

Research & Validation

User Interviews:

User 1 – AH (Male, Mid 20s)

Summary

Uses Spotify during travel and at night mainly for entertainment and casual learning.

Key Insights

- Podcast discovery rarely happens on Spotify; instead, it happens via Instagram or YouTube. Spotify is only for *consumption* due to background play with a locked screen and fewer ads.
- Ratings or popularity do not matter. Selection depends on **topic relevance** and **mood fit**.
- Prefers podcasts to be long enough to avoid repeated discovery during travel.
- Wants **chapter markers** to skip to relevant sections.
- Curation is only valuable if playlists are created by influential people (due to high time investment versus songs).
- Catchy podcast titles strongly drive selection.

Workflow

- Discovery: Instagram reels or YouTube search.
- Action: Search podcast name on Spotify and consume.

Emotional Triggers

- Frustration at the **effort required to plan podcast listening** (“better to watch a movie instead”).
- Annoyed with Spotify’s limited **topic-based recommendations** (same artist bias).

Open Questions

- How can Spotify effectively support **theme- or mood-based podcast search** instead of just creator-focused discovery?

User 2 – A (Male, Early 40s)

Summary

Long-time Spotify user (10 years), consumes podcasts during commute for learning across topics.

Key Insights

- **Continuity of playback** makes Spotify preferable.
- Relevance of podcasts depends on **life stage** and **personal context**.
- Guest credibility is key; user researches credentials before committing.
- Prefers long-form (>50 minutes) as short podcasts feel surface-level.
- Wants **personalized, intent-based categorization** and direct redirection to podcast home if a frequent consumer.

Workflow

- Discovery: Mainly YouTube (trending topics) + internet search for guest credibility.
- Action: Search directly on Spotify and consume.

Emotional Triggers

- Sees Spotify as a **private/intimate space**, unlike YouTube (shared accounts with kids/parents).
- Defines podcasts as *“intelligent people discussing useful information for common people”*.

Open Questions

- Can Spotify provide **personalized, intent-driven recommendations** aligned with user life stage and context?
- How can credibility indicators (guest/host validation) be surfaced more easily?

User 3 – SB (Female, Mid 20s)

Summary

Daily news podcast consumer during workouts, favors short formats for productivity.

Key Insights

- Podcasts act as a **music replacement** by making workouts feel productive.
- Preference for **bite-sized episodes (~6 mins)** due to limited time.
- Earlier listened to career-related podcasts but switched to news → preferences shift with **life context**.
- Follows channels only if the **entire content library adds value**.
- Frustrated with removal of the **“What’s New” section** that earlier made daily discovery seamless.

Workflow

- Discovery: Instagram reels or followed channels.
- Action: Visits podcast page on Spotify, browses followed channels manually.

Emotional Triggers

- Positive: Short-form news feels productive.
- Negative: Frustrated by **manual scrolling since “What’s New” was removed**.

Open Questions

- How does **frequency of consumption** connect to **topic preferences** for tailored daily recommendations?
- Could Spotify reintroduce “latest podcast” surfacing mechanisms for routine listeners?

User 4 – K (Male, Late 20s)

Summary

Consumes podcasts primarily on YouTube for entertainment, Spotify used only for music.

Key Insights

- Discovery and consumption almost entirely happen on Instagram (snippets) and YouTube.
- Will watch if the podcast **resonates emotionally** or relates to personal life.
- Podcast completion likelihood increases with emotional hooks, even requiring late-night binges.
- Guest identity is crucial, with a fan-driven approach.

Workflow

- Discovery: Short Instagram snippets as emotional triggers.
- Action: Direct search on YouTube to watch full podcast.

Emotional Triggers

- Positive: A snippet that *“triggered an emotion”* led to dedicated consumption.
- Strong commitment if engaged (“will stay up all night to finish”).

Open Questions

- How to identify and surface **emotionally triggering snippets** that drive full podcast consumption?

User 5 – HW (Female, Late 20s)

Summary

Uses Spotify for travel-based podcast listening and YouTube for video consumption. Balances education (full plays) and entertainment (selective listening).

Key Insights

- Discovery driven by **Instagram reels and YouTube**; Spotify is for locked-screen background listening.
- Strong preference for video podcasts on YouTube for **visual cues**.
- Educational podcasts → consumed fully; Entertainment podcasts → selective/semi-skipped.
- Convenience of search determines engagement, with **low discovery persistence** (“if not in top 3 search results, I move on”).

Workflow

- Discovery: Instagram + YouTube.
- Consumption: Spotify when traveling, YouTube otherwise.

Emotional Triggers

- Associates Spotify strongly with music and YouTube with video.
- Easily disengages if Spotify search makes discovery difficult.

Open Questions

- How can Spotify **shift user perception** from being a music-first app to a **podcast discovery and consumption hub**?
- Can Spotify provide **differentiated discovery** for educational vs. entertainment podcasts?

Common Patterns

Discovery

- **Instagram reels/snippets** are the primary discovery channel for all users. Short clips hook interest.
- **YouTube** acts as a secondary discovery hub due to trending content and better search results.
- **Spotify is rarely used for discovery** → almost all users shift to Spotify only for *consumption*.

Motivations

- **Topic and guest resonate more than ratings or popularity.** Selection depends on *relevance, emotional connection, curiosity, and credibility*.
- **Context matters:** Users pick podcasts based on current mood, life stage, or environment (e.g., commute, workouts, travel, winding down).
- Length preference depends on purpose:
 - Informational/deep-dive: longer podcasts (>50 mins).
 - News/productivity/short attention: bite-sized episodes (5–10 mins).
- **Snippets/title quality** are decisive hooks.

Pain Points

- **Spotify’s discovery is weak:**
 - Doesn’t surface variety of topics.
 - Recommends the same artists/hosts instead of adjacent or intent-based themes.
- **Search friction:** if podcasts don’t appear quickly (top 3 search results), users drop off.
- **Loss of “What’s New” feed** frustrates daily listeners (Shereen).
- **Segregation issues:** Users see Spotify as *music-first*, YouTube as *podcast-first*.

User Survey:

Initials	Where do you consume Podcasts?	Why do you listen to a podcast?	How often do you listen to a Podcast?	When do you listen to Podcasts?	How do you discover Podcasts?	What is your preferred duration of a podcast?	How long does it take you to decide before playing a Podcast?
SS	Spotify	Learning, To pass time	Weekly	During traveling, On weekends and holidays, While working on chores	Spotify, Instagram, Friends/Family, Substack posts	Less than 30 mins	5-10 minutes
HW	Spotify, YouTube	Learning, Entertainment	Monthly	During traveling	Spotify, YouTube	Less than 30 mins	10-20 minutes
GL	YouTube	Learning, Entertainment	Monthly	No preference	Spotify, YouTube	Between 60-90 mins	Immediately

Initials	Where do you consume Podcasts?	Why do you listen to a podcast?	How often do you listen to a Podcast?	When do you listen to Podcasts?	How do you discover Podcasts?	What is your preferred duration of a podcast?	How long does it take you to decide before playing a Podcast?
MK	Apple	Learning, To pass time, Entertainment, For news	Weekly	During traveling	Instagram	Between 30-60 mins	5-10 minutes
SP	YouTube	To pass time, Entertainment	2-3 times in a week	At night	YouTube	Between 30-60 mins	5-10 minutes
NS	Spotify, YouTube	Learning, To pass time, Entertainment	Daily	During traveling, During the day	Spotify, YouTube, Friends/Family	Between 60-90 mins	5-10 minutes
KS	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not a fan of Podcasts	Not applicable	Not applicable	Less than 30 mins	Not applicable
MJ	YouTube	Learning, Entertainment	Monthly	No preference	YouTube, Instagram	Between 30-60 mins	Immediately
K	YouTube	Entertainment	Monthly	No preference	YouTube, Instagram	Between 60-90 mins	Immediately
KC	Spotify, YouTube, Apple	Learning, For news	2-3 times in a week	At night	YouTube	Between 60-90 mins	5-10 minutes
R	YouTube	Entertainment, For news	Weekly	No preference	YouTube, Instagram	Less than 30 mins	Immediately
AP	YouTube	To pass time, Entertainment	Monthly	During traveling, At night, On weekends and holidays	YouTube, Instagram	Between 30-60 mins	10-20 minutes
PP	YouTube	Learning	Weekly	During traveling, On weekends and holidays	YouTube, Instagram	Between 60-90 mins	5-10 minutes
LG	Not applicable	To pass time	Not a fan of Podcasts	Not applicable	Not applicable	Less than 30 mins	10-20 minutes

Initials	Where do you consume Podcasts?	Why do you listen to a podcast?	How often do you listen to a Podcast?	When do you listen to Podcasts?	How do you discover Podcasts?	What is your preferred duration of a podcast?	How long does it take you to decide before playing a Podcast?
S	YouTube	Learning, Entertainment	Monthly	At night	YouTube, Instagram	Between 30-60 mins	5-10 minutes
VR	YouTube	To pass time, Entertainment	Weekly	On weekends and holidays	YouTube, Friends/Family	Between 30-60 mins	5-10 minutes
MB	YouTube	Learning	Monthly	During traveling, At night, No preference	YouTube	Less than 30 mins	Immediately
DV	YouTube, Apple	Learning, Entertainment	Weekly	No preference	YouTube, Instagram	Less than 30 mins	5-10 minutes
PB	Spotify	Learning, To pass time, Entertainment	Daily	During traveling, At night, During the day, While completing household chores such as washing dishes and cooking.	Spotify	Between 30-60 mins	5-10 minutes

Key Insights from the Survey

- **Platforms:** Podcasts are consumed the most on **YouTube**, followed by **Spotify**, and then **Apple Podcasts**.
- **Motivations:** The top reasons for listening are **Entertainment**, **Learning**, and **Passing time**.
- **Frequency:** The majority of users listen to podcasts **monthly**, while a smaller share listens **weekly** or more often.
- **Contexts:** Podcasts are commonly consumed **while traveling**, followed by **at night** and during **weekends/holidays**.
- **Discovery:** Most users discover podcasts via **YouTube** and **Instagram**, with some influence from **Spotify** and word-of-mouth.
- **Duration Preference:** Users prefer episodes that are either **under 30 minutes** or between **30–60 minutes**.
- **Decision-Making:** Most listeners decide **within 10 minutes** whether to commit to a podcast.
- **Selection Drivers:** The key factors influencing podcast choice are the **Topic** and the **Guest** featured.

Spotify-Specific Insights

- Over **50% of respondents have a Spotify Premium subscription**.
- Spotify is primarily used for **songs**, with podcasts as a secondary use case.
- Users prefer Spotify for podcasts because of features like:
 - **Background play** with the screen off
 - **Resume from where you left off**
 - **Download functionality** (Premium)
 - **Fewer ads** compared to YouTube
 - **High audio quality**

Improvement Opportunities on Spotify

- **Personalized recommendations** tailored to listening themes or habits

- Better **categorization of podcasts** by genre, mood, or chapters
- Easier **navigation within large podcast libraries** (episode filtering and search)

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths

- **Seamless playback features:** Ability to play in the background with screen locked and resume where left off are highly valued by users.
- **Audio quality and fewer ads:** Users cite Spotify audio quality and relatively fewer ads for podcasts compared to YouTube as reasons for preference.
- **Offline access:** Download functionality for premium users makes it convenient during travel, a major use case for podcasts.

Weaknesses

- **Poor podcast discovery on-platform:** Majority of users discover podcasts on YouTube and Instagram, not on Spotify. Recommendation system is seen as repetitive (same artists) and not intent-based.
- **Brand perception as a “music app”:** Users strongly associate Spotify with *songs*, while for podcasts, YouTube feels more natural (video + trending discovery ecosystem). This limits organic adoption.
- **Navigation & catalog issues:** Users find it difficult to filter long podcast episode lists, lack of chapters makes skipping harder, absence of "latest release" section, and redirection to songs every time the users opens the app adds friction.
- **Content categorization gaps:** Lack of action-oriented, intent-driven personalization (based on life phase, interests, or context like workouts vs. travel) makes it harder for users to find relevant shows.

Opportunities

- **Improve discovery and personalization:**
 - Introduce *snippet-based podcast recommendations* similar to Instagram reels or YouTube Shorts.
 - Build *intent/mood/life-stage based recommendations* (e.g., "career growth," "news update," "light entertainment after work").
- **Chapter-based navigation:** Adding *chapters within episodes* would help listeners skip to relevant sections, especially for long podcasts.
- **Context-driven experiences:** Curated playlists for daily routines (e.g., "Morning news digest," "Commute shows under 45 minutes") to address use cases like workouts or travel.
- **Reputation layers:** Highlight credibility of podcast hosts and guests (background, verified credentials) since this is a factor that heavily influences trust.
- **Platform positioning:** With more than 50% of surveyed users already on Spotify Premium, there's an opportunity to *cross-sell podcasts more effectively* by surfacing them alongside music, tying discovery directly to existing listening habits.
- **Feature revival & innovation:** Bring back “What’s New” for latest content in followed channels and create better search filters to find old episodes quickly.

Threats

- **YouTube dominance in discovery:** YouTube clips and trending culture give it an entrenched advantage along with the relevant recommendations and industries best search algo; Spotify remains a secondary consumption platform.
- **Platform associations:** Users naturally associate YouTube with *video podcasts* and Spotify with *music*, which is hard to change without strong product repositioning.
- **Time-to-decide barrier:** If discovery feels difficult, users may choose other entertainment formats altogether (movies, TV shows), bypassing Spotify entirely.

Goal Setting:

- *Weak discovery → users not able to shortlist any podcast → fewer acquisition*
- Metric : Acquisition
- **“Solve weak discovery to improve acquisition rate for podcast listeners on Spotify.”**

Personas:

Persona 1:

Identity Snapshot - Rohit, **The Curious Explorer**, mid-20s, Data Analyst from Delhi.

Goals / Motivations - Uses podcasts as both entertainment and learning tools during travel or free time. Enjoys content that creates *relatability and emotional connection* rather than structured learning. Categorizes podcasts into *educational (serious, full listens)* and *entertainment (casual, skip-to-parts)*.

Behaviors - Discovers podcasts through Instagram and YouTube snippets, using Spotify purely as a playback tool. Prefers lengthy podcasts for uninterrupted travel listening and values chapters/timestamps for navigation. When a guest resonates with him, he becomes deeply invested often binge-listening late into the night. Has a strong preference for video content when available. Prioritizes topic relevance over ratings/reviews. Responds to catchy titles, emotional triggers, and guest relatability more than topic or popularity. Demands search convenience—podcasts must appear in top 3).

Frustrations (Pain Points) - Spotify's discovery system feels repetitive and lacks topic-based recommendations.

Quote - “If I have to sit and plan which podcast to listen, it would be better to watch a movie instead”.

Persona 2:

Identity Snapshot - Sahil, **The Knowledge Seeker**, early 30s, Engineering Manager from Bangalore.

Goals / Motivations - Consumes podcasts as learning resources aligned with his career stage and intellectual interests. Values *depth and credibility* in content. Listens to short news podcasts during workouts instead of music to stay informed. Views podcast listening as *productive multitasking*.

Behaviors - Discovers podcasts through YouTube trends and validates guest credibility before investing time. Uses YouTube & Instagram for discovery, with occasional browsing on Spotify. Previously relied on Spotify's "What's New" section for news updates until the feature was removed. Prefers longer podcasts (50+ minutes) for depth, finding shorter content too superficial. Seeks *intent-based recommendations* and personalized categories, though for news specifically prefers brief daily updates (under 10 minutes) and follows channels for timely content. Values guest expertise, host credibility, and content relevant to his life stage more than ratings, but for news prioritizes timeliness over depth or presenter. Values simplicity and consistency.

Frustrations (Pain Points) - Generic homepage instead of direct podcast hub; overly random Spotify recommendations. No quick-access "latest updates" view, forcing users to scroll through irrelevant content.

Quote - “If only there was a way by which Spotify can understand my podcast needs based on my life situation and currents interests”.

Problem Prioritization:

Goal - Acquisition

Problems list:

- Poor podcast discovery on-platform
- Brand perception as a “music app”
- Navigation & catalog issues
- Content categorization gaps
- No Context-driven experiences
- Time-to-decide barrier
- Search friction

PIF (Population, Intensity, Frequency) Score -

Problems	Population	Intensity	Frequency
Poor podcast discovery on-platform	High	High	High
Brand perception as a “music app”	Medium	Medium	Low
Navigation & catalog issues	Medium	Medium	Medium
Content categorization gaps	High	High	Medium
No context-driven experiences	Low	Low	Low
Time-to-decide barrier	Low	High	High
Search friction	Low	High	Medium

Strategic filters -

- Poor podcast discovery on Spotify directly affects acquisition
- Discovery has been one of Spotify's core strengths
- Yes, podcast discovery on Spotify is solvable within scope

Problem statement -

"Podcast listeners find it difficult to discover which podcast to listen to on Spotify, which leads to user dropping off thereby decreasing user acquisition."