



**BRIGHT
BROTHERS**
STRATEGY GROUP

Can You Hear Me Now?

a trends report for UPMO practitioners

Josh Yeager
April 2021



CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

As we reported in our [COVID Cliffs Notes Edition 26, Week 53](#), “everything audio” is poppin’ off in a big way right now. Across multiple verticals and industries, we’re seeing audio play out in interesting ways, so we’re taking a deeper dive look at this trend that’s literally music to our ears.

Did You Know?

- Our hearing is always on. When we sleep, our brain can filter out sounds and respond only when we perceive a threatening noise.
- The University of Newcastle in Australia documented the most unpleasant sounds for humans, (TW: just reading the descriptions can literally make your skin crawl) including some neck hair-raisers like an electric drill, a baby crying, chalk on a blackboard, rusty swing chains, a person retching, a knife scraping against a bottle, a fork scratching on a plate, a ruler on a bottle, nails on a blackboard, or our own personal hell; two pieces of Styrofoam rubbing together.
- The vestibular system, responsible for maintaining equilibrium is in the inner ear. In fact, most cases of vertigo lie within the auditory system.

FUNCTIONALITY OVER FORM

In a laudable, audible effort, those crafty deities of Swedish home décor over at IKEA have dispensed with their printed, paper catalogue and gone full-blown digital this year. Northern Europeans tend to drive the cutting edge of eco in many aspects of lifestyle, and IKEA should be commended on two fronts for this dramatic pivot:

First, the reduction in paper waste and killed trees is meritorious on multiple levels. We're more than a fifth of the way through the twenty-first century, and digital means should trump wasteful paper and toxic ink footprints in any and every scenario imaginable. It's estimated that IKEA will save about 450,000 tons of paper annually by offering a [digital only catalog](#), and that alone is impressive.

Secondly, the savvy Scandinavians should be applauded for keeping *au courant* not only with a visual "look book" style virtual catalogue (which mirrors the handheld experience), but the global brand is on trend with a contactless, convenient, [hands-free audiobook](#); chockful of style inspo, auditory tidbits and vibrant product descriptions. Some have even commented that the cool voiceovers are akin to ASMR sleepy time tactics to quell and calm the brain at bedtime. Give a listen on Spotify, Audiobooks.com or YouTube.



The IKEA Audio Catalog



[LISTEN HERE](#)



**BRIGHT
BROTHERS**
STRATEGY GROUP

DROP-IN AUDIO



Bright Brothers Strategy Group is seeing an increase in audible initiatives everywhere, like the new audio-based social media platform [Clubhouse](#). According to its website, *“Clubhouse is a new type of social network based on voice—where people around the world come together to talk, listen and learn from each other in real-time.”*

The invite-only entity has risen to prominence due to its purposeful exclusivity (although that may change soon, and iPhone users may download the app and join a waiting list), and celebrity usage by the likes of Drake, Kevin Hart, Ashton Kutcher, Oprah, Chris Rock – and even Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. While its seemingly elite member base seems unattainable to us commoners, the New York Times reported that the toney talkers already boasted 600,000 registered users in December 2020 and has been courting influencers.

Vogue magazine gave us a sneak peek, calling the experience "a dizzying bringing together of live podcast-style conversations, panel discussions, networking opportunities (some savvy people are already swapping 'influencer' for 'moderator') and advantageous multiple-room use (locked and private options are available so you can talk to pals too), the social-media app mimics real-life interactions."

The first rule of Clubhouse is that the audio itself never leaves the app. Conversations are not recorded or saved. More to follow as this platform matures.

AUDIO KILLED THE DIGITAL STAR

Marketers have been talking about podcasts for well over a decade now, but the lesser-used cousin of visual media platforms like Instagram, Facebook & Pinterest is seemingly coming into its own; pushed to prominence by you guessed it — the pandemic.

Since “shelter-in-place” and “safer-at-home” orders virtually decimated the traditional rush-hour commute in many places with mandatory lockdowns, entire populations have found themselves with more and varied time on their hands to lend an ear to podcasts. Some interesting facts:

- A [MARU/Matchbox survey](#) conducted in July 2020, showed that since COVID-19 hit, 41% of weekly podcast listeners report they are spending more time listening to on demand audio content.
- That equates to 4X more than the 7% who said they’re listening less.
- Of those who listen to six or more hours per week — 46% said they are spending more time with podcasts.
- The fastest growing segments of heavy podcast listeners are women, Millennials aged 18-34, and newer listeners.
- The top reasons weekly podcast listeners tune in to podcasts are to be entertained and to learn.

52% of weekly podcast listeners learn about new podcasts via social media:

Word of mouth and social media drive new podcast discovery

Q: "How do you find out about new podcasts?" (% of respondents) – July 2020

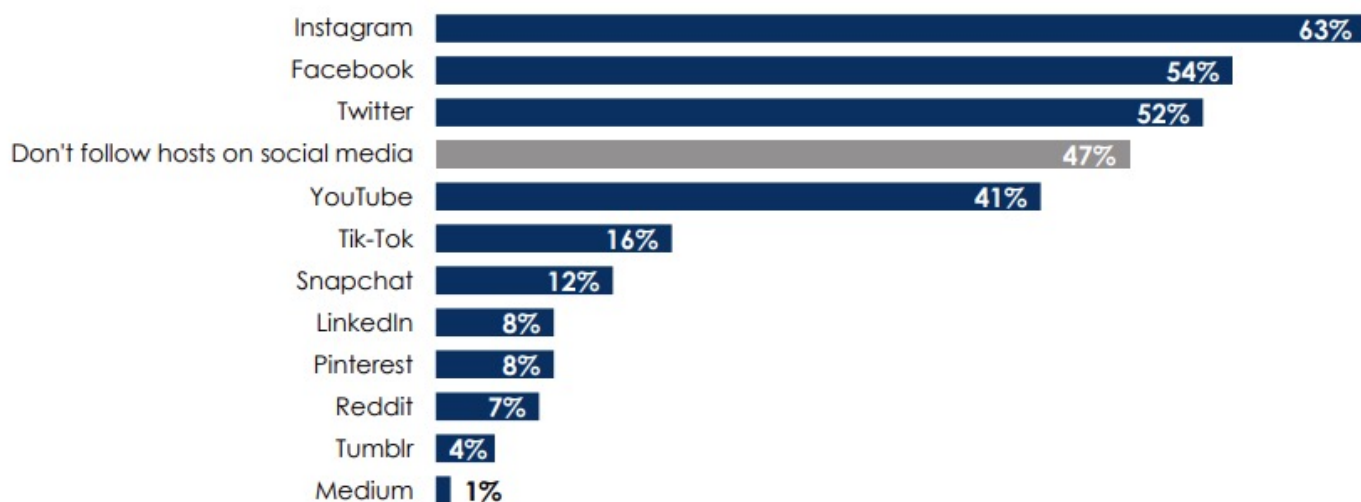
	Total (weekly podcast listeners)	Heavy podcast listeners (6+ hrs/week)	Millennials (A18-34)	Gen X (A35-49)	Boomers (A50-64)	Men	Women	Podcast Pioneers (4+ years ago)	Podcast Newcomers (past 6 months)
Word of mouth (recommendations from friends/acquaintances)	55%	49%	57%	57%	54%	51%	59%	61%	44%
Social media	52%	56%	58%	53%	37%	54%	50%	48%	53%
From other podcasts	45%	51%	45%	44%	48%	45%	46%	58%	37%
Podcast apps/software platforms (i.e. iTunes Genius)	37%	46%	42%	39%	22%	44%	32%	40%	38%
A favorite radio or TV program	27%	35%	27%	27%	26%	35%	20%	31%	25%
Ads heard on the radio	20%	26%	20%	22%	20%	28%	14%	20%	16%
Magazine ads	13%	22%	16%	12%	10%	20%	8%	12%	13%
Billboards	12%	21%	16%	11%	1%	21%	4%	14%	12%

■ Noteworthy difference from the total

Among weekly podcast listeners who use social media, 63% follow their favorite podcast hosts on Instagram:

Instagram is the most popular social media platform used to follow listeners' favorite podcasts hosts

Q: "On which social media do you follow your favorite podcast hosts?" (% among total weekly podcast listeners who use social media)

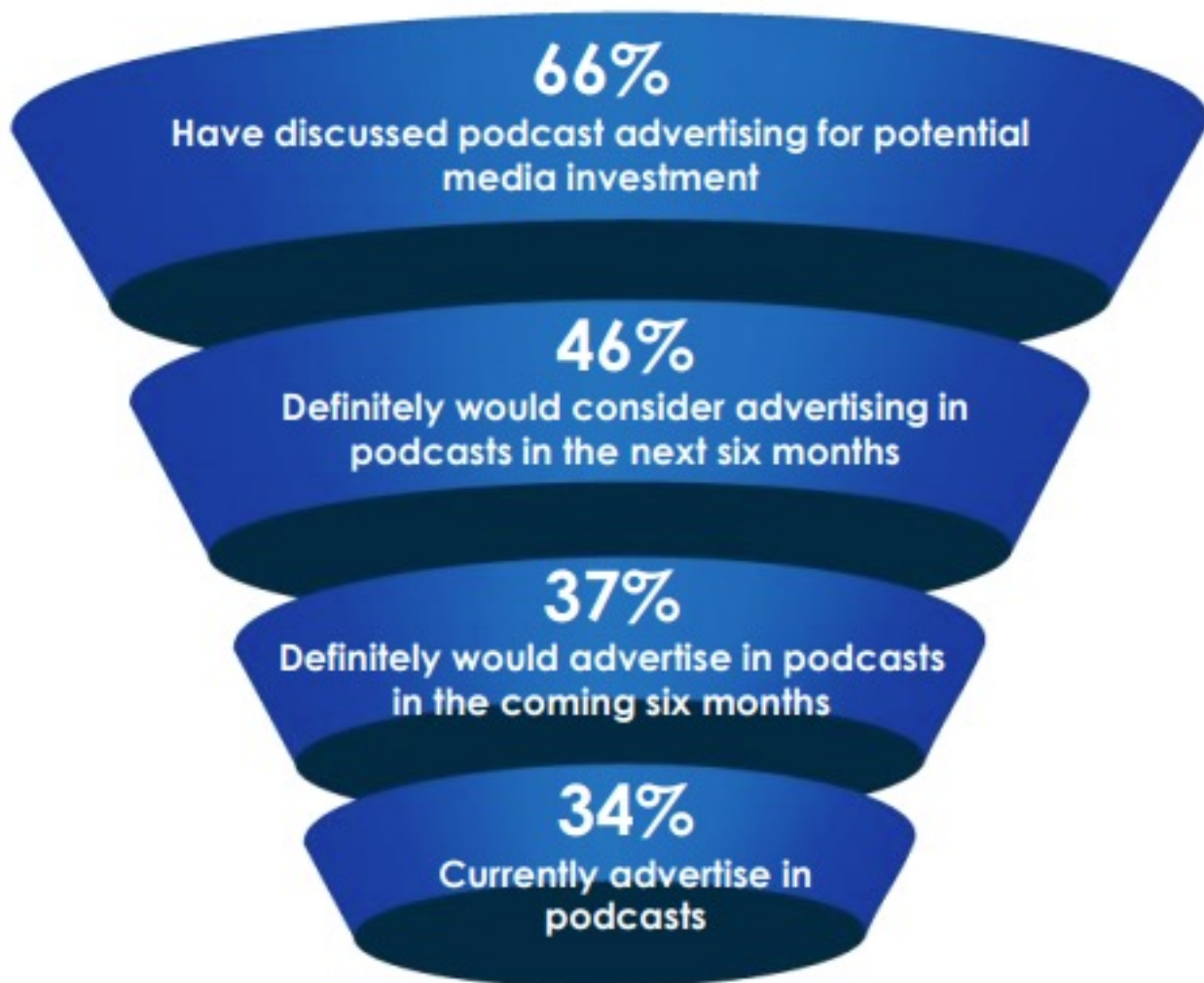




We only know of one district that produced their own podcast (and it's phenomenal)! The [“Hey Baltimore!” podcast](#) was produced by the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore and includes a variety of local guests and astounding insider takes on the city’s vibrant district.

But you don’t have to be a producer to take advantage of podcasts:

Among agencies and brands





THE SWEET SOUND OF BRAND LIFT

YouTube is taking on Spotify head-to-head (or ear-to-ear, as it were), with 15-second audio ads. During the pandemic, listenership has increased with as many as 3 million people using YouTube as background playlists. To leverage those listeners, the Google-owned video giant has launched 15-second audio ads that include a static image or simple animation, with a clickable area if the user is paying attention and wants to explore the advertisement.

Audio ads are still in beta, and available on Google Ads and Display & Video 360 with the same audience-targeting as video campaigns. The audio-only ads include a static image or simple animation that's clickable if the user wants to explore the advertisement.

YouTube ran tests and found a significant boost in brand awareness for those who participated. Shutterfly, for example, saw a 14% increase in ad recall lift after using YouTube audio ads, and YouTube boasts that:

75%

of audio ads campaigns drove a significant lift in brand awareness

Plus, the auction-based nature make the ads a good fit for PMDs that already include Google SEM as part of their paid media tactics. Learn more at: <https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10227746>

IN SUM

Some may say that “the bird is the word”, but we’re gonna place our chips on the “year of the ear” with so many audio-based examples of MarCom evolutions taking place right now. Twenty years into the future, we’ll look back at many trends, changes and (oh sheesh, yes, we’re gonna say it) pivots – due to the pandemic, but it’s clearly a time of change. COVID-19 has been a pivotal (there it is again!), turning point in fostering many changes that have been afoot for years — and now pushed to the brink.

When one door closes another opens, as they say, and we’re living through a time of phenomenal upheaval, disruption and reinvention. And like most major historical turning points, there are those who will succumb because they did not adapt and thrive, and those who will succeed because they recognized an opportunity, seized upon it and rode the wave to profit, progress & prosperity. Our hope is that your district takes note with our series of regular trends reports and flourishes as the world reinvents itself due to a horribly deadly disease.



Bright Brothers Strategy Group

josh@bright-brothers.com

Bright-Brothers.com

