

The role of ease of use and need for information on Millennials' Embracement Towards Podcasts

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Abstract:

Podcasts are a type of digital media that has grown in popularity and importance on the market in recent years. Its main audience is Millennials, the generation born between 1982 and 1999. This paper aims to understand the main reasons that led to embracing the use of podcasts, such as (i) the need for information, (ii) perceived mobility and ease of use, and (iii) perceived professional usefulness. A sample of 302 responses was collected, and, after data analysis, it was possible to identify that perceived mobility and ease of use are the factors that most influence the millennials' podcast embracement. It was possible to conclude that the subjects most listened by them were Politics and Economics and that their greatest motivation for adopting them was the practicality of technology. Conversely, this study becomes useful for companies looking to communicate with this generation. Their behavior and preferences regarding podcasting which impact the media industry were discussed.

Keywords: Podcast; Millennials; Digital Media

Track: Digital marketing and Social Media

1. Introduction

Podcasting is a media process emerging from publishing audio files on the Internet. There are an estimated 700,000 active podcasts available for listeners to subscribe to right now and growing every month (WADDINGHAM et al, 2020, SPOTIFY, 2019). Since the advent of audio Booking in the decade of 1980 and its popularity increase in the early 2000s, podcasts, as they have been named later, have been used to share information, stories and entertainment all over the globe. Also, the podcast industry has grown in popularity recently in Brazil - the number of podcasts and users are continuously increasing. The number of individuals using mobile apps to discover and listen to podcasts increased 60% in January 2019 compared with January 2018 (ADOBE, 2019). The key enablers of the Podcast industry growth were the individuals defined as Millennials.

Also called Gen Y, Millennials are born between the years 1982 and 1999. The Millennial generation is characterized to have grown up in contact with technology, differently from past generations, and for being immersed in a digital-oriented world. The bond that unites these people is the fact that they were born at the moment the world was discovering the cable TV, video games, computers and the Internet: social moments that imprinted on their personality certain characteristics, such as the immediacy, multi-tasking, knowledge to absorb a large amount of information, quick-thinking, yet find it difficult to make connections between the contents learned.

The Internet has enabled Millennials to exercise control by expressing their opinions through a multiplicity of online spaces that can potentially influence consumers and traders (MANGOLD, SMITH, 2012). Consequently, new styles of sources of information have been extremely important to rephrase traditional methods, and become innovative. (MATULICH; PAPP; HAYTKO, 2008; TWENGE, 2006).

Inside the context of new ways of communication, podcasts are becoming one of the strongest means of communication, especially between Millennials, who represent a great share of today's modern society with approximately 74 million people over the world. This new format of media and broadcast impacts the whole communication industry, and it is important to understand how do Millennials behave towards podcasts in order to seize the opportunity of this new disruptive communication way.

In addition, it is important to also understand what is the consumer behavior towards the intention of adopting a new technology. There are several theories that aim to explain what are the reasons the consumer may take into consideration when passing through the decision-

making process of adopting or not a new technological tool (VENKATESH; DAVIS, 2000). People form intentions for adopting a new technology, trying to understand why they should or should not use it and what will be its consequences. (BAGOZZI; DAVIS; WARSHAW, 1992, p. 22). With all that stated, the research problem of this paper aims to understand Millennials consumer behavior towards podcast embracement. Therefore, the research problem seeks to understand more deeply the Millennials consumption habits of podcasts in order to find out why this has been an emerging trend inside Millennials adoption of the technology. With the empirical studies and the theories found about consumer technology adoption, the research question arises three independent variables that can mostly affect the propensity of Millennials to embrace podcasts. The variables are i) Perceived Information Need, what is the extent to which the modern and information-abundant society influences Millennials to have thirst for acquiring every type of possible knowledge they consider relevant and essential to fit in this new society; ii) Perceived Usefulness, what is the degree which a person believes that the usage of a technology or system will augment their overall knowledge and therefore bring aggregate value to their professional life (DAVIS, 1989, DAVIS; BAGOZZI; WARSHAW, 1989); and iii) Perceived Mobility and Ease of Use, what is the extent to which the easy usability of accessing podcasts at anytime, anywhere and about anything, with no restrictions, influences someone to adopt the technology (DAVIS, 1989, DAVIS; BAGOZZI; WARSHAW, 1989).

Therefore, the research question is: to what extent do the defined independent variables influences Millennials behavior towards podcast embracement?

2 Theoretical Background

The concept of generations was traced by Mannheim (1952), who theorized that generations sections are shaped by relevant events that have occurred during the most formative years of the generation's childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. What characterizes a common position of those born in the same chronological time is the potentiality or possibility of witnessing the same events, experiencing similar experiences, but above all of process, these events or experiences in a similar way. Meanwhile, these groups of people share forming trends of a collective arising from the appropriation of common contents. As a result, a generation could be defined as such when individuals, even without physical, intellectual proximity or any knowledge of each other, present cultural similarity resulting from their participation period of the historical process in accordance with years of its formation (WELLER, 2010, FEITOSA; LOURENÇO, 2018). The Podcast embracement has increased, and Millennials represent

66,6% of the Podcast listeners (ABPOD, 2019). There are two important theories which investigate technological, social and individual aspects that influence technological adoption. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) are the two theories used in order to sustain and understand the hypothesis that makes Millennials embrace the use of the podcast technology and answer the research question.

The Diffusion Innovation theory (DoI) explains which factors contribute to the technology adoption decisions and what is the procedure of technology diffusion (ROGERS, 1983). Rogers also explains in which extent, how and why new technologies and innovation are diffused through the cultural systems. Diffusion can be described as the process of adopting certain innovation through specific channels, in a certain time, within members of a social system (ROGERS, 1995). It is the communication used to spread new ideas that may represent uncertainty. The four elements that play an important role of innovation diffusion are: (i) innovation, (ii) time, (iii) communication channels and (iv) social systems. Innovation means “an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (ROGERS, 1983, p. 11). The adoption of an innovation is determined by the features of this innovation perceived by the individuals of a social system.

The diffusion speed of an innovation relies on the quantity of people relying on it. There are five categories of adopters that can be classified based on their innovativeness: (i) Innovators, (ii) Early Adopters, (iii) Early Majority, (iv) Late Majority and (v) Laggards.

The Technology Acceptance model (TAM), proposed by Davis in 1986, predicts and assess the user acceptance of information technology (DAVIS, 1989; VENKATESH; DAVIS, 2000). The main concept of the TAM model is based on the inference that the user acceptance of some technology tends to be greater if the user perceives the technology of easy usage and useful (DAVIS, 1989). According to the TAM model, many variables influence the individual’s decision towards the acceptance and adoption of some technologies, but for this specific study, we will only focus on the following:

- I. Perceived usefulness: “is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance” (MERHI, 2015, p. 35);
- II. Perceived ease of use: “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort” (MERHI, 2015, p. 34).

In other words, the Technology Acceptance Model reveals that the use of a particular system free of effort or the use of a system which aggregates knowledge or will improve job performance are the drivers to a person's decision of adopting a technology. In this context, this empirical study also sustains the hypothesis about Millennials podcast embracement.

With all that stated, in order to sustain the main research question of this thesis, those two empirical studies of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) will support the two hypotheses of Millennials podcast technology embracement:

H1: Perceived information need positively influences podcasts adoption by Millennials.

H2: Perceived Usefulness positively influences podcasts embracement by Millennials.

H3: Perceived Mobility and Ease of Use positively influences podcasts embracement by Millennials.

3 METHODOLOGY

Regarding the research approach and objectives, exploratory quantitative method was chosen. This choice was influenced by the podcast s nature of still being new and unexplored by researchers, so it will benefit from an exploratory investigation inherited from a quantitative research. It was collected 302 responses. The questionnaire was based on the three hypotheses formulated and presented in the previous sections. The research was launched through social media (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp). Data collection was performed from October 22nd to November 5th, 2019. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions divided into 3 sections as previous detailed on the methodology. It was excluded individuals that never listened to any podcast and that were not Millennials.

The questionnaire was divided into 3 different sections with a total of seventeen questions. The first section was focused on demographics and frequency of use, to filter respondents. The second part was focused on Millennial's preferences of listening to podcast like subjects and the main reason to start adopting this technology. The third and last part uses the Likert Scale as a measure of opinions in order to understand which of the hypotheses influences the most Millennials. Figure 1 shows the scales used. All scales are 7-point Likert Scales.

Figure 1 – Scales used on data collection

Ease of use (Practicality)	Perceived usefulness (Professionalism)	Perceived Information need (knowledge seek)
I listen to podcasts because of the practicality	I listen to podcasts because I believe they add me professionally	I listen to podcasts because I have a "thirst for knowledge"
I listen to podcasts because I can listen anywhere	I listen to podcasts because I believe they add me academically	I listen to podcast because I can learn new things
I listen to podcasts because of the mobility - I can listen while I'm moving.	I listen to podcasts to study	I listen to podcasts because I can better interact with people about different subjects

4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was tabulated using Excel spreadsheets. After exclusions, 274 answers out of the 302 responses were eligible for the data analysis. The age range was 29% of respondents are aged 17-21 years (78 people); 56% of respondents are aged 22-25 years (151 people); 11%

of respondents are aged 26-30 years (29 people) and 4% of respondents are aged 30-36 years (11 people). Even though Podcasts exist since 2004, the major part of respondents started listening recently: 43% of respondents less than 6 months ago and 38% between 1 and 2 years. Only 10% of respondents started listening between 2 or 3 years and just 7% listen for more than 3 years. It was observed a huge diversity among themes. There were in total 64 different subjects cited.

About the frequency of Podcast listening it was observed from the survey's answers that it is a habit among Millennials having contact with Podcasts on their routine. Around 20,4% of individuals listen to Podcasts every day, 16% listen once a week, 20,4% twice a week and 13,5% every 15 days. Only 8,7% listen to it once a month and 21,1% listens to Podcasts less than 1 time per month.

With those three categories defined, it was possible to calculate the average of each respondent in order to see which one they "completely agreed" the most: podcast embracement because of the Need for Knowledge, Professionalism or Practicality. Furthermore, when calculating the average of each category, it was possible to see the following results: the highest average was for the Practicality category, with 5.8, which means that most of the sample agree the most that perceived mobility and ease of use is the strongest reason on podcast embracement. Followed by the Knowledge category, with 5.3 the data shows that the average for perceived information necessity is the second most relevant for millennials podcast embracement. Last there is the Professionalism category that represents a lower relevance in millennials embracement towards podcast, with 3,9 (t-test confirmed p-value <0,001).

This fact can also be related to frequency. When relating frequency of listening with the variables, the highest relation was 6.3 was between practicability and everyday listening, indicating heavy users of podcasts consider practicability a strong factor for its adoption. On the other hand, for the average of knowledge and frequency, the highest relation was 5.6 for everyday and twice a week. For professionalism and frequency, highest was 4.3 for everyday. Also, it was possible to relate which podcasts subject people listen to when variables have a high or low influence for its embracement. Consequently, we have separated the database into the three categories and classified the total averages sample as High, Low and Medium influence for embracement. The category considered "high influence" was part of the fourth quartile of the sample, which means the top 25% average of the sample. On the other hand, the first quartile was composed by the last 25% averages that represent the category with "low influence" for podcast embracement.

When analyzing the themes listeners are mostly interested about, for each of the variables and its strength separately, it was found the following: the most relevant themes for all the listeners for embracing podcasts are: Politics, News, and Economy. On the other hand, i) for those who practicability is not a strong influencer for podcast embracing, the subjects they most listen to are Politics and General Knowledge, ii) for those who professionalism is not a strong influencer, the subjects they most listen to are: Comedy, Psychology and General Knowledge. Finally, iii) for those who knowledge is not a strong influencer, the subjects they most listen to are: Comedy, General Knowledge, News and Psychology.

Table 1: Podcast theme vs Interest level

Podcast theme	Practicability		Professional		Knowledge	
	High (4 ^o quartile)	Low (1 ^o quartile)	High (4 ^o quartile)	Low (1 ^o quartile)	High (4 ^o quartile)	Low (1 ^o quartile)
Politics	44	26	45	19	51	20
News	44	19	44	18	42	22
Economy	40	17	44	17	45	17
General Knowledge	36	24	40	28	39	28
Psychology	20	13	31	19	22	22
Technology	18	10	19	16	24	7
Educational	17	8	21	5	15	8
Comedy	15	16	16	28	15	31
Crimes / Mystery	8	5	8	7	7	9
Sports	4	5	1	5	1	6

5 FINAL THOUGHTS

The main objective was to answer the research question: to what extent do the defined independent variables influences Millennials behavior towards podcast embracement? Data allows to conclude that perceived mobility and ease of use is what most influence millennials towards podcast adoption.

Podcast is a type of digital media gaining traction and relevance in the market in recent years, as also considered a new mean of communication. Millennials represent a considerable share of its main public, and this study can be considered relevant once it analyses its consumer behavior and the key drivers to podcast adoption by this generation. It was possible to conclude that perceived mobility and ease of use are most influence millennials podcast adoption. In other words, the practicality of listening to a podcast is considered by millennials as the strongest factor for adopting the technology. However, the data also showed the variable of

perceived information need as a relevant factor: the averages were 5,8 for perceived mobility and ease of use and 5,3 for perceived need for knowledge.

Thereby, since the analysis of the affirmations of the Likert Scale showed the average of perceived mobility and ease of use as the most relevant for podcast adoption, and also, the answer to the question about the main reason of podcasts listening “to acquire general knowledge”, it can be inferred, when correlating the fact obtained, that, for the given sample, millennials chose adopting podcast because is a practical way of obtaining general knowledge. Within a global context of technology and Internet, millennial's features such as immediacy, high capacity to absorb information and digital engagement, make them conducive to want information "on demand", which means rapid, practical and immediate information, where, what and when they want. Therefore, podcast is the new type of digital media that provides this type of on demand information, where it can be listened anywhere, anytime and about millions of different subjects. The presented research confirms this social context and the conclusion of listening to podcast because is a practical way of acquiring general knowledge is reaffirmed. Theoretical contributions rely on an advance on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) theories, by extending this knowledge to podcasts domain. Millennials can be considered as early adopters of podcasts. Future studies can compare Perks et al (2019) scales to engagement, including factors such as Controlling Edutainment, Storytelling Transportation, Social Engagement, and Multitasking, with the variables present on this study.

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