ENTERTAINMENT NATION 2026

AUDIO

PODCASTS, VODCASTS AND AUDIOBOOKS
NOV 2026



THE growth DISTILLERY

WHAT WE DID

A large scale quantitative survey was conducted in April 2026 with a nationally representative sample of 3,647 Australian respondents aged 18 and older. The survey captured varying levels of audience engagement across six categories: Streaming, Audio, Cinema, Gaming, Live Events, and Cultural Events.

Unless otherwise specified, all data are sourced from The Growth Distillery research and the methodology outlined above.



THE growth DISTILLERY

To understand what drives audio listening, we explored listeners' motivations, habits and engagement levels across podcasts, vodcasts and audiobooks, and how well these formats deliver what audiences are looking for.

AUDIO OVERVIEW IN NUMBERS

ENTERTAINMENT NATION 2026

DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES IMPLY DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS

The Casuals form the smallest cohort across all entertainment segments.

THE DEVOTED

42% MARKET PROPORTION

The Devoted are the intentional ecosystem explorers. For them, their motivators surround **emotional fulfilment, identity and community**.

Not only do they know what they want, but they engage far beyond the activity itself. They **dive into the broader ecosystem by actively exploring reviews, fan communities, content creators, and merchandising.**

Because they see the emotional and social return from entertainment spaces, they perceive it to be of high value in their spending, and they are **the group most likely to further increase their engagement** in the next 12 months.

THE CASUALS

24% MARKET PROPORTION

The Casuals are the flexible escapists. They turn to entertainment to help **decompress and escape everyday pressures**.

They are less sure about what they want, meaning **discovery comes from both their own decision making and external recommendations**. However, they still tend to gravitate towards comforting, nostalgic, or feel good entertainment types.

Their engagement in the wider ecosystem remains relatively light touch, which makes them **more value conscious**. They often need incentives or reassurance before committing time and money.

THE SEEKERS

34% MARKET PROPORTION

The Seekers are the functional and friction prone users. They have a very transactional relationship with entertainment, but over index in motivators related to self exploration and validation.

Their discovery behaviour is heavily **passive and reliant on advertising and mainstream visibility** across digital and real life touch points. When faced with an abundance of choice, they are easily overwhelmed and often experience choice paralysis.

Due to **low ecosystem** engagement and **high price sensitivity**, this audience requires targeted encouragement to clearly see the value in entertainment.

MOST FREQUENT ← → LEAST FREQUENT

A MEDIUM WHERE DEVOTED FANS FIND EACH OTHER

The most engaged listeners look for others who share their passion, and they join online communities and attend live events at about twice the rate of Low Engagers.



26%

of devoted listeners listen to feel connected to a community that shares their passion, against 16% of Low Engagers

AUDIO HAS EVOLVED FROM A DAILY COMPANION TO AN INTRINSIC ROUTINE.

Listeners decide when and where audio fits, and they place it in the parts of the day that repeat.

66%

of heavy listeners listen **every day**

44%

Of Australians say they consume audio as part of a **routine** to switch off, relax and unwind

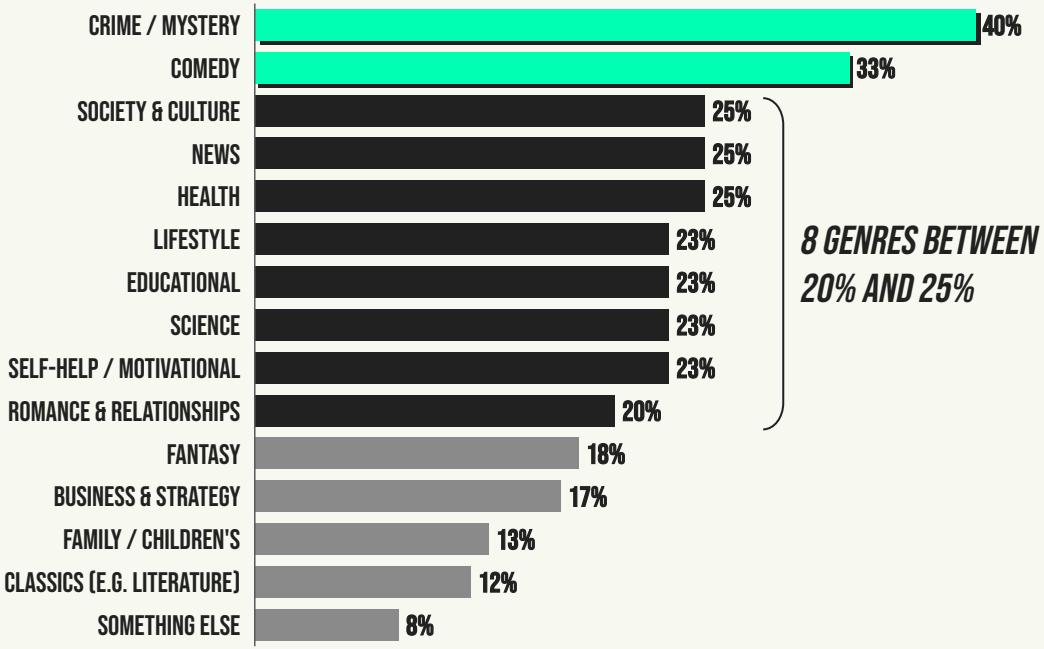
64%

of podcast fans say podcasts feel like a **companion** in their daily routine

(Acast, Podcast Pulse 2026; 13 markets including Australia)

CRIME & MYSTERY LEADS, BUT AUDIO TASTES ARE BROAD

Comedy comes next, followed by eight genres attracting between 20% and 25% of listeners each.



Genres listened to across podcasts, vodcasts and audiobooks in the past 12 months

While our census covered the wider entertainment landscape, this deep dive explores audio – how it fits into Australians' daily lives, the trust and loyalty podcasts build, and what listening to books means for people's sense of themselves as readers.

AUDIO DEEP DIVE

DIGITAL CHALLENGE

Specific audiences within digital spaces struggle with content overload, whilst also lacking motivational fulfilment.

AUDIO CHALLENGE

In audio, the challenge is less about a consumer struggle and more about brands breaking into locked-in habits. It's value lies in an intimate companionship that leaves listeners fully satisfied.

SECTION 01

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

BUILT ON INTIMACY, AUDIO FOSTERS A RARE DEPTH OF CONNECTION.

It has a unique ability to foster deep, powerful parasocial relationships between hosts and listeners

31%

of audio users tune in for **social connection**, significantly higher than those who use gaming ***(21%)*** or streaming ***(17%)*** for the same reason

1 IN 4

audio users seek **self-exploration and validation**, compared to just ***18%*** of gamers and ***9%*** of video streamers

62%

of multi-tasking listeners globally agree that podcasts make **solo time feel less solitary**

(Acast, Podcast Pulse 2026)

THE growth DISTILLERY

EVEN IN SCRIPTED AUDIO, THE VOICE BUILDS A POWERFUL BOND.

A great narrator can still turn a solitary audiobook into a shared companion journey, building a powerful, ongoing bond between the listener and the voice.







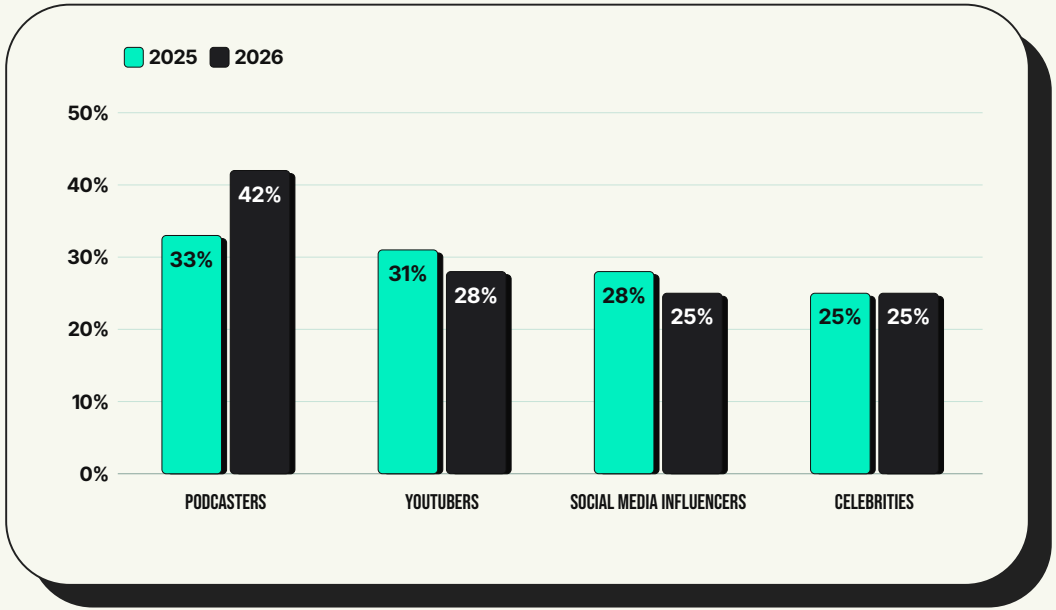
In 2025, **Spotify named a top narrator for the first time**: Julia Whelan.
(USA Today, December 2025).

"I've definitely discovered books I otherwise wouldn't have because they were narrated by someone I like"

Reddit r/audible, April 2026). Qualitative.

IN A FRAGMENTED MEDIA LANDSCAPE, AUDIO REMAINS A RARE HAVEN OF TRUST.

While the value of digital influence is shifting across most channels, the host-to-listener bond is uniquely resilient, making audio one of the few environments where genuine loyalty still grows.



90%

of weekly listeners say they **have had their mind changed by a podcaster**.

42%

of listeners now **trust podcasters** (up from 33%) while trust in YouTubers, influencers, and celebrities remained stagnant or declined

(Acast, Podcast Pulse 2026)

ACROSS CHOICE, QUALITY, COST, AND TIME SPENT, LISTENERS FEEL COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH WHAT THEY ALREADY HAVE AND SEE NO REASON TO CHANGE THEIR ROUTINES.

The selection feels right

66% say there's the **"just right amount"** of podcast, vodcast, and audiobook platforms and content. **Only 5%** say there's not enough to choose from

No complaints on quality

95% rate the quality of platforms and content as OK (64%) or excellent (31%). **Just 5%** say it's "not good enough"

Paid audio feels fair

71% say paid podcasts, vodcasts, and audiobooks are fair (47%) or excellent (25%) value. **Only 8%** say they don't get value.

Time spent feels balanced

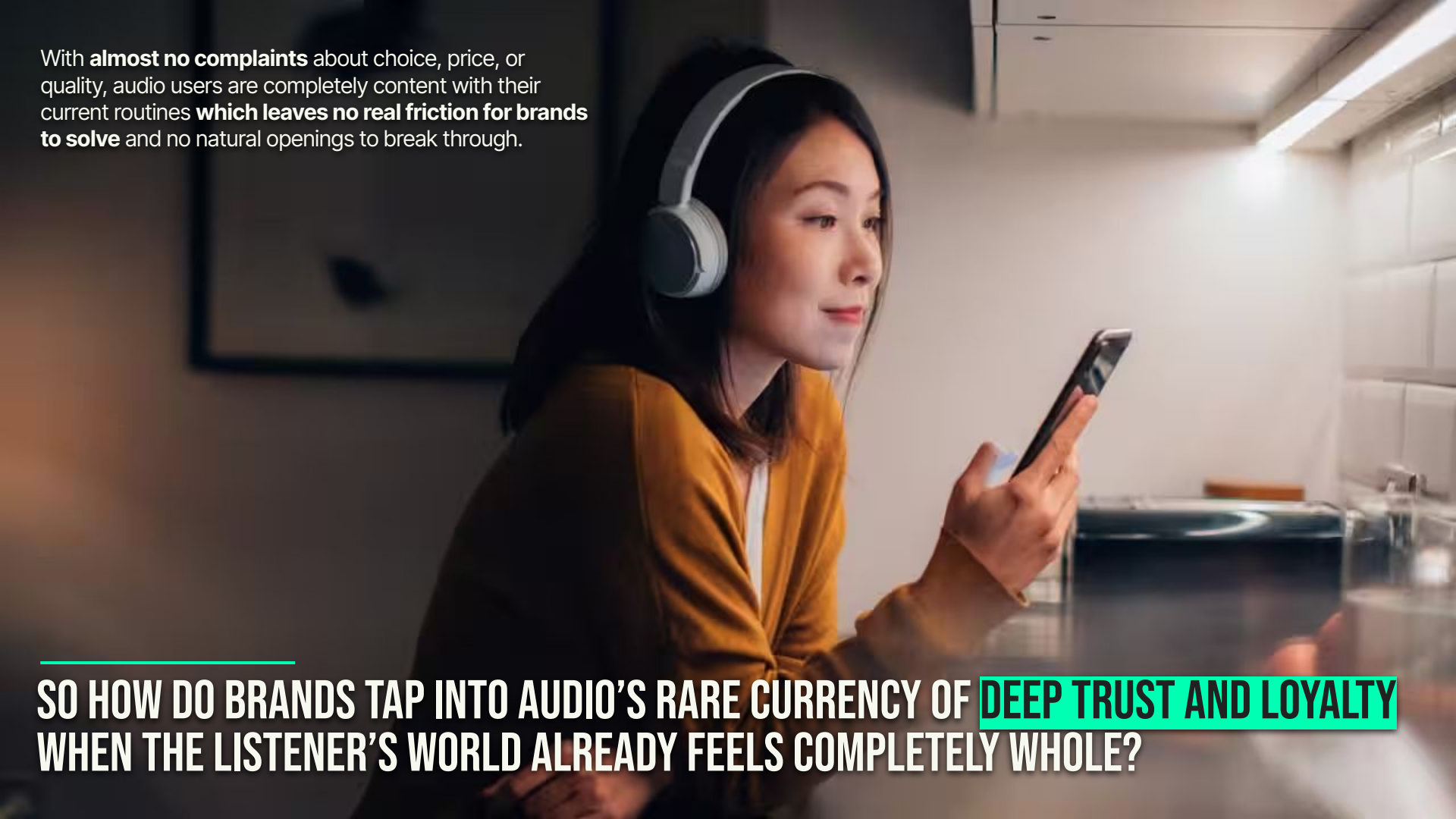
81% say the time and energy they spend is "just right", and **71%** expect to listen about **the same amount over the next 12 months**

Nothing holds them back

#1 Reason reported to stop them from engaging more is **"Nothing"**, ranking ahead of **cost (19%)** and **life commitments (18%)**

Listeners arrive with intent

61% know what or who they want before they open the app



With **almost no complaints** about choice, price, or quality, audio users are completely content with their current routines **which leaves no real friction for brands to solve** and no natural openings to break through.

SO HOW DO BRANDS TAP INTO AUDIO'S RARE CURRENCY OF DEEP TRUST AND LOYALTY WHEN THE LISTENER'S WORLD ALREADY FEELS COMPLETELY WHOLE?

1

PODCASTS

PODCASTS BUILD UNMATCHED PASSIVE TRUST, BUT THE REAL COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL MIGHT BE THE ACTIVE SURROUNDING ECOSYSTEM.

THE MORE ENGAGED THEY ARE, THE MORE *THEY DO* AROUND THE EPISODE

The most engaged listeners are the biggest group.

42%

of audio users are High Engagers, making them the **largest listener group** ahead of Low Engagers at 34% and Casual Engagers at 24%

Listening alone stops being enough.

71%

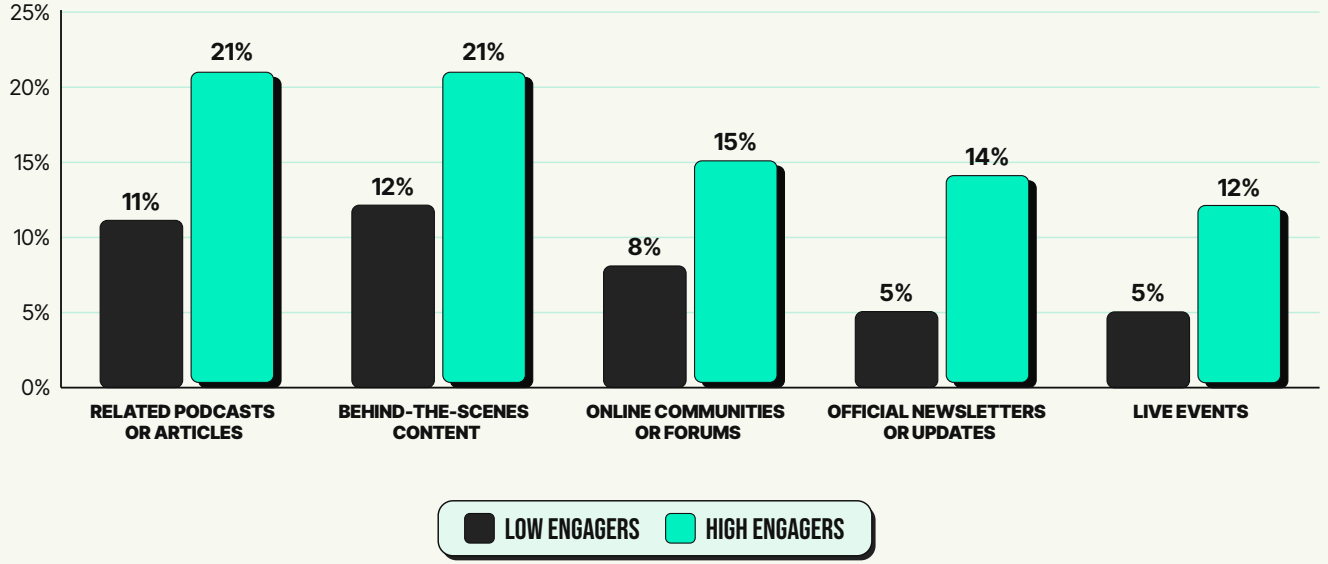
of High Engagers **actively do more than just listen** (compared to 57% of Low Engagers), showing that heavy listeners consistently seek out content, reading, and community around their shows

Reading is the biggest signal.

26%

of High Engagers actively **read news, reviews, or articles about what they listen to,** making reading the single most common activity they do beyond just listening

EVERY SIGNAL OF COMMITMENT ROUGHLY *DOUBLES* WITH HIGH ENGAGERS



FOR MANY, THE INITIAL PASSIVE ENGAGEMENT CAN EVEN TURN INTO FRONT-ROW ADVOCACY



30%

of Australian fans have been to a live podcast

50%

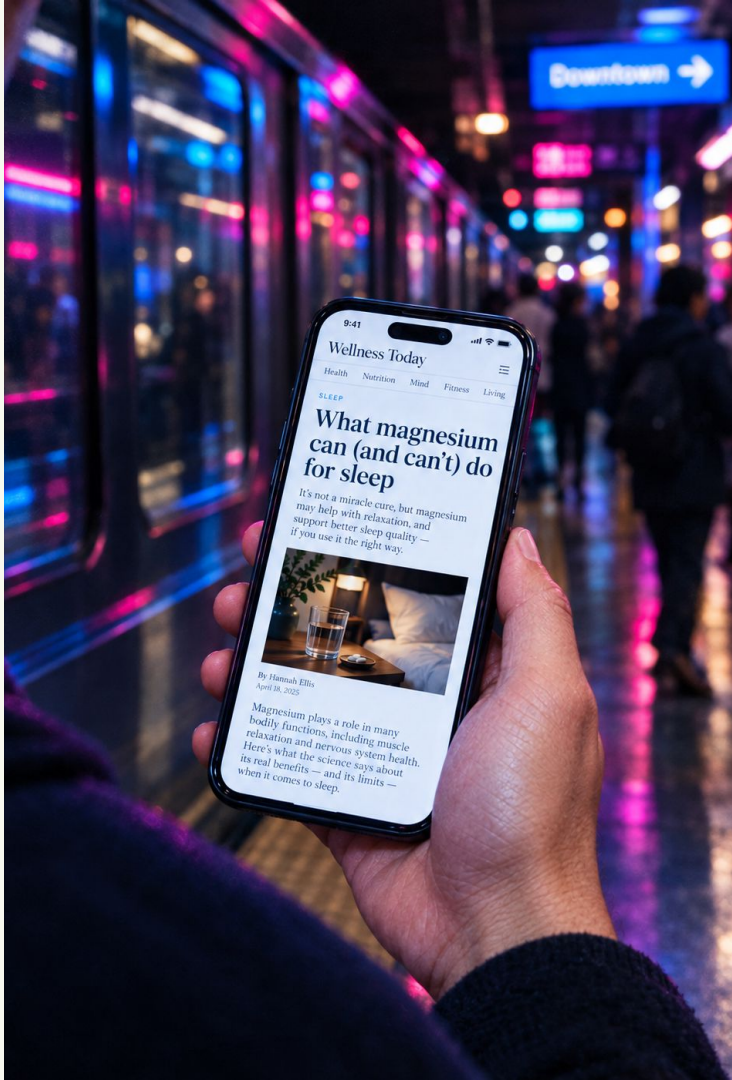
say live podcasts strengthen their connection to the creator

Acast Podcast Pulse 2026

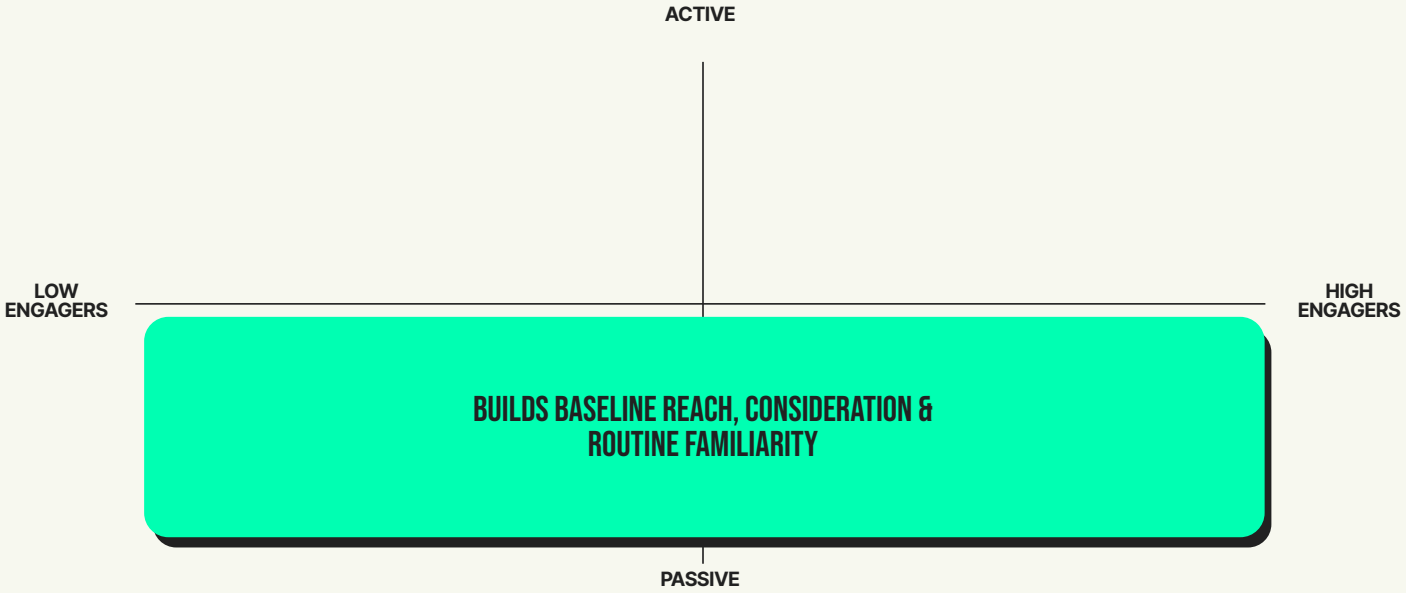
DESPITE THEIR SATISFACTION THEY ARE STILL OPEN TO MORE

72%

of High Engagers are **interested** in at least one more type of content about what they listen to, against 59% of Low Engagers.

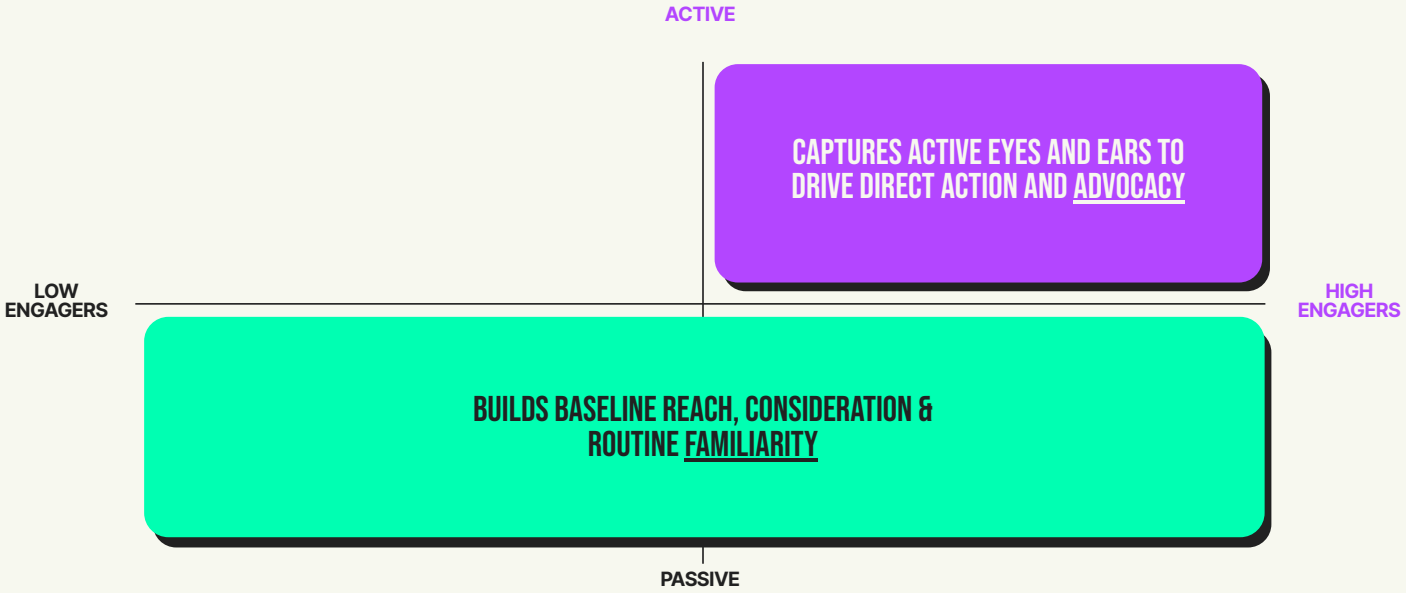


STANDARD AUDIO ADS MIGHT HELP BUILD RELIABLE AWARENESS IN THE BACKGROUND AND CAPTURE HIGH-TRUST CONSIDERATION AT SCALE



BUT EXPANDING BEYOND THE AUDIO FEED TARGETS HIGH ENGAGERS IN THEIR MOST ACTIVE STATE

High engagers carry hard-earned routine trust into active touchpoints. Layering into the show's wider ecosystem meets them at peak attention, ***turning passive loyalty into brand advocacy.***



THE TRUTH IS

PODCASTS LET LISTENERS LEAN BACK, BUT THE MOST VALUABLE ONES WANT TO LEAN IN.

What high engagers do in their most active state

Read news, reviews, or articles about what they listen to	26%
Independent podcasts or videos about it	17%
Original source material	16%
Behind-the-scenes content	16%
Official podcasts about it	15%

28%

of live podcast attendees bought from a sponsoring brand

Acast Podcast Pulse 2026

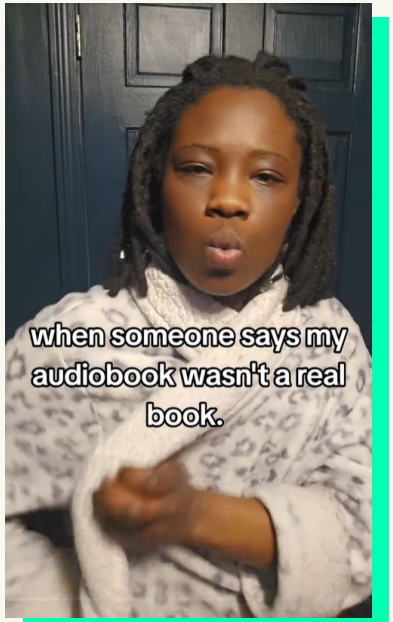
2

AUDIOBOOK

AUDIOBOOK LISTENERS ARE UNSURE WHERE THEY STAND AS READERS, AND THE MEDIUM GIVES THEM NO WAY TO SETTLE IT.

AUDIOBOOKS BUILD A READING HABIT, BUT THEY DON'T GRANT A READER'S IDENTITY.





1 IN 3

of audiobook listeners see listening as something different from reading, and

1 IN 5

are unsure.

(Australia Reads)

"Whenever I want to tell somebody that, oh, I read that book, I feel the need to almost apologize and say, oh, but I actually just listened to the audio book"

(A Way with Words 2026)

WHEN LISTENERS CAN'T DISPLAY THEIR TASTE, PLATFORMS SUBSTITUTE IT WITH STAMINA.

Unable to easily signal their literary taste, platforms instead offer listeners gamified badges that track listening endurance.

- **Mount Everest –** finishing a book of 24, 30 or 60 hours
- **Marathoner –** listening for 16 to 24 hours straight
- **Daily Dipper** – listening every day for 7, 30 or 90 days
- **Repeat Listener** – hearing the same book 3, 10 or 20 times
- **Watchtower** – checking your stats 50, 200 or 500 times

(Audible Badge Collection sample)



THE PHYSICAL BOOK STILL ACTS AS THE TANGIBLE TROPHY FOR AN INVISIBLE DIGITAL HABIT.

A digital audio file has limited social currency in the real world.
By purchasing a physical copy of an author they just listened to, listeners are buying a permanent, visual anchor that validates their identity and broadcasts their taste.

61%

of listeners have read the book in print or eBook after listening to it

63%

listened to an author on audio and subsequently purchased their physical/print books

(Audible & NielsenIQ 2026)



THE TRUTH IS

AUDIOBOOK LISTENERS HAVE THE READING HABIT BUT NOT THE READER IDENTITY.

"There's sort of a particular form of shame associated with audiobooks; it's all too often perceived as not being real reading."

Professor Matthew Rubery

Professor of Modern Literature, Queen Mary University of London, speaking to ABC Radio National in May 2021.

SECTION 02

UNPACKING THE OPPORTUNITY

	PODCAST	AUDIOBOOK
INSIGHT	Audio builds unmatched passive trust, but the real commercial potential might be the active surrounding ecosystem.	Audiobook listeners are unsure where they stand as readers, and the medium gives them no way to settle it.
TRUTH	Podcasts let listeners lean back, but the most valuable ones want to lean in.	Listeners have the reading habit but not the reader identity.
NEED	**DEEPEN**	**VALIDATE**
OPPORTUNITY	**Give loyal listeners somewhere to go next** Step beyond standard background ads to convert built-in routine loyalty into direct advocacy.	**Create social currency for the invisible habit** Bridge the gap between digital listening and tangible pride by creating the artifacts, receipts, and badges that validate the reader identity.

GIVE LOYAL LISTENERS SOMEWHERE TO GO NEXT



THE INSIGHT:

Audio is unmatched at building routine intimacy, but everyday audio ads are largely consumed with split attention during commutes and chores. When high-engagers look to deepen their connection to a show, they migrate beyond the RSS feed, leaning into reading editorial coverage and attending live tours.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY:

Complement broad-reach audio ads by investing across the surrounding multi-format ecosystem to intercept superfans at their peak moment of active focus.

What it looks like in practice:

- ➔ **Own the post-listen debrief in newsletters:** Capitalise on the reflection phase. Sponsor the editorial newsletters and cultural debriefs that unpack each episode's revelations, intercepting loyal fans while they are actively digesting and discussing what they just heard.
- ➔ **Surround the audio with companion journalism:** When a podcast tackles an investigation, cultural debate, or business case, listeners naturally turn to the news for more. Anchor brand presence within the adjacent investigative articles, explainers, and op-eds covering the show's topics to capture audiences when their eyes and focus are fully engaged.
- ➔ **Bring the connection to life in physical spaces:** Meet superfans where their digital intimacy manifests in the real world. Sponsor live tours, local events, or interactive physical experiences that turn solitary listening into shared community moments, cementing brand loyalty when emotions and attention are at their peak.

CREATE SOCIAL CURRENCY FOR THE INVISIBLE HABIT



THE INSIGHT:

Audiobook listeners log substantial literary hours, but the digital format leaves them without the visible artifacts of reading. Without physical spines to display on a shelf, listeners suffer from a reading impostor syndrome. Meanwhile, platforms default to gamifying listening endurance rather than validating literary taste.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY:

Create the artifacts, social receipts, and public milestones that bridge the gap between digital consumption and true reader identity.

What it looks like in practice:

- ➔ **Mint the "receipt" of reading:** Partner with publishers to offer exclusive physical dust jackets, collector bookmarks, or print companion editions when listeners finish a title.
- ➔ **Design for public taste-signaling:** Build shareable digital bookshelf recaps and social badges engineered for messaging apps and book communities.
- ➔ **Reward literary depth over stamina:** Move beyond tracking "marathon hours" and introduce milestones celebrating genre mastery, back-catalog completions, or author deep-dives.
- ➔ **Sponsor the physical-to-digital bridge:** Co-sponsor bookstore and library initiatives that let consumers purchase the physical book while unlocking seamless audio companion access.