

Trust the Voice: How Host Credibility Drives Generation Z's Podcast Purchases

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ABSTRACT

Trust between podcast listeners and hosts is widely regarded in the literature as the central mechanism behind podcast advertising effectiveness. Prior theoretical work argues that listeners who perceive the host as authentic and credible transfer part of that trust to the products and brands the host mentions, a process often described as parasocial trust transfer (Brinson & Lemon, 2022, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025). Despite the prominence of this argument in the theoretical literature on podcast advertising, the relationship between listener-host trust and actual purchasing behaviour has rarely been tested directly on empirical data; most existing studies infer the mechanism from qualitative reasoning or from attitudes towards advertising in general, rather than from the host relationship as a distinct, measurable construct. This creates a relevant gap for research focused on Generation Z, the cohort for which podcasts have become a daily media habit and for which the host is frequently described as a trusted, friend-like figure rather than a distant media personality. If host trust indeed functions as a trust-transfer mechanism, listeners who report higher trust in the host, a stronger sense of personally "knowing" the host, and greater importance attached to the host's recommendations should also report a higher incidence of purchasing a product or service on the basis of a podcast. The present study therefore addresses the following research problem: to what extent is Generation Z listeners' trust in the podcast host, and the strength of their relationship with the host, associated with their reported willingness to purchase a product or service on the basis of a podcast?

JEL Codes:

Keywords: consumer behaviour, generation Z, parasocial relationship, podcast, advertising