

Podcasts. How wrong I was...

CONSUMER EDINBURGH OPINION

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I have to admit that when I first heard about podcasts, in a very general sense, I was sceptical. I think this was based on my previous experiences with audiobooks, which I found to be (without exception) incredibly tedious – I don't think I ever actually managed to finish one.

I had grown up during a time of rapid technological advances in terms of how people listen to music. Since the mid-90s, I can remember owning a Sony Walkman, then a Minidisk player, then a massive brick of an mp3 player called (I think) an Archos Jukebox, then an iPod, and now, like most people, I just rely on my smartphone for all my audio needs.

With all these changes in terms of how audio is consumed en masse, perhaps it was inevitable that the nature of what it is we're actually listening to was bound to change as well.

Given my previous reticence, my change of opinion regarding podcasts couldn't be more all-encompassing. According to their handy "2018 Wrapped" feature, I had Spotify open and running, and actively streaming audio, for over a third of 2018 as a whole, or for over 2,900 hours (or 175,000 minutes.)

I've found myself utterly conditioned, to the point that my walk to work, my morning routine, even getting to sleep, are all profoundly affected by podcasts. My podcast listening can vary, depending on what kind of mood I'm in, what time it is, where I am, what I'm planning on doing that day, and the list goes on.

It seems that I'm not alone, either; Podcast listenership is going from strength to strength. In the UK alone, listenership has almost doubled in 5 years, such that around 20% of the UK Adult population now listens to at least one podcast per week. Given that the same figure for South Korea is almost 60%, there is obviously still a huge opportunity for growth in this sector. For advertisers, the appeal is clear; the audience is technologically savvy, they are engaged (they did choose to listen to that particular podcast, after all!) and there is growing evidence that podcast listeners are significantly more likely to follow and engage with brands online than non-podcast listeners. Advertisers within certain niche categories (looking at you, mattress-retailers and website-design companies) have made podcast-advertising a staple of their communications strategy, and given their continued (and indeed increasing) investment into the sector, it's obviously working for them.

With all that in mind, and in an effort to not be such a grumpy old man (before my time, I might add) – I'm going to try and be slightly more open-minded when advances in media consumption tech are unveiled to the world at large, given how completely and utterly wrong I was about podcasts.

(In case anyone is curious in discovering some podcast gold, some of my personal favourites include; Comedy Bang Bang, No Such Thing as a Fish, Dan Carlin's Hardcore History, Serial, WTF

with Marc Maron and My Dad Wrote a Porno.)

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