

# Innovative Frontiers: Exploring Factors Influencing Travel Podcast Consumption in the Web 4.0 Era

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**Abstract:** With the advent of Web 4.0, society is evolving online in every aspect. The online media platform and user-generated content have given a new face to people's interactions and communication, with the evolution of new media platforms and the changing consumption patterns of user-generated content. They have also become a new way of earning a livelihood for many. Among the various media influencers and business entrepreneurs' podcasts as a platform have proliferated in recent years, with millions of people listening to travel podcasts. This study aims to explore the unresearched terrain of travel podcast listening via exploring the consumption factors of travel podcasts and provide valuable insights for the travel podcast creators and, and destination stakeholders. besides this paper is of the interest to the various researchers of the multiple domain like audio media, content, marketing, and tourism. The study involved a systematic literature review followed by a Delphi survey. A total of eleven factors are shortlisted via Delphi analysis as the prominent influencers of travel podcast listening. Authentic content and subjective norms are added as new factors to the existing list of literature, and a few factors are discarded based on the expert's viewpoints, e.g., fashion. The study unfolded various practical, conceptual, and managerial implications for tourist destination marketing managers, DMOs, and various stakeholders (the government and host community) in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Travel innovation, Audio travel podcast, Listening motivations, Web 4.0, Delphi survey

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## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary media landscape, Content marketing has undeniably carved a significant niche in modern marketing strategies, exemplified by successful campaigns like Volvo Penta's Adventurous Campaign (Kim Moutsos, 2023) and its subsequent brand success (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). In the Web 4.0 and IoT era, content creation has become not only a viable source of income but also a full-time profession, with the global podcasting market reaching \$23.56 billion in 2023 and projected to grow at a CAGR of 27.6% from 2023 to 2030 (Rohit Shewale, 2024), offering promising opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs.

In industries like travel and leisure, content creation plays a pivotal role in attracting potential customers (Cunha Ferreira et al., 2023). As in travel, the importance of experiencing the product beforehand cannot be overstated in stimulating interest in destinations (Chen et al., 2014). Social media, blogs, YouTube vlogs, and emerging technologies like virtual reality and the metaverse are increasingly instrumental in drawing tourists, highlighting the integration of communication and marketing strategies (García-Haro et al., 2021).

Likewise, Podcasts have emerged as a powerful medium for content distribution in the travel industry, capturing the attention of a growing audience globally. Global podcast listeners reached 4,464.7 million in 2023, reflecting a significant annual increase (Daniel Ruby, 2023). Despite its popularity, the "Travel Podcast" genre remains relatively unexplored in the existing literature, prompting this study to delve into travel podcast consumption patterns and audience engagement. While podcast creation has become more accessible, captivating listeners remains challenging (Jesse Noyes, 2014). Thus, this study aims to identify the factors influencing travel podcast consumption and provide insights for creators to expand their audience and target specific markets, utilizing the Delphi survey methodology preceded via a systematic literature review.

## 2. Literature Review and Research Background

### 2.1 Podcasting, Social Media, and User-Generated Content Creation

"Podcasting," a portmanteau of "iPod" and "broadcast," represents a significant shift in online radio. Podcasts are It is defined as a form of digital media, usually audio like a radio program that can be downloaded and listened to on MP3 players, computers, or smartphones. podcasts are disseminated across streaming platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, SoundCloud, and others on the internet. They typically follow a series format with episodes released periodically and cover a wide range of topics, from news and education to entertainment and storytelling.

While content creation predominantly occurs on social media (García-Haro et al., 2021): user-generated content, devoid of bias, has gained notable credibility. Social media marketing, mainly influencer marketing, is a potent tool for brand awareness and education (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Robert Rose, 2023).

In parallel, podcasting emerges as both an art and a lucrative business venture (Martin Spinelli and Lance Dann, 2019). With top podcasts like 'The Joe Rogan Experience' grossing \$30 million in 2019 (Statista, 2021) and the US podcast revenue nearing \$1 billion in 2020, podcasting is financially rewarding. This dynamic landscape attracts premier talent, fuelling economic growth and innovation (Giliberti, 2016).

Moreover, amid the COVID era, the significance of content marketing has evolved, as indicated by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) report. While 45% of organizations' key audiences consume videos, there is a notable openness to alternative content formats (Robert Rose, 2023). Despite the demand for content marketing, organizations struggle to identify subject experts, highlighting the need for research and strategic insights.

In this context, exploring podcasts within the travel domain promises valuable insights into user-generated audio content and consumption patterns. This study aims to illuminate how organizations, entrepreneurs, and influencers can leverage podcasts to craft compelling content marketing strategies, addressing a crucial gap in contemporary marketing practices.

**2.2 Travel Podcast**

The past literature has identified different factors affecting the wish of the user to adopt the podcasts, such as usability, image, relative advantage, situational factors, lower levels of complexity, and functionality (Chang et al., 2012). They emphasized the importance of adopting podcasts in digital tourism.

Travel with Rick Steves, 'Musafir Stories', 'Indie Travel Pod', and 'Travel with RV Show' are popular travel podcasts already exploiting the podcast's capabilities. Referred to as 'audio travel podcasts' or 'travel podcasts' (Lee et al., 2017), these programs entail individuals (travellers, hosts, guests) sharing their travel narratives and original travel experiences and dispensing information through downloadable recordings on various platforms.

According to a study conducted in the United States, the primary motivations for engaging with podcasts were identified as entertainment, information, and the perceived superiority of audio platforms (Chan-Olmsted and Wang, 2020). The primary factors identified in the context of true crime podcast consumption were convenience, boredom, escape, voyeurism, and amusement (Boling and Hull, 2018). Previous studies have examined the underlying factors that drive individuals to engage in podcast consumption as a whole (Chan-Olmsted and Wang, 2020). However, there needs to be more literature regarding the motivations behind listening to travel-related podcasts despite research on other genres, such as true crime amusement (Boling and Hull, 2018), entertainment, and comedy. Notably, Xie and Lew (2008) stand out as an exception in exploring the realm of travel podcasts.

Apart from the listener's perceptions, the podcast has been explored during travel as a tour assistant for the on-side tours at national parks, museums, and historical and cultural sites. A few studies have already explored the effect of these narratives on innate intentions. However, there still needs to be a lag between the in-depth understanding of this emerging social media phenomenon among the study domains of travel, audio media and marketing. Despite its potential for influencing the audience through narratives and storytelling and its use in the advertising and branding world, podcasts have yet to be a focus of inquiry for many researchers. Considering its importance and dearth in the literature, it might be helpful for marketers to have insights into this emerging phenomenon. The present study will act as a founding study that provides insights into the podcasting world of travel and tourism and will explore this abundance of listeners and the constant increase in listenership.

**Table 1: Motivations for Travel podcast listening**

Motivations for Travel podcast listening		
S.N	Motivations	References
1	Arousal	Boling and Hull (2018); Chung and Kim (2015); Rubin (1977)
2	Entertainment	Chan and Wang (2020);

Motivations for Travel podcast listening		
S.N	Motivations	References
3	Companion/connection/ Social	Chou et al. (2022); Chung and Kim (2015); Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2020); Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007);
4	Convenience/Mobility/Multi-tasking/time-shifting/Customizable experience	Chung and Kim (2015); Papacharissi and Rubin (2000)
5	Educational	Chung and Kim (2015); Vitis and Ryan (2021)
6	Fashion	Chung and Kim (2015)
7	Hobby	Boling and Hull (2018)
8	Habit	Boling and Hull (2018); Chung and Kim (2015)
9	Curiosity- interest	Tobin and Guasagno (2022)
10	Escape/Relaxation	Boling and Hull (2018); Chung and Kim (2015)
11	Information	Khan (2016); Rubin (1983); Suyu Chou, et al. (2022)
12	Digital collection/ Library building ( <i>Removed in second round</i> )	McClung and Jhonson (2010)
13	Story telling transportation /Participation/engagement	Chung and Kim 2015; Perks et al. (2019)
14	Personal Identification ( <i>Removed in second round</i> )	Sylvia and Wang (2020)
15	Podcast perceived affinity	Chung and Kim 2015
16	Communal identification/belongingness	Sylvia and Wang (2020)
17	Podcast perceived realism	Chung and Kim (2015)
18	Perceived travel risk/ Travel anxiety	Vitis Ryan (2021); Expert
19	WOM ( <i>Added in second round</i> )	Expert
20	Content ( <i>Added in second round</i> )	Expert
21	Subjective norm ( <i>Added in second round</i> )	Expert

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Delphi Survey in Tourism

The Delphi technique is one of the most widely accepted qualitative (Gupta and Clarke, 1996) and structured approaches for group studies (Rowe and Wright, 2001). Ng (1984) described it as an informed prediction using the expert's opinions once a consensus is reached among the panel of experts. Among the four forecasting techniques mentioned by (Lin and Song, 2015), the Delphi technique is found to be one of the most popular judgemental forecasting techniques used in tourism studies. Hence utilised for the present study.

*The present study is conducted in two phases. The first phase, from prior literature, extracted many aspects of the reasons for various audio media listening (such as podcasts, radio, online music, etc.). In the second phase, these factors were refined and ranked using Lawshe's content validity ratio in two sequential rounds utilising the Delphi technique.*

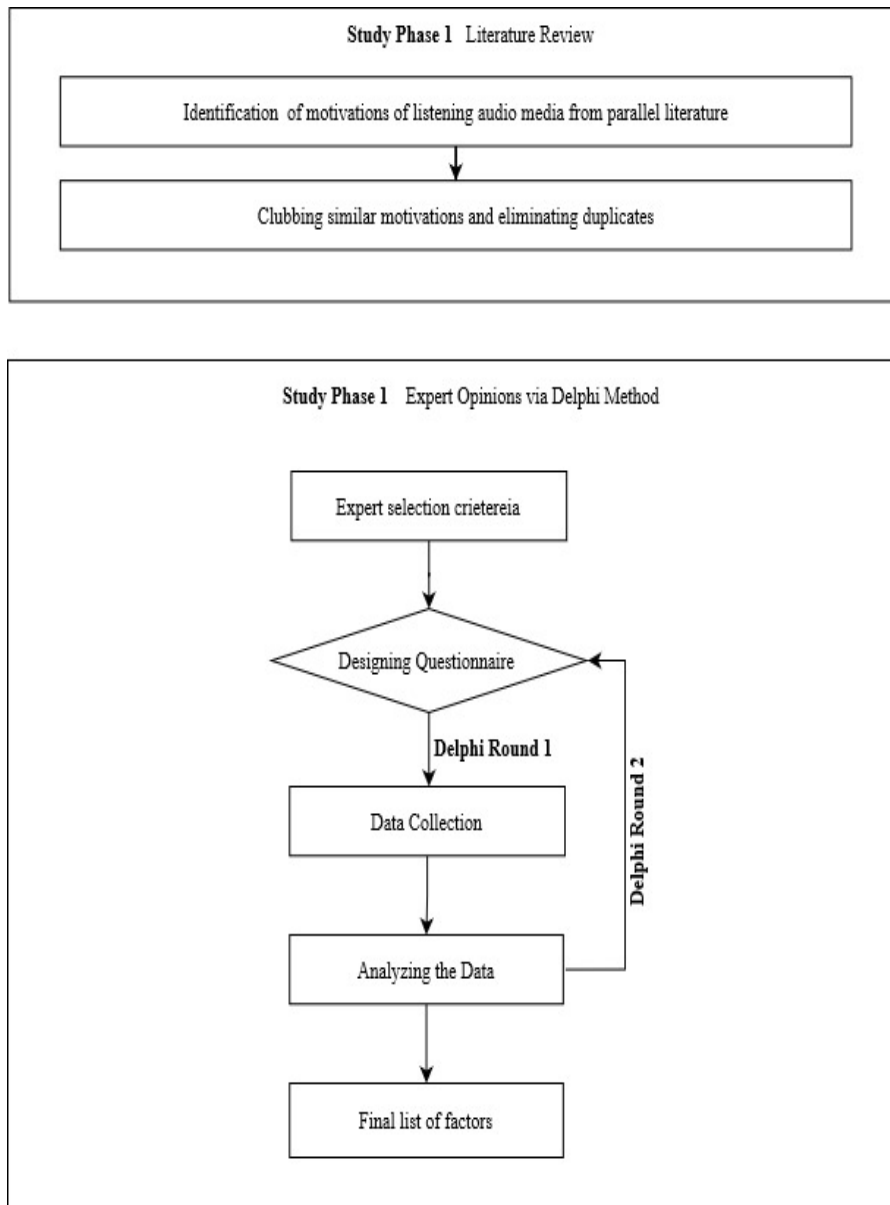
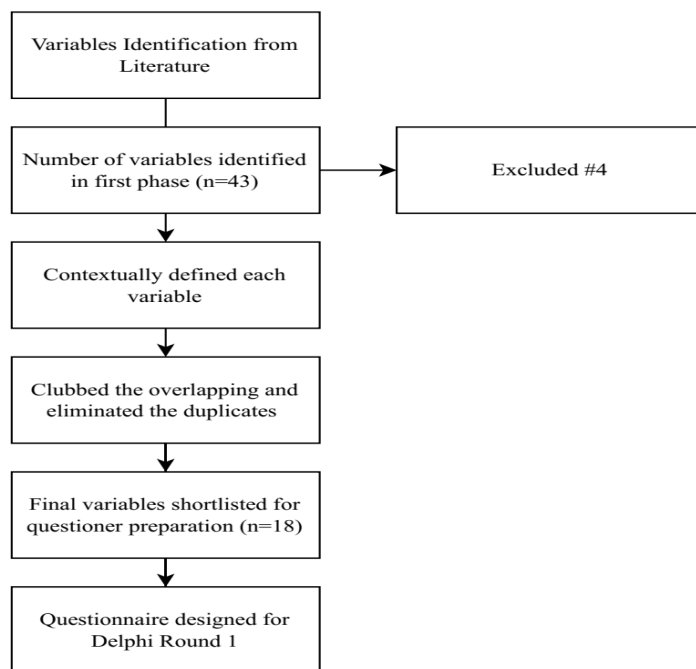


Figure 1: Design of research methodology

### 3.2 Study Phase 1

In the study's *first phase*, various factors that motivate listening to different audio media (like podcasts, radio, online music, etc.) are extracted from previous literature, and an exhaustive list of variables is created. Afterwards, this list is analysed carefully by the researcher, and a few variables that fit the study's objective are shortlisted in Table 1.



**Figure 2: Study Phase 1, Literature review steps**

### 3.3 Study Phase 2

The study's second phase is designed considering the limitations and advantages of the Delphi technique. The choice of criteria for this study is mentioned in Table 2. The experts have asked about their opinions on the relevance of these selected factors to the context of the present study in two sequential rounds. These factors are then rated based on their importance.

**Table 2: Choice criteria for the study**

Criteria Choice for Identifying the motivations and inhibitors of travel podcast listening study	
Purpose of the study	Exploring and shortlisting the factors of podcast listening
Number of rounds	Two
Experts	Heterogeneous group
Mode of operation	Remote
Anonymity of panel	Full
Communication media	Via e- mail and over call.
Concurrency of rounds	Sequential

Adapted from; Day and Bobeva (2005)

## 4. Data Collection and Analysis

### 4.1 The Expert Panel

The expert panel consisted of a perfect blend of academic marketing experts who worked in both tourism and non-tourism domains, with previous industry experience and avid podcast listeners. Using the Delphi method, the study utilised non-random sampling to select 15 experts as suggested for social studies (park, 2002). It includes purposive and snowball sampling to select panels.

Professors and associate professors with a keen interest in tourist behaviours, destination marketing, and branding from the top institutions of India spread over four corners, including Tourism Business Management schools and other management schools in general, were approached. To add a technological viewpoint, the academicians who had research interests in technological advancements in tourism were approached. In

addition, experts from a non-tourism background working in marketing and consumer behaviour were also included in the panel to have a perspective apart from tourism. A few avid podcast listeners are also part of the sample to make the survey more insightful from the listeners’ perspective. In order to touch upon every aspect of the study, the researcher has included experts from all related domains to maintain the heterogeneity of the panel. For anonymity, all individuals were contacted through emails and phone; no experts knew each other. Among many contacted experts, a few showed interest in participating in the survey. Table 3 includes the final panel list and their respective designations.

**Table 3: Expert panel composition**

Academicians				Total
Domain and Designation	Tourism Marketing and Management		Marketing and consumer behaviour	
	Non-tech.	Tech.		
Professor	4	-	0	4
Associate professor	2	1	1	4
Assistant professor	1	2	1	4
Avid Listeners	-	-	-	3
<b>Total experts</b>				<b>15</b>

**4.2 Delphi Round 1: Gathering and Analysing the Data**

*4.2.1 Delphi Round 1 Results*

The objective of round one was a) to confirm whether the identified motivators from the literature appeared to be relevant or not and b) to get the new motivators and inhibitors of podcast listening that might be missing in the literature. Hence, in the first round of the Delphi survey, experts were presented with the questionnaire in Excel format, listing all the possible motivators of podcast listening along with their contextualised definitions. They were asked about the listed motivator and whether it should be included in the further course/phase of our study or not (for reference, the experts we provided with the travel podcast link in the description mail, which described the objective of our study and instructions to respond for questions). After analysing the frequency of disagreement, we found that digital collection and personal identification received the least, yes, i.e. 2 and 1, respectively. Hence, the author dropped these two variables in this phase.

To fulfil the second objective of this round, the subsequent section of the questionnaire was presented with open-ended questions to seek new possible motivators and inhibitors for travel podcast listening. The questions are as follows:

- What other possible motivators of travel podcast listening must be included in the study but are missing in these listed factors?
- What possible inhibitors of travel podcast listening must be included in the study?

Examples of travel podcast inhibitors also followed the second question to make it more transparent to the experts. No significant inhibitors of travel podcast listening were identified earlier in the literature; only some reports mentioned them in the form of paid subscriptions and advertisements (Spotify, 2022). Hence, we cited both examples and inquired about the travel podcast inhibitors except these.

To bring more confidence to the study and the suggestions from experts, not only were the experts asked about listing new factors, but they were also asked to give sufficient justification for considering their suggestions.

After collecting all the responses from experts, the analysis of the qualitative section of the questionnaire was conducted, and it was found that the answers to the questions were diverse; few of them were in the form of lists (only the new factor name), and few were in comments with elaborative descriptions. As the comments were comparatively few, the researcher analysed the comments and suggestions manually. To analyse these comments, the author followed a systematic thematic analysis approach as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2012). Thematic analysis followed due to its wide range of applications and its flexibility in a qualitative analytic approach. Thematic analysis applies to almost all types of qualitative research questions and designs

and, hence, to our study as well (Clarke and Braun, 2017). See Tables 4 and 5 for more detailed descriptions of the thematic analysis.

4.2.2 Delphi Round 1 Results

Based on the thematic analysis, we identified WOM (Word of Mouth) and subjective norm as new possible motivators for listening to travel podcasts. Traditionally, WOM is defined as face-to-face communication; however, nowadays, it has taken the new form of e-WoM (Electronic Word of Mouth). E-WOM is a consumer-to-consumer communication through blogs, vlogs, and websites where the consumers do not necessarily know each other. The present study considers both types of WOM, traditional as well as E- WOM.

Subjective norm appeared as a new motivator is defined as "a person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question" (Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA (1975).

From thematic analysis, other factors were identified as the inhibitors, like past performance and physical accessibility. Physical accessibility being a duplicate of convenience (previously on the list) and prior experience being less frequent did not emerge as a new theme. Further, the content of the travel podcast emerged as a possible inhibitor to listening. The content quality, its type, the authenticity of the information, diverse interests related to travel, podcast episodes in different languages, etc., reflected the possibility that a listener might not be interested in listening to travel podcasts due to these characteristics of podcast content, hence we consider it under an umbrella term 'content'. Other inhibitors like 'addiction' appeared, but due to less frequency of occurrence, those dropped.

Hence, three main themes emerged as the most talked about.

- WOM
- Subjective norm
- Content

Table 4: Coded comments illustration

Respondent	Comment	Comment coded as
R2: For the motivators	Suggestions to listen to a podcast by a close friend	WoM, Social Influence or Subjective Norms
R4: For the inhibitors	Besides a couple of inhibitors mentioned above, the major inhibitors are: the nature of information, authenticity of the facts and figures on a tourist's destination that are shared to tourists. Nature and typology of tourist interviewed; to know the experiences, what they had experienced during their sojourn to a specific tourist destination. What nature of coverage the podcast had made of the local community to know their customs and rituals and which were the tourist places where the operators of Podcast had made the coverage of tourist. Moreover, were the contents have been thoroughly vetted before getting them circulated. Further, what percent of content are understood by the foreign tourist and a tourist not know the language delivered through the podcast.	Nature of information, Authenticity of the facts and figures, Language barrier, Nature and typology of tourist's interviewed, Content quality
R7: For the inhibitors	Quality of content- drab and lack lustre, content not up to the mark may reduce listeners' interest and they skip episodes/sessions or negate channels all together.	Content Quality, Availability of better options.

Table 5: The frequency of occurring identified codes and their interlinkages; Changing Codes to themes

Respondent	The possible new motivator for podcast listening	Appearing Frequency	Final theme/ Construct
R2, R4	WoM, hearsay	2	WOM and Subjective norm
R3,R2	Social Influence	2	
R4,R7	Subjective norm	2	
R4	Physical Accessibility	1	
R4	Past experiences	1	

Respondent	Possible new inhibitors	Appearing Frequency	Final theme/ Construct
R1,R4	Unrelated content	2	Content
R3,R7	Unavailability of Content	2	
R3,R7	Quality of Content	2	
R4	Authenticity of the facts and figures	1	
R4	Language barrier	1	
R4	Nature and typology of tourist's interviewed	1	
R10	Addiction	1	
R3	Unpopularity		

### 4.3 Delphi Round 2: Gathering and Analysing the Data

In the second round of Delphi, we modified the questionnaire for Delphi round 1; we removed digital collection and personal identification, and new inhibitors were added. The modified questionnaire is then presented to the experts to rate the given factors based on their importance on a five-point rating scale, from least important to most important.

After collecting the data, the data was recorded against each factor of every respondent in Excel format. This round's data is analysed using Lawshe's Content validity Ratio (Lawshe, 1975).

The Critical value of 0.66 for Lawshe's CVR for accepting and rejecting the possible listening motivations obtained concerning the panellist's count (i.e. 15) for each factor. (Critical Values for Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio).

#### Calculating Content Validity Ratio (CVR):

$$\text{Content Validity Ratio (CVR)} = (\text{ne} - N/2) / N/2$$

ne= is the essential score

N= total number of experts

According to Lawshe, there are three types of values/scores in the rating scale. The top 2 values or parameters are essential, the middle is useful but not essential, and the last one is not necessary. In the context of our study, extremely important and very important are equivalent to essentials. Important was considered useful but not important, and somewhat important and least important were assumed as not necessary.

#### 4.3.1 Delphi Round 2 results and discussion

The essential scores of each construct with CVR are presented in Table 6, along with the list of accepted and rejected. Out of 19 factors, eleven were selected through the second round.

**Table 6: Essential scores of motivations with CVR and acceptance status**

S. N	Podcast listening Motivation	Ne	CVR	Result
1	Curiosity of interest	15	1.00	Accept
2	Arousal	14	0.87	Accept
3	Educational	14	0.87	Accept
4	Subjective norm	14	0.87	Accept
5	WOM	14	0.87	Accept
6	Information	14	0.87	Accept
7	Story telling transportation /Participation/engagement	13	0.73	Accept
8	Content	13	0.73	Accept
9	Podcast perceived realism	13	0.73	Accept

S. N	Podcast listening Motivation	Ne	CVR	Result
10	Perceived travel risk/ Travel anxiety	13	0.73	Accept
11	Entertainment	12	0.60	Accept
12	Convenience /Multi-tasking	10	0.33	Reject
13	Escape/Relaxation	9	0.20	Reject
14	Communal identification/belongingness	9	0.20	Reject
15	Hobby	9	0.20	Reject
16	Podcast perceived affinity	8	0.07	Reject
17	Companion/connection/ Social	8	0.07	Reject
18	Fashion	6	-0.20	Reject
19	Habit	6	-0.20	Reject

## 5. Discussion

The study has uncovered insights into travel podcast consumption, revealing motivations and barriers perceived by experts and listeners.

The Delphi survey's first round identified WOM and subjective norms as motivators and content as new inhibitors. Subsequently, eleven factors were confirmed in the second round.

Among the identified motivations, factors such as curiosity, arousal, education, subjective norms, word of mouth, and information emerged as crucial drivers influencing travel podcast consumption. Previous research highlights the influential role of WOM and e-WOM in consumer behaviour, fostering credibility and adoption of new products/services. Similarly, subjective norms influence technology adoption and acceptance of innovation.

Conversely, inhibitors such as content quality, perceived risk, and podcast realism hinder listener engagement. Addressing these barriers is crucial for creators to broaden their audience appeal.

Strategies focusing on WOM and community promotion can enhance travel podcast accessibility and popularity. Additionally, prioritizing authentic, quality content tailored to traveller interests can bolster destination attractiveness via podcasts.

Given the convenience of audio media, promoting travel content through streaming platforms proves advantageous. Adapting to Gen Z preferences necessitates destination brands' presence across various media, including local language content, to boost domestic travel and local economies.

## 6. Research Implications

*Theoretically*, implications of this study go beyond the specific context and adds nuance to existing theories of consumer behaviour and media consumption by identifying the motivations and inhibitors influencing travel podcast listening.

Incorporating subjective norms and word of mouth into the analysis expands upon established frameworks, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Diffusion of Innovations theory, which emphasise social influences and interpersonal communication in shaping individual behaviours. Furthermore, recognising content quality and authenticity as critical determinants of listener engagement contributes to ongoing discussions surrounding media credibility and trustworthiness.

*Practically*, the results of this study demonstrate the potential for destination managers to utilise podcasting as a strategic tool for destination promotion.

The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of audience preferences, encompassing informational, social, and entertainment-driven motives. Authentic content and storytelling in engaging listeners, emphasizing the need for high-quality production and narrative delivery in travel podcasts. In the article 'Should your Company Start a Podcast' Jesse Noyes (2014) in Harvard Business Review noted how difficult it is to create and sustain a good podcast. Centralising the overall destination content through podcasts and other media channels will be

beneficial for the overall marketing and content strategy of the destination and its services. The utilisation of travel podcasts also has the potential to serve as a transformative mechanism for enhancing the image of destinations and promoting sustainability. We further suggest harnessing the potential and expertise of the podcasters by leveraging the exemplary collaboration efforts with them. The insights provided in the study will also hold significant value for anybody aiming to access the expanding market of travel content consumers, particularly Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs). Podcasts have the potential to be an effective tool for brand storytelling and consumer engagement if they are produced with the proper drive, support, and regularity (Jesse Noyes, 2014).

## **7. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Scope**

This study has delved into the relatively uncharted territory of travel podcast consumption, identifying key factors influencing listener engagement and providing valuable insights for content creators and destination marketers. The findings from the Delphi survey highlighted eleven critical motivations for listening to travel podcasts, including curiosity, arousal, education, subjective norms, word of mouth, and information, while also recognizing content quality as a significant inhibitor.

The findings of this research provide important insight into what drives people to listen to travel podcasts, as well as the potential next steps for podcast producers, destination brands, and other stakeholders like destination brands. Integrating WOM and subjective norms into the analysis enriches existing consumer behaviour and media consumption theories, emphasizing the social influences and interpersonal communication in shaping podcast listening habits. These insights underscore the importance of authentic, high-quality content and engaging storytelling in attracting and retaining listeners.

The results underscore the strategic potential of travel podcasts in destination promotion. By leveraging the identified motivations and addressing the inhibitors, destination marketers can enhance the appeal and effectiveness of their podcast content. This study advocates for a comprehensive content strategy that integrates podcasts with other media channels, focusing on authentic narratives and quality production to engage audiences and promote destinations effectively.

While comprehensive, the study has a few limitations that should be acknowledged. The opinions expressed by the experts may not necessarily reflect the views of all podcast enthusiasts. The extension and generalization of this study to the general public should be approached with caution. However, it can be seen as a solid foundation for future research.

Furthermore, the factors considered in this study may only partially capture some of the various motivations behind consuming travel podcasts. For instance, the analysis did not include platform subscriptions and advertisements. Therefore, future research endeavours could explore the intricate psychological aspects associated with podcast consumption. Future research could also explore the intersectionality between travel podcast consumption and destination marketing strategies and employ different variables as predictors to enhance the precision of the findings. Additionally, it would be beneficial to validate the identified factors by conducting multiple measurements to ensure their reliability and consistency.

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