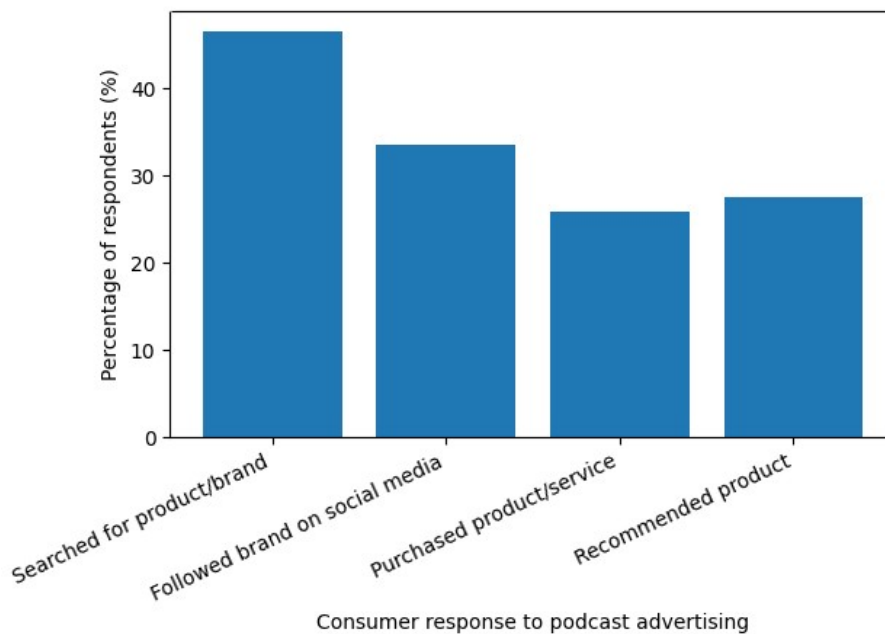
The results suggest that among Generation Z respondents, advertising in podcasts is perceived as a tolerated element of the podcast itself. When evaluating the statement "I generally don't mind advertising in podcasts," respondents took a rather neutral position, with negative ratings slightly outweighing positive ones. The result suggests that although advertising in podcasts is not perceived as particularly positive, it does not represent a significant barrier to the consumption of podcast content. The findings also point to the fact that listeners compare podcast advertising with advertising in other media, with some respondents considering it less disruptive than in audiovisual formats such as television and YouTube. The thematic relevance of advertising also played a significant role in its evaluation. Most respondents agreed that advertising should be thematically related to the content of the podcast. This suggests that the contextualisation of advertising can significantly influence its overall acceptability.

In terms of the placement of the advertisement itself, respondents rated advertisements placed before the start of the episode most positively. The overall ranking can be seen in Figure 1. We deduce from the results that this format is perceived as the least disruptive to the consumption of the content itself because it does not directly interfere with the course of the episode. We believe this is also because advertisements placed directly during the episode were rated as the least acceptable, which points to listeners' increased sensitivity to the disruptive effect of advertising during continuous consumption of podcast content. The way advertising is integrated into the podcast format thus plays a significant role in its overall acceptance by the audience.

Figure 1 *Most acceptable form of podcast advertising.*

Source: *Own processing.*

An analysis of behaviour itself showed that podcast advertising can also stimulate interest in products and brands to a certain extent. As shown in Figure 2, almost half of the respondents (46.5 %) said that they had searched for a specific brand or product based on a podcast. This result suggests that podcast advertising can be particularly effective in the early stages of the consumer decision-making process, especially in generating interest and initiating information searches. Only a third of respondents (33.6 %) said they had started following a brand on social media based on a podcast, while 66.4 % of respondents did not report such an experience. Podcast advertising can therefore generate interest in a brand, but it less often leads to longer-term brand following in the online environment. An even more significant decline can be observed in purchasing behaviour. Only 25.9 % of respondents said they had purchased a product or service based on a podcast. A similar result was found for product recommendations, with only 27.6 % of respondents stating that they had recommended a product to someone else based on a podcast. These results suggest that podcast advertising can generate interest in a brand, but less often leads to immediate conversion or active sharing of recommendations.

Figure 2. *Impact of podcast advertising on consumer behaviour.*

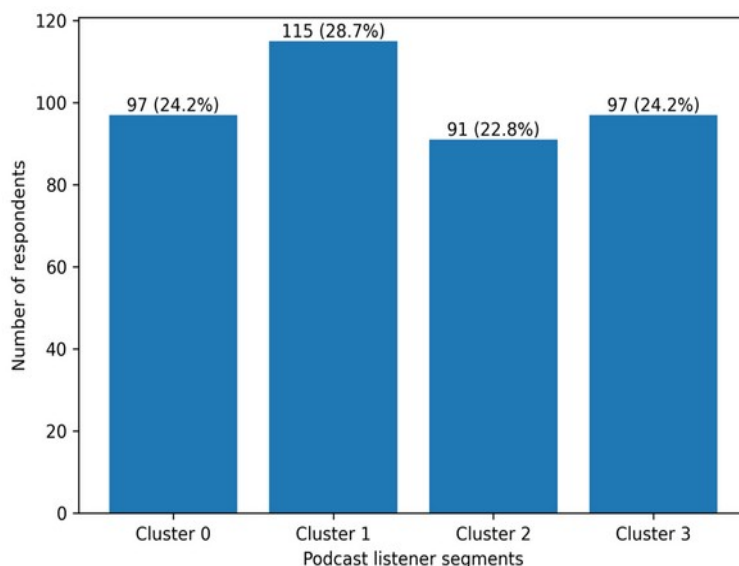
Source: *Own processing.*

The relationships between respondents' attitudes and their behaviour were further analysed using Spearman's correlation analysis. Specifically, the relationship between individual statements about advertising in podcasts and respondents' experience of searching for a product or brand based on a podcast was examined. The results showed weak but statistically significant positive correlations between a more positive perception of advertising in podcasts and a higher likelihood of searching for a product or brand. The relationship between the statement "I generally don't mind advertising in podcasts" and searching for a product or brand based on a podcast was confirmed ($\rho = 0.142$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, a weak positive correlation was also found between the perception of podcast advertising as less intrusive compared to advertising in other media and searching for a product ($\rho = 0.130$; $p < 0.01$). Conversely, no statistically significant relationship was found between the statement "Advertising should be related to the topic of the podcast" and product searches ($\rho = 0.001$; $p = 0.988$). However, a significant positive correlation was found for the statement "If the advertisement is relevant, I am more willing to look at the product" ($\rho = 0.227$; $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that individual perceptions of ad relevance may be associated with a higher likelihood of searching for information about advertised products or brands. The above results therefore show that the mere presence of advertising in a podcast does not automatically lead to respondent behaviour; their subjective perception of advertising is more important. Respondents who are less bothered by advertising in podcasts, who consider it less disruptive and, above all, relevant, are slightly more likely to search for the product or brand mentioned in the podcast. This suggests that the effectiveness of podcast advertising is more dependent on its acceptability and perceived relevance than on its formal consistency with the podcast's theme.

To identify the heterogeneity of respondents' attitudes, a segmentation analysis was subsequently performed, which identified four basic groups of podcast listeners (K-means method). The largest segment is the group with 115 respondents (28.7 %), while the other three segments are similar in size: 97 respondents (24.2 %), 97 respondents (24.2 %) and 91 respondents (22.8 %). The relatively balanced representation of the individual segments indicates that there are several different approaches to podcast advertising among Generation Z podcast listeners. The first group can be described as

advertising-sensitive listeners. These respondents show high sensitivity to the intrusiveness of advertising and react more strongly to situations where advertising disrupts the flow of an episode or appears in large quantities in a podcast. The second segment consists of tolerant supporters of the creator. Respondents in this group are willing to accept advertising, especially if they perceive it as a form of support for the podcast creator. Advertising is not a major problem for them as long as it is naturally incorporated into the content of the episode. The third group consists of pragmatic or neutral listeners. These respondents do not show significantly positive or negative attitudes towards advertising. Although they register the advertising, in most cases they consider it a normal part of podcast content. We characterise the last segment as advertising-tolerant listeners. For this group, advertising is not a significant distraction, and respondents perceive it more as a natural part of free digital content. The segmentation analysis thus points to the fact that Generation Z podcast listeners do not perceive advertising uniformly. Their attitudes differ mainly in their tolerance of advertising, sensitivity to its intrusiveness, and perception of advertising as part of the podcast ecosystem. The complete results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Distribution of podcast listener segments identified by K-means clustering.*



Source: Own processing.

The analysis of attitudes towards different models of podcast content financing also yielded important findings. The aim of this analysis was to compare respondents' willingness to tolerate advertising as a form of support for creators with their willingness to pay for podcasts without advertising. The results show a significant difference between these two attitudes. For the statement "I tolerate advertising if it directly supports the creator," a significant proportion of respondents gave medium to high ratings, indicating a relatively positive attitude towards advertising when it is perceived as a form of support for the creator. Conversely, negative responses predominate for the statement "I am willing to pay for a podcast without advertising." As many as 233 respondents gave ratings of 1 or 2, representing the highest concentration of negative responses among the items analysed. The findings suggest that Generation Z respondents are more likely to accept a model of free podcast content financed by advertising than a model of pre-paid content without advertising. It is still important to note that However, Generation Z listeners prefer advertisements placed before the beginning of the podcast episode, as this format does not interrupt the listening experience. An additional cluster analysis of the acceptability of advertising formats identified three distinct groups of respondents that differ in their

level of acceptance of different types of podcast advertising. These groups were: (1) selectively tolerant listeners, (2) advertising-tolerant listeners, and (3) advertising-reserved listeners. The first segment can be described as selectively tolerant listeners. Respondents in this group show a moderate level of acceptability for most advertising formats, with the highest ratings for pre-episode advertising, product placement and voluntary podcast support. Conversely, they are less positive about advertising during episodes, which can disrupt the flow of podcast content. The second segment represents advertising-tolerant listeners. This group shows the highest acceptability ratings across all advertising formats. Respondents in this segment are relatively open to various forms of podcast monetisation and perceive advertising as a natural part of the podcast ecosystem. The third segment can be characterised as advertising-reserved listeners. Respondents in this group show lower acceptability ratings for most advertising formats and are generally more critical of podcast advertising. They show the highest level of acceptability only for less invasive forms of monetisation, such as voluntary podcast support. These results thus point to the fact that the acceptability of advertising formats in podcasts is not homogeneous among respondents. Generation Z listeners differ mainly in their tolerance of advertising and their preference for specific methods of financing podcast content.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyse the media behaviour of Generation Z podcast listeners and to examine their attitudes towards podcast advertising and its potential impact on consumer behaviour. The results of the primary research pointed to several significant findings that confirm and, to a certain extent, complement the theoretical foundations presented in the first chapter. Generation Z has an ambivalent perception of advertising in podcasts: they do not reject it outright, but at the same time, it cannot be described as a positively received part of podcast content. The predominance of neutral responses when assessing the acceptability of advertising indicates that podcast advertising is accepted more pragmatically and rationally than emotionally. This confirms the assumption that in the podcast environment, it is not the presence of advertising that is decisive, but the way it is integrated.

The results showed that respondents placed strong emphasis on the thematic relevance of advertising content to the topic of the podcast. Our results thus confirm the studies mentioned in the first chapter, in particular Brooks et al. (2022), which emphasise that podcast advertising is more effective when it is perceived as a natural continuation of the podcast topic. Our research clearly showed that the relevance of advertising is perceived as an additional quality of advertising, but also as one of the fundamental pillars of its acceptance and acceptability. At the same time, however, it has been shown that the thematic relevance of advertising alone does not automatically mean a higher rate of subsequent behaviour, such as searching for a product. This suggests that a linear relationship between the acceptability of advertising and its behavioural effect cannot be assumed.

The placement of advertising within the episode itself also proved to be important. The preference for advertising placed before the start of the episode and, conversely, the more negative evaluation of advertising inserted during the episode confirm that listeners are particularly sensitive to interruptions in the flow of listening. Ritter and Cho (2009) came to the same conclusion, stating that interruptive advertisements are more invasive and cause a higher degree of irritation. The structure of content reception thus plays an extremely important role, as podcasts are generally consumed as a continuous and concentrated medium. From a practical point of view, this means that the effectiveness of advertising cannot be separated from its timing and formal placement within an episode.

From a consumer decision-making perspective, podcast advertising is particularly relevant in the early stages of this process. A significant proportion of respondents searched for the brand or product after

listening, suggesting that advertising in this medium has the potential to stimulate interest. Padiya et al. (2025) stated that podcast advertising is effective in building awareness, memorability and initiating interest, but less so in triggering the actual purchase, which mirrors our own findings. There is no direct link between searching for brands and products and the actual purchase. Podcast advertising therefore does not function as a conversion mechanism.

The relationship between the subjective perception of the relevance of advertising content and the tendency to search for a product is also significant. This result is supported by studies by Brinson and Lemon (2022) and Moe (2023). It appears that listeners do not respond only to the mere presence of advertising, but especially to whether they consider it suitable for their own needs. It is also important whether the content of the advertising message is consistent with the content environment and focus of the podcast itself.

Our results also suggest that Generation Z cannot be homogenised as a single mass in relation to podcast advertising. They are different groups of individuals with varying degrees of tolerance towards advertising, ranging from advertising-sensitive to advertising-tolerant respondents. This result and the individual results of the analysis itself expand current knowledge on this issue. The results show that even though this is a single age cohort, there are significant differences in the perception of commercial content. From a marketing communication perspective, it is therefore untenable to treat young audiences as a uniform category with the same preferences and expectations.

With regard to the monetisation of podcasts, it can be observed that respondents were more accepting of advertising as a direct means of supporting the creator. For respondents, advertising in the digital environment is a standard and expected model. Here, an interesting paradox can be pointed out: although advertising is not perceived positively, it is still more acceptable than direct payment by the listener. This means that the advertising model remains a more realistic and audience-acceptable way of monetisation for podcast creators than subscriptions themselves. It is important to note that this study did not examine price sensitivity, which can greatly influence listeners' decisions and their overall acceptance of advertising. If the subscription price were favourable or low, it cannot be ruled out that the results would be significantly different.

The hypotheses formulated in the methodology section were evaluated on the basis of Spearman's correlation analysis. H1 was supported, as a weak but statistically significant positive relationship was found between the acceptance of podcast advertising and searching for a product or brand based on a podcast. H2 was also supported, as respondents who perceived podcast advertising as less intrusive were slightly more likely to search for a product or brand. H3 was supported as well, since perceived advertising relevance showed the strongest positive relationship with product or brand search. H4 was not supported, as no statistically significant relationship was found between the perceived thematic consistency of advertising with podcast content and product or brand search. These findings suggest that perceived relevance and general acceptance are more important for consumer response than thematic consistency alone.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the research sample consisted exclusively of Slovak respondents aged 18 to 25 years, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other age groups and cultural contexts. Second, the study was based on self-reported data collected through an online questionnaire, which may be influenced by respondents' subjective perceptions and response biases. Third, although the study examined attitudes towards podcast advertising and monetisation, it did not analyse actual purchasing behaviour or long-term behavioural changes resulting from exposure to podcast advertising. Future research could expand

the sample to different countries and demographic groups and incorporate experimental or longitudinal approaches to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of podcast advertising.

Overall, it can be said that the impact of podcast advertising is mainly reflected in the attention and interest of listeners, and less so in their purchasing decisions. The results clearly showed that podcast advertising should be used primarily to build product awareness and initiate contact with the brand, while its persuasive nature in the later stages of the decision-making process and life cycle has not been proven. These results provide further information for marketers on how to structure ads in the podcast digital space when developing communication strategies aimed at Generation Z.

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