



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING

“I Think I Get Enlightened Somehow”

A Case Study on the Use of Podcasts for Informal Employee Learning

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Program and/or course:	International Master's Programme in IT and Learning
Level:	Second Cycle
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Supervisor:	Charlott Sellberg
Examiner:	Ann-Marie Eriksson

Abstract

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Purpose: The thesis aims to explore how companies can improve the use of employee informal learning through podcasts. This thesis examines the use of podcasts as tools for employee informal learning, using a case study of the *Insight Exchange* podcast at the Swedish consultancy Innovation AB. While podcasting has become a popular medium for education, research on its application in professional learning contexts remains limited.

Theory: Andragogy and Self-Directed Learning Theory (SDL) are adult learning theories that inform the thesis on the characteristics and learning needs of adults. The thesis uses Oddi's three dimensions, which focus on self-directedness as an assessment of personal characteristics, and Knowles' six andragogical assumptions, which highlight the learners' internal and individual motivations. The two theories work in conjunction to address both the individually focused and personalized learning traits of podcasts as an informal learning tool. Together, they also offer some contextualization of external factors on informal learning, such as interpersonal or parasocial relationships, everyday interactions, and the learners' environment. However, the theories needed to be supplemented with other learning concepts for better use.

Method: Using a mixed-methods case study, the research investigates (1) what motivates employees to listen to podcasts for learning, (2) what barriers they face, and (3) what knowledge or skills they gain. Data was collected through podcast topic clustering, an adaptive survey and semi-structured interviews.

Results: Results indicate that personal connection and interest significantly drive employee motivation. Key barriers were identified that limit employees' engagement with podcasts for learning. The learning outcomes mostly involve tacit knowledge and soft skills, which makes it challenging for employees to articulate their knowledge. However, this also provided professional insights, raised awareness of company culture, and enhanced soft skill development. The thesis contributes to the field by demonstrating how internal podcasts support employee development through informal learning. This thesis offers practical considerations for professional organizations that wish to improve the integration of podcasts into informal learning initiatives for employees.

Foreword

The initial spark for this thesis originated from the internship I completed as part of this master's program. Throughout this internship, I had the wonderful opportunity to turn my academic knowledge into practical experience, especially during a project centered around informal learning for knowledge sharing and upskilling. This journey allowed me to dive into different facets of the learning industry, where I got to observe the technologies used to support employees. My thesis concept emerged from many insightful conversations with my corporate supervisors, evolving into a creative blend of my previous work in informal learning and the company's podcast. Through this project, I have immersed myself in podcasts, seeing the ins and outs of production and the interactivity of the media. Best of all, I was invited to speak about this thesis on a podcast. The podcast episode was a fun way to discuss preliminary information about the research, such as identified research gaps, the study objective, and the role of audio-based learning in organizations.

All in all, I want to express my gratitude to my mentors and supervisors, Margo, Robbie, and Ken. You have offered me unwavering support, challenged me to think like a learning professional, and shown me the ropes during our time together. I have been lucky to be part of your community and to have made wonderful memories and friendships during this project.

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To the three generations of educated Marta Serpas'

Marta Serpas-Olmedo, Marta E. Serpas-Alvarado, Marta (Sol) Serpas-Guardado Nävert

Table of contents

- Introduction 1
- Research Aims 2
 - Research Questions 2
- Literature Review 2
 - What is a Podcast? 3
 - User Motivation 3
 - Flexibility and User Empowerment 3
 - Personal Interest and Entertainment 4
 - Social Relationships 4
 - Community in the Workplace 5
 - Parasocial Relationships and Influence 5
 - The Podcastee, Lone Wolf or Pack Animal? 6
 - Learning, Professional Life, and Podcasts 6
 - Employee Learning as a Part of an Organization 6
 - Informal Learning 7
 - Incidental Learning 7
 - Tacit Knowledge 8
 - Skills 9
- Theoretical Framework 9
 - Andragogy 9
 - Self-directed learning 11
- Method 12
- Case-Study 12
 - The Case: Innovation AB and the Insight Exchange Podcast 13
- Data Collection 13
 - Listening to IE Episodes and Clustering of Podcast Topics 13
 - Creating the Ranking 14
- Adaptive Survey 14
 - Participants 14
 - Demographics of Survey Respondents 14
 - Process 14
 - Survey Analysis 15
- Semi-Structured Interviews 15
 - Participants 15
 - Process 15
- Interview Analysis: Coding and Thematic Analysis 16

Consent and Ethical Considerations.....	17
Findings.....	17
Clustered Topics and Rankings.....	18
Adaptive Survey Findings.....	19
Overall Podcast Listening Preferences.....	20
Employee Awareness and Engagement of IE.....	20
Company Identity:.....	20
Accessibility and Platform familiarity	20
Learning, Insight Exchange, and Professional Life	21
Barriers.....	21
Barriers and Podcast Applications in Professional and Non-Professional Settings.....	21
Barriers to Sharing	22
Semi-structured Interviews and Thematic Analysis	22
Motivation.....	22
Theme #1: Entertainment, Hobbies, and Personal Interests	22
Theme #2: Multitasking and Boredom	23
Theme #3: Positive Feelings and Relationships.....	23
IE Podcast Hosts	23
IE Engagement and Social Connection.....	24
Ties to Innovation AB.....	24
Barriers.....	25
Theme #4: Interpretation of Podcasts	25
Theme #5: Multitasking and Concentration.....	26
Theme #6:Office Interpersonal Relationships and Employee Personal Lives.....	26
Theme #7:Stress and Time Constraints.....	27
Theme #8:Memory and Retention	27
Theme #9: Barriers and Difficulties for Learning.....	28
Learning	28
Theme #10: Personal Interest and Personal Development for Self-Directed Podcast Learning....	28
Theme #11:Podcasts for Professional Interests, Development and Skills	29
Theme #12:Learning as a Feeling.....	29
Findings summary.....	30
Discussion	31
Theoretical Relevance.....	34
Practical Relevance	35
Limitations	36
Methodological Limitations	36
Theoretical Limitations	36

Area of Interest and Future Research.....	36
Conclusion.....	36
References.....	38
Appendix.....	44

Introduction

The rise in the use of Web 2.0 technology in the workplace has changed the landscape for professional learning. Web 2.0 technology focuses on building networks for personal or professional interests through social media (Gaál et al., 2015). These technologies are defined by Gaál et al. (2015) as the distinct use of interaction and participation with information and other people or communities. Traditionally, professionals looking to stay informed about their jobs or needing to upskill have used formal education to seek out new knowledge or hone a skill (Littlejohn & Margaryan, 2014; Purvis, 2006). However, employees must keep up with the demands and expectations of the workplace, (Wei et al., 2013) and Web 2.0 technologies have facilitated easier access to the information that employees require to stay current in their roles. One manner in which Web 2.0 technologies have changed professional learning is through **the use of informal learning**, (Carpenter et al., 2025) as social media use has pushed beyond personal and everyday use and into professional uses (Ahmed et al., 2019). Informal learning is non-institutional and unstructured learning. It can manifest itself in the context of everyday situations and places, and the learning is embedded in the learners' experiences through everyday life (Eshach, 2007). In the context of workplace learning, informal learning occurs within the employee's daily workflows and professional interactions (Sharma et al., 2022). In both instances, informal learning is not driven by an external authority or guide. In line with the principles of informal learning, a growing number of organizations incorporate Web 2.0 technologies into their employees' daily work routines (Gaál et al., 2015).

Podcasts are one of many forms of Web 2.0 technology that organizations and everyday users choose to use for informal learning. Although podcasts are used as a form of entertainment (Sullivan, 2024), their impact extends beyond entertainment and into *opportunities for informal learning*. The characteristics of podcasts, such as their mobility and interactivity, offer engaging content and provide overall convenience by making knowledge and information more accessible and flexible to their users (McLaughlin, 2006; Rahim, 2024; Wei & Ram, 2016). These characteristics make podcasts a good tool for informal learning. However, most research on the use of podcasts for learning has been done in formal educational settings (Meden et al., 2024; Wei & Ram, 2016), *showing a research gap regarding podcast use in informal settings*.

There is a need for further research on podcasting as an informal educational tool (Meden et al., 2024) because leveraging technology, like podcasts, to enhance informal learning initiatives in workplaces offers significant opportunities and a crucial growth area for organizations interested in supporting their employees' learning (Manuti, 2016). These opportunities, as suggested by Meden et al. (2024), indicate that podcasts serve not only as a medium for content consumption but also offer more as a learning tool to support relationships and community, and foster diversity in perspectives. Moreover, Wei et al. (2013) state that the research on learning via podcasts in the existing literature *does not give a full view of the role of podcasts for professional learning*, since much of the literature is focused on student uses.

It can be argued that podcasts should be used differently to address the specific learning needs and characteristics of employees in professional organizations, as brought up by Gaál et al. (2015) and Wei and Ram (2016) because they face distinct **challenges** in learning. According to Wei et al. (2013), employees must focus on their commitments, particularly those related to work and family, meaning that they must find a way to accommodate learning between these responsibilities (Wei & Ram, 2016; Wei et al., 2013). Furthermore, Rosenberg (2008) also points out that for professionals, learning may not be prioritized due to low **motivation** or time constraints. These challenges have resulted in employees having lower rates of adoption and use of podcasts for workplace learning (Wei & Ram, 2016). However, *using podcasts as a tool for informal learning offers a solution* to professionals who may benefit from informal characteristics of podcasts, like mobility, accessibility, and flexibility, and

the concept of informal learning that incorporates learning into experience through their daily life and work routines. Therefore, this thesis examines the research gap pertaining to the role of podcasts in informal employee learning, as this is a topic that is much less explored and utilized in comparison to other sectors like education and other types of learning, like formal learning.

Research Aims

With an interest in informal learning in professional organizations, this thesis explores how companies can improve the use of employee informal learning through podcasts.

Research Questions

RQ1: What motivators are most important for employees to engage in podcast listening as a form of informal learning?

RQ2: What challenges do employees face that prevent them from listening to or using podcasts for informal learning?

RQ3: Do employees gain specific knowledge or skills from engaging with podcasts for informal learning? What are they?

The study employs a mixed-methods approach that includes topic clustering, an adaptive survey, and semi-structured interviews. As a result of the investigation, the data gathered through these methods yields actionable recommendations for companies seeking to leverage podcasting for employee learning in informal settings. The research is based on a case study of a large Swedish consultancy company, which will be referred to as Innovation AB for the purposes of this thesis.

The thesis structure will be as follows: First, the literature review covers how users typically interact with podcasts, user motivations, and the implications of the role of social relationships in podcast use. The second half of the literature review discusses organizational and informal learning, as well as tacit knowledge and skills. The theoretical section outlines frameworks for the thesis based on andragogy and self-directed learning (SDL), which will guide the subsequent data analysis. The methods section covers the application of a case study, the data collection process, and ethical considerations involved in the research. The findings presented afterwards will highlight the areas of interest derived from the collected data. Finally, the discussion will analyze and interpret the data in relation to the research questions and the thesis's aim, offering actionable recommendations as a practical contribution for companies to consider implementing. Lastly, the conclusion will provide a summary of the thesis and the main takeaways from the thesis.

Literature Review

This chapter will cover the key components of relevant literature, such as terminology and ideas central to the study. The literature review aimed to explore three aspects: the reasons users generally listen to podcasts, the informal learning uses of podcasts for general users, and the role of podcasts and social media in informal workplace learning. The reason for utilizing both podcasts and social media in the literature review is that information about podcasts for employee learning is minimal. The expanded search enables a more complete overview of Web 2.0 technologies in various sectors to gather applicable concepts for this thesis. Web 2.0 applications and technologies have similar aims regarding information and community interactions. Since podcasts are a subset of Web 2.0 technology, it was necessary to expand the search for sufficient information to have a critical understanding of learning and podcasts (Clark et al., 2021).

This study features a narrative literature review aimed at analyzing and summarizing existing works, as well as identifying gaps in the literature. Due to the limited academic research on this topic, this literature review includes peer-reviewed articles, whitepapers, book chapters, and conference papers.

The searches were done using three databases: Scopus, Gothenburg University Library's Super Search, and Google Scholar.

The first section of the literature review covers the emergence and significance of podcasts as a technology and user motivation for podcast listening. This section explores why the average user engages with Web 2.0 technologies, like social media and podcasting. This section also provides examples of how professionals in other sectors use podcasts and social media. The second part of the literature review explores the significance of informal learning within professional settings for employees, examining the connections and intersections between podcast listening and learning.

What is a Podcast?

Podcasts are a series of audio (visual is optional) broadcasts organized into episodes. The word "podcast", coined by Ben Hammersley (Bonini Baldini, 2015), is a hybrid of "iPod" and broadcast (Bonini Baldini, 2015; Meden et al., 2024; Palenque, 2016). Listeners will often subscribe to podcasts to listen to the latest episodes (Meden et al., 2024; Wei & Ram, 2016) and can listen through a variety of online platforms (Waddingham et al., 2020). Popular streaming platforms include, but are not limited to, Spotify, YouTube, and Apple Podcasts (Rahim, 2024). The roots of podcasts can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s (Bonini Baldini, 2015). For Bonini Baldini (2015), the emergence of the podcast is regarded as a significant advancement in the de-institutionalization of radio. Menduni (2007) describe podcasting as the final phase in sound digitization that started in the 1990s and saw podcasting as the crucial connection that online radio stations have struggled to form between traditional radio and the internet. Since 2012, podcasting has entered what Bonini Baldini (2015) refers to as a "second age," during which many well-known American public radio podcasts opted to detach from public radio funding and instead fully finance themselves through listener crowdfunding platforms.

In addition to the significance of podcasts as a media form, podcasts also offer entertainment. Its emergence as an amateur creative medium has drawn people in because of its easy accessibility for both creation and listening (Sullivan, 2024). From 2005 to 2014, the popularity of podcasts had a steady but slow annual growth rate. However, since 2019, podcasting's global influence has surged (Sullivan, 2024).

User Motivation

The first key concept from the literature centers on user motivation. These motivations mainly relate to flexibility, social relationships, fun, and personal interests.

Flexibility and User Empowerment

Podcasts and social media have been investigated as flexible learning tools in sectors like education, healthcare, management, and general media consumption. One distinguishable aspect of podcast listening is that the user controls the podcast's use to various degrees. One way in which users take advantage of its flexibility is by utilizing multitasking (Waddingham et al., 2020). In other words, users can pay as little or as much attention as they want to a podcast and listen or watch while handling other tasks, such as driving a car or exercising (Bauer, 2010). Busy users can squeeze in a podcast or social media post during their day, while more focused users can intently focus on a podcast as a single activity, in which podcast listening is an activity for relaxation and concentration (Balsebre-Torroja et al., 2023). In both scenarios, podcasts are used as an escape for users (Shamburg et al., 2023). This sense of escapism includes softening the harshness of less-liked tasks (Waddingham et al., 2020) like cleaning or running errands, or simply enjoying the feeling of being immersed in the narrative or information of the media (Shamburg et al., 2023). Users prioritize their needs and mold the use of the podcast to their needs.

Users are also enticed to use podcasts and other Web 2.0 technologies due to their ability to control the experience. Podcasts, unlike traditional radio or television, are an on-demand service (Whittle, 2024), making them more accessible and leveraging the advantage of mobility as podcasts can be streamed or downloaded to a variety of electronics like laptops, cell phones, tablets, etc. (Bauer, 2010; Waddingham et al., 2020). Users can listen or watch on the go or when it's most feasible. Additionally, the variety offered by podcasts allows users to choose from various podcast formats and content. Users can choose a long or short format, host and episode tone, and how deep or niche the information gets (Waddingham et al., 2020). This offers a substantial change from the rigidity of traditional media and has influenced a “co-existence” of traditional media adopting principles and formats popular in Web 2.0 technologies (Balsebre-Torroja et al., 2023). Meden et al. (2014) state that podcasts have a leg-up on media like television, as podcasts help people use their time more efficiently. These advantages help explain the growth in the popularity of podcasts (Waddingham et al., 2020). Ultimately, Web 2.0 technology, like podcasts, puts the power and decision-making in the hands of the consumer, which can be an advantage over other forms of media.

Personal Interest and Entertainment

As podcasts have shown to give users a sense of flexibility, they also have a high appeal to consumers' interests. Podcasts come in an array of topics, and as Sullivan (2024) explains in *Podcasting in a Platform Age*, “the hyper-niche nature of the content” (p.15) pulls many listeners to podcasting. Unlike its mainstream or traditional counterparts, the success or allure of a podcast may come from its obscurity or specificity. This is echoed by Martín-Morán et al.'s (2022) study where an interviewee states, “It's [podcasts are] about niches, micro-niches, or nano niches. It is about niches, it is about loyal audiences, and it is about communities” (p.6). Users select the media they find most interesting, and podcasts offer them an opportunity to connect through a topic or theme ranging from superficial hobbies to deeply personal experiences. These niches offer specialized information or a more profound understanding that gets users to have further contact with the topic. Shamburg et al. (2023) show that podcast listeners felt a sense of personal growth, and as stated by an interview respondent, they use podcasts to find more discussion and more information on things they like, such as books or television (p.2024). Additionally, through podcasts, users can discover new interests and connect with content or communities (further on this in the next section) that they would otherwise miss.

On top of the sense of personal growth and interest, the podcast must feel entertaining. As shown by Shamburg et al. (2023) and Whittle (2024), entertainment is a contributing factor to podcast listening. People's reasons for listening to podcasts include entertainment, killing free time or helping with boredom (Shamburg et al., 2023), and substituting listening to music (Meden et al., 2024). The entertainment value has increased as podcast production has become higher quality (Whittle, 2024). One way this is exemplified is through Chou et al.'s (2023) study of Taiwanese podcast listeners, who list entertainment as one of three factors for people to listen. Even in enterprise social media (ESM) use, which is defined as the application of social media and Web 2.0 technology in the workplace, Sharma et al. (2023) state that sharing information through these platforms is a form of fun or entertainment.

Social Relationships

The final piece in user motivation is the strong social relationships that can develop through podcast listening. Whittle (2024) presents several survey results showing that users listen to podcasts for several reasons, associated with social relationships. These include being part of a community, the ability to discuss podcast content with friends, and developing parasocial relationships (Shamburg et al., 2023).

Technologies like podcasts and social media foster the social relationships that users desire. One example is “an affinity space,”(Carpenter et al., 2025, p. 5) which describes the hashtag-based digital professional development ecosystem that includes several Web 2.0 platforms and formats for teachers. Carpenter et al. (2025) and (Gee, 2004) describe this affinity space as either a blended, physical, or

virtual environment where people can form relationships based on common interests, behaviors, ideas, and goals. This concept is well-suited to podcasting, which is usually part of a greater ecosystem of other social media interactions (Shamburg et al., 2023).

Community in the Workplace

Carpenter et al. (2025) show how social media-based communication helps professional educators maintain their social and community-based needs, as social media offers greater social support and reduces a sense of professional isolation. The use of social media expands their social networks and support systems from just the local professional networks (Carpenter et al., 2025). In other workplace instances, ESM were similarly used by employees for finding support and professional advice and expanding their professional and social networks (Sharma et al., 2022). Another key aspect for Sharma et al. (2022) in the use of ESM was the advantages for remote employees or employees with offices in different geographical locations. ESM lets these employees be connected regardless of location and better engage with colleagues to share information or to problem solve (Sharma et al., 2022). The use of ESM is not limited to text-based social media, as podcasts can be added to the scope of ESM by embedding or sharing links or including podcast-related information in online discussions, as podcasts are shown to begin discussions in social circles often (Meden et al., 2024).

Parasocial Relationships and Influence

Through podcasts strong parasocial relationships can be formed. These relationships include host-to-listener and company or product-to-listener connections. Following podcast hosts on other social media platforms is important to podcast audience engagement (Meden et al., 2024). Smaller podcasts have shown stronger social engagement because listeners are more involved in the podcast content or offer some financial support to the podcast creators (Meden et al., 2024). The strength of podcast communities may be the result of the combination of the “intimacy of radio” (Meden et al., 2024, p. 3) and the personalization or user-centricity of technology (Meden et al., 2024). On a similar note, Shamburg et al. (2022) also highlight that the relationship between listener and podcast host is strengthened by the intimacy of podcasting, alluding to the sense of a collective and distinct identity.

Listeners often identify with podcast hosts, feeding this parasocial relationship. In Martín-Morán and Martín-Nieto (2022) study an interviewee explains, “another thing that to me very much defines something as a podcast is identification with the narrator, with the person or with the hosts, since this forms a bond that is created with the narrators” (p.6). This bond can make listeners interested in topics they might otherwise skip, as they feel connected to the host and enjoy qualities such as their vocal tone or personality (Shamburg et al., 2023). Listeners can experience a feeling of “exchange” or conversation, increasing the listener's attention span and encouraging them to listen more often or for more extended periods of time (Meden et al., 2024). Listeners are also more inclined to listen when they feel that the hosts are passionate or excited about the podcast’s topic (Shamburg et al., 2023).

This host-to-listener connection can also spill out into products, companies, and experiences, as host endorsements influence the choices and loyalties of listeners as consumers (Shamburg et al., 2023). Balsebre-Torroja et al. (2023) state that podcasting has ceased to be a fully do-it yourself (DIY) medium and has expanded its presence to mass and mainstream media companies. The monetization of popular podcasts has brought in the attention of advertisers and investors (Sullivan, 2024). According to Meden et al. (2024), “Factors such as podcast engagement, storytelling, and social engagement influence listeners’ intention to purchase the recommended products, demonstrating the medium’s influence on consumer behavior” (p.3). Companies leverage the influence that host endorsements can have on listeners by creating their own podcasts with original content, bringing in the rise of “branded” podcasting (Sullivan, 2024). High-profile companies like Duolingo, Trader Joe’s, and Slack have followed this trend with various aims, such as showcasing the company’s core business or sharing stories related to company employees (Sullivan, 2024). Ultimately, branded podcasts find their strength in reaching specific demographics of listeners by tuning into the strong

bonds and sense of authenticity found in podcasts. This, in turn, helps brands have higher engagement with consumers.

The Podcastee, Lone Wolf or Pack Animal?

One critical aspect of the literature is the role of community and social engagement for podcast listeners. As discussed in the previous section, Shamburg et al. (2023) shows that podcast listeners use the social media ecosystem as a form of social engagement; this research also suggests that podcast listening is a more solitary experience in which the richness of the experience comes from the parasocial relationship and idea exchange, as opposed to a peer-to-peer exchange (Shamburg et al., 2023). This research also showed that study participants were not highly engaged in social media communities or groups and took a more passive or peripheral role in social media use (Shamburg et al., 2023). Listeners preferred to listen alone and did not discuss the podcast, but instead the ideas and topics of podcasts with their peers (Shamburg et al., 2023). Meden et al.'s (2024) findings are similar to those of Shamburg et al. (2023) in that the most popular activity identified in their study was listeners following podcast creators and hosts. This emphasizes the significance of the parasocial relationship between listeners and hosts. However, a notable difference is that Meden et al.'s (2024) study participants indicated that their second most popular activity was discussing the podcasts they listened to with friends. This raises the question of whether podcast listening can be considered a social activity.

Learning, Professional Life, and Podcasts

This section will identify the concepts in the field of learning that are important to this thesis. It will also explain the relationship between podcasts and professional learning.

Employee Learning as a Part of an Organization

Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) define organizational learning as the development and transformation of an organization's collective knowledge due to its experiences. Gaál et al. (2015) highlights the importance of upkeeping organizational knowledge, especially in a digital environment, stating, "Organizations that need to thrive, compete, and operate in an ever evolving environment, cannot leave the development of knowledge within the organization to chance" (p.185). Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) endorse Gaal et al.'s (2015) viewpoint, emphasizing that, practically speaking, organizational learning influences the capacity to learn and adapt, a key component of an organization's enduring success and performance. Organizational learning is crucial for knowledge transfer, helping workplaces adapt to retirements, layoffs, and the challenges of a globalized market characterized by distributed work environments, multi-unit structures, and inter-organizational relationships such as mergers, acquisitions, and alliances (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011).

Manuti et al. (2016) suggest that the benefits for employees in workplaces focused on organizational learning include staying motivated, feeling supported in their tasks, and maintaining a positive ambiance in the workplace. The authors also show that staying on top of organizational learning leads to better communication, knowledge transfer, and overall better organizational performance.

In organizational learning, it is important to see the role of Information Technology (IT) as a facilitator of quick information and knowledge collection and distribution (Wei et al., 2013). IT is an easy and flexible way to provide employees with information, knowledge, and resources (Wei et al., 2013). Despite the clear link between organizational learning and technology, Gaal et al.'s (2015) study shows that video sharing, which could include technology like podcasts, is underdeveloped, with an "existence" rate of 19% among the 299 companies surveyed. This shows that companies do not leverage video sharing or video creation for learning purposes. However, it maintained a significant adoption rate, as 71% of employees used the videos for learning and knowledge sharing, signaling that it can be an effective tool for employee work practices and learning.

Informal Learning

Broek (2021)* places workplace learning and job-related learning outside of the system of formal learning. This distinction is essential for grasping the learning dynamics explored in this study. According to Broek (2021), formal learning for adults is typically done in schools or via organized and structured settings such as higher education institutions, and can be seen as intentional learning that often leads to a certification, diploma, or other awarded qualification. In contrast to formal learning, Broek (2021); Meden et al. (2024); Shamburg et al. (2023) all define informal learning as grounded in experience, such as daily life or work, and is situated in places and spaces occupied by the learner, such as in a neighborhood, online, or during a learner's free time. Although Meden et al. (2024) and Shamburg et al.'s (2023) studies have a focus on the general adult podcast user, these studies have a strong focus on the impact of podcasts as a tool for informal learning and show what is meant by informal learning and how informal learning is typically embedded in podcast use. A defining characteristic of informal learning is that it is not organized or supported by an authority figure (Broek, 2021) and does not lead to qualifications or certifications (Meden et al., 2024). The intentionality of informal learning is also ambiguous, as in some cases it can be intentional, but often is at random or accidental (Broek, 2021; Meden et al., 2024).

The current professional landscape increasingly demands flexibility in learning, allowing learners to choose the place, time, materials, topics, and their approach to learning, which demonstrates the need for informal learning (Meden et al., 2024). This shift challenges traditional views that regard professional development and job-related learning as fitting primarily within formal contexts of learning. In actuality, much of what is work-related learning or professional development happens in informal ways (Carpenter et al., 2025). For example, Carpenter et al.'s (2025) research found that educators who engage in professional development choose "informal components" in their development and learning. This has the distinct advantage of individualizing or personalizing the learning and having the learner engage in just-in-time learning that may not be possible in a formal learning environment (Bauer, 2010; Carpenter et al., 2025). The connection between informal learning traits and modern professional needs provides a strong reason to explore podcasts as tools for informal learning.

Podcasts serve as a tool for informal learning by utilizing "accessibility, timeliness, and adaptability" (Meden et al., 2024, p. 2). While much of the literature highlights the benefits of informal learning for adult professionals, particularly through podcasts, Meden et al. (2024) identify two important factors to consider. First, the difference between formal and informal learning does not lie in the knowledge or information itself but instead in the learner's activities and interactions, enhancing the diversity of learning experiences. Second, Meden et al. (2024) and Rehman et al. (2024) indicate that podcasts are effective as informal learning tools within specialized disciplinary contexts, such as the hard sciences. This specific effectiveness shows that podcast content significantly influences informal learning results. Although this thesis does not aim to analyze podcast content, this insight is connected to this study's RQ3 regarding what specific knowledge or skills employees gain from podcast engagement, which may indicate whether specific topics or professional areas lead to more effective learning.

Overall, positioning podcasts at the intersection of informal learning and professional development presents a particularly interesting case for examining how employees utilize accessible digital media for knowledge acquisition and skill enhancement.

Incidental Learning

In contrast to self-directed learning (discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis), incidental learning is usually a "by-product of doing something else, unintentionally but consciously done by the learner" (Shamburg et al., 2023, p.2035). In short, an incidental learner might not actively seek out learning opportunities, yet they become aware of the learning that occurs during activities not aimed at educational activities. For instance, people who listen to podcasts for entertainment may find their

* Broek's pre-study for the European Commission contributes a well-rounded overview, definitions and applications of the different types of learning (formal/informal) and their role in adult workplace learning.

vocabulary expanding. This reinforces the notion that podcasts can merge entertainment with education, a viewpoint supported by Gielissen and Chan (2023) who highlighted the dual-purpose aspect of podcasts. In professional contexts, podcasts possess the potential to more effectively harness the entertainment-education dimension of employee engagement compared to other professional learning resources.

Incidental learning is often a product of social media use. Sharma et al. (2023) illustrates that even passive employees learn unintentionally when using ESM due to the media's openness and approachability. In the area of audio-visual media, incidental learning can be especially significant for understanding podcast consumption patterns. Meden et al.'s (2024) study show empirical evidence regarding incidental learning through podcast listening. This can offer a transferable insight into how incidental learning via podcast listening can influence employees. Although incidental learning is considered to contribute less depth of knowledge compared to self-directed learning (which strongly prioritizes intention when interacting with content for learning), it is still a significant learning experience for podcast listeners (Meden et al., 2024). Respondents also reported that 39.5% of them engaged in incidental learning, making it the second most common type of learning in the study. For employees, these findings may suggest that even when professional development is not the main motivation, significant learning still takes place. The participants in Meden et al.'s (2024) study recognize that they learn something even when they do not intend to, transforming other priorities like entertainment or time-killing into inadvertent learning experiences. This finding has a significant impact on understanding employee motivations for podcast consumption (RQ1), transforming entertainment into unplanned learning experiences. Podcast-facilitated incidental learning can address barriers (RQ2) by incorporating learning into activities that employees already find motivating, thereby reducing resistance to learning initiatives, making the process feel more engaging and integrated into their day-to-day experiences.

In addition to depth of knowledge, in Meden's et al.'s (2024) study, the intentionality of learning impacted the podcast listeners' ability to remember information or knowledge. This study revealed that incidental learners ranked second in their ability to connect new information with existing knowledge. This finding shows that incidental learning is still a suitable learning process for meaningful learning in a professional environment. Additionally, incidental learners came in second in their ability to retain new information from podcasts. However, they also experienced the highest rate of forgetting information presented in podcasts, which may show an interesting contradiction.

Tacit Knowledge

This section will examine organizational learning and podcasts in connection with tacit knowledge, or "difficult-to-articulate components" (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). One of the strengths of using podcasts in the workplace is their capacity to communicate tacit knowledge, which can help in preserving vital organizational information and knowledge. Tacit knowledge is challenging to communicate or formalize, making it difficult to share among employees. It is characterized by insights and an intuitive nature, possessing a distinctly personal quality (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2014; Blackman & Sadler-Smith, 2009; Morris et al., 2023). Qi and Chau (2018) position tacit knowledge as "the sharing of know-how, know-why, know-whom or know-where, work experiences, and expertise" (p.45). Alluding to the notion that tacit knowledge is about connections as much as it is about holding knowledge or information. Wei and Ram (2016) assert that tacit knowledge comprises the majority of knowledge within an organization and is held by employees. They then state that podcasting plays an important role by first assisting in significantly contributing to both the overall learning and growth of employees and, to some degree, in documenting the tacit knowledge of employees.

Much of the literature supports the idea of social media and Web 2.0 technologies as a point for tacit knowledge sharing and recording aspects of company culture that may not be available to document formally. Regardless of the type of knowledge, either tacit or explicit, social media, has shown to support sharing between employees. In Qi and Chau's (2018) paper, employees' use of technologies

like enterprise social networking systems (ESNS) (a sub-type of enterprise social media [ESM] that is only for organization members and is within the boundaries of the organization) as a means to cultivate organizational-level learning. Sharma et al. (2022) show that the use of ESM facilitates information sharing among employee networks, which then can convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. This conversion then increases the organization's learning capacity as a whole. In a similar way, Morris et al. (2023) state that company podcasts assist in "better articulate [ing] and intentionally shaping or re-shaping culture" (section 3). Company culture is often a difficult thing to convey or articulate, and podcasts may be a good way to capture and distribute its qualities.

Skills

In any professional setting, skills are a common necessity. According to Purvis (2006) listening to podcasts can help employees by maintaining a toolkit of skills and encouraging continuous learning, as in keeping their knowledge up to date (Manuti et al., 2016). Skills include both soft skills, which affect professional relationships, and hard skills, which are directly tied to specific jobs or fields (Lyu & Liu, 2021). Manuti et al. (2016) explains skills as "personal equipment which is acquired in the course of our personal and professional life and that can be developed and enriched starting from the formal and informal experiences each individual collect" (p.30). This definition views skills not just as separate technical abilities but as a cohesive set of capabilities that evolves through diverse learning experiences. Purvis (2006) also suggests that these bonus skills can make employees stand out to their superiors.

Particularly relevant to this study is the characterization of skills as a "sense-making repertoire that allows people to cope with difficulties, to solve problems, and to manage relationships in the professional as well as in the personal context" (Manuti et al., 2016, p. 30). This idea emphasizes the transferable skills gained through different learning experiences and technologies, indicating that learning via podcasts can enhance abilities beyond specific content areas. It also clearly highlights that skills are essential to problem-solving and have a place in the social aspects of professional environments.

The literature offers valuable resources for investigating the distinct knowledge and skills gained from podcasts (RQ3). This definition of skills, which encompasses both problem-solving and relationship management, suggests the necessity of evaluating podcast learning outcomes to include not only knowledge of technical content but also interpersonal abilities and adaptability capabilities.

Theoretical Framework

This section will present theories and information that were considered during the study and are important to the reasoning in the thesis.

Andragogy

Andragogy is an important theoretical framework for this thesis in that it explains *why* adults engage in informal learning through podcasts. Andragogy refers to a theory of learning for adults (Knowles, 1989). For this thesis, andragogy, as developed by Malcolm Knowles, is central to understanding adult learners and their engagement in informal podcast-based learning. The theory's inclusion in this thesis is justified by its alignment with the characteristics and constraints of employees navigating informal workplace learning. The selection of Knowlesian andragogy as a theoretical framework is supported by addressing the study's research questions. First, to understand what motivates employees to listen to podcasts (RQ1), it is essential to acknowledge the internal motivation and self-direction that characterize adult learners. Second, recognizing barriers to podcast use for informal learning (RQ2) benefits from andragogical insights into adult learners' need for immediate relevance of their learning experiences, and their social roles and responsibilities as adults. Lastly, evaluating the specific knowledge and skills acquired from informal podcast use (RQ3) aligns with andragogy's focus on experience-based learning and problem-centered learning.

Loeng (2018) makes a clear distinction between the European conception of andragogy, which holds a social perspective, and the North American one *focused on internal and individual motivation*. Malcom Knowles predominated in the United States with the idea that there are learning differences between adults and children (Knowles, 2005). Knowles characterizes learning for children (known as pedagogy) as teacher-led, meaning that the teacher takes responsibility and makes decisions about what the student will learn, while the learner takes a submissive role in their learning (Knowles, 2005). On the other hand, he bases andragogy (adult learning) on six assumptions which embody the learner's active responsibility, internal motives, and experience in their own learning.

Merriam (2001) outlines five out of six key assumptions that form the foundation of andragogy, “[Andragogy] describes the adult learner as someone who (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors.” (p. 5). The assumption not discussed by Merriam (2001) is “The need to know”, which is described by Knowles (2005) in the following passage “Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it... Consequently, one of the new aphorisms in adult education is that the first task of the facilitator of learning is to help the learners become aware of the “need to know.” At the very least, facilitators can make an intellectual case for the value of the learning in improving the effectiveness of the learners’ performance or the quality of their lives. Even more potent tools for raising the level of awareness of the need to know are real or simulated experiences in which the learners discover for themselves the gaps between where they are now and where they want to be.”. These six assumptions align with podcast consumption patterns identified in the literature review.

The relevance of andragogy is reinforced by the literature review. The six andragogical assumptions align with the decentralized, learner-driven nature of podcast listening in professional informal contexts, where individuals choose content based on relevance to their personal development or job-related needs, as shown in the literature by Carpenter et al. (2025); Martín-Morán and Martín-Nieto (2022) and Meden et al. (2024). Knowles’ view of andragogy is well suited for examining the self-driven and individualistic aspects of informal podcast engagement highlighted by Shamburg et al. (2023).

Furthermore, the literature reinforces the suitability of the andragogical framework as Shamburg et al. (2023) and Tikkanen and Billett (2014) emphasize a shift in the perspective of learning that views older individuals as learners. Specifically, Shamburg points out that this shift will necessitate the use of technology-supported self-directed informal learning. This viewpoint is confirmed by Meden et al.’s (2024) findings, which point out that older people tend to use podcasts to seek information and knowledge, while younger individuals are more inclined to use them for entertainment purposes. This speaks to Knowles’ assumption of adults as independent, self-driven learners and also to adults’ “need to know”. Podcasts can serve as a tool that raises the employees’ awareness of what they need to learn to reach their professional or personal learning goals. Meden et al. (2024) put it plainly that podcast listening serves as a “medium for adult learning in andragogy,” as it is an intuitive tool for informal learning. This age-related difference underscores the idea that internal motivation and goal-oriented learning are more pronounced in adult learners, as shown in Knowles’ assumptions.

Additionally, employees who listen to podcasts for professional development typically do so outside of formal educational structures, fitting Broek’s (2021) definition of informal learning. Informal learning is often self-initiated, guided by personal interest or professional needs, and tailored to the individual’s specific objectives, which are key features of the andragogical assumptions.

Podcast characteristics like flexibility, autonomy, and personalization align with conditions that foster adult informal learning. Professionals engaging informally with podcasts select content relevant to their work and challenges. This reinforces the assumptions that adult learners are problem-centered

and seek immediate knowledge application. Podcasts support professionals in overcoming their work-related challenges and problems by offering just-in-time learning (Bauer, 2010; Carpenter et al., 2025) that can be integrated into daily routines without interrupting professional responsibilities.

Moreover, the assumption on internal motivation is reflected in the personal interests and entertainment aspects that influence podcast consumption, as users choose content driven by genuine curiosity rather than external pressures (Shamburg et al., 2023; Whittle, 2024).

The use of andragogy in this thesis is not without limitations. Knowlesian andragogy has been seen as “as a set of guidelines (Merriam, 1993), a philosophy (Pratt, 1993), a set of assumptions (Brookfield, 1986), and a theory (Knowles, 1989).” (Knowles, 2005, p. 1), which speaks to andragogy’s ambiguity in applying it to learning or maybe even teaching which is also seen in Hartree’s (1984) critique of Knowles andragogy. This critique may have some weight to it, as Knowles never provided a systematic framework for evaluating realistic assumptions to adapt andragogy to specific situations (Knowles, 2005). Additionally, Knowles’ model has been criticized for assuming universal traits of adult learners, potentially overlooking how external structures or cultural expectations influence learning (Hartree, 1984; Merriam, 2001).

As a response to these problems, Knowles (2005) notes that the assumptions must be considered as adaptable and subject to change based on the situation, and that an essential feature of andragogy is flexibility (p.146). Andragogy is best used in combination with complementary models to understand the learner’s environment and context (Knowles, 2005), so positioning andragogy with another theory, such as Self-directed learning (explained in the following subsection) could contextualize the andragogical assumptions, leading to a clearer understanding of the role of employees in informal learning via podcast listening.

Overall, andragogy provides a foundational understanding of employee informal learning through podcasts, clarifying how internal motives, autonomy, and experience shape informal professional learning.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning (SDL) offers a crucial theoretical complement to andragogy by explaining *how* adults participate in informal learning via podcasts. Utilizing SDL is crucial for addressing the shortcomings of Knowlesian andragogy such as its lack of context and individualistic view of learning (Hartree, 1984). SDL emerged as another model distinguishing adult learners from children (Merriam, 2001). SDL serves as a fundamental theoretical concept for this study, as it pertains to how employees independently engage with podcasts for their professional development within an informal learning environment.

Merriam (2001) defines SDL as “learning that is widespread, that occurs as part of adults’ everyday life, and that is systematic yet does not depend on an instructor or a classroom” (p.8). This view of SDL directly reflects the context of podcast use in the workplace, where learning is often embedded in daily routines, accessed via mobile technologies, and self-managed.

This thesis draws upon models of SDL theory developed in the 1980s and 1990s, which enhance the understanding of employees’ learning experiences through contextual insight. Specifically, the branch of SDL used for shaping this study will focus on self-directedness as an assessment of personal characteristics (Merriam, 2001; Oddi, 1986). To assess this, (Oddi, 1986) presents “three dimensions” which give insight into the traits of self-directed learners: “Proactive drive versus Reactive drive (PD/RD)”, “Cognitive Openness versus Defensiveness (CO/D)”, and “Commitment to learning versus Apathy or Aversion to learning (CL/AAL)” (pp.98-99). What this speaks to is, first, the learner’s ability to learn and continue to learn without immediate external reinforcement. Second, their openness to new ideas, activities, and their adaptability and tolerance of ambiguity. The last dimension is about a positive attitude towards learning engagement and preferring leisure or hobbies that

encourage thinking. Each of these dimensions should be understood as a scale or "poles," where learners can fall on opposite ends (Oddi, 1986). These areas are not isolated and influence one another.

From the literature review, empirical evidence supports the idea that most podcast listeners have personal attributes that fit into the uses of SDL. Shamburg et al. (2023) define SDL as “intentional and conscious” (p.2035), emphasizing that self-directed learners deliberately pursue knowledge with clear learning objectives. This perspective ties into PD/RD, where most podcast listeners pursue their learning without external reinforcement or motivation. For self-directed learners, the goal is to learn and engage in activities that work towards the goal. The relevance of SDL to workplace learning contexts becomes evident through Manuti et al.'s (2016) research, which show the benefits of SDL by stating that it lets individuals set goals and emphasizes collaboration and mediation. This reflects the CO/D and CL/AAL dimensions, which were being positive, open to the ideas of others, and adaptable in their learning, are valuable attributes for professional learning and working. This makes SDL particularly important in professional environments where employees must balance individual development needs with organizational objectives.

SDL is essential for challenging learners and encouraging growth. Meden et al. support this view by stating that SDL fosters better and deeper understanding and strengthens long-term retention of information and knowledge in podcast listeners. These outcomes are essential for effective workplace learning and professional development.

Meden et al.'s (2024) research provides quantitative support for the prevalence of SDL in podcast consumption. Specifically, 53.7% of respondents indicated that they listen to podcasts with the deliberate intention of learning. This statistic shows the intentionality in podcast consumption, which supports the notion that podcasts are an effective tool for workplace learning. The research of Hew (2009), Gielissen and Chan (2023), and Meden et al., (2024) further reinforces the alignment between podcast usage and SDL principles in professional development contexts.

SDL will be a key interpretive lens in the thesis's analysis and discussion. The framework will include themes that relate to SDL traits like intentionality, learner autonomy, openness to new information, and goal orientation.

Method

This section of the thesis addresses the use of a case study and provides its background. It will then explain the three methods of data collection: topic clustering, an adaptive survey, semi-structured interviews and method for analyzing the collected data. Finally, it will discuss the ethical considerations of the study.

Case-Study

The project is a case study, which is defined as a precise investigation of one or several cases to gain a rich understanding through a detailed examination of parts or aspects of the case (Thomas, 2017). The subject of the case is Innovation AB's company-owned podcast, Insight Exchange. The organization was chosen not only for access, but also because its technology-oriented, consultancy-based environment provides excellent opportunities to investigate podcast use in real-world professional learning settings. This makes it an ideal site for understanding how adult learners interact with decentralized learning technologies in practice. This case is especially relevant given the thesis's emphasis on adult learning theories. Employees at Innovation AB represent knowledge workers who are likely to use informal, SDL resources such as podcasts.

The research uses a mixed-methods approach, which means that it utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. A case study is a research design (Clark et al., 2021) that

influences the selection of data collection methods. As Thomas (2017) noted, a mixed-methods approach in case studies is essential to get the necessary information and understanding of various sides of the questions related to that case. According to Yin (2018) surveys and interviews are appropriate data collection methods to provide case-study evidence because they give good insight into human experience and actions. The adaptive survey served as the foundation for the semi-structured interviews by helping to shape the question guide. This mixed-method approach also ensured completeness (Clark et al., 2021), allowing the thesis to provide a fuller account of the research area and triangulation to offer cross-checked findings and discussion sections (Clark et al., 2021) for fuller validity.

The Case: Innovation AB and the Insight Exchange Podcast

Innovation AB is a large multinational Swedish consultancy company operating in seven countries. It has four branches: digital, business, cloud solutions, and product information, offering 27 different services. The work conducted for this thesis has been within Innovation AB's branch that primarily focuses on Product Information and, most recently, Learning and Development.

The Insight Exchange podcast started as talk show-style videos on the company's YouTube channel in 2021. For this study, the podcast will be referred to as "Insight Exchange" (IE). The original intent and ongoing purpose of IE is to serve as a branding and marketing tool for external audiences and potential clients. Additionally, the podcast is shared on a popular professional networking social media platform in order to reach external professional audiences. That being said, the IE podcast also has a channel on the company's internal learning platform, which shows a conflict in the rationale behind the podcast's current use since it is not intended to be a learning tool. This has left the question open regarding why IE would be shared on an internal employee learning platform if its intent is not educational or learning focused. Although learning may not be IE's original or explicit purpose, it still offers employees a learning opportunity.

IE went through several iterations of formatting and hosts until February of 2024, when it was revamped to its current format and hosts and moved from a visual/audio-based podcast to only audio. The current podcast episodes are on two platforms, Spotify and Apple Podcast. Every episode follows a similar format. First, the hosts speak on current events or topics relevant to the company's primary industries, offer opinions and commentary, and conclude the episode with a question from a listener, who is usually an employee and offers perspective or an answer. The podcast now also has "specials," which feature a special guest, focus on a specialized topic, or offer a "live" format aimed at increasing interaction or engagement from employees and external listeners.

Data Collection

This section will describe each form of data collection, which encompasses: IE podcast topic clustering and ranking, an adaptive survey, and semi-structured interviews with subsequent coding and thematic analysis.

Listening to IE Episodes and Clustering of Podcast Topics

Listening to the IE podcast was a preliminary step for this study to learn more about the podcast's structure and purpose. The first step in data collection was to place every episode of IE, totaling 36 episodes, into a Microsoft Excel sheet in the order of their release dates. 33 episodes were selected for analysis. Episodes excluded from the analysis were season trailers and introductory episodes that did not present a topic or theme pertinent to the regular podcast content. The remaining episodes featured predominant topics, which were then grouped into overarching categories using the highlighter function in Excel to color-code each topic in the episode headline. If the headline topics were unclear, it was necessary to read the episode description or listen to the podcast section covering that topic.

The grouping showed the most predominant categorizations by clustering similar and related topics into overarching categorizations. **These categorizations were then discussed in the semi-structured**

interview portion of the study (explained later in this section) to see if any topics were more popular or influential among respondents. These clusters offer a direct insight into employees' interests and enhance understanding of employee motivation for learning, potentially connecting superficial motivations to deeper learning outcomes that address RQ1 and RQ3.

Creating the Ranking

Once the IE podcast topics were clustered, the clusters **were then used during the semi-structured interviews** for respondents to rank based on their personal and professional interests and learning goals.

Each interviewee was asked to rank the topics and explain their preferences. To get the final ranking, two steps were taken:

First, use NVivo to rank each topic based on the frequency of references in the interviews.

Second, each quote within the topic was read to identify negative or positive sentiments. The topics were recorded, and a + or – sign was used to tally the quotes' sentiments; in the case of neutrality or indifference, the symbol +/- was used.

The final ranking was based on the number of positive sentiments referenced, with the number of neutral or negative sentiments giving the topics a lower ranking. See Appendix B for the preliminary rankings.

Adaptive Survey

Participants

The primary respondent target for the survey was company consultants, both on and off assignments. However, other Innovation AB staff, such as managers or interns, were also desired participants. The survey used convenience sampling to get respondents. Thomas (2017) describes convenience sampling as “a sampling strategy that uses the most easily accessible people to participate in a study” (p.316). The survey aimed to get a sample size of 30-40 respondents. This number was selected due to this being the typical rate of employee engagement for non-required activities.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

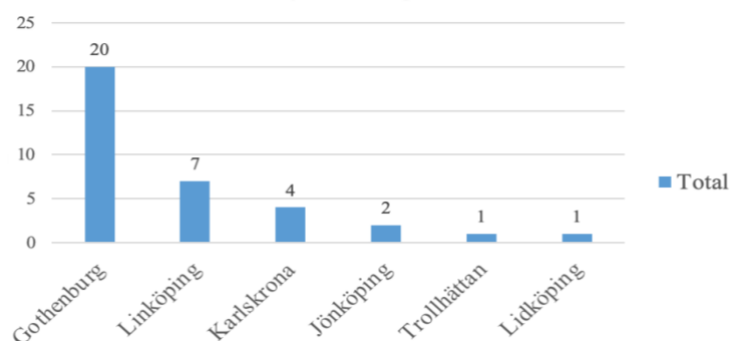
This section shows how many employees responded to the survey, their professional roles, and their locations.

The total of 35 respondents comprised of 27 consultants on assignments, five consultants between assignments, and three managers.

Figure 1

Primary Employee Working Locations

Out of 35 respondents, the majority worked in Gothenburg, while the remaining 42.86 % of respondents worked from various locations in Sweden.



Process

An online survey, also known as a self-completion questionnaire, is a type of questionnaire where the respondents read and answer questions themselves (Clark et al., 2021). It is, in essence, a “written form of questioning” (Thomas, 2017, p. 217) and has variances based on resource accessibility and research aims, and can be used in different types of research design (Thomas, 2017). The questions

should be straightforward and easy for the respondent to answer, the flow of the questionnaire should be easy to follow, and it should be on the shorter side to avoid respondent fatigue (Clark et al., 2021).

This type of survey is convenient for both the researcher and the respondent, as it is quick and affordable to administer, and allows respondents to answer at their own pace (Clark et al., 2021). In contrast to the conventional survey, this survey was designed to be adaptive. This means that survey questions are tailored to each respondent according to their prior answers. Adaptive surveys provide a more personalized experience for participants and enhance accuracy by more effectively capturing the characteristics and needs of respondents. They boost efficiency by showing only relevant questions based on earlier responses, leading to a higher response rate because respondents are not required to sort through irrelevant questions (Chun et al., 2017)

The adaptive online survey comprised closed and open-ended questions that explored podcast use habits, motivations, and perceived learning, dimensions rooted in both andragogical assumptions and SDL traits. See Appendix C for samples of each question format. The survey was conducted using Microsoft Forms, a platform compatible with the company's communication ecosystem. To see the development of the survey, look at Appendix D.

The survey was designed to explore the diverse use of the company podcast and employees' podcast listening habits. The survey questions were branched based on three scenarios. First, questions for employees who have listened to both general podcasts of their choice and the IE podcast. Second, questions for those who listened to podcasts but do not listen to the IE podcast. Finally, for employees who do not listen to any podcasts. Although the survey structure was based on these scenarios, the survey's adaptability aimed to capture the nuances of each of these general groups as they would later become questions or talking points for in-depth semi-structured interviews. The survey findings served as the basis for the interview portion of this study.

Survey Analysis

Finally, the survey findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics serve as a simplified and organized way to summarize and visually present data. They aim to show the "how many" and "how often" of data (Thomas, 2017, p. 260). The survey data was downloaded and analyzed in an Excel worksheet. This organized the information and extracted precise percentages. Excel was also used to create visualizations of the data.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Participants

Interview participants were selected via convenience sampling. Employees who completed the survey could voluntarily leave their contact information to be interviewed. A total of 6 participants from two different office locations participated in the interviews.

Process

Interviews are conversations with respondents that aim to uncover information, views, or attitudes held by the respondent (Thomas, 2017). Semi-structured interviews combine a list of areas or issues to bring up with respondents and allow flexibility to follow up when needed (Thomas, 2017).

The use of semi-structured interviews followed the study's areas of interest based on the survey's preliminary findings and the requirements of the research questions. This method is particularly effective for examining SDL principles, as it enables participants to narrate their motivations, intentions, and reflect on their learning experiences. Similar to the survey, the interviews aimed to identify patterns that resonate with andragogical concepts like autonomy, prior experience, and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, these interviews were intended to detail how employees describe their podcast use, learning objectives, and perceived skill development. The questions were created to be open-ended, minimizing interviewer bias and allow for unanticipated themes to emerge.

The questions and final interview guide were developed using the steps outlined in Figure 2. See Appendix E to see the interview guide.

Figure 2

Steps to Creating an Interview Guide

Note. The figure shows the steps to create interview question adapted from Clark et al., on page 1398.



The use of semi-structured interviews effectively allowed for employee participation in contrast to other data collection methods like focus groups. Focus groups are excellent for examining participant interactions and gathering multiple levels of data. However, this method was not selected for this thesis due to potential scheduling conflicts, which could hinder participation, and because the thesis does not intend to explore group dynamics. Both in-person and online interviews were selected to provide flexibility in scheduling and location, with the intent to increase participation.

Each interview lasted about 20 to 30 minutes and took place either over Microsoft Teams or in-person. The interviews were recorded using a portable voice recorder or the built-in recording feature on Microsoft Teams. These recordings were then transcribed with either the Teams auto-transcription or the software Turboscribe and proofread manually. Additionally, the transcript excerpts used in this thesis have been further edited for clarity. These transcriptions were then coded using the NVivo software. Developing the codes will be explored in the following paragraph, and the outcomes of the analysis will be in the following section titled “Findings”.

Interview Analysis: Coding and Thematic Analysis

To analyze the data, a thematic analysis was used following Braun and Clarke’s general method (Clark et al., 2021). This method uses six stages, which are: familiarization, initial coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and finally, evidencing themes (Clark et al., 2021). The analysis was done after the data was collected via interviews, but the process of analysis was iterative, as it took several rounds of analysis and review to gather all the needed data from the transcripts. The process produced 11 codes. **Those 11 codes were then used to create the 12 themes presented in the findings** through this six-stage process. **See Appendix F for full code list.**

The following section will describe how the themes were created by breaking down what was done in each of the six steps.

1. *Familiarization:* As stated in the previous paragraph, the interview transcripts were manually proofread and then uploaded to NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, or CAQDAS (Thomas, 2017). Once in the software, each transcript was skimmed to look for areas of interest.
2. *Initial coding:* NVivo was then used to code each transcript. An inductive approach to coding was taken, creating codes by highlighting the quotes and dialogue that showed important points or reoccurring ideas and habits. This process took about three rounds of skimming interviews to ensure all areas of interest were noted before proceeding to the next step.
3. *Identifying themes:* Here, a thorough review of the interviews was conducted to identify significant themes such as barriers and challenges, as well as engagement with podcasts and

the IE podcast. Additionally, this portion sought to identify codes pertinent to literary themes, including relationships, learning opportunities, and both professional and personal growth, along with key theoretical concepts in andragogy and SDL, related to drive or motivation and the context of the employee's everyday life and professional life that affect their learning.

4. *Reviewing themes*: In this phase, the codes were assessed and merged where necessary. New codes were created, and existing ones were refined. Some outdated codes were removed if the quote-based evidence fit more appropriately with other codes.
5. *Defining themes*: At this stage, all codes (both sub-codes and dominant) were established and adapted into thematic narratives to describe the purpose of the themes and the relationship of codes within each theme.
6. *Evidencing themes*: The final step was to provide evidence and support for each theme from the interview quotes. Specific interview respondent quotes were selected to show the relevance and nuances of the themes, such as their relationship to the thesis's research questions and a critical point in the theme that spoke to the aim of the thesis's research. The quotes also served to show the range of perspectives from the interview respondents.

The final themes are organized and presented in the findings based on the research questions. **RQ1**: Entertainment, Hobbies, and Personal Interests, Multitasking and Boredom, Positive Feelings and Relationships. **RQ2**: Interpretation of Podcasts, Multitasking and Concentration, Office Interpersonal Relationships and Employee Personal Lives, Stress and Time Constraints, Memory and Retention, Barriers and Difficulties for Learning. **RQ3**: Personal Interest and Personal Development for Self-Directed Podcast Learning, Podcasts for Professional Interests, Development and Skills, Learning as a Feeling.

Consent and Ethical Considerations

All survey participants agreed to the terms and conditions of the study through informed consent before proceeding to the survey. Participants were made aware of their rights and protections under GDPR. Those who volunteered to continue with the study via interview were sent a consent form to sign, informing them of the nature and aims of the study, what data is collected and stored, and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time. All ethical considerations were aligned with the research, which will adhere to the ethical guidelines of University of Gothenburg (GU), the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, and GDPR (University of Gothenburg, 2024)*. In-person Interview participants printed and signed the consent form, while those online used an e-signature to provide proof of consent. All interview participants were reminded of their rights verbally before the interview started, and any subsequent questions were discussed at this time as well. See Appendix G for the survey consent statement and interview consent forms.

Finally, the identities of survey participants and interview respondents were anonymized. Survey participants did not provide any information that revealed their identity unless they included contact information to participate in the interviews. That contact information is stored and is discarded in accordance with the University of Gothenburg's (University of Gothenburg, 2024) checklist for processing personal data. Additionally, interview respondents have also been anonymized by using placeholders instead of names, and no identifying professional information will be used in the study.

Findings

In this section, the results of the data collection methods will be presented. This section will show the results of the survey and the interviews, as well as delve into the thematic analysis that stemmed from the coding of the interview transcripts. The findings and analysis were informed by the two theories

* This citation is included as it provides the sources for all the ethical guidelines of the research and informed consent practices.

used in this thesis, andragogy and SDL, by examining and evaluating the relationship between andragogy’s assumptions and SDL’s three dimensions to the themes and topics of the findings, as well as employees’ answers in the survey and interviews. This includes but is not limited to intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, curiosity, and willingness to learn, and the role of personal experience in learning.

Clustered Topics and Rankings

This section discusses and categorizes the clustered topics from the preliminary data collection. The clustering results show the 12 final groupings: Artificial intelligence, learning, product information, law/legal, automotive, aviation, professional life and development, social issues/inclusion/diversity, social media, cyber/data security, design, and sustainability.

This ranking aimed to see which topics from the IE podcast were preferred by employees and investigated potential connections to information that individuals may use in their daily lives or professional fields. Although similar topics were initially grouped together (automotive/aviation), the interview respondents did not always rank the topics together, and sometimes only referred to one or the other. The final ranking was evaluated by the number of positive sentiments. Cells that have two topics without a “/” indicate a tie in the ranking.

The excerpts for each category come from respondents’ interview discussions, highlighting insightful sentiments and illustrating the connections influencing their rankings. Interview respondents are labeled as “IR” followed by a number.

Table 1

Ranking of clustered topics

Ranking	Topic	Sentiment	Number of times referenced
1	Social Issues/diversity/inclusion	5 positive 1 neutral	6
3	Learning	5 positive	5
2	Sustainability	4 positive 2 neutral	6
4	Product information Artificial intelligence	4 positive	4
5	Professional life and development	3 positive 1 neutral 1 negative	5
6	Design	2 positive 1 neutral 1 negative	4

7	Cyber/Data Security	2 positive 1 negative	3
8	Legal/Law	1 positive 2 negative	3
9	Social media	1 positive	1
10	Automotive	1 positive 1 negative	2
11	Aviation	0	0

The respondents based the ranking of different factors such as personal interest, professional interests, and professional networking. These areas of interest resonate with the idea of a self-driven learner, which is supported by the theoretical framework used for this thesis.

Personal interest and everyday contact with the topic were most frequently mentioned reasons, for example, IR5 stated, *“Yeah, I mean, social issues and sustainability, that's like personal interests.”* This resonates with the principles of andragogy in that the topics of interest build upon the employee’s existing experiences. IR2 explained *“We talk AI during our morning breaks, during lunch break, afternoon break. I talk AI with my wife.”* Despite showing some sense of internal drive, this may also contradict SDL’s concept of having the pursuit of learning without reinforcement or external influence, as the social environment had an influence on employees’ learning interests.

For less engaging topics, respondents brought up personal disinterest, even if it had ties to professional development, *“I would say. And I probably shouldn't because my latest assignment was at [Transportation Co.], but the least interesting one at the moment is automotive.”* (IR4). This demonstrates that professional development may not be a strong motivator for employees on its own, and instead, it’s best used when supplemented by further context.

Identity was also a factor that contributed to topic rank, as one respondent stated, *“Social issues, inclusion, diversity. Me being a [states age, and gender identity], I may not rank that as high as some other people may do. Same thing as sustainability. But it's not unimportant.”* (IR2). This addresses the second dimension of SDL concerning CO/D, where openness to learning might be limited or amplified by factors related to identity.

These rankings highlight the learner-driven nature of podcast selection. Prioritizing content based on personal or professional relevance reflects andragogical assumptions of motivation and experiential learning. The variation in ranking justifications underscores SDL traits, with learners aligning content to their development goals and social contexts.

Adaptive Survey Findings

The data presented here shows respondents’ habits, preferences, and feelings towards podcasts as a type of media and IE podcast. This section also shows how respondents interact with the IE podcast and what barriers they face, preventing them from listening to IE or other podcasts. Overall, even without formal instruction, employees engage with podcasts in line with andragogy and SDL principles. The survey highlights flexibility, autonomy, and optional participation in a learner-centered environment but also reveals that awareness and organizational support are significant for self-directed engagement. Internal motivation needs accessible structures to sustain learning behavior.

Overall Podcast Listening Preferences

Figure 3

Podcast listening frequency

94.29% of respondents listened to podcasts (any genre or topic) within the last year, with most being occasional listeners.

Most respondents spent time listening to podcasts either on their commute, at leisure, or in their spare time.

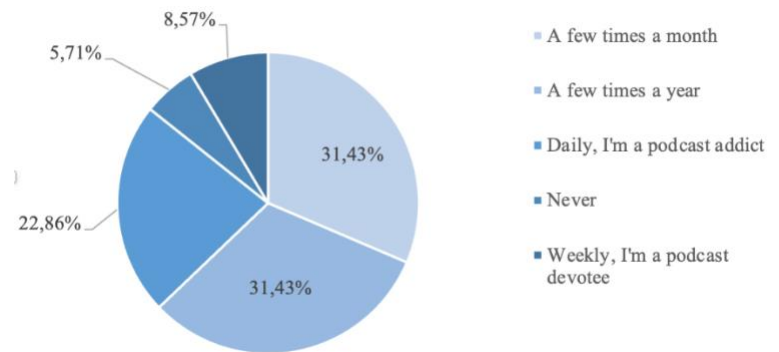


Figure 4

Favorite activities while listening to podcasts

Within the “other” category, respondents had several answers, with the most popular answer being “chores/mental tasks” with four answers out of 14, or 28.57%.

When do you prefer to listen to podcasts? Click all that apply.	answer
While commuting	36,07%
During my chill time (at home/leisure)	31,15%
Other	22,95%
On work breaks/lunch	9,84%
Grand Total	100,00%

Employee Awareness and Engagement of IE.

91.43% of survey respondents reported they know about the existence of the IE podcast. Despite wide awareness of IE, 40.63% of respondents have never listened to it.

Awareness about new podcast episodes was also low, with 43.75% of survey respondents stating they know about new episodes, 31.26% stating they do not know about the release of new episodes, and 25% responding “unsure/inapplicable”.

Additionally, employees have an opportunity to engage with IE by asking a question that is then discussed by the podcast hosts or suggesting a topic for the host to feature on the show. 15.63% of respondents who know about IE have previously submitted a question or topic for the podcast, while 18.7% stated they would like to submit a question or topic in the future. 25% were unaware of the possibility to participate, and 40.63% had no interest in participating.

Company Identity:

Many respondents felt more akin to Innovation AB through the IE podcast. 68.42% somewhat agreed that listening to IE helped them better understand Innovation AB’s corporate values and the company’s identity. 15.79% strongly agreed with this statement, and another 15.79% did not feel they had a better understanding. Lastly, survey respondents felt that IE helped them feel more connected to Innovation AB, with 78.96% agreeing and 21.05% disagreeing. This section showed an interesting aspect of SDL concerning the learning environment. These answers indicated that, despite not having formal instruction or clear external motivations, organizational support reflects a “systemic” aspect of SDL, serving as a motivator for employees to engage with IE.

Accessibility and Platform familiarity

The role of accessibility factors or platform familiarity had minimal impact on employee engagement. The survey asked respondents if the podcast episodes were too long, if there were issues with audio quality, or if the podcast was inaccessible (for example, needing subtitles). 40,63% did not agree that episodes were too long, 50% responded unsure or inapplicable, and 9.38% agreed or somewhat agreed that the episodes were too long. As for audio quality, 46.88% of respondents did not agree that it was poor, while 50% marked unsure or inapplicable, and only 3,13% somewhat agreed that the audio quality was low. Accessibility was a concern in the study, as ensuring accessible spaces for employees is an important factor in engagement and participation. 40.63% did not agree that the IE podcast was

inaccessible, 56% of survey respondents were unsure, or the question was inapplicable, and a small 3.13% found IE somewhat inaccessible.

On the side of platform familiarity, the questions asked if respondents had trouble accessing the podcast on their devices and if they found the podcast platforms difficult to navigate. 6.26% of respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that they had issues streaming the podcast on their device, and 37.50% were unsure or made this inapplicable to them. In a similar manner, 6.56% of survey respondents stated that the platforms hosting the IE podcast are difficult to navigate. While 43.75% were unsure about this, or it was inapplicable to them. The rest of the respondents did not agree.

Learning, Insight Exchange, and Professional Life

In terms of professional interests and development, the IE podcast had connections to employee learning by providing industry insight, understanding other departments' work. 100% of respondents agreed to some degree that IE gave them insight into important or interesting industry trends. While the response for using IE to understand other departments' work was less strong, 73.69% of respondents found this true. The breakdown consists of the majority at 42.11%, somewhat agreeing, 26.32% agreeing, and 5.26% strongly agreeing. The other 26.32% did not find IE helpful in understanding other departments' work.

From employees who had listened to at least parts of several episodes or one episode of the IE podcast, 84.22% responded that they listened to IE because it helped them develop professional skills and knowledge. Only 15.79% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

This statement was also posed to a more general demographic, which included IE podcast listeners and those who knew about IE but had not listened to it. Here, 59.38% somewhat agreed that the podcast's content is relevant to their professional role, while 9.38% strongly agreed, bringing the total to 68.75%. 25% marked that they were unsure or that this statement was inapplicable to them. Finally, just 6.25% did not feel that the content was relevant to their role. It is important to note that although some of the respondents had not listened to the podcast, it is possible that these respondents either responded "unsure/inapplicable" or had another form of contact with the podcast content, such as reading the episode summary or hearing about episode content from colleagues or other social media posts. Although this area could be interesting to explore, no survey participants in this category volunteered for a follow-up interview.

Barriers

Of the 24 participants who have never listened to a podcast or listen on a semi-regular basis were asked to specify why they do not dedicate more time to listening to podcasts. 66.67% of respondents listed "I don't have a habit of listening to the podcast or audio format" as a reason. 33.33% preferred to get their information via another type of media. 45.83% of respondents selected time constraints or "Other" as barriers to listening to podcasts. In the "other" category, respondents wrote in that they prefer listening to music or audiobooks, they like to listen to ambient sounds from their surroundings such as birds, they don't have the equipment such as headphones to listen to audio on the go, and that they listen to streamed or downloaded radio programs that they don't consider a traditional podcast.

Barriers and Podcast Applications in Professional and Non-Professional Settings

In the survey, respondents selected from statements arranged on a Likert scale. Through this scale, respondents showed that they struggle to apply information from the IE podcast into their daily non-professional life. 63.2% did not agree with the statement "I have used the information from the podcast in my daily (non-professional) life". In a similar outcome, 59.4% of respondents chose "I do not agree" or "unsure/inapplicable" to the statement "The podcast content is relevant to my personal interests."

Another barrier to listening to IE was employees' ability to incorporate the podcast into their workday. 68.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that listening to the podcast during their workday was difficult.

Barriers to Sharing

Lastly, respondents showed that few shared or discussed the IE podcast with colleagues or people outside of Innovation AB. 63.2% had not shared information from IE with colleagues, and 68.4% of respondents had not shared information about the IE podcast with those outside of the organization, such as friends, family, or acquaintances.

Semi-structured Interviews and Thematic Analysis

This section presents the findings from the interviews and discusses the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. The themes were organized based on their connection to the thesis's three research questions. The following themes were produced based on stages three through five of Braun and Clarke's general method, as described in the chapter: *Methods*, Section: *Interview Analysis: Coding, and Thematic Analysis*.

As shown in stage six of Braun and Clarke's general method: *evidencing themes* from the methods chapter, the quotes were selected due to their detailed description of the key elements of the themes, which speak to the research questions and aim of this thesis. The quotes were selected to demonstrate diversity of perspectives and reflect the experiences of the employees at Innovation AB. The respondents in the interviews are mentioned as Interview Respondents or "IR," and the researcher is mentioned in interviews as "IV" for interviewer.

Motivation

First, the themes extracted from the interview will address **RQ1: *What motivators are most important for employees to listen to podcasts in an informal learning setting?***

Theme #1: Entertainment, Hobbies, and Personal Interests

The range of engagement with podcasts, specifically the IE podcast, varied from respondent to respondent, but the biggest point of engagement stemmed from their personal lives.

One respondent stated, "*I listen to a mix of, you know, entertainment podcasts. Or historical, educational, philosophical yeah*" (IR6).

IR1 had a similar view, which also showed the variety in podcast listening platforms and formats available through these platforms, "*Yeah, usually I listen, if I have for example, some topic that I'm interested in and I find a good podcast and YouTube, or in Spotify or in Tidal. I try to listen to it.*" These quotes show the variations of content and platforms that interviewees seek and use in their podcast engagement.

Other respondents discussed their interests and hobbies, showing that their podcast listening was directly tied to their personal goals or activities, indicating that their podcast listening behaviors were affected by these factors, "*I ran a marathon two years ago... So up to that event, I listened to this marathon pod discussing running. And I still listen to it*" (IR2). Another respondent had an interest in cybersecurity. This respondent stated that a cybersecurity-related podcast would be one of the only podcasts they would actively seek, saying, "*Yeah, but that's the only topic because that's my passion kind of thing*" (IR3). These two quotes illustrate how hobbies strengthened the interviewees' motivation to listen to podcasts, as they found the content relevant to their interests regardless of whether the hobbies were mainstream or niche.

IR4 listed several areas of interest that motivated them to listen to podcasts, "*So when I listen to podcasts, I like there's a synthetic biology one that's quite interesting and my partner listens to*

[Swedish history podcast], which I find very interesting". This was an instance in which podcast choice was influenced by an external person, and that common interest influenced the employee's listening choice. The literature was ambiguous about the role of social podcast listening, but this quote supports the idea that podcast listening may be a good activity to bond with others as a shared activity.

IR1 and IR4 also described enjoying the feeling of being whisked away from reality when consuming different types of media, *"It's like trying to get myself really in what I'm listening, like when you read the book and you get absorbed by the story, that's how I like to have my listening experience"* (IR1). This quote shows the importance of a podcast's entertainment value as a motivating factor to listen and engage.

The respondents' podcast choices highlighted self-initiated learning driven by personal interest, aligning with SDL's focus on proactive drive. These narratives exemplify Knowles' idea of experience-based learning, as listeners drew on personal interests and life contexts like hobbies, relationships, or growth.

Theme #2: Multitasking and Boredom

For all respondents, this area is a double-edged sword. This section will discuss the positive aspects related to multitasking and boredom.

Most respondents were able to multitask while listening to podcasts, particularly when performing menial tasks.

IR6 expressed their ability to multitask, but they were hesitant to do so, as they preferred to listen to podcasts as a singular activity. *"I mean, I can listen to podcasts while cooking, but not while trying to perform, you know, mentally taxing task."* The important aspect of multitasking is that the activity must not compete with the attention to the podcast.

Two respondents also talked about using podcast listening to make their long travel and commuting less boring, *"I went to France, so I needed to download because on the plane I was not able to listen, obviously. So I downloaded a couple of episodes"* (IR2).

Another interesting aspect was IR6 using boredom to their advantage by utilizing podcasts to drift off to sleep, *"listening to podcasts when falling asleep. If it's too interesting, that can be a problem."*

Overall, respondents reported mitigating less desirable activities through podcast listening. Yet, unless the employees could incorporate their listening into routine tasks, it may be difficult for them to listen to podcasts habitually.

Theme #3: Positive Feelings and Relationships

The respondents' personal feelings about the IE podcast hosts had a tremendous impact on their drive to listen to the IE podcast. The feeling encapsulated several facets of both interpersonal and parasocial relationships. Like multitasking, the theme of relationships has had a positive impact on podcast listeners but also poses some challenges that will be discussed in a later section.

IE Podcast Hosts

Several interview respondents talked about the IE hosts in a positive light. It showed that listeners were drawn to the podcast due to the qualities, characteristics, and competencies of the two hosts.

IR2 expressed feelings of camaraderie, *"For me, maybe they [IE hosts] were nice to listen to. They're more like my friends."* In another instance, IR2 generalizes this sentiment of friendship to their experience with other podcast hosts, *"Yeah, of course. If I didn't like them, I wouldn't be as connected. So that's an asset they have. And as in most podcasts, you tend to think that they are your friends, but maybe not."* Here, IR2 recognized that the podcast host-listener relationship is not a reciprocal friend dynamic, but this did not detract from the connection.

Respondents highlighted the hosts' professionalism and friendly demeanor as reasons they listen to IE, *"I think the two presenters, they sound so professional, so friendly and so clear. I mean they're speaking, I mean, they're so few filler words and they're able to just succinctly kind of get all their ideas across without, like, a lot of umms or like or anything like that. It's a real skill to be able to do that. So, I'm just impressed with their presentation really"* (IR4)

Personal connection also created a sense of curiosity as stated by a respondent when asked about why they began listening to IE they stated, *"I think because they, they told us we're like starting a podcast. And I think they were shooting it down there, like in the lobby or... Yeah. I mean, as I know them too, [the podcast hosts] it becomes natural to look at it."* (IR5).

The host's presence on other social media platforms also had an impact, as IR1 had not listened to the IE podcast but shared, *"So I know that they have the podcasts and they have a lot of presence in [professional social network] with them, but I have never listened to any of their podcasts. Maybe I do it sometime?"*.

The respondents highlighted the importance and influence of parasocial relationships for podcast listening, which fosters curiosity and willingness to engage further, something that fits within the dimension of PD/RD in that there is some external reinforcement in learning through podcast engagement. CO/D is also an influencing factor in the employee's curiosity. It also shows a contradiction to the andragogical assumption that the employee is purely motivated by internal factors. In mixing the views of andragogy and SLD these parasocial dynamics reflect a unique intersection of social motivation and internal learning drive.

IE Engagement and Social Connection

Some interviewees talked about how they discussed the IE podcast with others in the company. IR2 stated, *"Yeah, we've discussed [Car brand's AI function]. Is it of use for the car driver or not? [inaudible] has his opinions. That's one example, as I remember. There was this episode discussing layoffs and why layoff people, why [we] don't educate them. We discussed that."* These topics showed a sense of immediacy as areas like AI integration and company layoffs were big news at the time of these conversations.

IR6 saw the discussion with colleagues as areas of mutual interest or a way to connect to others through a specific topic, *"But it might just be, you know, the thing they said on the podcast or whatever. And then we might, you know, discuss the topic further. So it's like a shared starting point for discussing a particular topic, because if you know someone's listen to the podcast, or I mean if you've just discussed that, then at least you have some kind of baseline for that topic, kinda."*

When asked further about how the conversations about IE arise, IR6 said, *"It's not like a structured review club for the podcast episodes. It's more something comes up. And then I mean it's it's. So common that people actually have listened. That it's yeah, easy to almost assume."*, showing that IE podcast discussions are purely employee-driven rather than organized by company leadership.

Ties to Innovation AB

In addition to the interpersonal relationships, respondents acknowledged that their engagement with IE was linked to their sense of duties as an employee, *"You should be loyal to your company and you should help them, and if they're helped then you are helped because you stay with the company and you get better wages and stuff. So I think that it's everybody's responsibility to just boost the channels and you know, like, yeah, whatever resources the company owns and then you just yeah hit like or stuff like that"* (IR3).

On the other hand, some had a more personal sense of connection with Innovation AB through the IE podcast as they are primarily a remote worker, *"I've spent [amount of] years on an assignment and I've been the only one for a lot of that. The only one from [Innovation AB]. So it's easy to feel"*

disconnected there from the company. So just hearing voices from [Innovation AB] actually makes me feel like I'm not alone." (IR4). Although engagement is self-initiated, corporate identity seems to boost learner involvement by situating the podcast in a relevant professional context.

Barriers

This next section explores the findings in relation to **RQ2: What challenges do employees face that prevent them from listening to or using podcasts for learning?**

Theme #4: Interpretation of Podcasts

The process of interviews raised two interesting questions: What do employees understand a podcast to be? And how does this affect their podcast engagement?

Throughout the interviews, respondents organically defined their ideas and definitions of podcasts. This greatly influenced their own views on themselves as self-proclaimed "podcastees" and their perceptions about their personal interests. Three respondents, IR1, IR3, and IR5, engaged in discussing their views on podcasts.

IR1 directly reflected on their difficulties with defining a podcast as they reflected on how much engagement they have with podcasts, *"The term podcast... There are podcasts that include like interviews or podcasts that are like read acting, reading something or yes. The term podcast is like more listening to a radio show that it's recorded for me."*

IR3 and IR5 had a similar dilemma, specifically in the role of visual information or visual cues. For example, IR5 asked if listening to documentaries counted as listening to a podcast. While IR3 reflected on grey areas, such as talk shows and YouTube content, which they hesitated to identify as a podcast due to the visual aspect of the platforms, *"No visuals. There are no visuals in podcasts, of course"* (IR3).

IR3 also had difficulty distinguishing media formats, such as late-night talk shows that share characteristics with podcasts, *"It's just visuals and not just like, it's not even like when it's an interview, even if it's an interview and you watch it like some, you know...night shows and stuff. I do watch and it's like kind of podcast, kind of, material, but then you can watch the people as well at the same time, right."* This confusion was a surprising finding as the definition of podcasts includes the optional use of visual media.

Another instance came up during IR5's interview, where it was unclear whether a public radio show fit the concept of a podcast, *"If I listen to a podcast? Yeah. I usually listen to radio if I'm commuting... Yeah. It's like P3. National radio."*. Although IR5 did not identify P3 as a podcast stream, the website includes podcasts for streaming (P3 | Sveriges Radio, 2025) *.

IR1 also talked about the relationship between radio and podcast *"It sounds really interesting...Like to look into the podcasts because it's a it's a new thing and it's. I mean, it's like the new radio or something."* This suggests that interviewees have some understanding of evolution of podcasting from traditional radio.

All in all, half of the interview respondents struggled to know if they authentically engage in podcast listening. The confusion about definitions complicates the application of SDL, as learners struggle to classify their behaviors within known learning structures. This also shows that the andragogical assumption of self-direction may fail if learners don't truly understand the positioning and purpose of a podcast in comparison to other forms of media as a learning tool.

* The P3 website is cited due to the researcher's need to familiarize themselves with the website and see what kind of media the website hosted.

Theme #5: Multitasking and Concentration

Despite examples of some employees using multi-tasking to accommodate podcast listening, this theme showed that many found it to be a hurdle in their podcast listening experience.

Only one respondent stated that they multitasked while listening to the IE podcast, and in general, many interview respondents found that multitasking made it difficult to concentrate on podcast content. Respondents preferred to listen to podcasts in environments that encouraged focus and concentration. This extended into work tasks as well, “[You] mean during work hours? ...No, no, because I just, I can't really work and listen to podcast. If I need something to, you know, tune out to I listen to music while working because it doesn't like compete with my for my attention. So no, for work and stuff. Unless I'm doing something that's, not like work on the computer for whatever reason. If I have something else like, if that, then maybe, but no.” (IR6)

The environment in which they listened also played a factor in interview respondents’ ability to focus on podcast listening and deciding if they would multitask while listening to podcasts “I would just play that at home rather than listening to it on the bus or something. So yeah, I would like to concentrate. And I would really listen to it like I'm not gonna be cooking or something and multitasking or something” (IR3).

In some cases, multitasking can lead to lower listening engagement, preventing listeners from engaging in activities that would get them more involved with the podcast, “So when I've been listening to [IE], I have actually been like thinking, oh, I should really phone in and ask about this. I should really do that and then I get distracted. And then I never do. But I should like the problem is that I'm always doing other stuff when I listen to it. So, like I never have a pen and paper handy to write down things like” (IR4). This tension between attention and distraction challenges the SDL concept that adult learners can regulate their own learning environments and the andragogical assumption that employee will direct their own learning seamlessly. While employees have autonomy, multitasking reveals limits in maintaining focus, especially when learning tools are integrated into daily routines.

Theme #6: Office Interpersonal Relationships and Employee Personal Lives

Interview respondents were asked if they used IE or other podcasts when they needed guidance at work or if they felt interested in any topic. The interview respondents showed that there was a healthy in-office dynamic between colleagues, and they preferred to talk to colleagues or to the IE host directly rather than try to find answers through podcasts, “Specifically for my assignment, it's with meetings and by asking advice or discussing with colleagues. Think it's the most direct way” (IR1). Additionally, IE’s focus on company brand hindered engagement, as employees picked up on the notion that the podcast primarily targeted non-employees. “Maybe that's for outsiders, maybe. I mean, I can talk to [Podcast hosts] over the desk” (IR2).

Some number of respondents expressed that they did not see IE as a medium for in-office connection, “So the reason why I chose that answer, I think it is because I see it [IE] as something for marketing. So I don't think that it is that the purpose is to connect people, connect the colleagues and stuff. The purpose is for visibility of the company” (IR3). They also felt that the IE podcast did not contribute to their connection to other colleagues, “Well, when I'm at the office, I meet people, so I already know them. So it's not like I am listening to them for the first time in the podcast” (IR3). These responses demonstrate that even in a supportive social environment, podcast use is often deprioritized for immediate interpersonal knowledge sharing. This suggests that while SDL thrives on autonomy, it may be limited when learners view traditional interactions as more efficient or trustworthy, especially in time-sensitive, high-pressure work contexts.

When away from work, interview respondents found it difficult to engage with podcasts due to the influence of family-oriented responsibilities, *“So during the day that's kind of hard. Working or after work with house chores and a baby at home, it's very hard to listen to a podcast” (IR1).*

IR4 and IR5 both spoke about the difficulties of listening to podcasts in a household with children, *“I prefer to read because when in the evenings. After dinner, we normally sit altogether and I let the kids have their paddles for an hour and I've got like two different sounds from either side of me for me to then try and listen to something. It's really difficult” (IR4).* This exemplifies the need for spaces that foster supported learning. However, this need can still be met in informal manners.

Theme #7: Stress and Time Constraints

Similarly, some interview respondents noted that listening to podcasts increased their daily stress, and their time limitations made it challenging or even impossible to engage with podcasts at various times in their lives.

Interview participants stated that they needed to have the right amount of time to listen to a podcast. Otherwise, the experience was much less desirable *“So if I have short time or other interruptions, it doesn't feel very appealing for me to start listening...I need to know that I have time and silence” (IR1).*

Daily stress was also a barrier to interview respondents. Adding any other activity, even passive listening, was a stressor, *“It's like, you know, like stress. So, it's like causing stress, more stress than relaxing to listen to anything at all.” (IR5)*

Work-related stress also prevented interview respondents from choosing to listen to IE or any other content related to their work in their spare time, *“[I] Can't listen to podcasts when I am commuting, but I don't do that. I prefer to listen to music instead...Yeah, it's just that I don't want to focus on anything because I'm already drained and I just wanna, you know, listen to something that I don't have to focus on” (IR3).*

IR4 also gave a good explanation of how work-related podcast content can become a burden when dealing with work-related stress, *“So at my latest assignment, it was really quite heavy on the meetings, so I would have a minimum of like six hours of meetings a day....Which leaves two hours for getting stuff done. It was very, very stressful. It was like a very high sort of pressure, and at the end of the day, I just wanted to switch off. I didn't want to then go and listen to more things about that industry or work-related things.”*

These barriers emphasize that although adult learners are internally motivated, as suggested by andragogy, external factors such as workload and stress can hinder learning behaviors. This area does however show that the assumption on self-direction and independent self-concept are in play as employees showed that they are aware of their own limits and choose to disengage in learning when it is no longer convenient or manageable.

Theme #8: Memory and Retention

Another barrier to podcast listening was the issue of retention and memory. Podcast listeners often struggle to recall the content from podcasts or maintain the information for future use. Although this issue was not exclusive to podcasts, it did dissuade employees from listening to podcasts as they saw it as less effective than other kinds of media, *“I have like zero movie memory. Yeah. Podcasts are really hard to remember” (IR5).*

IR3 made it clear that they preferred other types of media over podcasts when they intended to learn or seek out specific information in their day-to-day life, stating, *“It's just that I can absorb the information better”.*

These examples suggest that podcasts, while flexible and engaging, may not reliably enhance retention or structured knowledge acquisition. This challenges the andragogical assumption and SDL notion that adults transform their experiences into usable knowledge.

Theme #9: Barriers and Difficulties for Learning

Many respondents expressed that they neither utilize IE nor other podcasts habitually for their professional growth or to stay updated regarding their roles “*Yeah, I haven't used podcasts that much to get knowledge related to work, I can say*” (IR1).

The interviews showed that respondents did not view that they gained any specific skill from IE in relation to their professional development “*Skill, I don't know. Don't really know, but a skill necessarily? I don't think so.*” (IR6).

IR3 also clarified that the IE podcasts were not their primary means of professional development but served more as an accessory to the knowledge they already possessed “*I did apply. I do apply a lot of things I would say, but the source where the information is coming from is not the podcast*”.

Another issue regarding the challenges of learning from IE was that respondents identified that many of the topics addressed were already familiar news or information. Rather than seeking innovative news or insights, respondents viewed IE as a summary of subjects they already understood, “*I heard some of the things they are saying before, so it's not so new to me*” (IR2).

Most respondents indicated that they used the internet or artificial intelligence to remain current in their professional development. “*I mean, to be honest, to stay updated about my role, I'd take time to actually research things on the Internet and go to the relevant websites, find articles and white papers and things like that*” (IR4).

The excerpt below highlights the diversity of internet-based media that interview respondents choose over podcasts when it comes to their professional knowledge.

“If I want to learn more about something, I just, you know, Google it and read about it.” (IR5)

“I'm sort of an avid ChatGPT user I guess.” (IR6)

These quotes show that employees engage with podcasts for professional growth only when the content is novel, applicable, and accessible. This aligns with the notion in andragogy that knowledge should have an immediate application, also highlighting the importance of just-in-time learning, which was discussed in the informal learning section of the literature review. The preference for other technologies shows that in daily workflows, non-podcast technologies may offer better immediacy and just-in-time knowledge to employees.

Learning

This final section addresses research question three (RQ3): ***Do employees gain specific knowledge or skills from listening to podcasts? If so, what are they?***

Theme #10: Personal Interest and Personal Development for Self-Directed Podcast Learning

All interview respondents used podcasts to learn about topics pertinent to their personal interests or personal growth. IR6 stated, “*it's [podcasts] just an interesting medium for gaining knowledge or yeah learning something interesting*”.

In relation to SDL, the interview respondents showed personal initiative when it came to choosing and listening to podcasts. For example, finding topics that related to areas that appealed to a sense of

growth in their personal knowledge, *“I listen to psychology podcasts related to psychology, such as discussions, tips, and things like that”* (IR1).

Respondents also identified ways in which podcasts helped them hone specific skills, such as language learning, or encouraged them to try something new, *“It [a history podcast] helps with my Swedish because my Swedish is terrible right now. I've been here for 10 years and it really should be better than it is”* (IR4). This respondent also stated that this podcast connected to their prior university education, giving them an extra incentive to listen to it.

IR5 expressed a desire to remember more about the IE podcast to discuss information they personally found interesting during the interview, *“I mean, if I would see all the subjects that we've been talking about, then I could choose something because I'm interested. It's more like, yeah, to get more information about something that sounds interesting.”*

These examples are supported by both SDL and andragogy, demonstrating that learners seek content that fosters personal growth, take charge of their learning without a formal structure, and connect new knowledge to their past experiences. The independent nature of podcast use reflects SDL's characteristic dimensions, especially proactive drive and commitment to learning.

Theme #11: Podcasts for Professional Interests, Development and Skills

The interview respondents found that IE helped them prepare for the changes and trends they need to understand and prepare for in the future of their professional area, *“I think just in terms of maybe the the topics they discussed there, I think. Having listened now to two episodes about digital product passports, that's something that I feel like I didn't really have a grasp of. So that I think has helped improve my understanding of the future needs in the industry kinda for good product information”* (IR6).

Out of the context of IE, they also used podcasts to challenge themselves to apply new tools or create specific projects that relate to their professional role, even when it may not be a requirement from their employer. Even when they are not successful in their attempts to learn, they still feel the drive to continue exploring. *“This [redacted] AI podcast and this AI avatar film setup that I mentioned earlier, I tried to do it for us. And I even recorded in Swedish a description of [Innovation AB], and then I tried to translate it to English. But I think they have developed a tool since, so I maybe should try again. It wasn't that easy as I thought it would be”* (IR2).

Although the interviews showed that many respondents did not apply the IE podcast to their professional learning, they still recognized that it may be a good resource for their professional development under some circumstances *“If it's considered like a work time so if I need to learn about something about work and I know that's a very good podcast about a topic I can listen to it”* (IR1).

The interviews also showed that respondents believed that some professional knowledge is more suited to podcasts compared to other media, *“If I worked with sales or with marketing or a teacher or something else, then I think information through a podcast could be more suitable for my activities...I think if it's more theoretical work then podcast can be more suitable for me to listen and get some information”* (IR1). This sentiment follows Meden et al. (2024) insight, which also suggests that certain professional fields may have better use of podcasts for learning and that the podcast content impacts the effectiveness of podcasts as an informal learning tool.

Theme #12: Learning as a Feeling

Although some respondents had used podcasts to learn about a particular tool or train a skill, when it came to IE, respondents struggled to articulate exactly what knowledge they were gaining when listening, *“I remember that it was like useful information that I got updated in some field, but I don't remember what the field was anymore. But I think I get like, you know, enlightened somehow”* (IR5).

However, as seen in the literature review in the section on tacit knowledge, respondents may not have the ability to articulate and express what they learn. They instead either expressed that they felt like they learned or gained an understanding of a more general aspect of their professional field.

Findings summary

Table 2

Summary of findings from each of the data collection methods

Research questions	Summary of results	
	Survey	Interviews and Clustered Topics
RQ1. What motivators are most important for employees to listen to podcasts in an informal learning setting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filling in leisure or free time with podcast listening • Feeling connected to company and having better understanding of the organization • Professional skills and knowledge development • Podcast relevancy to professional role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcasts related to entertainment, hobbies and personal interest more popular • Daily engagement with topics • Multitasking and relieving boredom • Having positive feelings and engaging relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parasocial relationships with hosts ○ Discussing podcast content with colleagues ○ Feeling connected to the organization • Identity and social standing
RQ2. What challenges do employees face that prevent them from listening to or using podcasts for learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No habitual use of podcast listening or audio-based media • Preference for other media modalities • Difficulty applying information from IE to personal life • IE podcast not relevant to employee personal interests • Unable to integrate IE podcast listening to workday • Not discussing or sharing podcast content with colleagues or in other social situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling to connect with topics related only to professional development • Struggling with multitasking and concentration • Identity and social standing • Preferring in-person contact with colleagues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Podcasts do not help with establishing new connections to colleagues. • Not having enough free time to allocate to podcast listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family life is disruptive to engaging with podcasts in free time • Podcast listening adding to work related stress • Information from podcasts and audio-based media is more difficult to remember and retain

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees do not regularly look to IE or other podcasts for enhancing professional learning • No firm connection between IE and specific workplace learning or skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Podcast listening not used as a primary source for information ○ Topics presented in IE were already known by listeners ○ Preference for other technologies to learn for the workplace: search engine, and AI
<p>R3. Do employees gain specific knowledge or skills from listening to podcasts? What are they?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding industry trends • Better understanding of other departments in organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcast related learning outcomes more intertwined with listeners personal interest and growth • More general sense of learning from IE for workplace or professional learning • Employees used other podcasts to practice specific skills or try a new tool • Employees aware of podcast content effecting learning outcomes • Employees had trouble specifying learning outcomes but felt like they used IE to learn in some way they could not articulate

Discussion

Here the thesis will interpret the findings using the theoretical framework and existing literature, providing a critical view on informal podcast-based learning.

The overall purpose of the thesis is the exploration of podcast listening as an informal learning tool for employees. The findings suggest that podcasting is an effective tool for informal learning, but at times present a contradictory picture of how podcasting is perceived and used, particularly in relation to motivation, barriers, and learning outcomes. Specifically, the findings show that employees had some trouble with articulating and demonstrating the knowledge they gained through this medium. However, the finding also indicates that this ambiguity does not indicate a lack of learning. To present the analysis more effectively, the discussion will be structured around the thesis's three research questions.

RQ1: *What motivators are most important for employees to listen to podcasts in an informal learning setting?*

Employees' primary motivation can come from their personal lives, meaningful connections and relationships, their need to multitask and relieve boredom, and having positive feelings. In certain circumstances, there is also a secondary motivation based on employees' professional role.

Employees' life experiences and interests motivate their engagement in podcast listening and learning. Their personal experiences and interests also dictated what content or information they sought out. This supports the literature's depiction of podcasting as a medium that caters to niche interests and enables users to exert control over their learning (Shamburg et al., 2023; Sullivan, 2024). These motivations also mirror the user-centric traits of SDL, particularly as defined by Oddi's (1986) model of personal traits such as PD/RD and CL/AAL.

A curious but sometimes contradictory area of the research was how employees found motivation when their professional roles converged with their personal lives. Survey respondents who perceived the podcast content as only moderately relevant to their roles were less motivated to listen. This highlights a gap between the pertinence of the content and the engagement of the learners. However, the interviews showed that professional skills and knowledge were more prominently connected with respondents' personal interests, which then translated into actionable projects. This shows the significance of perceived personal relevance in motivating informal learning and confirms prior findings in the literature that podcast listeners are drawn to content that supports both professional development and personal enrichment (Martín-Morán & Martín-Nieto, 2022; Shamburg et al., 2023). Although the interview respondents sometimes recognized professional development as a motivator, it generally served as a secondary reason compared to their personal motivations.

Another key aspect of motivation is the connections and relationships in the professional context, highlighted in the survey and interviews. The thesis's two methods demonstrated that employees valued knowledge about other departments and their relationship with the company's identity, which kept employees motivated to listen to IE. The interviews, however, dove more into other aspects of social relationships, which found that the host-to-listener relationship was particularly important in professional and non-professional settings to motivate employees to listen to the IE podcast and podcasts in general. This insight is also supported by the literature, highlighting the importance of parasocial relationships in podcast engagement. The interviews indicated that discussing podcast content contributed to engagement and motivated employees to listen, though it was considered a secondary activity compared to the influence of personal connections and personal interest.

The third area that impacted podcast use was employees' need to fill in their time with a more meaningful activity, especially when faced with a boring, repetitive task. Respondents indicated that podcast listening is often rooted in leisure, driven by curiosity or entertainment. This suggests that podcast listening is deeply related to entertainment as much as it is to learning, as shown by Shamburg et al. (2023) and Whittle (2024). The entertainment value and sense of curiosity fueled positive feelings that perpetuated an interest in podcast listening.

The findings also reflect the ambiguity in the literature regarding whether podcast listening and engagement is a social or a solitary activity. Although there are aspects of podcast engagement that encourage listening and participation, this thesis's findings suggest that most of the listeners' motivation comes from intrinsic needs and motivations rather than something set in external factors like company culture, or work-related expectations.

RQ2: *What challenges do employees face that prevent them from listening to or using podcasts for learning?*

The barriers identified in the thesis relate to preferences, issues with multitasking, concentration, and memory, time and priority limits, stress, family responsibilities, and difficulty identifying audio/visual media as a podcast.

In the interviews, respondents stated that they preferred other tools over podcasts for work-related learning. Search engines and AI tools were described as more direct and efficient, offering immediate answers tailored to specific tasks. In situations where support was needed, employees were also more likely to consult a colleague, valuing the speed and clarity of real-time interaction. This preference reveals a gap between viewing podcasts as effortless informal learning tools and the practical choices employees make in time-sensitive work situations. Instead of looking for broad content in advance, employees opted for learning that was incorporated into their workflow for “just-in-time” learning (Carpenter et al., 2025). This indicates that podcasts could be more beneficial when incorporated into structured workflows or aligned with timely, task-specific learning opportunities.

Respondents also described the IE podcast as too loosely connected to immediate job demands, leading to low prioritization. This may be due to the ambiguity in the purpose of the IE podcast, which serves both branding purposes and incorporates educational elements. Sullivan’s (2024) observations on branded podcasts indicate that, while they are powerful storytelling tools, their educational impact relies on clarity of purpose and target audience alignment. Many employees found it challenging to recognize IE’s professional significance or incorporate it into their workday, potentially decontextualizing the use of the podcast. The literature suggests that informal learning is deeply contextual (Broek, 2021), and when podcasts do not meet immediate job needs, they are often deprioritized. These findings suggest that, without proper institutional support and integration into workflows, informal resources such as podcasts may be overlooked, despite their potential.

While podcasts are praised for their multitasking potential, this aspect can inadvertently hinder deep engagement and memory retention, causing friction between the benefits and setbacks of multitasking while listening to podcasts. Some respondents fell into the category of incidental learners, who engaged in podcast listening for non-learning reasons and found interesting skills and knowledge along the way. These participants expressed difficulty retaining information while multitasking, which aligns with findings from Meden et al. (2024), who showed that incidental learners were more prone to forgetting information.

While the literature presents podcasts as tools that fit naturally into busy schedules, interview participants described stress and time pressure as key barriers. Podcast listening sometimes added to their mental load instead of offering relief. Several respondents noted that after long days of meetings or emotionally taxing work, even low-effort media like podcasts felt overwhelming. Rather than a relaxing activity, it was viewed as another task, adding pressure instead of alleviating it. These findings support earlier observations by Rosenberg (2008) who notes that time and motivation are significant obstacles to employee learning in everyday contexts.

Family responsibilities also proved to be a major barrier to podcast usage after work hours. Parents characterized their home environments as unfavorable for listening, often filled with background noise, competing media, or responsibilities that demanded their attention. This reflects Wei et al.’s (2013) distinction between student and employee learners, where the latter must balance learning with both professional and personal obligations. This supports prior literature suggesting that employee learning must be understood in relation to both professional and personal commitments.

Finally, a last barrier revolved around how employees perceived podcasts and whether they considered themselves podcast listeners. During the interviews, several participants expressed uncertainty about whether certain media, such as streamed radio, talk shows, or visual interviews, qualified as podcasts. This confusion was not reflected in the survey data, where respondents were more likely to report podcast use. The discrepancy between survey and interview responses points to a gap between behavior and self-perception. If individuals do not recognize themselves as podcast listeners, they are less likely to approach the experience as a learning activity. Employees may not see informal media use as part of a learning process if they do not classify it as podcast listening. Understanding this gap is crucial for organizations aiming to support informal learning via digital audio content. The findings indicate that having a clear definition is vital for promoting podcast engagement and measuring its impact within professional learning environments.

RQ3: *Do employees gain specific knowledge or skills from listening to podcasts? What are they?*

Both the interviews and the survey indicated that employees gained less specific technical knowledge and more tacit knowledge, as they stated they often could not find immediate application of podcast-based knowledge for their professional roles. These outcomes were influenced by a strong preference to focus on personal interest and shows the importance of information timing when engaging in informal learning.

From the IE podcast, the interview respondents often struggled to identify specific knowledge or technical skills but referred to increased awareness of company culture, industry trends, interdepartmental practices, and soft skills development, like language or industry-related future-readiness. These findings reflect the characteristics of tacit knowledge, as discussed in the literature (Qi & Chau, 2018; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Sharma et al. 2022), where knowledge transfer is context-rich and difficult to articulate. As Purvis (2006) and Manuti et al. (2016) describe, such skills are often developed in both personal and professional contexts and may be difficult to isolate or measure in terms of employee learning.

Yet, a closer look reveals that employees learned more when their personal areas of interest aligned with the podcast content. Professional learning unrelated to employees' personal interests had less emphasis on specific skills or knowledge, focusing instead on a general understanding of concepts, trends, and key overarching professional elements. This relationship between personal interest and professional development speaks to the importance of personal interest as a mediator to learning for self-directed learners and should be taken into consideration for companies that use podcasts as a source of employee learning. On the other hand, in instances where there were greater personal connections or individual interests, employees were able to articulate experiences related to projects and their hard skills.

The literature confirms that informal learning environments, especially those supported by digital media, are effective at developing soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and future-readiness (Manuti et al., 2016). Despite the difficulty in articulating concrete learning objectives from a purely professional perspective, employees still understood that they had learned and could "feel" a change in their knowledge. Interview participants' reflections frequently pointed to an intuitive understanding gained from podcast engagement, which also fits with tacit knowledge. Learning was more often described as "a feeling" or a sense of relevance than as a list of takeaways. In this context, learning was rarely driven by a structured learning goal, contradicting the theoretical assumption from Knowles' andragogy that adult learners are goal-oriented and focus on problem-solving (Broek, 2021; Meden et al., 2024; Merriam, 2001). This also suggests that podcasts are particularly effective at conveying cultural norms and shared understandings, which are types of knowledge that are difficult to transfer to explicit knowledge and even harder to teach through formal channels.

The study reinforces the idea that digital audio content, like podcasts, especially when tailored and delivered by recognizable personalities, can convey and communicate organizational messages, behavioral norms, and shared practices that formal training might miss. Podcast listening did not consistently produce clearly defined technical learning outcomes but promoted valuable contextual and interpersonal learning. These findings confirm existing literature, showing that podcasts are more effective when viewed beyond mere content delivery. For organizations, this highlights the importance of podcast content that not only informs but also builds belonging, identity, and soft skills among employees.

Theoretical Relevance

This thesis's theoretical framework focuses on andragogy and self-directed learning (SDL) to reflect the intricate, learner-centered dynamics of informal podcast engagement. The autonomy embedded in podcast use directly corresponds to the principles of SDL and andragogy. Employees decide what to listen to, when, and why. There are no instructors, grades, or imposed objectives, making podcast listening an example of adult, self-managed learning. Merriam (2001) notes that SDL involves

participating in systematic, intentional learning processes integrated into daily life. Although the desire to learn was not always evident, participants demonstrated cognitive engagement, personal reflection, and commitment to their development, elements that SDL recognizes and fosters.

Furthermore, these theories influenced the research methodology by emphasizing important variables for investigation, including learning intentions, autonomy in choosing content, and the incorporation of podcast content with existing knowledge and experience. The theoretical choices demonstrate current perspectives on professional development as being learner-centered, adaptable, and seamlessly integrated into daily work activities. These traits enhance the relevance of podcasts as educational tools within current professional environments.

The inconsistency between stated professional motives and actual engagement patterns exposes a theoretical tension. Podcasting can be seen as hybrid learning that combines entertainment, professional and personal development, along with social connections, challenging the dichotomies found in the andragogical theoretical model. The tensions uncovered between intention and incident, autonomy and distraction, and knowledge and feeling could not have surfaced without a starting point in established adult learning theory. These tensions complicate traditional Knowlesian assumptions in andragogical models that position adult learners as problem-centered and driven purely by their professional endeavors. This misalignment suggests that while the andragogical model provides a foundational framework for understanding autonomy and internal motivation, it oversimplifies the realities of informal, media-based learning in modern work contexts.

Nevertheless, the framework was enhanced with the concept of tacit knowledge and informal and incidental learning, acknowledging that not all learning is goal-oriented or even pursued consciously.

Practical Relevance

This section will focus on providing recommendations on how companies and professional organizations can enhance the use of employee informal learning through podcasts. First, **align podcast topics with employee interests** (themes #1, #10, #11). The most impactful learning was done at the cross-section of employees' personal interests and their professional endeavors. This may entail gathering more information about employees' personal interests or finding ways to get employees to participate in the development of podcast episodes. **Second, make professional development content fun and interactive** (themes #3, #10, #11). Move from passive intake to participatory actions. As shown in the survey and interviews, employees rarely discussed podcast content without prompting, so facilitating listening clubs, reflective sessions, or discussion forums can bridge the gap between solitary learning and collective meaning-making. Leveraging parasocial relationships to draw in employee listeners and keep them interested. Selecting relatable hosts with authentic, consistent voices can enhance engagement and trust. This may vary depending on the company's culture or norms.

Third, address mental load and time barriers, and honor boundaries (themes #5, #6, #7).

Consider employees' personal lives and their ability to prioritize listening to podcasts on their own time. Informal learning may seem like an easy way to incorporate learning by "squeezing it in," but barriers such as family life and work stress can deter employees from engaging in work-related learning on personal time. Finding ways to incorporate informal learning into informal work-related activities to give employees a "continuous dose" of informal learning. For example, hosting a listening party featuring special guests or offering lunchtime activities based on the podcast content, holding lunchtime reflective sessions, or using discussion forms may bridge solitary learning and collective meaning-making. **Lastly, understanding knowledge management and transfer** (themes #8, #9, #12). Podcasts may be a good way to capture tacit knowledge in organizations, but it may not be the best way to convey it to employees. Exploring other ways to connect the podcast to other activities that will better transfer tacit knowledge or convert it to explicit knowledge for more tangible or specific employee learning outcomes.

Limitations

Methodological Limitations

The study is limited by its case-study design, which focuses on a single organization and a specific podcast. The number of interview respondents was relatively small and self-selecting, potentially skewing the findings toward those more positively disposed to podcasting and possibly constraining generalizability. The inductive coding process of the interview transcripts, while rich, was influenced by pre-existing themes from the literature and theoretical framework, potentially narrowing alternative interpretations. Furthermore, the decision not to analyze podcast content limited the capacity to link content design with perceived learning outcomes. Finally, the podcast analyzed was not originally designed as a learning tool. This may have influenced employee perceptions and the clarity of learning outcomes.

Theoretical Limitations

While SDL and andragogy provide valuable frameworks for understanding podcast usage in workplace learning, it is important to critically examine the limitations and implications of these theoretical choices.

First, the SDL framework assumes a level of learner autonomy and motivation that may not be consistently present among all professionals. This raises questions about the applicability of findings to workplace environments where learning is more structured or prescribed.

Additionally, both andragogy and SDL emphasize individual cognitive processes and motivations, potentially underrepresenting the social and organizational dimensions of learning. Other theoretical frameworks, including situated learning, were taken into consideration. However, the emphasis of this thesis on podcasts aligns itself with the individualized and personalized elements of the technology, which depend on both the learners' preferences and characteristics. Despite these limitations, the selected theoretical framework offers good theoretical tools for analyzing how and why professionals engage with podcasts for learning.

Area of Interest and Future Research

Future research should investigate the long-term effects of podcast learning, such as whether ongoing engagement leads to measurable changes in professional behavior or skill acquisition. This thesis explored various research facets of podcast-based learning given the constraints of using a case study as a research design. However, other areas that may provide a richer understanding of podcast-based learning include comparative studies across industries, organizations, and cultures. Such studies could clarify the conditions that support successful podcast integration into learning experiences. Finally, another direction that could be of interest for future study is the role of Knowledge Management in podcast-based learning in organizations.

Conclusion

This thesis examined how employees utilize podcasts for informal learning in the workplace, using a case study of the *Insight Exchange* podcast at Innovation AB, a large Swedish consultancy company. Through a mixed-methods design combining a clustered-topic analysis, an adaptive survey, and semi-structured interviews, the study addressed three central research questions concerning employee motivation, barriers to informal podcast use, and the knowledge or skills gained from informal podcast engagement. The thesis aimed to explore how companies can enhance employee informal learning through podcasts, and this aim was addressed by investigating real-world podcast engagement within an organizational context, identifying conditions that support or hinder learning. It offers empirical insights and practical applications for IT and learning by situating its findings within the broader literature on organizational learning, informal and incidental learning, tacit knowledge, and skill

acquisition. The thesis also incorporates the frameworks of self-directed learning (SDL) and andragogy to analyze findings and provide insights.

The findings revealed that motivation (RQ1) to engage with podcasts was driven primarily by employees' personal lives and interests, meaningful connections and relationships, their need to multitask and relieve boredom, and having positive feelings. While the survey data showed that professional development was recognized as a motivator, the interviews and topic clustering revealed that learning was more prominent in instances where employees tied in their experience and interests. This aligns with theoretical frameworks presented in this thesis and much of the literature that emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation and perceived relevance in adult learning. Employees were most engaged when content aligned with their existing interests or current projects, highlighting the importance of contextual and identity-driven relevance for podcast-based learning.

The thesis identified several key barriers (RQ2). These included a preference for other media to learn, multitasking, concentration, and memory fatigue, time and priority limits, stress, family responsibilities, and difficulty identifying audio/visual media as a podcast. Although podcasts are flexible, they are often deprioritized by employees if they lack clear alignment with work tasks. This shows that informal learning competes with daily demands unless supported structurally. Additionally, many participants preferred faster, more searchable tools like AI, viewing podcasts as less efficient for just-in-time learning.

Regarding learning outcomes (RQ3), while few participants could identify specific hard skills gained from podcast listening, many described improved awareness of company practices and culture, industry trends, and interpersonal insights. These outcomes correspond with the development of tacit knowledge and soft skills, which are key capabilities for employees in contemporary workplaces. Podcasts served as a tool for organizational socialization, aiding employees in understanding values, culture, and interdepartmental dynamics. This affirms the role of digital media in conveying not just information, but shared meaning and organizational identity. Podcasts served as a medium for socialization and cultural learning more than content mastery.

This thesis contributes to the limited research on podcasts as a tool for workplace learning. While prior research has mostly focused on students or formal educational settings, this thesis provides evidence that podcasts can promote substantial informal learning in professional environments. For practitioners in the field of learning and development, the results point to the need for clearer integration strategies, curated content based on employee needs, and organizational support that legitimizes podcast use during the workday.

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Appendix

Appendix A

IE episode topic clustering

This appendix shows the episode titles that contain the topics discussed in the podcast episodes. The topics are highlighted and categorized according to their assigned grouping.

Figure A1

First screenshot of Excel spreadsheet.

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

Episode #	Month/year	Title	grouping
1	Trailer	2021 Trailer	Dark blue AI
2		2021 Evolutionen av Produktinformation	sky blue Learning
3		2022 Migrering av Produktinformation	yellow Product info
4		2022 Pandemins påverkan på produktinformatio	sage green law/legal
5		2022 Behövs all information? (product information)	dark grey automotive / aviation
6		2022 Digitalisering av Produktinformation	bright green professional
7		2022 Höjdpunkter från Boti 2021	lilac Inclusion/diversity/social issue
8		2023 Gamification	hot pink social media
9		2023 UI UX and Product Information	vermillion Cyber/data security
10		2024 Using ChatGPT for Learning	orange design
11		2024 ChatGPT for Learning Experience Designers	teal sustainability
12	Intro	Feb-24 Introducing the NEW Information Talks podcast	
13	1	Feb-24 ChatGPT in Cars, Digital Cloning, and How to Translate Technical Language	
14	2	Mar-24 How Not to Get Hacked, EU Law Cracks Down on Greenwashing, Networking Tips	
15	3	Apr-24 New EU AI Act, NHS Patient Data & "Fun" Product Information	
16	4	Apr-24 What are Digital Product Passports and who needs them? How do cultural differences impact emojis?	
17	5	May-24 Learning Technologies 2024, AI & Aviation, and do you need an LMS?	
18	6	May-24 ChatGPT4o, Retraining and Redundancy, Onboarding Tips	
19	7	Jun-24 Has TikTok solved deepfakes? Why are we DELVING more (AI)? & Can you learn in your sleep?	
20	8	Jun-24 DEBATE - Are humans ready for the AI revolution?	
21	9	Jul-24 Apple vs the EU (again!), AI start-up fails (again!), & How to be a woman in tech	
22	10	Jul-24 QR codes to replace barcodes, the first AI prison, & Accessibility in Product Information	
23	11	Aug-24 CrowdStrike global outage disrupts air travel, McDonald's vs. Taco Bell on AI voice ordering in drive-thrus, and combating disinformation online	

Figure A2

Second screenshot of Excel spreadsheet.

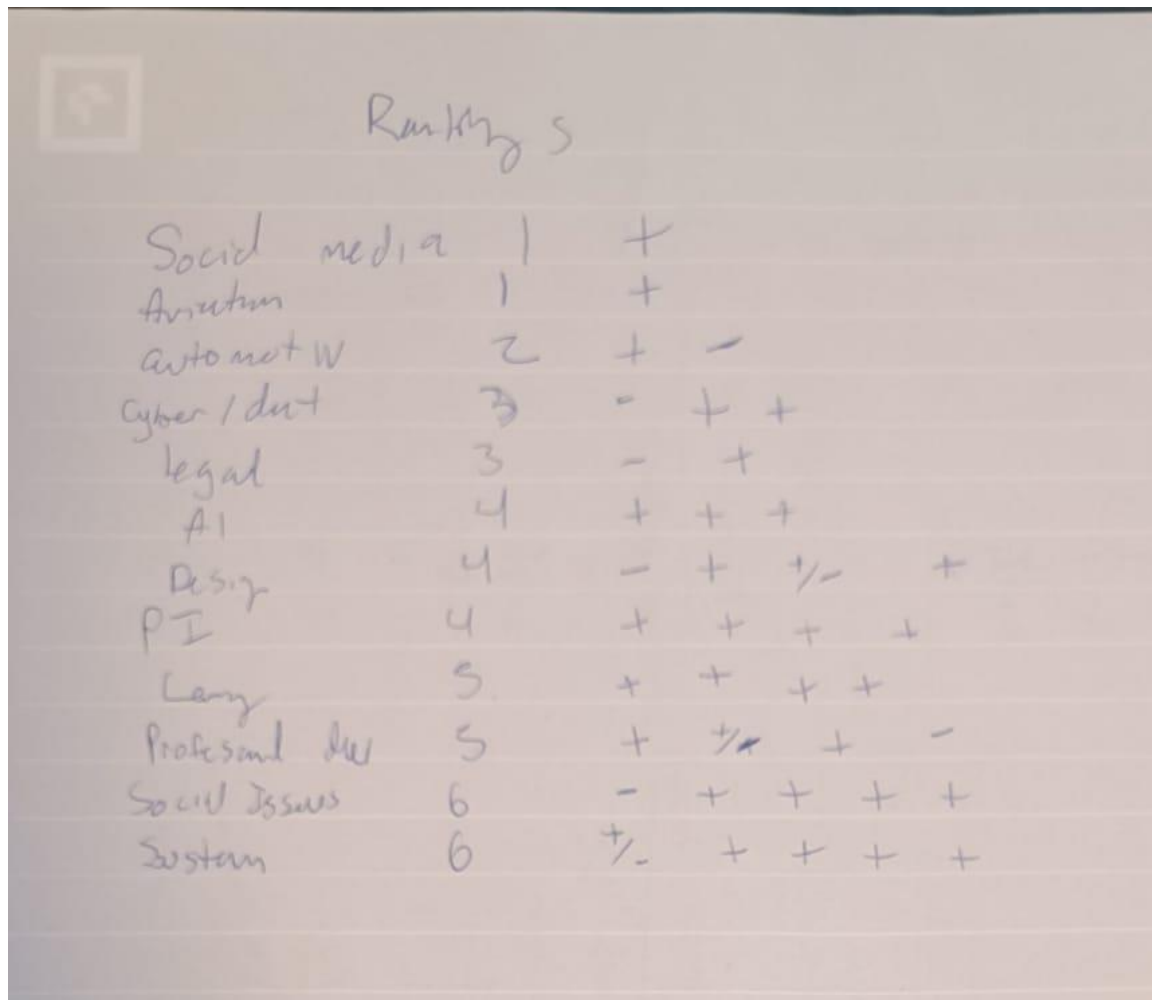
	A	B	C
23	10	Jul-24	QR codes to replace barcodes, the first AI prison, & Accessibility in Product Information
24	11	Aug-24	CrowdStrike global outage disrupts air travel, McDonald's vs. Taco Bell on AI voice ordering in drive-thrus, and combating disinformation online
25	12	Sep-24	Duolingo teaches music with Hozier, UK government invests in AI projects, and How to motivate your employer to invest in learning
26	13	Sep-24	Volkswagen In-Car Gaming, Women in Tech, and Corporate Universities
27	14	Oct-24	Upskilling to Battle Unemployment, Google's €2.4 Billion Fine, Benefits of Being a Consultant
28	15	Oct-24	Classroom Censorship, 23andMe, and a Self-driving Taxi Nightmare
29	16	Oct-24	Interview with Wouter Maagdenberg from TXTOmedia: How AI and Automation Transform Content Creation
30	17	Nov-24	EU AI Act for Employers, Cyberattacks in Education, Long Passwords
31	18	Nov-24	Bluesky vs Twitter, NIS2 Directive, Digital Sustainability
32	19	Dec-24	Instagram Algorithm, OpenAI Lawsuits, WFH or WFO
33	20	Dec-24	Listener Questions: Buttons vs Touchscreens, Cloud vs Hard Drive, Technical Writer Skills
34	21	Feb-25	Introducing Information Talks Season 2!
35	22	Feb-25	DEBATE - The demise of objective truth or social media
36		25-Feb	The Toyota Training Team explains how they're addressing an international audience with modern solutions
37		25-Mar	DeepSeek, The Swedish 2-Year Law for Consultants, and Copilot Vs ChatGPT
38			
39			
40			
41			

Appendix B

Preliminary clustered topic ranking

Figure B1

First draft of rankings.



Ranking 5

Social media	1	+				
Armutun	1	+				
Automat W	2	+	-			
Cyber / dnt	3	-	+	+		
legal	3	-	+			
AI	4	+	+	+		
Desiz	4	-	+	1/2-		+
PI	4	+	+	+		+
Lany	5	+	+	+	+	
Profesand der	5	+	1/2	+		-
Social Issues	6	-	+	+	+	+
Sustan	6	1/2-	+	+	+	+

Figure B2

Another draft of rankings.

2 1) Sustainability	6	$\frac{1}{2}$	+	+	+	+
1 2) Social issues	6	$\frac{1}{2}$	+	++	++	
3) Learning	5		+	+	+	+
4) Professional Dev	5		+	$\frac{1}{2}$	++	-
5) DI / AI	4		+	+	+	+
6) Design	4		-	+	$\frac{1}{2}$	+
7) Cyber / data sec	3		-	++		
8) legal / law	3		-	-	+	
9) Social media / Analytics	1			+		
10) Automation	2		+	-		

Appendix C

Sample question from Adaptive survey

Figure C1

Example of closed ended, multiple choice questions from apdaptive survey

The image shows two survey questions, labeled 7 and 8, presented in a vertical layout. Question 7 asks, "Which platform do you use to listen to podcasts? Click all that apply." and offers five options: Apple music, Spotify, Youtube, and Other. Question 8 asks, "When do you prefer to listen to podcasts? Click all that apply." and offers three options: During my chill time (at home/leisure), On work breaks/lunch, and While commuting. Each question is contained within a light blue rounded rectangular box.

7

Which platform do you use to listen to podcasts? Click all that apply.

- Apple music
- Spotify
- Youtube
- Other

8

When do you prefer to listen to podcasts? Click all that apply.

- During my chill time (at home/leisure)
- On work breaks/lunch
- While commuting

Figure C2

Example of Likert scale question from adapted survey

12

Read each statements and pick the option that best describes you.

	I do not agree	I somewhat agree	I agree	I strongly agree
The podcast helps me understand other department's work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The podcast provides valuable insights into industry trends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen to the podcast because it helps me develop my professional skills and knoweldge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The podcast has improved my understanding of company values and identity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening to the podcast helps me feel more connected to the company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have shared information from the company podcast	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D

Adaptive survey flow and developmet

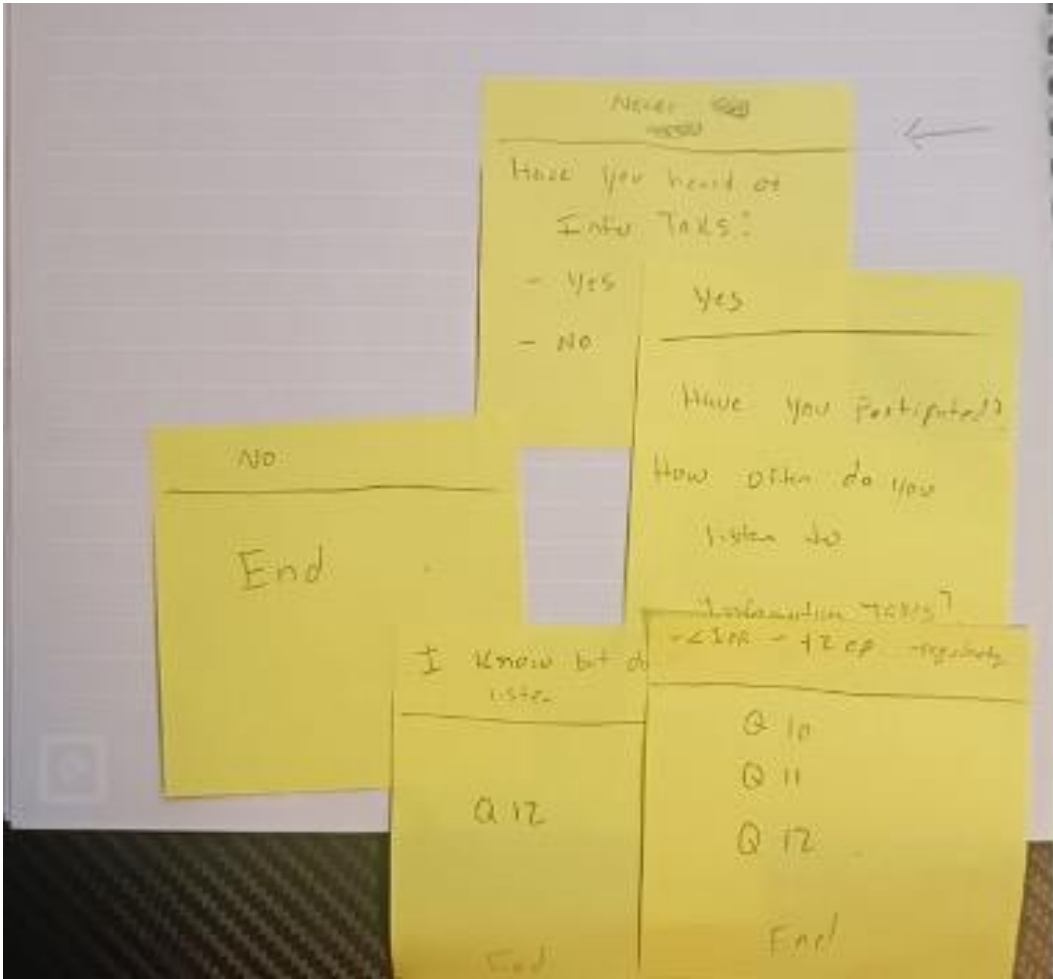
Figure 1D

Preliminary survey



Figure 2D

Preliminary survey continued



Appendix E Interview guide

Figure 1E

First page of interview guide.

Interview guiding questions

1. What topics or episodes have you found most valuable, and why?

AI

Learning

Product information

Law/legal

Automotive/aviation

Professional life and development

Social issues/inclusion/diversity

Social media

Cyber/data security

Design

Sustainability

For podcast listeners:

2. In the survey, you indicated [refer to their general podcast listening habits]. Can you tell me a more about what contributes to this pattern for you?
3. "Many respondents mentioned time constraints as a barrier. Could you describe how your work schedule or other commitments influence your ability to engage with podcasts?"
1. We had a few statements in the survey about learning and connection. Could you give me an example of how a podcast has helped you learn something new?
 - a. or feel more connected to the company or your colleagues?"
 - b. "Have you ever shared or discussed information from a podcast with a colleague? If so, how did that conversation come about?"
2. In the survey, we saw varying levels of agreement with the statement 'I have applied information from the podcast to my work'. Can you share any examples of how you have (or have not) applied podcast content in your role?
3. What is it that you enjoy about the podcast or don't
4. Are there other ways you prefer to learn new information or stay updated in your role?

Figure 2E

Second page of interview guide

5. "What, if anything, could the company do to make the podcast format or content more appealing or accessible to you?"

Non-podcast listeners

4. In the survey, you indicated [refer to their general podcast listening habits]. Can you tell me a more about what contributes to this pattern for you?
6. In the survey, you indicated that you don't listen to the podcast. Can you elaborate on that?" (Gets more detail on their reasons)
7. Are there other ways you prefer to learn new information or stay updated in your role?" (Explores alternative learning preferences)
8. What, if anything, could the company do to make the podcast format or content more appealing or accessible to you?"

Appendix F

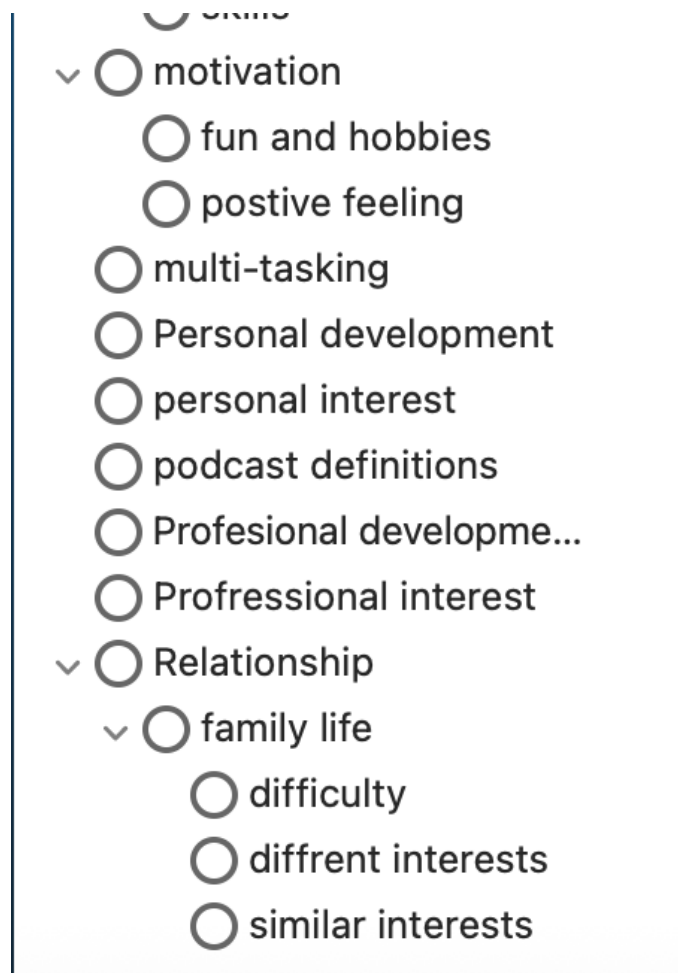
Codes for thematic analysis

Figure 1F
First set of codes from the NVivo software

-
- ✓ adoption
 - ✓ Behavior
 - Media preference
 - Time availability
 - Engagment
 - ✓ Barriers
 - Bordon
 - ✓ difficulty concentrat...
 - memory
 - drive
 - Interest change
 - interpersonal comm...
 - Overload
 - prioritites
 - stress
 - Time constraint
 - ✓ learning
 - learning preference
 - repetative content
 - skills

Figure 2F

Second set of codes from the NVivo software

- 
- ▼
- ▼ motivation
 - fun and hobbies
 - postive feeling
 - multi-tasking
 - Personal development
 - personal interest
 - podcast definitions
 - Profesional developme...
 - Professional interest
 - ▼ Relationship
 - ▼ family life
 - difficulty
 - diffrent interests
 - similar interests

Appendix G
Consent forms

Figure 1G
Survey consent

1

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires that you are informed about how your personal data is processed. By participating in this survey, you consent to the use of your responses for research purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence. Do you agree to participate? *

I agree

Figure 2G Interview consent form, 4 pages



Information about the processing of personal data for educational purposes at the University of Gothenburg and consent to participate in the work

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires that you are informed about how your personal data is processed. This document describes how the processing is carried out and what rights you have as a data subject. The last page of this document also contains a consent form for participation in the work described below.

Who is responsible for the processing of your personal data?

The University of Gothenburg is the data controller for the processing carried out by students in the context of their studies.

If you have questions about the processing, you can contact the student who carries out the processing (**to be filled in by the student**).

Course code	PDA699
Title of the student's project	Podcurious (title in progress)
Name of the student	Marta Serpas-Guardado
Email address of the student	gusserpma@student.gu.se

Legal basis and purpose of the processing

According to chapter 1 §2 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), the university has a mission to organize education. This means that the university has the right to process personal data on the legal basis of public interest when it is necessary to fulfil its educational mission according to article 6.1 e GDPR.

This also means that individual students process personal data for educational purposes. Students process personal data in their education, e.g. when carrying out individual projects, essays or field studies. In these cases, the student must formulate an explicit and limited purpose for the project. The student has filled in the purpose of the project below.

Purpose for the student (to be filled in by the student)

This thesis will look at the role of podcasts-based informal learning in an organizational setting using employees in a Swedish consultancy company as case study in relation to the company's own podcast "Information talks". To qualify for the interview the respondent must be employed by Sigma Technologies at the time of the interview and have taken the survey related to this project prior to this interview.



The student will process the following data about you (to be filled in by the student)

Below, the student has ticked the data the student will process about you:

- name, contact information and/or address information
- only indirect personal data such as answers to survey questions, etc.
- ethnic origin
- political views
- religious or philosophical beliefs
- membership of a trade union
- health
- information about sexual life or sexual orientation
- genetic data
- biometric data used to uniquely identify a person
- data on offences against the law
- other types of personal data, please specify in free text:

Method of collection (to be filled in by the student)

Below, the student has ticked the method(s) that will be used for data collection in the project.

- Image or video recording
- Sound recording
- Survey
- Interview
- Observation
- Other method, describe it here:

Who will be able to access the personal data?

Only the persons involved in the project that the student is conducting for educational purposes at the University of Gothenburg will be able to access your personal data. This means, for example, that the student and a possible supervisor of the student will have access to your personal data.

Data can be requested under the principle of public access to official records

Your personal data or documents containing your personal data may, if submitted to the university by the student, be subject to a request in accordance with the principle of public access to official records. This means that individuals can request access to official documents and thus gain access to information in which your personal data appears, if these are not covered by confidentiality. These requests are handled in accordance with the principles of the Freedom of the Press Act (1949:105) and the Public Information and Privacy Act (2009:400).



Students are encouraged not to submit information about you that can identify you directly (name, contact details, etcetera) when submitting their finalised work. This way, it will in most cases only be possible to request indirect personal data about you from the university.

For how long will the personal data be processed?

Your personal data will only be processed for the duration of the student's work for educational purposes. After the project has been completed, the student will delete the personal data. However, this does not apply to data that has been submitted to the university and which thus becomes an official document (see above).

Will your personal data be processed outside the EU/EEA?

As the result of the university's activities, the university may transfer personal data to third countries; i.e. to countries outside the EU/EEA. In such circumstances, special legislation applies. In these cases, the university will take all reasonable legal, organizational and technical measures required to achieve an appropriate level of protection for the personal data. A transfer to the US may occur when the student is using the text editing and file storage tools provided by the university. The university uses Microsoft for these services.

Your rights according to GDPR

GDPR states that individuals have a number of rights. The most relevant rights are listed below. If you want to read a more detailed description of your rights according to GDPR, please visit <https://www.gu.se/en/about-the-website/processing-personal-data>.

Right of access (register extract)

As an individual, you have the right to once a year, free of charge, request information about what personal data the university processes about you. Contact us via dataskydd@gu.se to request an extract of your personal data from us.

The right to be forgotten

As an individual, you have the right to have your personal data erased in cases where the personal data is no longer needed to fulfil the purpose for which it was collected (the right to be forgotten).

There may be other legislation stating that personal data cannot be erased, in which case this legislation applies and the data cannot be erased.

In cases where there are legal obstacles to the deletion of personal data, the university will limit the processing of these personal data to only include processing to the extent that there is a legal basis for.

The right to object to processing

As an individual, you have in certain cases the right to object to the university processing your personal data. If there are no compelling reasons for the university to continue processing the personal data, such as to fulfil legal requirements, the university will cease processing.



Contact details for the Data Protection Officer

If you have questions about the specific processing, you can contact the student who collected the data. The student has filled in his/her/their name and contact details under the heading "Who is responsible for the processing of your personal data?" in this document.

If you have questions about the processing or have complaints, you can also contact the university's Data Protection Officer, by email dataskyddsbud@gu.se.

If you want to read more about how the University of Gothenburg processes personal data in general and a detailed description of your rights according to GDPR, please visit <https://www.gu.se/en/about-the-website/processing-personal-data>.

You have the right to complain to the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection (IMY)

If you believe that the university processes your personal data in violation of GDPR, you have the right to file a complaint with the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection, IMY. Further information on how to make a complaint can be found on the website of IMY, www.imy.se/en.

Consent to participating

Your participation in the student's work is voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any time until the work has been submitted. Please read the information above before agreeing to participate. If you have any questions about the above information or the student's work, please contact the student. The student's contact details can be found on the first page of the information and below.

Course code	PDA 699
Title of the student's project	Podcurious (title in progress)
Name of the student	Marta Serpas-Guardado
Email address of the student	gusserpma@student.gu.se

Consent

I consent to participation in the project carried out by the student as described above.

I consent to the processing of my personal data in the project mentioned above.

I have read the information presented together with this consent form.

Signature

Date

Name clarification

Contact information (Email and/or phone number)