Podcasts: “Entertainment To Go”

A study on why Uppsala University students listen to podcasts

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Preface

This essay is written by Anneli Modin and Sasha Börholm. Börholm has worked with the introduction, background, theory, and has written the abstract. Modin has written the previous research, methods and materials. She has also corrected and reformatted the text. Both authors have contributed in writing the results and analysis, as well as the discussion and conclusion.

We would like to thank everyone who has responded to our survey and everyone who attended and was a part of the focus group interviews.
Abstrakt

Titel: Podcasts: “Entertainment To Go” - A study on why Uppsala University students listen to podcasts

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Metod: Studien bygger på kvantitativa och kvalitativa forskningsmetoder: intervjuer med fyra fokus grupper och en online-enkät.

Huvudresultat: Resultaten indikerar att (1) studenternas primära motiv för att lyssna på podcasts är: att bli informerade och underhållna, att distraheras medan de gör andra saker och som en form av sällskap; (2) studenter lyssnar på liknande podcasts, den mest populära är Sveriges Radios P3-dokumentär; och (3) studenter upplever känslomässiga kontakter med podcastvärldarna. En online-undersökning genomfördes som beskriver vilka faktorer som gör en podcast intressant att lyssna på, till exempel svarade: 46,5% att de lyssnade på avsnitt som var en timme eller längre, och komedi var den mest populära genren (60 röster). Resultaten visar att, en kombination av aktuell teknik, typ av podcast samt användning- och belöningsom förklarar varför studenterna lyssnar på podcasts och varför de tror att podcasts är populära i allmänhet.

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1. Introduction

In the age of converged technology, and with endless media and information convened at the tips of our fingers, podcasts have steadily increased in popularity. The term comes from a combination of the words broadcasting and iPod (McClung & Johnson, 2010). Podcasts are audio files that can be downloaded or streamed from a mobile device, usually at no direct cost to the user. This unique distribution avenue has enabled audio media innovation spanning topic, time, and structure (Perks & Turner, 2019).

A podcast is an episodic series of audio-files, whereby one or more hosts talk for a period of time about, well, anything really. Topics of conversation range from business and technology, sport and lifestyle, interviews with celebrities and storytelling pods with plotlines and characters- with everything in between. With this thesis, we have chosen to investigate the phenomenon of podcasts. We believe this study is important because it recognizes that podcasts are a phenomenon, but the aim is to analyze why this is so by exploring why people choose to listen to them. This topic of research also falls under the field of media and society which is an important area within media and communication studies.

As of 2018, Swedes are the 3rd most frequent listeners of podcasts in the world (behind South Korea and Spain). Over 70% of all listeners of podcasts are between 20-49 years of age, with an audience peak in the age group 20-34 (Wåreus, et al, 2018). Due to this demographic, and because of an ease of access to students at Uppsala University, we chose to be more specific in our study and base our research on the podcast listening behaviors of Uppsala University students. We have relied on the techniques of reviewing available and relevant literature and/or data, as well as conducted both quantitative and qualitative research. A 9-question survey was distributed electronically via email as well as by being shared on our personal Facebook accounts. Four, semi-structured focus groups were also conducted in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of students’ podcast listening habits. In using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, we hope to shed light on the underlying reasons of why these students listen to podcasts by evaluating their listening behaviors and podcast preferences.
1.2 Purpose and Formulated Questions

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of podcasts as a phenomenon. Specifically, it will explore what Uppsala University students think about podcasts in an effort to gain understanding about why students listen to podcasts, if there are particular genres that students are drawn to, and why they think podcasts are successful. The purpose is also to contribute with in-depth knowledge of what student listeners are looking for.

In this thesis we have sought to answer the following questions:

- **Question 1: Why do Uppsala University students listen to podcasts?**
  
  This question is aimed at identifying the underlying reasons for why students choose to listen to podcasts; e.g. if they use them to relax, as a source of information, etc. This question also aims to investigate if students believe certain factors make podcasts successful, and if so, what are they? Some of these factors could be length of episode, host, topic of conversation etc.

- **Question 2: Are there certain genres students are particularly drawn to?**
  
  With this question we want to figure out if certain podcasts are popular due to their genre or theme. Podcast genres range from science and economics, to lifestyle and fitness. Is there a common genre that students choose to listen to?

- **Question 3: Why are podcasts successful according to Uppsala University students?**
  
  This question inquires what students believe are the primary reasons for podcasts being so successful today.
1.3 Disposition

The thesis starts with Background (2) which includes a brief history of podcasts (2.1) and previous research (2.2) that inspired this study. Theories used in the study are discussed under chapter 3: Convergence Culture 3.1 Uses & Gratifications 3.2. In the Methods and Materials (4) chapter Research Design (4.1), Collection Methods and Implementation (4.2), Method of Analysis (4.4), Material Reflections and Ethical Reflections are discussed. Results and Analysis are in chapter 5 and the paper ends with Conclusion and Discussion (6). References are in chapter 7 and Appendix in chapter 8.
2. Background

2.1 A brief history of podcasts

Podcasts, previously known as “audio blogs”, have roots dating back to the 1980’s, when the company Radio Computing Services (RCS) provided music and talk-related software to radio stations in a digital format. In the early days of internet radio, Carl Malamud launched ‘Internet Talk Radio’ which was the first computer-radio talk show, where each week he interviewed a computer expert (1993). It was distributed ”as audio files that computer users fetch one by one” (Lewis, 1995), and listeners were able pause, restart the audio files as well as skip content at will.

In September 2000, the first system that enabled the selection, automatic downloading and storage of serial episodic audio content on PCs and portable devices, was launched from early MP3 player manufacturer, i2Go (Credeur, Mary Jane, 2001). i2Go introduced content by way of a digital audio and news entertainment service called MyAudio2Go.com that allowed users to download episodic news, sports, entertainment, weather, and music in audio format for listening on a PC, the eGo portable audio player, or other MP3 players.

‘Audio-blogging’ picked up speed in 2004. In May of that year, Eric Rice and Randy Dryburgh launched Audioblog.com as the first commercial podcasting hosting service (Audioblog.com, 2004). In June 2005, Apple added podcasting to its iTunes 4.9 music software and built a directory of podcasts in its iTunes Music Store (Neumayr & Kerris, 2005). The new iTunes allowed users to subscribe to, download and organize podcasts. Apple also promoted the creation of podcasts by using its GarageBand and QuickTime Pro software. On December 3, 2005, "podcast" was named the word of the year by the New Oxford American Dictionary (Hudson, 2011) and was added to the dictionary in 2006.

Fast-forward to 2012 when a technical breakthrough came in the form of the Apple-produced iPhone podcast app, which provided a popular library system for listeners. This was followed by a dramatic improvement in inexpensive recording production and editing equipment, as well as the development of 4G mobile phone connections. The widespread of wi-fi also meant that listeners could browse, download or stream shows whenever they wanted (Robertson, 2019). The cultural breakthrough came in 2014 with a very specific podcast called ‘Serial’ - a piece of
investigative journalism hosted by Sarah Koenig, narrating a non-fiction story over multiple episodes. To date, the first and second seasons of the show have had more than 340 million downloads (Robertson, 2019).

2.2 Previous Research

With the rapid growth of the podcast phenomena, many studies have been done to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the new technology. Among those whom have researched the spread and popularity of the massive audio market is Kantar Sifo and Svenskarna och Internet. They have found that the listening of podcasts has grown rapidly over the past couple of years. The paper ‘Podcasts and Productivity: A Qualitative Uses and Gratifications Study’ by Lisa Glebatis Perks & Jacob S. Turner inspired this study's path.

2.2.1 Kantar Sifo

The organization Kantar Sifo is a client-based organization that researches different markets to get insight for their clientele. In total, 45,000 people are interviewed each year by the organization. They describe themselves as the following:

“We are passionate about what we do; based on facts and knowledge, to generate insights that cause our clients to increase their competitiveness, growth and reach their goals. For that to happen, we offer new discoveries and deeper insights from high-quality data, leading methods and diverse range of sources.” (Kantar Sifo, 2019)

In the first quarter of 2019, the organization did a study on the top Swedish podcasts. Those who were selected to answer their surveys were asked at random and podcast statistics were analyzed by the organization. The study found that weekly podcast listening increased by 26% from the previous year (2018). A top podcast list was provided, where the top 11 podcasts in Sweden had 100,000 listeners and above weekly. The most popular podcast in Sweden is P3 Dokumentär, which is a public service radio show. This list of popular podcasts will be used in the survey to see if Uppsala University students listen the same way as common podcast consumers. It should be noted that the company is profit driven and provides insights for other
companies purely for marketing purposes. The table below (Figure. 1) is relevant for our study because of the listening behavior it shows.

![Figure 1. Poddtoppen (Kantar Sifo, 2019)](image)

2.2.2 Svenskarna och internet

The Swedes and the Internet is a study conducted by the Internet Foundation yearly.

“With the survey we want to contribute facts and insights on how the use of the internet in Sweden is developing. We want to provide the conditions for the digitization of Swedish society and the business community to take place on an informed basis.”

(Svenskarna och internet, 2018)

The study was conducted in 2018 and a total of 3057 people were randomly selected to take part. It was found that podcasts are most popular amongst young people. The age group 16-35 are the most frequent listeners of podcasts. In this age group, 34% listen daily, 41% listen weekly, 28% listen every month and 38% have listened at some point (Figure 2.). In 2015, only 29% of the population listened to Podcasts, but in 2018, that number rose to 51% of which 8% listen daily, 12% every week, 10% every month and 21% have listened at some point.
2.2.3 Department of Media and Communication Merrimack college

The paper ‘Podcasts and Productivity: A Qualitative Uses and Gratifications Study’ concluded the following:

“We ultimately conclude that podcasts offer an endless supply of engaging content that travels with listeners, allowing them to be “productive” in various physical and mind-expanding ways. The enjoyment is facilitated in part by forging connections with hosts and other listeners.” (Glebatis Perks & S. Turner 2019)

As the study mentions; “Berry (2016) identified overlapping and distinctive U&G between radio and podcasting, arguing that listening to traditional radio is more of a linear process with messages moving mostly from sender to receiver, whereas podcast listening involves the choice to create a social yet personalized and customizable listening experience.” This piece of research was critical in understanding the listeners behaviors and understanding the historical segway from a physical radio to the new form of radio that exists in our cellphones, podcasts.

Podcasts have been able to thrive because of their accessibility, affordability and the fact that anyone is able to produce one. Radio requires expensive equipment and licensing which in turn can make it less appealing for someone who is interested in the medium but can not afford to produce their own radio show. Podcasts have made it possible for an ordinary individual to produce their very own content.
3. Theories

Some theories that are relevant to our study and that can better help explain the phenomenon of podcast listening are: Jenkins’ (2006) work on convergence culture, and multiple works on ‘Uses and Gratifications theory’ (UGT). Under convergence culture we have the sub-theory of ‘Mobility’, presented by Ott and Mack (2014), as well as the sub-theory of Lilliestam’s ‘listening behavior’ (2006) under UGT.

3.1 Convergence Culture

The digitization of all media content has led to convergence culture; a process Henry Jenkins defines as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (2006). An example of convergence is using a mobile phone to listen to music or reading a book on an iPad. Today, the media often converges, but at the same time, the range of interactive media channels increases, encouraging users to influence and choose their content (Berglez, 2009). On-demand media streaming services such as Spotify and Apple’s Podcast app are a perfect example of this: users can choose when, where and how they listen to media provided through these channels. The sheer convenience of media streaming services is fundamental to understanding podcast listening; especially considering that full episodes and whole seasons of podcast series are easily available for listening at any time and on a range of electronic devices.

3.1.1 Mobility

Mobility refers to the ease with which an object can be moved from place to place (Ott & Mack, 2014). Historically, different media has not been very portable; seeing films was restricted to theaters, watching TV was restricted to viewing at home. Limited mobility was the case for print media (i.e. books, magazines, newspapers) too, as the size and weight of printed material likely restricted how much media one would carry around. But the development of powerful microprocessors and wireless technology is rapidly changing all this, and today, instead of us
going to places for media, media can increasingly go places with us (Ott & Mack, 2014). As media has converged and as technology becomes more and more mobile, our consumption of media doesn’t have to stop; the portability of podcasts allows us to continue listening no matter what we are doing.

3.2 Uses and Gratifications theory

One more theory useful to our study is uses and gratifications theory (UGT). UGT is an audience-centered approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. UGT discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape (Mcquail, 2010). It assumes that audience members are not passive consumers of media. Rather, the audience has power over their media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. Unlike other theoretical perspectives, UGT holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification. Research has shown that media taken in for entertainment purposes (i.e., movies, songs, television, etc.) have a wide range of uses and emotional gratifications (Bartsch & Reinhold, 2010) and that these are not mutually exclusive but can overlap with each other. Some examples of these gratifications we found prevalent in our results were podcasts are a customizable experience for students (selecting the medium and content one wants, when one wants it) (Perks & Turner, 2019), students enjoy the ability to multitask, students have eudaemonic motivation (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) and that students created parasocial relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Uses and Gratifications theory helps us explain both how and why students choose to actively listen to podcasts and what they get out of it.

Customizable experience:
With a wide range of genres, topics of conversation, different shows, different hosts- as well as the ability to be played and paused at the convenience of the listener- podcasts can be described as a customizable experience.
**Multitasking:**
We define multitasking simply as listening to podcasts and engaging in at least one more activity at the same time (Perks & Turner, 2018). Multitasking can be motivated by several factors, including perceived efficiency, enjoyment, and habit (Hwang, Kim, & Jeong, 2014).

**Eudaimonic Motivation:**
Eudaimonic motivation suggest that media consumers turn to entertainment media to search for deeper meanings, insights, purpose in life, finding beauty, raising morale, experience strong emotions, and understand how others think and feel (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).

**Parasocial Relationships:**
Parasocial relationships describes the way that consumers of entertainment media sometimes use it to gratify a need for social connection by becoming very attached to characters seen in entertainment media, such as characters in a TV show (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

3.2.1 Listening behaviors

A prevalent gratification we found within our research that helps to explain podcast consumption can be linked to *listening behavior*. Lars Lilliestam, professor of music, writes in his book Musikliv (2006) about the different ways people listen to music. Lilliestam mentions some listening techniques that he noted in his research, including "listening to music as a backdrop" which means that music is played in the background and acts as a form of company to the listener. Lilliestam mentions concepts such as "inattentive listening" and "attentive listening" and that they can be described as motor/reflexive listening, associative/emotional listening and recognizable listening. The book then goes into “active” and “passive listening” whereby active listening suggests that the person in question participates in only listening to music whilst passive listening suggests that the person in question performs other chores whilst listening to music and thus does not put all their focus on the music (Lilliestam, 2006). These listening techniques and concepts can also be linked to the consumption of podcasts.
4. Methods and materials

4.1 Research design

Our study on the phenomenon of podcasts was fundamentally exploratory. Our research was exploratory in the sense that it “aims to gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to acquire new insight into it in order to formulate a more precise problem or to develop a hypothesis” (Shields & Rangarjan, 2013). Exploratory research “tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done” (Brown, 2006). This was the most reasonable design for this thesis as exploratory research in general does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, but merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth (Dudovskiy, 2018). We hypothesized that there are many different reasons why people listen to podcasts, but we hoped that through our research we could find statistics and quotes that point out commonalities. It has been noted that “exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method” (Singh, 2007).

Since statistics showed that podcast listeners were between the ages of 20-34 (Wåreus et al., 2018), Uppsala University students were chosen as the representative ‘sample’ for our study since the general age group of students is 19-35 (Antagningsstatistik, 2019). A sample should be ‘representative’, meaning that key characteristics (age, gender, social class, etc.) or variables relevant to the survey objectives are distributed similarly in the sample and in the larger population from which the sample is drawn (Hansen & Machin, 2019).

We chose this sample fundamentally because Uppsala University students generally fit the typical age of podcast listeners (between 20-34 years of age) and also because we had easy access to these students. Our research objects and methods (survey and focus groups) were thus exclusively designed for students who currently attend Uppsala University. Once our survey was distributed to our target group, we began conducting focus groups. We used ‘convenience sampling’, which is when responders are selected in terms of their relevance to the research objectives and on the basis of availability and willingness to be interviewed (Hansen & Machin, 2019). ‘Snowball sampling’ was also used, which is when existing study subjects recruit future
subjects from among their acquaintances. We understood that it might be difficult to find active podcast listeners amongst students and by using snowball sampling we spread the word to more students.

4.2 Collection methods and implementation

Secondary literature:
The study began with finding relevant literature and research to apply to the paper. This material created the background that was needed for the study and help to clarify the study’s path. The goal was to find between 1-3 current or previous research that had been done within this subject and find literature that helped guide us through relevant theories that were used. This helped strengthen the validity and reliability of our research.

Surveys:
Survey results are an example of quantitative data. We believed this research method was helpful to us as surveys are very quick to send out and gave us simple statistical answers to our questions. We conducted an electronic-based survey created on Google Forms which we then ‘shared’ on our private Facebook accounts, as well as sent out (via link in an email), to university students studying at Uppsala University. Reminders were sent out both via email and on Facebook to try to encourage more to answer and to get those who forgot to answer to respond. Respondents were encouraged to share the survey to friends and in other Facebook groups to reach a wider range of students. This survey was anonymous in nature.

The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions (see appendix 8.1). The first question of the survey was: “Are you a student at Uppsala University?” - if the respondent answered “No”, then the survey ended. Our results were only based on students who studied at Uppsala University and thus only this group were able to take part in the full survey. If the respondent answered “Yes”, they were forwarded to the second question which asked: “Do you listen to podcasts?”. If the respondent answered “No”, then the survey also ended there. It was invaluable that students who do not listen to podcasts answered the survey questions. The following questions assumed the respondent did listen to podcasts. The rest of the questionnaire contained both multiple choice and open-ended questions. We provided respondents with the choice to answer “Other”
when answering multiple choice questions, and also allowed respondents to write their own answer if none of the answers we had provided, were sufficient.

The aim of the survey was to acquire statistics and data to answer our research questions, primarily to answer the question: "What makes podcasts successful?". This research question aimed to gain an understanding of whether various factors such as the length, genre or topic of conversation in podcasts had any impact on why students thought podcasts were successful. An advantage of surveys, specifically web-based surveys, is that it is a quick and resource-efficient approach to acquire the data you are looking for. In his book Introduction to Social Science Analysis, Hjerm mentions how important it is that a questionnaire has strong validity and reliability (2014). Before we shared the survey, we conducted a pilot study where we sent the survey to five people as a test run. This was done to ensure that the questions were simple and clear, as well as to see that the web-survey worked technically. The pilot study was also done to ensure that the questions we had chosen to ask were strongly related to the topic, that is, that the study had strong validity.

**Focus Groups:**

After we had distributed the survey online, we conducted focus groups interviews in order to gain a qualitative understanding of our research problem. The focus group method has proven to be very useful for exploring how people think and talk about a particular topic, but also explore why they might have a certain point of view (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Focus groups only work when the subjects have some knowledge of the topic they are going to discuss during the session, which is why we only asked people who listen to podcasts if they would like to take part in our study.

The focus group interviews were conducted by both researchers. The questions were created and formulated based on some of the survey questions and responses. Four different semi-structured focus groups were conducted, consisting of 3 groups of 4 Uppsala University students and one with 3. All groups received snacks and coffee as compensation for participating. Only students who actively listen to podcasts were recruited to take part in the focus groups. We also informed the students that were recruited that the interview would be conducted in English. The subjects were informed of the date and time of the interviews. A consent form was also sent out to each participant prior to the interviews to ensure that the data could be used in the study since it will be published publicly.
The subjects were able to choose which date worked for them and from there the groups were created at random. The interviews were recorded with Voice Memos (iPhone app). The length of the interviews should not have exceeded 30 minutes to maximize efficiency on time spent transcribing the interviews. Since the study had a limited amount of time, the analysis of data period had to be short. After the focus groups were conducted, we transcribed, thematically coded and analyzed the interviews using the theories that we chose to base our study upon in order to understand the results.

The purpose of the focus group interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of why students listen to podcasts and what Uppsala University students believe makes podcasts successful. Focus group interviews helped clarify the listening behaviors of students and their everyday experience with podcasts. Unstructured interviews are the most popular primary data collection method with exploratory studies (Dudovskiy, 2018), however, our focus group was semi-structured, meaning we loosely followed an interview guide. The session was more or less open, allowing new ideas or questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the participants said. We chose to use focus groups as a research method because it allowed us to observe how audiences make sense of podcasts through conversation and interaction with each other in a way that is close to how we form opinions and understandings in our everyday lives (Hansen & Machin, 2019). Also, focus groups, or group interviews, are more efficient as we could interview multiple people within the same limitation of time and resources.

4.3 Method of Analysis

_Survey_

The survey was closed after the transcription of the interviews. We chose to do so in an attempt to get as many responses as possible and to give more time for people to answer after reminders had been sent out. The program “Google Forms” created graphs of data from the multiple-choice questions and the answers that were written by the responders were analyzed using thematic coding.
Focus Groups

The transcription of the focus groups was done by using intelligent verbatim style which means that the transcription excluded grammatical errors, fillers, stutters, false starts, repetitions, etc. This style made the analysis process of using thematic coding less time consuming (easier to find themes). The focus groups were analyzed using thematic coding analysis method, which helped find patterns and created valid results of the data. A non-response analysis was conducted and an analysis of the internal data loss (misunderstandings, optional questions that are unanswered, no-show participants in the focus group interview, etc.).

4.4 Material reflections

The material that was used and the selection of the material was primarily done through convenient access to the field of study. A study focusing on why people listen to podcasts would have been too broad and not possible for a thesis of this size. The population that was available for this study was Uppsala University students, since we are students ourselves at the university.

The recruitment process for the focus group interviews was not as simple as expected. Finding people who listen actively to podcast was not an easy task. Luckily through friends or people we knew, they knew someone who listened to podcast that would be willing to participate in the interview. Like our pilot survey, we had planned on having one pilot focus group each, in order to test the interview guide. Because of limited time and resources, these pilot studies were never conducted. Pilot testing is important because it can bring forth potential problems with the sequencing, framing and wording of questions. However, changes were made to the focus group interview guide once the pilot survey had been reviewed.

Since this is an exploratory research paper, this topic could be further researched. We do not have the resources to study the amount of people to representative population (to cover the university population you would need a large sample). Since, as mentioned, the responders may be mainly media and communication students this study could be considered as a pre-study for further research within this topic.
Loss of potential data always occurs in all research (Ekström & Larsson 2013). The method that might have produced the most loss of data could have been the survey. The risk of people not responding and, as mentioned previously, misunderstanding the questions could have been quite significant. So, the data was analyzed and loss of responders had to be considered. There was of course also risk that planned participants for the focus groups would not show up (see 5.2.1.1). It is recommended to then have one extra person recruited to make sure that there is the correct amount in the group (Hansen & Machin 2019).

4.5 Ethical Reflections

Academic research must always be ethical, and it is especially important when subjects (people) are involved. In this study we did come across ethical dilemmas and challenges. To minimize these, we were extremely clear that the participants in the study would be anonymous and if they wish to no longer take part in the study, they have the right to terminate their participation (Hansen & Machin 2019). Those answering the survey were informed of their anonymity through the study description and the data confidentiality. The focus group interviews had an introduction where the participants were informed of how their conversation would be recorded, how the data would be used, and were also be informed of their anonymity in the study. The data was collected and used for only clearly and explicitly defined purposes. A letter of information was sent out to responders before the interviews to assure their confidentiality and information. All participants gave their informed consent prior to collecting the data. All participants were over the age of 18, so the need of parental consent was not an issue.
5. Results and analysis

5.1 Results

5.1.1 Survey

The survey had 111 answers of which 102 were relevant for the study and one person was not included in Diagram 1 because of the answer they gave (see Data Loss Analysis 5.2.1.1). It had four checkbox questions, two free text questions as well as one multiple choice question. The four checkbox and two free text answers were analyzed with thematic coding to reach the results below. To see the original survey see appendix 8.3.

![Diagram 1. What do you study?](image)

The first question of the survey was “What do you study?”. There were 57 responders that answered that they study Media and Communications studies, 13 Economics, 13 Peace and Development, 4 Teacher program, 2 Law, 2 Literature, 2 Societal planing, 2 Rhetorics, 1 psychology, 1 Science, 1 Language, 1 political science, 1 Art History, and 1 social sciences.
Diagram 2. Do you actively listen to any of the following Podcasts?

The results of question 2 shows what podcasts the students actively listen to out of the top 11 podcasts in Sweden. P3 Dokumentär has the highest with 64 listeners, Sommar/Vinter i P1 is second with 49 listeners, Alex & Sigge is third with 21 listeners and P1 dokumentär is third with 19 listeners. There were 19 people that chose the option “None of these,” which is 18.8% of the answers.

Diagram 3. Is there a particular genre of podcast that you listen to?

The results for question 3 shows that the most common genre amongst the students who answered was ‘comedy’ with 62 answers, ‘news’ was the second largest with 38 answers, the third largest was ‘mystery’ with 34 answers and the fourth largest was ‘politics’ with 27 answers.
Diagram 4. How do you find the podcasts you listen to?

Results for question 4 shows that the most common ways the students find podcasts that they listen to is through suggestions from family/friends as well as on the platform they listen to podcasts (both received 61 answers). The second largest factor was seeing the podcast on social media, which had 50 answers.

Diagram 5. How long are the podcasts you typically listen to?

Results for question 5 shows that the majority of students listen for an hour or longer (46.5%). The second largest choice was 45 min (37.6%). 12.9% of the students said they listened to podcasts that were 30 min and 3% said they listened to podcasts that were 20 min.
Results for question 6 shows that students multitasked whilst listening to podcasts: on commute received 90 answers, cleaning 81, cooking 78, exercise 40, nothing 33, to fall asleep 4, getting ready 2 and working 1.

Results for question 7 shows why the students think podcasts are successful. It was mentioned 34 times that the host was important, 32 content, 28 humor, 18 informative, 14 entertaining, 12 interesting, 10 voice, 8 structure, 5 factual and 5 editing.
5.1.2 Focus groups

Four focus groups were held to discuss students’ podcast listening, with fifteen participants in total. The longest focus group lasted 42 minutes, the shortest lasted 22 minutes, and the other two focus groups lasted about 26 minutes each. The focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using thematic coding. Respondents were asked a range of questions about their podcast listening habits by researchers with the help of an interview guide (see Appendix 8.1). Follow-up and impromptu questions were asked when we felt it was necessary/appropriate.

The ‘introduction questions’ asked were intended to encourage respondents to think about their general listening habits. One of these questions was: “How often do you listen to podcasts?” Respondents’ answers ranged, with some saying that they listened “every day” to others saying “once a month”, with the average answer around 2-4 times a week. When asked “When do you usually listen to podcasts?,” respondents answered that they predominantly listened to podcasts whilst multitasking. Common tasks that respondents participated in were cleaning, cooking, exercising, commuting and getting ready, e.g.:

*Respondent 3, Focus Group 1:* “I listen to a podcast when I am cooking food or cleaning.”

*Respondent 2, Focus Group 3:* “I usually listen to it on the train or (if) I’m travelling somewhere.”

Respondents said that the podcast episodes they listen to were typically anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour long, but they also stated that it wasn’t a problem for them to pause episodes at any time:

*Respondent 3, Focus Group 2:* “Yeah, it depends on what I am doing. If the thing I am doing takes an hour, then I will listen to the whole podcast. If it doesn’t, then I’ll pause it and come back to it later.”
Focus groups were asked what application they used to listen to podcasts. The majority of respondents answered that they used Apple’s own Podcast application that is built into the iPhone, but respondents also said they listened on the media streaming app, Spotify.

The ‘transition questions’ from the interview guide were intended to get focus groups thinking about their favorite podcasts and what they liked about them. When asked “How do you choose what podcasts you listen to?”, respondents in all four focus groups answered similarly, with the four ways to finding podcasts being:

1. Through recommendations from friends/family 
2. Find podcasts displayed on the popular ‘charts’ on the Podcast app 
3. Search themselves for the podcast by genre 
4. Listen to podcasts made by ‘influencers’ they followed on social media channels

The voice of the podcast host/s mattered a lot to respondents, with some respondents saying they specifically won’t listen to a podcast if they find the voice irritating:

*Respondent 2, Focus Group 4:* “But I also feel like if you’re going to listen to, like, a lot of hours... the voice needs to be a certain way. It can’t be annoying.”

*Respondent 4, Focus Group 1:* “The voice is very important I would say, because I can be very irritated or annoyed if there are weird sounds, so, like... then I can be like: ‘I can’t listen to this’.”

However, some respondents pointed out that sometimes it depended on the podcast, and that they could continue listening to an irritating podcast host if they found the episode interesting:

*Respondent 1, Focus Group 1:* “That depends for me... I know in P3 Dokumentär they have one host with a really horrible voice, but I listen anyway because I want to know, like, the facts and the story and I think it’s interesting.”

Focus groups were asked what podcasts they were listening to at the moment, which also gave similar answers across the groups. The most mentioned podcasts were: ‘P3 Dokumentär’, ‘Alex
och Sigge’ and ‘Tom och Petter’. They were also asked what their favorite podcasts of all time were, to which there were varying answers. However, respondents were asked what they liked about these podcasts to which they generally answered that the podcasts were ‘funny’, ‘interesting’ and ‘informative’. It seemed most important to respondents that they were entertained by the podcast as well as that they were able to learn something.

The ‘key questions’ asked in the focus groups were aimed at revealing how respondents felt emotionally towards podcasts. When asked “Why do you listen to podcasts?”, respondents answered with the following reasons:

- They were ‘tired’ of listening to music
- It was entertaining and informative
- They were able to multitask (i.e. when cooking, cleaning, commuting, etc.)
- They used podcasts as a form of company/ to avoid quietness

Focus groups were asked how they felt when they listened to podcasts, and generally respondents answered that it depended on the podcast (that is, topic of conversation or genre). However, some common feelings they associated with podcast listening were relaxed, entertained, stimulated and focused. Focus groups were also asked to reflect on if they felt emotionally connected to the host/s of podcasts in any way. Largely respondents acknowledged they felt some type of connection and some respondents referenced to building a ‘relationship’ with the host/s.

To finish the focus group interviews, respondents were asked the ‘closing question’: “Do you have anything else to add about your opinion on why podcasts are successful?”. The groups answered similarly, with their main opinions on the success of podcasts being:

- Podcasts are easy to access and mobile
- Listeners are able to multitask
- The vast range of podcasts allows anyone to find a podcast that interests them
- Podcasts are informative, entertaining and educational
5.2 Analysis

5.2.1 Data loss analysis

5.2.1.1 Survey

The survey was open for 10 days and received a total of 111 answers. Out of those 111 answers, 9 were not relevant and one was excluded from one result. In a survey it is common for people to misunderstand a question or answer even if the question is unclear to them. Since we did not have the opportunity to be there when the recipient answered, the option of emailing us was given in case something was unclear. We did not receive any emails during the time the survey was open. This can be considered an internal loss if the recipient answered a question with a different interpretation. There was no answer that showed that someone interpreted the question differently but that is something we will never know.

One person answered, “It is a secret!” under the question “What do you study?” which can be seen as a loss of data but since the recipient answered the rest of the questions with clarity, we decided to keep the answer. For that reason, this person was not included in the result of the graph for “What do you study.” Nine other recipients were not relevant since they did not study at Uppsala or listened to podcasts. Four answered that they were not students at Uppsala University and five answered that they did not listen to podcasts. These were all considered internal losses since the recipients were actively participating in the survey. Those who are considered external are all those we did not reach in this study.

5.2.1.2 Focus group

The focus group interviews were successfully filled with four people in each. Unfortunately, one person did not show up to our third group which resulted in one group being three people. Having an extra person for each focus group was not possible since it was difficult, as mentioned previously, to find people that actively listened to podcasts and wanted to participate. It is also important to note that for most, English was not their first language which
could have resulted in some participants not answering as thoroughly as others who may have been more comfortable with English.

5.2.2 Analysis of the survey

From the results in Diagram 2, it is clear that the students listen to similar podcasts as the general population of Sweden. The most common was P3 Dokumentär and Sommar/Vinter i P1, but where it differs to Kantor's graph is the popularity of Alex & Sigge amongst the students. Another interesting observation is the significant amount of answers under the choice “None of these,” which received 19 answers.

The popularity of P3 and P1 can be seen as a convergence from the traditional Swedish radio to online accessibility through podcasts. These radio stations are also public service which might attract more listeners since it is an established and trusted source of information.

Those who answered “None of these” could be listening to other large podcasts that are produced outside of Sweden or actively search for podcasts elsewhere. It would have been interesting to see what podcast those 19 people listened to and could have been used as a comparative factor.

The most common genres amongst the students was comedy, news, mystery and politics. Analyzing the individual answers, a pattern was discovered where the subject the student studied was linked with what genre they preferred to listen to. For example, a media student might prefer to listen to news, politics or lifestyle podcasts. Whilst a teacher student might prefer to listen to language, literature or history podcasts. There were of course answers where the genres of podcasts they listened to were not related to their education which could be seen as a way of learning about other subjects outside of their own education.

Students answered that the most common ways they find podcasts they listen to is through suggestions from family/friends, on the platform they listen to podcasts and through social media. It can be assumed that why people suggest to other friends or family is because they want to be able to talk about it. Previously this was not possible since traditional radio shows did not have playback until the early 2000s and was not possible to get access to a wide library.
of shows. Because of convergence from broadcast radio to modern day podcasts, the way the students find and listen to the podcast are very different. Now it is possible to follow someone on social media that has their own podcast, or they might suggest podcasts to their followers.

The students were asked “How long are the podcasts you typically listen to?” and the majority answered 45 minutes and an hour or longer. There were students that answered that it depends on the podcast but that they prefer a certain length. From those answers it can be assumed that the podcast length may depend on the genre or the time the students have to listen to it. This could be seen as customizing their listening experience through choosing the length they prefer but is also important to note that the students prefer long listening when they listen to a podcast. Some of these students may also prefer to start a podcast and then pause it to go back to it later when they have time.

Many students answered that they do something whilst they listen to podcasts. On commute, cleaning, cooking, exercise and nothing (relax, bored, etc.) were the top choices for the students. This shows that the majority of students like to do something whilst they listen but also do nothing (use it to relax or listen when bored). It could be that the students want something to listen to while doing a tedious task such as cooking or cleaning. When on commute music can be replaced by a podcast if the listener wants to learn something or just listen to a lifestyle podcast. It can be seen as a type of entertainment where you do not have to focus on an image but just have to pay attention to someone's voice or have a voice/voices in the background to keep you company.

The students were asked one last question that was free text which was “What makes a successful podcast according to you?” This question could be generalized as “What makes podcasts successful?” and the answers were varied amongst the students. There was a total of ten factors that were important to the students and those were the following: host, content, humor, informative, entertaining, interesting, voice, structure, structural and editing.
5.2.3 Analysis of the focus group interviews

By analyzing and coding the interviews using the theories presented at the beginning of the thesis (convergence culture, mobility, Uses and Gratifications theory and listening behavior), we can begin to understand why and how students listen to podcasts.

**Convergence Culture:**

Something that has popularized podcasts in general is digitization and the convergence that has occurred as a result. Focus group participants’ description of their pathways to podcasts included convergence of media as a key aspect to their listening. Podcasts seemed to be a type of replacement for radio or TV. Those interviewed in the focus groups were asked, in general, what they believed to be the reason behind the popularity of podcasts. One respondent answered that podcasts are a convergence of different media tied into one medium:

*Respondent 1, Focus Group 3: “Yeah, it’s like getting all you get from social media, newspapers, like, TV shows, wrapped up in your ears. So, it’s easy to just... consume.”*

This was also touched on in focus group 2:

*Respondent 3, Focus Group 2: “I also think that it’s an easy way to spread information... It’s kind of like the same to the radio- that now we, like, have it on our phones; so, it’s just like an extension of that.”*

*Respondent 4, Focus Group 2: “It’s like radio on demand.”*

When asked “Why do you listen to podcasts?”, respondent 1 in focus group 3 said:

*“You get more out of it, like in comparison to just listening to music, I guess, so... it’s more interesting than music, but it’s easier than TV shows and books.”*

The same question was asked of respondents in focus group 2:
“It’s also, like, the best Segway between listening to music and, like, watching a show.”

These quotes suggest that the convergence of radio, TV and mobile phones have led students to listen to podcasts. Respondents spoke a lot about how podcasts likened a type of modern radio system—where they were able to listen to important information at their convenience. In every focus group held, the popular Swedish podcast “P3 Dokumentär” (P3 Documentaries, in English) was mentioned. P3 Dokumentär is a Swedish radio show broadcast by Sveriges Radio P3. For one respondent, the likeness of podcasts to radio was fundamental to their listening—especially the notion of ‘public service’. Respondent 3 in focus group 4 said that they listened to “a lot of radio,” and that P3 Dokumentär was their favorite podcast. When questioned about why, they responded:

“…they are public service, they have a responsibility and so, you know that they have fact-checked everything. You know that because everything that comes with public service… you know it’s gone through the proper channels and, like, you know it’s trustworthy.”

Convergence was a big reason behind the students’ podcast listening, but it was fundamentally the mobility of podcasts that proved to be important.

Mobility:

Students mentioned over and over again that they listened to podcasts on-the-go. When asked “When do you usually listen to podcasts?”, respondents answered:

Respondent 4, Focus Group 1: “When I am out for a walk, I would say.”

Respondent 3, Focus Group 2: “For me it’s, like, when I am either walking somewhere or going somewhere.”

Respondent 2, Focus Group 3: “I usually listen to it on the train or when I’m travelling somewhere.”

Respondent 1, Focus Group 3: “I usually do it when I commute to school, because I have, like, 15 minutes of a bike ride, so that’s a good time-killer.”
Respondent 3, Focus Group 4: “If I’m going for a walk- or if I’m walking from destination A to B.”

It was important to respondents that the podcast could be taken with them. In focus group 4, when asked why respondents may choose to listen to a podcast instead of watch TV or read a book, respondents answered:

Respondent 1: “You can take the podcast with you- it’s hard to bring the TV! I can put it in my pocket and keep going.”

Respondent 3: “Yeah I’d say that’s why. Because it’s portable. I feel like, for the most bit, it is the fact that it’s really accessible. You can listen whenever and however.”

The matter of mobility plays into the following themes of Uses and Gratifications, especially that of ‘multitasking’.

Uses and Gratifications theory:

Our research suggests that podcast listening has a wide range of uses and emotional gratifications. Some of the specific and common trends that we found from conducting focus groups were that students listened to podcasts because it is a customizable experience, because they are able to multitask, because of eudaimonic motivation and because they were able to create parasocial relationships.

Customizable Experience:

Albarran et al. (2007) applied the term “demassification” to describe the most recent era in audio entertainment in which users are asserting power over the medium to select particular content at particular times. Respondent 2 in focus group 1 described the agentic appeal of listening to podcasts this way:

“...I think that’s why it’s so successful as well, because there is a podcast literally for everything; any interest you have, any people you are interested in... you can always find something for you.”
Respondent 2 in focus group 3 was also empathetic when praising the personalized experience:

“I also think because there are so many different kinds of podcasts- that you can find your, your thing. Like there are... I know my boyfriend listens to, like, a podcast that only talks about soccer, or football, which he thinks is really interesting. And I think my dad listens to something because he finds a connection, so, because there are so many different podcasts, it’s really easy to get, like, a thing that you’re interested in.”

As well as respondent 3 in focus group 4:

“... the podcasts that I listen to and the podcasts that my boyfriend listen to are so different. But, like, we can both find whatever we want. There’s so much to choose from... So, I feel like that’s why they’re so successful- because there’s something for everyone.”

Respondents in the focus groups were also asked if they listen to whole episodes at the same time or if they pause the episodes at all, for any reason. Twelve out of fifteen of the interviewees said that they had no problem with pausing the episode- which helps to explain the customizable nature of the podcast listening experience. Students are able to pause and play episodes at their convenience and come back to it later at their leisure.

Multitasking:

Granted the mobility of listening to podcasts, multitasking was a common topic of conversation during our focus groups. A smartphone playing a podcast can be tucked away into one’s pocket as one moves about the house cleaning, cooking or completing other tasks. Respondents usually partook in some sort of task at the same time as listening to podcasts (usually cooking and cleaning). When asked “When do you usually listen to podcasts?” respondents answered:

Respondent 1, Focus Group 1: “I think I listen to it all the time because I have it on in the background when I am cleaning, when I am cooking, when I am going somewhere...”

Respondent 4, Focus Group 2: “…when I am doing tedious things like doing the dishes, cleaning my room...”
When asked why they listened to podcasts, respondent 2 in focus group 3 answered:

*Respondent 2: “Because you can do other stuff at the same time. It’s quite difficult to read a book and clean. Or to cook and, well, like, you can cook and watch a tv series, but you know, travelling, like on the plane, or train, or whatever- it’s easier to listen to something.”*

The participants in the focus groups often listened to podcasts whilst completing mundane tasks. This meant that podcasts acted as an environmental resource, a companion—for accomplishing things like chores:

*Respondent 1, Focus Group 2: “I think it’s easy to do something else whilst listening to a podcast...”*

*Respondent 2, Focus Group 3: “...you’re in this zone listening to it so when you’re doing stuff it’s like, you don’t even pay attention to what you are doing because you’re, like, in your head with the podcast. Like cleaning- which is not that fun- but when you have a podcast, you know, after an hour you’re like: ‘Oh shit, I’m done!’”*

*Respondent 3, Focus group 3: “If I’m, for example, cleaning and listening to a podcast, I’m more focused on the cleaning... it makes you better at sticking to cleaning and getting it done.”*

According to the results, it seems the respondents felt that they became more productive in completing tasks (where they didn’t have to actively ‘think’) when they listened to podcasts. Podcasts cannot just help a person get started on a boring or mundane task, they can also help motivate one to see the task through and make time feel like it is passing more quickly (Perks & Turner, 2019).

We also found a contradictory pair of themes under podcast listening habits, which is that podcasts can facilitate both productivity and relaxation. Respondent 3 in focus group 4 recalled:
“…there’s like the one that you listen to for, like, to gain information about something, to learn about something because you’re interested in something and then there’s one that you kind of more, like, the ones that I listen to if I’m cooking or cleaning- my focus is split.”

This was similar to respondent 3 in focus group 3, who was asked how they feel when listening to podcasts:

“I’d say both relaxed and focused. Relaxed if I’m going to take it easy, you know, then a podcast will make me feel relaxed. But if I’m, for example, just cleaning and listening to a podcast, I’m more focused on the cleaning.”

Respondent 1 in focus group 3 found multitasking with a podcast as a relaxing experience, even whilst being productive in another task:

“Yeah, really relaxed, I think, yeah, because, I mean- you can just focus on that. I really have a hard time, like, doing several things at the same time. And, that makes, like, things that are usually boring or time consuming much more fun. And, also more relaxing, so I find like cooking really relaxing in the first place, and then when I have a podcast too it’s like meditation.”

As a counterpoint to the multitasking section, it is imperative to note that some interviewees stated that they did not multitask while listening to some or all podcasts, instead using the podcast as a way to relax, for example: “… in the summer- like if you’re laying down tanning or something like that,” (respondent 3, focus group 4).

Eudaimonic Motivation:

Eudaimonic motivation can be described and analyzed with the help of the above gratification of multitasking. Multitasking describes a behavior that comes with several gratifications: feelings of productivity, learning something new, and passing the time. Feelings of productivity can spring from (a) getting a work or household task accomplished and/or (b) learning or expanding one’s world through a podcast (Perks & Turner, 2019). We got a taste of this theme when focus group participants described their podcast listening as a way of ‘learning’. We have decided to categorize the idea of learning as eudaimonic motivation, because ‘eudaimonic’
refers to a sense of fulfilment and type of happiness that is realized through self-actualization and the persistence to improve.

When asked what they feel they get out of listening to podcasts, respondents answered that they felt they had learnt something after listening to an episode. Respondent 3 in focus group 1 described podcasts as “a source of knowledge”. Respondents also said:

**Respondent 1, Focus Group 1:** “I think that I always take something with me when I listen to a podcast.”

**Respondent 4, Focus Group 2:** “I mean, it’s entertainment but at the same time, it’s also interesting, as you have said. You learn something from it.”

Respondent 3 in focus group 4 theorized that students listen to podcasts due to a new wave crave for information:

“...we do live in the era of wanting information, you know? Like, there’s information coming at you, wherever you look. And, like, at least with podcasts you can choose what you want to listen to. We constantly crave information these days, I think.”

In focus group 3, respondent 1 talked about their favorite podcast “P3 Dystopia”. When questioned about their interest in the podcast, the respondent answered:

“...they do a lot of research and talk to different researchers and scientists from different countries- and, like, specialists on that topic. So yeah, I’ve learned a lot from it. It’s cool to learn about things that you... like, you usually hear in the news- but that you don’t really reflect about it. Like, what is the possibilities of artificial intelligence? ... It’s interesting to hear, like, a lot of sides about it.”

*Parasocial relationships:*

Some participants in the focus groups described their relationships with podcast hosts using language that signified parasocial relationships, which are defined as the “seeming face-to-face
Media companionship can include parasocial relationships, loneliness mitigation, or other feelings of sociability (Perks & Turner, 2019). The most common themes were the frequency of listening to a particular podcast show, as well as opportunities to interact with hosts through
social media channels, such as the photo-sharing app Instagram. Focus group 3 touched on this when respondents were asked how they find the podcasts they want to listen to:

Respondent 3: “Most of the podcasts that I listen to are from recommendations. But then there was one - which is actually my favorite one - so, there’s this guy who creates humorous videos on Instagram - like, funny videos. And I’ve been following him for quite some time, and then they started podding, this guy and another - well, Tom and Petter-

Respondent 2: Ah, I listen to that one as well!

Respondent 3: So, they started like podding and I was like: ‘Oh I have to listen to this’. So, yeah.

Sasha: And so, you found that podcast through Instagram?

Respondent 3: Yeah, exactly, through his Instagram. When they started with the podcast.

Instagram was mentioned in 3 of 4 focus groups (it was not mentioned in focus group 1). Respondent 2 in focus group 2, as well as respondent 2 in focus group 4 also said that they found their podcast through Instagram:

“I listen to, like, influencers I follow on Instagram.”
“But I usually listen to influencer podcasts. So, a lot of them I found on, like, Instagram, or something like that.”

Host sharing of personal information sometimes cultivated a sense of intimacy between listener and podcast host, for example, respondent 1 in focus group 3 said:

“Yes, I actually listen to one podcast with Felix Söderlund (means Felix Söderholm) which also is, like... he’s in Tankesmedjan too and he had his own podcast about, like, his drug problems. And you got to follow him like, day by day, like, through his journey and that was really, like, yeah it was moving. Because, like, you felt his... his emotions and stuff so that was kind of hard listening to.”
Respondents also enjoyed feeling as if they were getting ‘inside information’ from podcast hosts, especially from what could be considered ‘high-profile’ hosts such as influencers:

**Respondent 4, Focus Group 4:** “But usually... it’s kind of funny- you listen to an influencers podcast- usually they talk smack about everyone else- other podcasts. Like, ‘Hannalicious and Lojsan’. They were very bad, talking about Victoria’s Secret and what not. So, I kind of wanted to listen to that, because they talked smack.”

**Respondent 1, Focus Group 1:** “I think it’s because I have been listening to them for so long (Alex & Sigge), like, since they started, I think. I like them; I think they are funny and clever and I think you get... an insight in the, like, media world- like, what’s happening for real! Like into Stockholm with all the writers and media guys. I think it’s funny, and they also have... they can be kind of kind of harsh on some people and I think that's you know it’s a bit like ‘gossipy’. Like guy gossip.”

**Listening behaviors:**

Lilliestam’s work on listening behavior suggests that people sometimes put music on in the background as a form of company. That is, in order to combat quietness or loneliness, music is played- and the listener listens inattentively. This was also true for our respondents in some instances when they chose to listen to podcasts. Focus groups were asked what their main reasons for listening to podcasts were. Respondents answered:

**Respondent 1 in focus group 1** said: “I think that this might sound kind of sad, but I do it a lot for company.”

**Respondent 3, Focus Group 4:** “I feel like podcasts like that (lifestyle podcasts) you more listen to not to be alone.”

Podcast listening in itself seemed to be a solo experience: many focus group participants were listening while commuting, cooking, and cleaning—activities that are often completed alone. Some respondents spoke about putting on podcasts to avoid it being quiet:
Respondent 4, Focus Group 1: “...because I don’t want it to be quiet. So, I mean, if I am at the beach- I want to listen to something- or, when I am at home or going out for a walk... so, yeah, I think that’s... yeah, the main reason.

Respondent 2, Focus Group 4: “I feel like I don’t like when it’s quiet... so then I put on a podcast.”

Respondent 3, Focus Group 4: “I don’t like when it’s quiet either.”

Respondents also used podcasts as background noise if they had trouble sleeping:

Respondent 2, Focus Group 3: Sometimes I actually, like, Alex och Sigge- I think that’s Sweden’s... the famous podcast in Sweden, right now, or something. I don’t like that so much- but I listen to that quite often because I- I fall asleep to it! So, if I have trouble sleeping, I put on one of their episodes because I feel like they’re talking really slowly and they’re like, trying to analyze everything, and trying to be really deep- and then that makes me fall asleep! (Laughing) So if I have trouble sleeping, I’m like: “Ah, maybe I should put on an episode!”

Respondent 2, Focus Group 4: But I listen when I do other stuff. Like, when I get my make-up on, or... in the morning, or I fall asleep to podcasts as well.

It was interesting to find through analysis of the focus groups, as touched on earlier under the U&G of multitasking, that students could both use podcasts to motivate themselves to do chores as well as use podcasts to relax and wind down. This can be attributed to Lilliestam’s theories of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ listening- whereby active listening of podcasts seemed to boost concentration and productivity and passive listening of podcasts seemed to comfort and ease students.
6. Discussion and conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

*Question 1: Why do Uppsala University students listen to podcasts?*

Our results suggest that Uppsala University students listen to podcasts for a range of reasons. Respondents in our focus groups told us that they often opted for podcasts when they felt ‘tired’ of listening to their music, as well as when they wanted to be informed or entertained. They reflected on the fact that it felt easier to consume than other media, such as watching TV or reading books. Students also expressed using podcasts as a form of company and in order to combat quietness and loneliness. Podcasts are a medium that can be used for both diving deep into a story or as background noise that can be easily tuned in or out.

The main reason behind students listening to podcasts seemed to be the fact that they were able to multitask when listening. Statistics from our survey proved this, as well as our focus group results- whereby students claimed they were generally involved in some activity at the time of listening (cooking, cleaning, commuting, etc.). As eudaimonic motivation and multitasking were more thoroughly developed and analyzed together with the results, we see that podcast listening should be considered a form of ‘temptation bundling’. Temptation bundling, a concept that is discussed in Perks and Turner’s study *Podcasts and Productivity* (2019), is a term that involves coupling “instantly gratifying ‘want’ activities” with engagement in a ‘should’ behavior” that is not immediately gratifying and requires willpower to complete (Milkman, Minson, & Volpp, 2014). The same respondents that answered that they listened to podcasts to learn, also answered that they listened to podcasts whilst performing ‘boring’ tasks. Perks and Turner’s results suggest that: “If you have to do something mundane, distasteful, or boring, make it more enjoyable by putting on an engaging story or learning something new about the world” (2019).
**Question 2: Are there certain genres students are drawn to?**

From both the survey and focus groups it was clear that in general there were certain genres students were drawn to, including: comedy, audio blogs, news and mystery. The podcast that came up most frequently in both collection methods was P3 Dokumentär which is the most established and traditional podcast out of those mentioned by the students. The reason for this podcast being so popular amongst students could be because they grew up listening to the radio show or it may have been recommended to them. The radio channel has a wide variety of shows and is aimed at young adults (documentaries, news, comedy, mystery). It was important to the students that the show they listened to, if it contained facts, was accurate. P3 is run by Sveriges Radio which is an established public service in Sweden. It is also important to note that students were interested in learning something new when they listened to a podcast.

‘Comedy’ had the highest amount of answers in the survey (60) and was a topic of discussion in all focus groups. Comedy can be seen as a form of entertainment for the listener. Various comedic podcasts were shared, and it was clear that many enjoy a laugh when listening to a podcast.

‘Audio blogs’ was another genre that students were drawn to. Many listened to social media influencers podcasts, where the topic of conversation can be everything from fashion to how the influencers day has been. This can be seen as a eudaimonic motivation, whereby the listener is searching for others' experiences and feelings.

‘News’ might be a frequent genre because students may not have the time to keep up through TV or online newspapers if they are on the go. A quick recap of the news may be available through different radio shows that have podcasts.

‘Mystery’ can be a source of entertainment for the listener and a way of learning about new things such as murder mysteries, court cases and historical mysteries. It was a frequent topic of discussion in two focus groups and was the third largest genre choice amongst the students that answered the survey. Mystery podcasts such as mördarpodden, rättegångspodden, and serimördarpodden were amongst the most frequently talked about podcasts under this genre.
All of the above genres can fall under P3 (Sverige’s Radio) and can be assumed that this is the reason why the radio broadcaster is still so popular. They have adapted to the convergence from radio to podcast through providing multiple varieties of shows and making all shows available in podcast form.

*Question 3: Why are podcasts successful according to Uppsala University students?*

From the results and analysis of our survey and focus groups we can conclude that students believe podcasts are successful because of their mobility, accessibility, and customizability. One respondent said: “...we can have our entertainment to go, it's like take-away entertainment,” which inspired the title of this thesis. Podcasts are easy, flexible and portable, which enables students to consume them on the go. They are also successful because of their content, host, humor, entertainment and educational aspect. This was expected, since our assumption from the start was that students were going to emphasize factors such as length, genre or topic of conversation. Students also found the host of the podcast important to their listening, as well as guests appearing in the podcast episodes.

### 6.2 Discussion

This study has shown a consumer perspective of the current podcast phenomena, specifically that of students. Students have reflected on their own consumer behavior and have reasoned about their listening habits. The research has shown that listeners choose podcasts over other entertainment because the experience is customizable and mobile. Podcasts are customizable in the sense that listeners can choose what topics of conversation to listen to, as well as use podcasts both in order to relax and in order to increase productivity. Podcasts are mobile in the sense that listeners can take their devices with them, whether that be travelling somewhere, when exercising, or simply when walking around the home completing tasks.

The results of this study have further shown how important this field is to study because of its current relevance in today’s technology. A podcast is seen as a more relaxed version of radio and more ‘human’, or ‘authentic’, than what radio used to be and still is like. As well as being a substitute for radio, the immersive and engaging narratives thought to be strictly confined to television and film have found a new medium that resonates in the mobile phone and world
of podcasts. The findings thus also offer useful information for media practitioners interested in creating podcasts or expanding their podcast listenership. Because the appeal of podcasts rests in the ability of listeners to be their own agents (controlling what, when and how they are listening), media practitioners, then, should concentrate on producing nimble and segmented audio content that can be consumed on multiple media platforms.

The results of this study are relevant for future research within this field. Future research would be encouraged, because although this study has heuristic utility, it was not without its methodological limitations. First, the focus groups were limited in both size and diversity, especially in terms of respondents’ race, gender or ethnicity. We also did not assess other potential pockets of useful information, such as our participants’ socioeconomic class or political leanings. These sampling weaknesses could be suggestions for other research. Second, our survey was only answered by students at Uppsala University and although students were asked to disclose what they were studying, there was no division of different degrees in the results. Because of the nature of this study, and due to limitations, only students at Uppsala University were researched. Other studies might focus on differences in podcast listening between different schools or be taken further to study podcast listening of a wider variety of population- not just students. Future and larger studies about podcasts should explore potential differences among people from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, various ages, occupation, political leanings, and socioeconomic classes.

As demonstrated in Perks and Turner’s U&G study of podcasts (2019), our findings clarify what podcasts ask of listeners (very little attention in some cases), what it allows listeners to do (multitask, be on the go, feel connected to others), and what it encourages listeners to do (complete boring tasks through temptation bundling, keep expanding their minds). All of these things add up to why podcasts are so successful today, in our fast-paced, stimulating and technologically rich society. Podcasts are in the mainstream because they are the take-away medium of the media and entertainment industry.
7. References

Books


Electronic


Credeur, Mary Jane (2001). "2Go is gone after burning through $7 million". *Atlanta Business Chronicle*.


Stratmann, Jo (2011). "'Horizontal media' - how social media has changed journalism". FreshMinds. Archived from the original on November 29, 2014.


8. Appendix

8.1 Focus Group Interview Guide

All of the participants in this study will be anonymous, you are free to change your mind at any time if you no longer wish to be part of the study and the data that is collected will be used for research purposes only. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed but also all data will be deleted after the paper is finished. Confidentiality is also very important to us so therefore we will not be using names but numbers for your identification.

Short summary of the study:
We have decided to study why Uppsala University students listen to podcast. Background: As of 2018, Swedes are the 3rd most frequent listeners of podcasts in the world. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of podcasts as a phenomenon. Specifically, it will explore what Uppsala University students think about podcasts in an effort to gain understanding about why students listen to podcasts, what makes a successful podcast, and if there are particular genres that students are drawn to.

Recording starts:

Introduction questions:
Do you listen to podcasts?
- How often?
- When do you usually listen to podcasts?
- How long is the podcast? (Does the genre matter?)
  - Do you listen all the way through?
- Are you usually doing something in the meantime?
- What app do you use to listen to podcasts?

Transition questions:
How do you choose what podcasts you listen to?
- Do you look for podcasts yourself?
- Do you typically wait for podcasts to be suggested to you?
- Does the host of the podcast and their voice matter?

Are you listening to a certain podcast right now?
- Which one?
- Why?
- What do you think about it so far?

What is the best podcast you’ve listened to so far?
- Why? What do you like about it? What don’t you like about it?

Key questions:
Why do you listen to podcasts?
How do you feel when you listen to podcasts?

Do you feel like you become somehow emotionally invested in the hosts of a podcast?

_Closing question:_
Do you have anything else to add about your opinion on why podcasts are successful?

### 8.2 Focus group transcriptions

Due to the anonymity of the study subjects and the confidentially of data, we have chosen to exclude the transcriptions in the appendix.

If you wish to access the transcriptions please email aneli96622@gmail.com or sasha.borholm@hotmail.com
8.3 Survey questions and answer alternatives

Why do Uppsala University students listen to podcasts?

Podcasts have grown increasingly popular since their emergence in 2005. In 2015, the industry boomed when the new Apple update provided a fully integrated podcast support, making it easier than ever for users to search and subscribe to podcast channels. As of 2018, Swedes are the 3rd most frequent listeners of podcasts in the world. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of podcasts as a phenomenon. Specifically, it will explore what Uppsala University students think about podcasts in an effort to gain understanding about why students listen to podcasts, what makes a successful podcast, and if there are particular genres that students are drawn to.

You, as a responder, will be completely anonymous. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us at annali96622@gmail.com

Thank you for taking part in our study!

* Required

1. Are you a student at Uppsala University? *
   
   Mark only one oval.

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No  Stop filling out this form.

Why do Uppsala University Students listen to podcasts?

2. Do you listen to podcasts? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No  Stop filling out this form.

Why do Uppsala University Students listen to podcasts?

3. What do you study? *
4. Do you actively listen to any of the following Podcasts? (Check each podcast you listen to, otherwise check "None of these") *

Check all that apply.

- P3 Dokumentär
- Sommar/Vinter i P1
- P1 Dokumentär
- Skäringer & Mannheimer
- Rättegångspodden
- Alex & Sigge
- Framgångspodden
- Creepypodden
- Historiapodden
- Filip och Fredrik Podcast
- Mordpodden
- Alice and Bianca
- None of these

5. Is there a particular genre of podcast you listen to? (Choose one or more options) *

Check all that apply.

- Comedy
- News
- Science
- Technology
- Mysteries
- Audio Blogs
- Politics
- Other: 

6. How do you find the podcasts you listen to? *

Check all that apply.

- Suggestions from family/friends
- Seen an advertisement for the podcast
- Seen it on social media
- On the platform you listen to podcasts
- Other:
7. How long are the podcast you typically listen to? *
Mark only one oval.

☐ 10 min
☐ 20 min
☐ 30 min
☐ 45 min
☐ An hour or longer
☐ Other: __________________________

8. What do you do whilst listening to podcasts? (Choose one or more options) *
Check all that apply.

☐ Exercise
☐ Cleaning
☐ On commute (train, walking, riding, bussing, etc.)
☐ Cooking
☐ Studying
☐ Nothing (use it to relax/listen when bored)
☐ Other: __________________________

9. What makes a successful podcast according to you? *


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Take-away underhållning

Podcasts har under det senaste decenniet blivit en enorm succé. Nu visar en helt ny studie från Uppsala universitet varför studenter väljer att lyssna på podcasts.

Podcast är en teknik där man streamar eller laddar ner avsnitt till sin mobil, dator etc. av tex nyheter, radiodokumentärer eller andra program från etablerade nyhetsoutlets som tex Sveriges Radio. Men man kan också lyssna till allt som finns tillgängligt från både publika och privata källor på internet. Tekniken har revolutionerat media då man som konsument inte längre tvingas lyssna ”live” när programmet ”sänds”.


Studien har gjorts av två studenter vid institutionen för informatik och media. Tidigare studier visat att podcasts är mest populärt bland personer i åldern 20-35. Det sammanfaller här med åldern hos universitetsstudenterna, vilket gav möjlighet till en både djupare och bredare studie då rekryteringen av studieobjekt och genomförande av fokusgrupper blev avsevärt lättare men också möjligheten att få enkät respondenter.

Studien visar att podcasts blivit mycket populärt eftersom de ger en enorm valfrihet. Man lyssnar när man vill, var man vill, hur man vill och till vad man vill.

När man vill: alla tider på dagen (morgon, förmiddag, eftermiddag, kväll).
Var man vill: på pendeltåget, när man tränar, när man lager mat, under tiden man städar, etc.
Hur man vill: man kan flytta mellan dator, mobil, Smart Tv, platta. Man kan avbryta och påbörja när man vill men även pausa och komma tillbaks till samma avsnitt.
Till vad man vill: det finns miljoner podcast alternativ på nätet och därmed något för alla.

Anneli Modin och Sasha Börholm

Podcasts:” Entertainment To Go”
A study on why Uppsala University students listen to podcasts

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