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Podcast Engagement and Listeners' Self-Reported Information Processing and Credibility-Related Outcomes

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Abstract

Podcast listening can provide opportunities for informal learning, but less is known about how listeners engage with podcast content and evaluate its credibility. Drawing on the cognitive theory of multimedia learning and the MAIN model of digital media credibility as interpretive frameworks, this exploratory cross-sectional study examined associations between podcast engagement and listeners' self-reported information processing and credibility-related outcomes. An online survey was conducted among 605 respondents in Slovenia. Pearson correlations, Spearman sensitivity analyses, demographic comparisons, and exploratory ordinal regressions were used to examine the research questions. Taking notes, seeking additional material, and discussing episodes were positively associated with reported recall and integration with prior knowledge. Seeking additional material was associated with noticing omitted citations ($r = 0.31$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.38]); genre count was also associated with this outcome ($r = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.25]). Demographic comparisons did not survive false-discovery-rate adjustment. The findings concern self-reported associations; they do not establish causal effects or directly test the proposed theoretical mechanisms.

Keywords: podcasts; informal learning; information processing; trust; source-citation awareness; opinion change

1. Introduction

Podcasts are portable and available on demand, so people can listen while carrying out everyday activities [1,2]. Higher-education research has also examined their use as supplementary learning materials [3,4]. We know less about how listeners process podcast information and judge its credibility during everyday listening.

Studies of podcasting in education include work using narrative podcasts as shared learning experiences and student-produced podcasts to teach literature evaluation in pharmacy education [5,6]. Other research discusses podcasts in non-formal learning and their use in higher education [7,8]. Research on adult education has also considered how digital learning contexts shape pedagogical relationships, including the conditions for building trust in distance learning [9]. At the policy level, individual learning accounts have been discussed as a means of supporting self-directed learning among adults who do not participate in organized learning [10]. Together, these studies situate podcast listening within educational and adult-learning contexts, but they do not address whether listeners notice when hosts omit citations or report changing their opinions while listening.

Research has also examined how audiences respond to podcast information. In a representative U.S. survey, listeners reported their trust in podcasts as a news source and

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assessed their journalistic merit [11]. An exploratory Australian survey looked at news-podcast listening in relation to trust and political participation [12]. Focus groups about one German science podcast found that listeners considered cues such as hosts' voices and familiarity, as well as whether they could access sources and distinguish evidence from personal views [13]. Together, these studies describe audience responses in specific news and science settings. They leave open how listening practices relate to the outcomes reported by listeners across podcast genres.

Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning offers a perspective for examining how listeners process information and connect it with prior knowledge [14,15]. To consider credibility-related judgments, we draw on Sundar's MAIN model, which explains how features of digital media may prompt users to rely on cues when evaluating credibility [16]. The concept of epistemic vigilance provides a complementary perspective on how people assess communicators and messages [17]. These perspectives inform the interpretation of the study; the survey does not directly measure or test their proposed mechanisms. This exploratory study examines associations between six self-reported engagement practices, the number of podcast content categories selected, and listeners' self-reported information processing and credibility-related outcomes. It also compares outcomes across demographic groups. The cross-sectional analyses address associations and group differences; they cannot establish causal effects or assess general critical evaluation competence.

1.1. Cognitive Engagement with Podcast Content

Listeners may take notes, replay episodes, or look for additional material. Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning describes how learners select, organize, and integrate information, which helps frame our examination of reported listening and processing [14,15]. Research outside podcasting has examined how collaborative and individual note-taking relate to writing and recall in an instructional setting [18], while medical-education studies have examined learning outcomes associated with educational podcasts [4,19]. These studies do not show that a particular listening practice improves learning in this sample: engagement and processing were both self-reported, and the survey did not test learning performance, objective retention, or critical-thinking skill. Any relationship with credibility judgments could also reflect listeners' prior views.

1.2. Social Interaction and Trust in Media

Listening is often social. People talk with friends about episodes, exchange views with other listeners online, and follow podcast creators on social media. These activities link personal listening to recommendations and participatory media use [20]. Friends and family are a common source of podcast recommendations [21], showing how social ties can shape what people hear. Communication research distinguishes brief parasocial interactions from longer-lasting relationships with media figures [22–24]. Podcast studies have also examined personal storytelling and audience participation [11,25,26]. These ideas inform our analysis of social engagement and trust, although we did not measure parasocial relationships or whether interaction changes trust or evaluation accuracy.

1.3. Podcast Listening and Source-Citation Awareness

Media literacy concerns how audiences interpret and evaluate media messages [27]. A study of one German public-service science podcast offers a more direct point of comparison: listeners in focus groups linked transparency to access to evidence and a clear distinction between evidence and personal opinion [13]. That study involved ten adults and one episode, so it cannot tell us whether listeners routinely verify podcast sources. Our survey asks whether respondents notice when a host omits citations or sometimes changes their

opinion. It does not test whether they check sources or evaluate information accurately, nor does it measure media-literacy competence.

1.4. Demographic Factors and Podcast Information Evaluation

Age and education may shape how people find and assess media, though patterns vary by context. Wineburg and McGrew [28] distinguish finding information online from judging its reliability. Pennycook and Rand [29] examine reasoning, prior beliefs, and susceptibility to misinformation. Other studies address young adults' evaluation of web content and credibility heuristics [30,31]. We compare respondents under 30 with those aged 30 or older and respondents with primary or secondary education with those reporting higher vocational or university education, a master's degree, or a doctorate. Only one respondent was over 60; the older group cannot represent older adults generally.

1.5. An Integrative Framework for Podcast Engagement and Credibility

This study draws on complementary perspectives to examine how listeners engage with podcast content and evaluate information in an informal learning context. Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning provides a perspective on how learners select and integrate information with prior knowledge [14,15]. It informs our examination of reported engagement practices, such as note-taking and seeking additional material, in relation to self-reported recall and integration. Because the survey did not measure cognitive processes or learning performance directly, the findings cannot establish whether these practices improve learning. To interpret credibility-related outcomes, we draw on Sundar's MAIN model, which explains how features of digital media may prompt users to rely on cues when judging credibility [16]. The concept of epistemic vigilance complements this perspective by focusing on how people evaluate communicators and messages [17]. Together, these perspectives provide a context for examining respondents' reported trust in podcast information, noticing of omitted citations, and changes of opinion while listening. The questionnaire did not directly measure credibility cues or epistemic vigilance, nor did it assess whether respondents verified sources or evaluated information accurately.

These perspectives inform four exploratory research questions. RQ1 examines associations between engagement practices and self-reported information processing. RQ2 addresses associations between engagement practices and credibility-related outcomes, while RQ3 considers the number of podcast genres selected. RQ4 examines differences by age and education. The analyses describe associations and group differences; they do not test causal pathways or the theoretical mechanisms outlined above.

1.6. Aims of the Study

This study examines how podcast engagement practices, the number of podcast genres listened to, and selected demographic characteristics are associated with listeners' self-reported information processing, trust in podcast information, attention to source citations, and opinion change while listening.

With this background, the study asks four questions about listeners' reported practices, characteristics, and questionnaire outcomes:

- RQ1. How are podcast engagement practices associated with listeners' self-reported recall, surface-level understanding, forgetting, and integration of podcast information with prior knowledge?
- RQ2. How are podcast engagement practices, including interpersonal and online interaction, associated with listeners' self-reported trust in podcast information, noticing when a host does not cite sources, and opinion change while listening?

- RQ3. How is the number of podcast genre categories respondents listen to associated with self-reported trust in podcast information, noticing when hosts do not cite sources, and self-reported opinion change while listening?
- RQ4. How are respondents' age group and educational attainment associated with differences in self-reported trust in podcast information, noticing when hosts do not cite sources, and self-reported opinion change while listening?

Because quantitative research on podcast engagement and credibility-related outcomes is limited, we framed the study around exploratory research questions rather than directional hypotheses. The cross-sectional survey allows us to examine associations and group differences, but not causal relationships. It also does not directly test the theoretical processes discussed above or measure source-verification accuracy or critical-evaluation competence.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample

The Slovenian-language online questionnaire was hosted on 1KA and available in Slovenia throughout March 2024. The link was shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and recipients were encouraged to redistribute it. Anyone with the link could participate; the questionnaire concerned podcast listening. The dataset contained 605 responses. Respondents comprised 307 men, 297 women, and one person with no recorded gender; 13 were under 18, 255 were aged 18–29, 237 were 30–44, 99 were 45–60, and one was over 60. Education was primary ($n = 14$), secondary ($n = 147$), higher vocational or university education ($n = 285$), or a master's degree or doctorate ($n = 159$). One record was missing gender; the analyzed Q12–Q14 items and other demographic fields had no missing values in the supplied data file. Recruitment was self-selected, and the sample is not necessarily representative. No population benchmark was available for comparison. Information about attention checks, duplicate screening, and straight-line exclusion was unavailable.

Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, that they could stop before submission, and that submitted anonymous responses could not generally be withdrawn individually. The information statement described the study's purpose and confidential research use; proceeding to the next page indicated consent. No separate parental consent procedure was used for respondents under 18. The authors have cited Article 6(a) of the University of Ljubljana's rules as the basis for considering this minimal-participation survey exempt from review; a formal exemption determination has not been documented in the materials available for this revision.

2.2. Instruments

The author-developed questionnaire contained 17 questions. Q12 asked how often respondents engaged in six practices: taking notes, seeking supplementary material, listening twice, discussing podcasts with friends, interacting with listeners online, and following creators on social media. Q13 asked how often respondents remembered information, understood it only superficially, forgot it, or connected it to prior knowledge. In the reported item-level analyses, all Q13 responses were used in their original direction: higher scores on the superficial-understanding and forgetting items indicate more frequent reports of those experiences. Three Q14 items asked about trust in the truthfulness of podcast information, noticing when a host did not cite sources, and changing one's opinion about a topic while listening. All Q12–Q14 items had five frequency categories from never to very often. The opinion-change item did not specify the topic, direction, or duration of change. Genre count was recomputed as the sum of the nine Q5 content choices, including 'other' (observed

range 1–8); it measures selected-category breadth, not listening time or viewpoint diversity. Q1 measured listening frequency; age, gender, and education were categorical.

2.3. Reliability and Validity

Two researchers in media studies and educational technology reviewed the author-developed questionnaire for relevance and clarity before distribution. The items analyzed here represent distinct practices or outcomes and were analyzed separately, not as validated latent scales. Internal consistency cannot be estimated for an individual item, and no confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The reported group alpha coefficients do not establish the validity of separate behavior or outcome items. Validated multi-item scales and direct measures of source evaluation are needed in future research [32].

2.4. Data Analysis

We recomputed derived variables from the original questionnaire responses. Pearson correlations describe unadjusted linear associations among six practices and four Q13 items, and between the practices or genre count and three Q14 items. We report 95% confidence intervals and two-sided p values; Spearman correlations provide ordinal sensitivity analyses. The nine demographic comparisons used one-way ANOVA with group sizes, means, standard deviations, F tests, eta squared, and confidence intervals for mean differences. Benjamini–Hochberg false-discovery-rate adjustments were applied separately to 24 practice–processing correlations, 21 credibility-related correlations, nine demographic comparisons, and 30 coefficients across three exploratory adjusted models. These families were defined for the revision, after data collection. Three proportional-odds logistic regressions included the six practices, genre count, age, education, and gender simultaneously; 604 records had complete model variables. Wald odds ratios and confidence intervals and McFadden pseudo-R^2 are reported. A cluster-robust Wald comparison of threshold-specific binary-logit slopes assessed proportional odds. The citation-awareness model showed no evidence of unequal slopes ($p = 0.170$); the opinion-change model showed evidence against proportional odds ($p < 0.001$). For trust, sparse categories caused nonconvergence and numerical separation in the threshold models, so the diagnostic was unreliable. Model estimates are exploratory, particularly for trust and opinion change. Full results appear in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results.

3. Results

3.1. RQ1: Engagement Practices and Self-Reported Information Processing

The results below describe associations; the cross-sectional design cannot establish direction or cause.

Table 1 reports Pearson correlations between six self-reported podcast-engagement practices and four self-reported information-processing experiences: recall, surface-level understanding, forgetting, and integration with prior knowledge. The practices include individual listening strategies as well as interpersonal and online engagement.

All six engagement practices were positively associated with self-reported recall after adjustment for the 24 correlations ($r = 0.11$–0.23). Note-taking, seeking additional materials, and discussing podcasts with friends were also associated with integration with prior knowledge ($r = 0.14$–0.17). These associations concern self-reports and do not establish gains in memory or learning.

Table 1. Correlations between engagement and processing of podcast content.

	Retention of Information	Surface-Level Understanding	Content Forgetfulness	Integration with Prior Knowledge
Take notes while listening	0.11 *	0.04	−0.01	0.17 *
Seek additional materials	0.23 *	0.05	−0.04	0.14 *
Listen to episodes twice	0.18 *	0.01	−0.06	0.05
Discuss with friends	0.23 *	0.06	−0.01	0.15 *
Engage with listeners online	0.13 *	0.03	−0.09	0.02
Follow creators on social media	0.11 *	0.02	−0.04	0.09

Note: Pearson r, N = 605. * Benjamini–Hochberg adjusted $p < 0.05$ within the 24 practice–processing correlations. Higher scores on surface-level understanding and forgetting indicate more frequent reports of those experiences. Exact *p* values, confidence intervals, and Spearman estimates appear in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results.

3.2. Podcast Engagement Practices and Credibility-Related Self-Reports

Table 2 reports correlations between all six Q12 engagement practices and three Q14 outcomes: self-reported trust in podcast information, noticing when a host does not cite sources (citation awareness), and sometimes changing one's opinion while listening (opinion change).

Table 2. Correlations between podcast-engagement practices and credibility-related self-reports.

	Trust	Citation Awareness	Opinion Change
To take notes while listening	0.03	0.17 *	0.17 *
To seek additional materials	0.03	0.31 *	0.21 *
To listen twice	0.00	0.06	0.10 *
To discuss with friends	0.11 *	0.11 *	0.14 *
To engage with listeners online	0.11 *	0.12 *	0.17 *
To follow creators on social media	0.12 *	0.04	0.18 *

*Note: Pearson r, N = 605. * Benjamini–Hochberg adjusted $p < 0.05$ within the 21 practice/genre–credibility correlations. Exact p values, confidence intervals, and Spearman estimates appear in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results.*

Seeking additional material had the strongest association with noticing omitted citations (r = 0.31, 95% CI [0.23, 0.38]). Several practices were associated with self-reported opinion change. These unadjusted associations do not show whether respondents checked sources or what prompted an opinion change. In the exploratory adjusted models, seeking additional material remained associated with citation awareness after adjustment for 30 model coefficients (OR = 1.72, 95% CI [1.42, 2.09], adjusted $p < 0.001$). The threshold-slope diagnostic for citation awareness did not detect unequal slopes, but its result does not establish that the assumption holds.

3.3. Genre Count and Self-Reported Evaluation Outcomes

We related the number of selected content categories (including 'other'; observed range 1–8) to the three Q14 outcomes. This count describes category breadth, not viewpoint diversity or listening time (see Table 3).

Table 3. Correlations between genre count and self-reported evaluation outcomes.

	Genre Count *
To trust podcast information	0.05
Notice omitted source citations	0.17 *
Report opinion change while listening	0.09 *

Note: Pearson r, N = 605. * Benjamini–Hochberg adjusted $p < 0.05$ within the 21 practice/genre–credibility correlations. Exact p values and confidence intervals appear in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results.

Genre count was associated with reported noticing of omitted citations (r = 0.17) and opinion change (r = 0.09) after adjustment within the 21 correlations. Its relationship with trust was uncertain (r = 0.05). These associations do not establish exposure to diverse viewpoints or actual source checking.

3.4. Age, Education, and Self-Reported Evaluation Outcomes

Table 4 presents group means and standard deviations for the three outcomes. Age compares respondents under 30 with those aged 30 or older; education combines primary and secondary education versus higher vocational or university education, a master's degree, or a doctorate. Gender was missing for one respondent. Full tests and 95% confidence intervals for mean differences appear in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results. Age was collected in bands; the under-30 versus 30-or-older division is an exploratory comparison that combines categories and therefore loses information about variation across age groups. Because each demographic factor has two groups, post hoc pairwise tests were not required.

Table 4. Demographic group differences in self-reported evaluation outcomes.

	Trust	Citation Awareness	Opinion Change
Gender			
Male	3.96 (0.53)	3.05 (1.08)	2.97 (0.64)
Female	3.97 (0.65)	3.02 (1.18)	2.96 (0.66)
Age			
Under 30	3.93 (0.65)	2.90 (1.18)	3.01 (0.69)
30 or older	3.98 (0.56)	3.14 (1.08)	2.93 (0.62)
Education Level			
Primary/Secondary school	3.88 (0.66)	2.96 (1.18)	2.93 (0.70)
Higher vocational/university or postgraduate	3.99 (0.58)	3.06 (1.11)	2.98 (0.64)

Note: Cells show mean (standard deviation). None of the nine comparisons met the 0.05 threshold after Benjamini–Hochberg adjustment. Gender comparisons include 604 respondents; age and education comparisons include 605. Group sizes were 307 men and 297 women, 268 under 30 and 337 aged 30 or older, and 161 with primary or secondary education and 444 with higher vocational or university education or a postgraduate degree. For trust, citation awareness, and opinion change, respectively, η^2 values were 0.000, 0.000, and 0.000 for gender; 0.001, 0.012, and 0.004 for age; and 0.006, 0.001, and 0.001 for education. Values rounded to 0.000 are smaller than 0.0005, not necessarily zero. Exact test results, unadjusted confidence intervals for mean differences, and adjusted p values are provided in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results.

The age-group difference in citation awareness was small (mean difference = 0.24, 95% CI [0.06, 0.42], $F(1, 603) = 7.02$, $p = 0.008$, $eta^2 = 0.012$) but did not meet the 0.05 threshold after adjustment across the nine demographic comparisons (adjusted $p = 0.075$). The education-group difference in trust was smaller than previously reported and was

inconclusive (mean difference = 0.10, 95% CI [−0.004, 0.21], $p = 0.059$, adjusted $p = 0.264$). The remaining comparisons also did not meet the adjusted threshold.

3.5. Adjusted Ordinal Regression Analyses

We fitted separate adjusted proportional-odds models for trust, noticing omitted citations, and opinion change. Each model included all six engagement practices, genre count, age, education, and gender (n = 604). The citation-awareness model showed a positive adjusted association with seeking additional materials (OR = 1.72, 95% CI [1.42, 2.09], multiplicity-adjusted $p < 0.001$; McFadden pseudo-$R^2 = 0.048$). Its threshold-slope diagnostic did not detect unequal slopes ($p = 0.170$), although this does not establish the assumption. The trust model's threshold-specific diagnostic models showed sparse-data separation and nonconvergence, while the opinion-change model showed unequal threshold slopes ($p < 0.001$). We therefore do not interpret those two models substantively. Table 5 summarizes the three models; full coefficients appear in the Supplementary Material S1: Complete Analysis Results.

Table 5. Summary of adjusted ordinal regression models.

Outcome	Model N	Adjusted Result	Diagnostic and Interpretation
Trust	604	McFadden pseudo-$R^2 = 0.030$	Threshold-specific diagnostic models showed sparse-data separation and nonconvergence; do not interpret coefficients.
Noticing omitted citations	604	Seeking additional materials: OR = 1.72, 95% CI [1.42, 2.09], adjusted $p < 0.001$; McFadden pseudo-$R^2 = 0.048$	No evidence of unequal threshold slopes ($p = 0.170$); proportional odds is not established.
Opinion change	604	McFadden pseudo-$R^2 = 0.050$	Unequal threshold slopes ($p < 0.001$); do not interpret coefficients.

4. Discussion

4.1. Engagement Practices and Self-Reported Information Processing

Because the survey was cross-sectional, we interpret the following patterns as associations rather than causal effects.

Several reported engagement practices were associated with accounts of recall and integration. The associations are broadly consistent with research on retrieval practice and levels of processing [33,34], although those studies did not use these measures or examine podcast listening. Our survey did not test recall, comprehension, or learning gains, and cannot determine whether the practices improve learning.

4.2. Engagement Practices and Credibility-Related Self-Reports

Seeking additional materials was associated with noticing omitted citations and with opinion change. Its association with citation awareness also appeared in an exploratory adjusted model, subject to the model limitations described below. Social practices showed smaller unadjusted associations with some outcomes. These findings do not establish source checking or the reasons for opinion change.

4.3. Listening Across Genres and Information Evaluation

Genre count was positively associated with reported noticing of omitted citations and opinion change, but the estimated latter association was small. Viewpoint-diversity research

provides context [35,36], but the measure counts selected content categories and cannot establish viewpoint diversity or source checking.

4.4. Demographic Differences and the Limits of Interpretation

Respondents aged 30 or older reported noticing omitted citations more often than those under 30, but the difference did not meet the false-discovery-rate threshold for the demographic family. The older category includes only one respondent over 60 and should not be interpreted as representing older adults generally. The item measures reported noticing, not actual source verification.

The education-group comparison did not provide clear evidence of a trust difference after the original categories were recombined and multiplicity was considered. The higher category includes higher vocational education as well as university education and postgraduate degrees. Education does not establish why respondents trusted podcast information.

Listeners may use production quality, tone, or familiar journalistic conventions as credibility cues [16]. Because we did not measure these cues or ask why respondents trusted podcast information, this interpretation remains to be tested.

The absence of clear statistical evidence for an education-group difference in citation awareness does not establish equivalent source verification. The survey did not assess digital literacy or verification competence [28]. The demographic comparisons did not provide clear evidence of differences in self-reported opinion change. The item does not identify the topic, direction, duration, or cause of any change.

Differences between education groups require further study with better measures and larger or more diverse samples. The adjusted models are exploratory and cannot establish the credibility processes involved. Podcast apps shape how people discover, organize, and share shows [37]. We did not collect data on app use, recommendations, or ratings. Future studies could examine whether these features relate to the range of genres listeners hear, their trust in podcast information, noticing omitted citations, or direct measures of source checking.

4.5. Limitations and Future Research

Convenience and snowball recruitment limit generalizability and may overrepresent digitally active listeners. Thirteen participants were under 18, and only one was over 60. The questionnaire was author-developed, and the Q14 outcomes were single items; they do not measure actual source checking, accuracy, or general critical-evaluation competence. A shared self-report method may have influenced associations, but the direction and size of any such influence are unknown.

The cross-sectional, correlational design precludes causal inference. The reported associations do not determine whether engagement practices relate to self-reported processing or evaluation outcomes in either direction, or whether other factors account for the relationships. Longitudinal and experimental designs are needed to investigate these questions.

The ordinal regression models adjust for measured covariates but remain observational. The threshold-slope diagnostic indicated a violation for opinion change and was unreliable for trust because the threshold models exhibited sparse-data separation and nonconvergence. It did not detect unequal slopes for citation awareness, but this does not confirm the assumption. The trust and opinion-change models should not support substantive conclusions. Single-item ordinal responses also limit interpretation of correlations and group means. Further work should assess model assumptions and use validated multi-item and behavioral measures. Future research could expose listeners to podcast episodes with experimentally varied citation practices, then assess citation detection, source verification,

and recall directly. Longitudinal or experimental designs could investigate the timing and potential causes of opinion change.

5. Conclusions

This cross-sectional survey found associations between podcast engagement practices and listeners' self-reported information processing. Note-taking, seeking additional material, and discussing episodes were positively associated with reported recall and integration with prior knowledge. These findings do not establish that engagement practices improve learning or cause changes in trust or opinion. The number of podcast content categories selected was positively associated with reported noticing of omitted citations and opinion change. However, genre count reflects the breadth of selected content categories rather than exposure to diverse viewpoints. None of the age, education, or gender comparisons met the 0.05 threshold after adjustment for multiple comparisons. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning provides a perspective for considering how listeners process and connect information, while the MAIN model and the concept of epistemic vigilance offer perspectives on credibility-related judgments. These frameworks were used to interpret the research questions and findings; the survey did not directly measure or test their proposed mechanisms.

The findings are limited by convenience sampling, an author-developed questionnaire, single-item measures of trust, citation awareness, and opinion change, and the cross-sectional design. The study did not assess actual recall, source verification, or critical evaluation competence. Podcast creators could make source links and supplementary materials easier to find. Educators could invite learners to locate cited sources and discuss the evidence supporting claims, while media literacy initiatives could teach source-location and assessment strategies. The effectiveness of these approaches should be examined in future research using objective measures of recall and source evaluation.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/soc16110420/s1. S1: Complete Analysis Results.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was not submitted for prior ethical review. The authors considered it to fall within the category of research not requiring review under Article 6(a) of the University of Ljubljana's Rules for the Processing of Applications by KERL UL, as the anonymous online survey involved minimal participant involvement and did not collect identified personal data. No formal exemption determination was obtained.

Informed Consent Statement: Participants received information about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to stop before submitting the questionnaire. Informed consent was indicated by proceeding to the questionnaire. No separate parental consent procedure was used for participants under 18, and the age categories recorded do not allow us to determine whether any were younger than 15, an age relevant to assessing parental consent requirements under Slovenian guidance.

Data Availability Statement: The dataset used in this study is openly available in Zenodo at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23945287, subject to the access conditions specified in the repository record.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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