

Transcript of Podcast 061: What I Wish I'd Known About Podcasting Before I Started

{Intro:

My friend Kitty: Did you come to a conclusion.?)

{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a fortnightly series looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Brit with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the 'whys' behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

I've been in Glasgow exactly a year. Well, that's not quite true, I've been in Glasgow just over exactly a year, but while I got the keys to the flat on August 13th, it took me a couple of weeks to gradually move in, most of my stuff not arriving until towards the end of August. It's been an interesting year, quite productive, quite expensive compared with renting a room off my friend in Sheffield, but considerably better for my mental health.

It'd be clichéd to give a whole list of Things That Have Gone Well and Things that Did Not Go Quite As Well in that year, but to be honest I think that would bore you. As well as being a bit nebulous, given I moved here while Scotland was still under some pandemic restrictions and it took several months for social things to restart. So though I haven't quite taken advantage of being in civilisation, aside from the regular visits to the local wee bar, it's for once not necessarily been my fault.

I have started to socialise though - and last week saw me out twice in successive days. On the Wednesday it was my second iteration with Non-Binary Night in Glasgow, which was pretty cool; I met a whole new host of people who I won't remember by the time the next one comes, while the day after it was a writing workshop in a vegetarian cafe, again with a whole posse of Queers. By Writing Workshop, I mean, they gave us a whole list of writing prompts to do things with, and we had an hour and a half to make something of them. We could read them out afterwards. Prompts I didn't use included 'Eat a Peach', 'Write an anti-love poem' (which got me thinking that my old writing website is inaccessible. It's not offline, it's there, I just can't remember the name of the subdirectory I moved all the content to, and it's not indexed by google), and 'Advise a Young Poet' (which my casual notes just has the word 'no', next to it). As one of the writing prompts was "Write the longest sentence you can", it was low-key tempting to just write one sentence for an hour and a half, because that's the sort of thing I could probably easily do. That said, I got bored after 246 words and wrote something on 'don't use adjectives'.

It was scheduled to be the last one of the writing get-togethers as the people organising them are moving to London very soon, but a couple of others have already offered to take over so hopefully it'll still be an ongoing thing. It'd be weird if the first time I attended something would also be the last time it took place.

What else have I done this month? Not very much, I must admit. I've been feeling a bit 'blah' at the way the world is right now, and especially the way the UK is, doubly so with the knowledge there's not a great deal even I can do anything about it. But though I'm a political blogger and podcaster, I do try to avoid talking about politics directly, because it's annoying. To both you and me, let's be honest. When I was a teenager I was quite into actual politics, you know, party politics and the way government and parliament worked. I guess because in those days, it kinda did work. There was, at least, a sense of coherence and a moral structure. I blame Tony Blair for it all going wrong. There's no reason to blame Tony Blair, it's just he's an easy target.

Actually, actually, I blame Gillian Duffy. Sort of. But that's a whole 'nother story.

I'm away next month for two weekends, or at least I am in theory. At the start of the month I'm going back to Nottinghamshire to meet a couple of old friends from back that way. The actual reason is because my friend in Sheffield is selling her house and I still have an old desktop computer there I need to collect before she does, but it makes sense to use the opportunity to do some catching-up. Oddly my friend is moving to near Glasgow

so in theory the computer could move with her and it'd be far easier to pick up after the event, but I'm feeling nice.

In mid-September I'm allegedly going to Brno, in Czechia, for the travel blogger conference run by Traverse. Those of you with very long memories will note that it was just after the 2018 one in Rotterdam that I started this podcast, and I couldn't attend the 2019 one because I was hiking up the Pennine Way at the time. Traverse are also the organisation who ran the Creator Awards that I nipped down to London for in October last year when something I wrote about Apartheid in South Africa was unexpectedly nominated for something I didn't win. Anyway. It'll be cool to hang out again with lots of people I know from Twitter, and I've booked my place on a couple of trips and workshops, including a brewery tour and a group all about TikTok, and while I don't use TikTok, my VA is actively trying to get me on YouTube Shorts, which works out as a very similar concept.

As an aside, my experience of TikTok is what friends in one of my only WhatsApp groups post, and I'll be honest, it vibes to me like Tumblr-but-on-video. What they send is like 80% shitposting, stuff that's just, quite, bizarre and makes little sense. Maybe that's the kind of people I hang around with. I am sure Travel Blogger TikTok is very different, but my only exposure to that is what my Instagram friends cross-post.

This podcast was supposed to have been on beer. But I was waiting for a couple of contributions that never came - but which will come at the Travel Blogger Conference because my contributors will be there, and I'll have a recording device and be able to do it. I did the same in previous podcasts on Vanuatu and London, and it makes me pretend I'm a proper journalist type of person. It's quite fun.

I then had to ponder what to do this podcast on, if it wasn't going to be beer. I did think about doing one on Glasgow, since I live here and I've spent the best part of a year exploring it, but I didn't want to do another geographic-based pod, especially after my last couple have been me talking about my trips. So instead, I'm going completely off-script, and I haven't told my VA this so when she gets the notification she's going to go 'what the heck, Nel?', but I'm going to do something quite 'meta' and talk about podcasting. Since it's been over four years since I started this pod, since I've done nearly 70 episodes, and since I've recently passed 20,000 downloads. I'm going to talk about 'things I wish I'd known before I started'.

{section separation jingle}

Actually, before I get into that I want to talk about why I have a podcast in the first place. I know I've gone into this in previous podcasts, about how I couldn't be mythered editing pictures for my blog, and I've always been more fond of radio than TV, especially when growing up, and how I figured it'd be easier than being a vlogger and dealing with video editing. And to be fair, it is, it's far easier than video editing. I encountered this on my Hike Across Great Britain. "Let's have a shot of you walking up to that stile. Lovely, great, let's have another one. And another one. Now let's have a shot of you going over the stile. No, you've led with the wrong foot, for consistency we need to do that again. Fabulous, now let's take a couple more. Awesome. Okay, so now we need a shot of you walking away from the stile. Other hand, please. Nice. Okay, and another."

Plus of course there's the whole deal about, if I make a mistake when I'm podding, I just re-read the passage and edit out the error, and you're none the wiser that a mistake has ever been made. On video, it's a whole series of cuts and continuity, and the final product either takes hours, or looks like it's a mishmash of takes because it's clear I've moved between edits.

Also, I have a very short attention span, and it often shows in my facial expressions. Plus, this means my short term memory is borked. With a podcast, I can sit or stand in front of my computer, and my mic, and just read off the screen and it sounds really fluent and fluid. I haven't yet figured out a way to sit in front of a video camera and be able to read words off a screen - I don't have the technical ability for autocues and to be honest I don't like them anyway, I like to be able to read ahead at least a paragraph so I know where I need to pitch my voice. This means I'd be really uncomfortable, unconfident, and speak with a lot of hesitancy if I were on camera. And it would be obvious if you watched me. It's why I've been slow and reluctant to even to YouTube Shorts. That I live alone doesn't help; I have to set up everything myself which adds to the angst and the hassle in doing video. Recording a podcast is something I can easily do on my own as it only requires audio input and audio editing.

Obviously there's a quality question to ponder about, and the better your setup the better the sound at the other end. I've listened to podcasts with some very awful sound quality, recorded on a dodgy £5 microphone or

a cheap, old, mobile phone, but, and this is the important thing, those podcasts were still recorded, still produced, and still issued. Sometimes the content is more important.

My early podcasts were recorded on a hand-held journalist voice recorder. It's a pretty good quality voice recorder, but it's still a voice recorder. I had to record in decent conditions, transfer the file, then edit the feck out of it. I'm happy with what I produced for it, and as I say I'll still collate contributions using it, and it's still excellent in recording stuff 'out and about', something I very rarely do but which I feel would be useful to do more of, but if you listen to my older podcasts and compare the overall quality to my more recent ones, you can definitely feel the difference. In those days I was recording speaking into the voice recorder, usually without the wind muffler, just sat at my desk in a bedroom. Which is good enough, for sure, and I use Audacity to clarify the recordings, but these days I record using a proper podcasting microphone attached to my computer, sat at my desk and underneath a duvet. Not only is the original audio quality much better, but I've noticed I also need to do less editing of what gets recorded. And this isn't even me being more fluid with my speech, but rather a better quality of input leading to less post-production work. It's not so much a lesson-learned, since I wouldn't have ... wanted? to go into it with better quality equipment, especially because when I started I didn't know if it was going to be like all my other ADHD obsessions and not be touched after four episodes, but definitely it's notable with hindsight.

{some kind of separation jingle}

This ADHD thing is actually quite an important factor, to be honest,. So many people start podcasts and then they kind of ... stop. Now, in early 2018, so about when I was contemplating starting my podcast, the Pacific-Content blog, using the Castbox app as a base (it's the app I use for my podcast listening, so I'm familiar with it), produced analysis and published the following two stats:

12% of podcasts had only published one episode. Now obviously some of those pods would have been Very New at the time of the research, but still ...

The median number of episodes was 14. That is to say, half of all podcasts on Castbox at the time of research had published 14 or fewer episodes. Again, this includes ongoing pods that had only reached 14, but it definitely highlights the fact that a large number of podcasters have this great idea of starting a podcast ... and then not getting very far with it.

Much more recently (covering the period April 21 to July 22), Amplifi Media, using Spotify as their base (thus using a much bigger sample) produced analysis that suggests very little had changed. In particular, they note: 32%, or just under a third, of all podcasts had produced more than 10 episodes, while 47% had produced three or fewer. Again, this will include very new podcasts, but even monthly podcasts would have to have been started relatively recently to be accidentally picked up in this stat, especially since ...

12% of podcasts had been updated in the previous 90 days; 8% in the last 30 days. And, for podcasts with more than 10 episodes, this figure surprisingly *drops*, to 7% - in volume terms this represents just over 280,000 podcasts.

Although a low percentage, that's still a lot of podcasts. It's just ... it definitely shows that there's an awful lot more failed podcasts out there. It also shows there's a fair number of 'ended' podcasts - successful pods with many episodes that have reached a natural conclusion, or which have ended due to change of circumstance meaning it was no longer feasible to keep recording. One example was the A.OK pod, interviews with asexuals and aromantics by Courtney Lang, which I've been a guest on, that ran for 71 episodes. Another was Tony Fletcher's 'One Step Beyond' pod, 34 long episodes about hiking, running, and outdoorsy life. Both ended purposefully and with advance warning. Other podcasts I listened to have just ... ended (Not So Bon Voyage, at 73 episodes, is the most notable example in my playlist).

Now, if I go back to the very start of my podcast. I'd been recently made redundant, and neither time nor money were a problem to me at that point. I figured podcasting was an easier thing than blogging, and certainly vlogging, and I had so much scope to create a weekly podcast where I could, effectively, blog without the admin, and it'd be great and ... lots of other adjectives that didn't come to fruition.

What I wish I'd known before I started, or at least what I wish I'd *realised* before I started, is just how much work a podcast was. I still maintain it's less work than a vlog, but after having done a couple of episodes, it became very quickly clear how much more effort it was than a simple blog. I always had trouble writing regular blog posts in the first place, and since I needed to have something written down for me to read otherwise I'd be lost in a world of hesitation, deviation, and repetition, this meant effectively I'd need to write a 5k blog post every week.

And then I went on a trip to New Zealand, Vanuatu, Australia, and Sri Lanka for over two months. And though I took my tablet computer with me, it was also clear that that simply wasn't powerful enough to cope with the demands that a podcast required. My third episode had a major fault in production that was a hassle to fix, and I kind of lost the vibe. I still wanted to *do* a podcast, but I stopped wanting to *make* one. Episode 4 was three months after Episode 3 (and I maintain Episode 3 was my worst episode; most podcasters work on the basis the first one they do will be the worst, but with me I've pretty much disowned episode 3, to the extent I went back on the topic nearly three years later and rehashed it in Episode 38), and then my pods were roughly monthly for a little while until Episode 9 was released in March 2019. Episode 11 arrived in ... late December 2019, some nine months later. Now some of that was due to me not being around for much of the year - a two month hike across Great Britain followed by three months Inter-Railing around Europe, but still ...

The problem is with regards to audience expectation. At the very start, I'd openly stated it would be a weekly podcast. I was unable to follow through with that, which means within four episodes, I'd effectively failed my audience. What I wish I'd known, therefore, is how much work it was to make a podcast, and therefore what I should have told my audience at the time what to expect.

I used to work for an energy company; yes, one of the big ones, yes you can hate me; and my job was to analyse the answers to customer satisfaction feedback surveys, There's a whole stand-up comedy routine I could do about that. But for the purposes of this podcast, the important thing to know is that very quickly in that role, one thing became clear. The question we asked was 'on a scale of 0-10, how likely are you to recommend us to your friends and family', and when we first implemented that question, we did so on the customer journey from point-of-sale to first-bill. It wasn't large bills that customers objected to. In fact there was no correlation at all between the size of the bill and customer satisfaction. This may surprise you. But think of it this way - if you live in a 5-bedroom mansion, you *know* your energy bill is going to be higher than if you live in a one bedroom flat, Rather, it was very apparent that the scores at the point of First Bill were very definitely affected by the expectations set at Point Of Sale. If our sales advisors said 'your bill is going to be x' and their bill was x, regardless of whether x was £20 or £2000, the customer was far happier, and gave far higher satisfaction scores, than if we told them at point of sale the bill was going to be £20 and it turned out the bill was £30.

So it is with podcasts, If you tempt your audience with weekly podcasts and then produce an episode every three months, they're going to be far more irked with you than if you said at the start 'look, I'm going to try for fortnightly podcasts but if they end up being monthly, so be it'. People expect to get the pod in their app of choice on a regular basis. It doesn't have to be frequent, it just has to be regular, or at least they need to know when to expect it.

I still don't do this, but at least I'm more honest about it. And oddly, I'm much closer to having a weekly podcast, in some senses of the word, than I ever have been, I still call it fortnightly, though.

It also helps to have a regular time/day for episode release, again for audience expectations. When I started my podcast, I tried to get each episode out on Thursdays, specifically 5.30am on Thursday mornings. I still try to do this, but often I lapse. It doesn't matter how *frequent* your podcast is, it just has to be regular, so your audience knows when to expect it, so they have confidence and trust in your podcast, and therefore in you. You can get them to 'look forward' to the next episode, which can only happen if they can reasonably expect it.

Conversely, the podcast 'Or, Learn Parkour', a podcast about ADHD by two people who have ADHD, is on episode 39. I have genuinely no idea what its schedule is. And I've no idea how it's reached 39 episodes. And to be honest, I don't think they do, either.

{section separation jingle}

I'm sure most people go into creating a podcast with some kind of plan about what they want to talk about, what they want their podcast to be about, what niche they want to fill, and with an idea of who their audience are or what they want, and not just go right from 'hey I've got an idea, let's start a podcast' to dropping Episode One. I mean, maybe they do. Sometimes you can even tell from the structure inherent within the pod.

There's a writing podcast I listen to, Prompety Prompt, that runs in 'seasons', of 8 or so episodes, followed by a break (with extra bonus episodes slotted in). Now, I don't know if they actually do this, but I very definitely get the impression with season 1 that they recorded and edited their entire season of episodes before they launched their pod - that is to say, they'd finished their entire season and scheduled it for broadcast *before*

they dropped their first episode. So everything was planned, structured, known in advance and there was no possibility of error.

Conversely, lifestyle podcast *Sounds Fake But Okay*, 227 episodes, and who have only just discovered that seasons are *A Thing*, have weekly episodes that they record about two or three days in advance. I know this because they tell us, and sometimes it all goes horribly wrong and episodes get delayed for ... reasons. In addition, they have ideas on what to talk about in advance, but largely speaking they decide on what their episode subject is going to be about only when they come to plan and record it. And if they can't think of anything, they just do something about Reddit, because it's easy material.

You may not be surprised to know I pod much more like the latter than the former. Indeed this episode is a prime example of exactly that. I have a list of subjects I know I want to blog about, but I don't actively go through any preparation to do them, even when I know the subject matter in question is going to involve a lot of research or effort. Unlike *Sounds Fake* though, I don't have an easy repository to fall back on, so my 'solution' is to skip episodes, which doesn't help audience expectation. I also write and record my podcasts relatively close to release; it's been known for me to release an episode immediately after I've finished editing it, but certainly for a Thursday morning release (which we'll touch on later), this means I usually finish recording and editing it on the Wednesday evening. This, as an aside, is why I don't offer 'early release' of my podcast episodes to my Patreon subscribers.

When I started my pod though, or rather, from Episode 2 because I always knew Episode 1 would be a 'special case', I tried to have a kind of 'structure' to the episodes: a travel-themed pod (eg solo travel, packing, hometown travel), a more deep-dive or political episode (travel privilege, queer travel, influencers), and a destination episode (Vanuatu, London, Uzbekistan), and I'd repeat this circle of three. This was so I always varied my content, and showcased that I was more than just a travel blogger. While I've not stuck strictly to this concept, it's certainly something still in my mind to follow, which is also sometimes why I miss episodes, because I can't easily make one with suitable content in the short time I give myself.

So yeh, my takeout here is - plan ahead, make content ahead of time, so if you're stuck for something, you have a ready-made episode you can release, rather than missing one.

{section separation jingle}

This also leads to a secondary lessons-learned. The way I've always liked to do my podcasts is to include contributions from others, as well as sliding in stock sound effects to punctuate my episodes and give them more life.

The big takeout here is: have a library of sound effects and contributions before you start. Now, the latter very much is dependent on episode content, so obviously as I've made more episodes I've thought of new subjects to talk about, but I still should be crowdsourcing them in advance rather than last-minute. I've had so many episodes run late or not at all because I wanted to get other people's input and I've not had any to hand when I wanted to record.

A secondary 'I wish I'd learned' concept is the realisation of just how much work it is to ask for contributions and follow-up with people who promised but haven't delivered. I am not, and have never been, comfortable in sales-like environments, and sometimes that's how I feel chasing up people is. It's something I often put low on my list because I don't like pushing my needs in front of others. It's hard enough to ask in the first place, which is why I tend to do it passively. It's also why I tend to have fewer contribs on pods than I hoped, and why many of them come from the same people. My most frequent contributor, appearing on a little under a quarter of all my episodes, is Amanda Kendle, who hosts the *Thoughtful Travel Pod* (289 episodes). Oddly, she once messaged me in a slight panic asking me to contribute to one of her episodes, for diversity reasons, because that episode (an overview episode) had too many Female Australians on it.

I ask for contribs because I never wanted to go down the whole 'interview' type pod, like Amanda's. Rather, I wanted to create a kind of 'vox pops', as was common on news magazine TV programmes in my childhood, and which you still get from time to time today. Quick extracts, one or two sentences, from everyday people, to support, oppose, or illuminate something I was talking about. I mean, very quickly they reached several minutes in length and I was happy with that, as it gave breaks from it just being my voice. I was always conscious of that from the very start, and because I was hosting solo and not doing interviews, it meant I was in danger of many of my episodes being just me talking for half an hour.

With regard to sound effects, it's only a small thing and I don't use them very often, but when I do they can be quite effective - I combined two of them for a battle-scene in Episode 30 (Wars of the Roses). You can get them from a couple of websites that people upload to, and many of them (all the ones I use, because admin) are free-use and attribution-free under the license they were uploaded with.

It's just that, while they provide colour (so to speak) for the episodes, very often I don't realise I want one until very late in writing/recording, which itself is, as you've seen, very last minute. And rather than going through the hassle of finding exactly the right style of laughter, or the most appropriate effect of the sound of people running, I tend to go without. If I had a sound library pre-prepared, I could dive into it at will without any angst, and even word my scripts to include it, because I know it's there.

A lot of these lessons learned are about organisation and planning. Yes. Who'd've thunked it.

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Speaking of Amanda Kendle, when I asked her for any 'I wish I'd knowns', she gave me three. One was 'how time consuming it is', which I've kind of already covered in a way, but it's true. I went into this kind of thinking 'it's just me reading out a blog post', and in a way it is, except that I still have to *write* said blog post. And while I don't have to source lots of images for it, edit them, then write captions and alt text for them, and while I do less actual editing of my writing on a pod than on a blog post, that's all counter-balanced by the fact my podcasts are far, far longer than pretty much any of my blog posts - I tend to think 3,000 words is getting quite big, and I think my longest is currently one I wrote on the Pennine Way that clocks in in the 5,000 range, but even this podcast, which is likely to be one of the shorter ones of recent times, is still over 6,000 words; my longest pods are over 10k. And that, even if it's just mostly stream-of-consciousness mind-dumping, still takes several hours to write.

Then of course there's the whole matter of editing, and due to issues I had with Episode Three, I always listen to it one final time before I launch it, so even if I increase the playback speed, an hour pod still takes a while to edit, sense-check, and publish. And that's not counting the most awkward and time-consuming bit of all - the shownotes, where I have to summarise what I've podded about, and do slightly edited versions for Social Media, before I schedule and post it.

You know, by the way, that I write my pods as a script before I record; this makes things much easier for me in the actual recording (as I'm pretty much reading out what I've written), so the editing doesn't take long, plus it means I have a pretty much ready-to-roll transcript, but it does mean, as compared with other pods, I have a lot more pre-production to do, and explains why I can't just 'knock out a pod' if I don't have a subject to hand.

It's one reason I've been comfortable with the idea of using my Twitter Spaces as extra podcast episodes - the recording's already done, all I need to do is top & tail it, and slightly clean it up. I do have issues with the transcription but even there much of what I say is pre-written, based on questions V pre-prepares for me. I'm just a bit looser on the Spaces from the written word than I am on the actual pod episodes. It opens the question of: how would my actual podcast be if I had a co-host, but I doubt that'll happen, as there's very few people who ... it would 'work' with, given the subject matter and my own personal style.

But, I'm not sure quite how long each pod takes, but for an hour-long pod I probably spend three times that editing and making sure it's valid, and another five or six hours writing the darned thing in the first place. And, usually, several beers.

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Amanda's other two observations were: 'download numbers & stats are awkward', and 'podcast listeners are awesome'. I don't think either of these were 'things I wish I'd known', but they're worth noting, along with the idea that 'it's okay to change'.

I said earlier that a podcast audience like regularity, they like to know when to expect a pod. But what I've also found is, if they're engaged and connected with you, and your content, they'll stay with you even if you make some changes to your pod. There's perhaps a fear that if you start doing something, you have to always keep doing it that way, lest you upset your audience. I'll concede I've never asked my audience this, but there's been a couple of changes I've made to my pod and no-one's complained.

When I first started my pod, I had a basic framework for each episode. It'd be in 'thirds' - personal housekeeping at the start, the main body, and then finish off with a 'lesser-known destination of the week', where I talked about a place I'd been that was relevant to the subject matter of the pod. That ... had disappeared before my pod reached double-figures. I even had a jingle for it!

In my teen episodes I had a number of double-headers; two consecutive podcasts looking at the same topic from a different angle (eg 'interesting tales of crossing international borders' followed by a more deep discussion on the nature of borders themselves). I've done that since (eg two consecutive pods about Influencers, Eps 41 and 42), but for the most part it's not something I've done again that often. But you know, I don't think it matters too much if you change things around a bit, your audience will adapt, and, I guess, if you have a podcast like mine that's a little bit random anyway, your audience will accept that and even view it as a benefit. Change only really becomes apparent if, say, you're a podcast with three hosts and then after series three, one of the hosts changes, so what you're used to is now different. But even there, as long as you're clear about the change, the audience will soon get used to it again. One of the podcasts I listen to, the sex-oriented Recon Podcast (24 episodes) has had several different hosts who share hosting duties so it's never necessarily the same person on it on each episode.

There's only one me. Though I could edit my voice in post-production.

The other thing I changed was podcast length. One of the things I angsted about before I started, along with the frequency of issue, was 'how long should my podcast be'. The Internet didn't give a satisfactory answer, obviously, and suggested it was whatever worked best for the podcaster - with the proviso that it was just as bad to waffle as it was to be too brief; if you have content for half an hour, making it 10 minutes, or an hour, was equally irksome.

And what I've learned, both from my own and from listening to other people's pods, is that this is very true. I started my pod trying to aim for half an hour, as that comfortably fitted in with the average commute (where I assumed most people listened to pods). These days my pod is as long as it is - I do irk if it goes over an hour, but I'm comfortable around the 45 minute mark. Amanda Kendle's pod rarely hits 30 minutes, while another pod I listen to, the 80 Days Podcast (which is basically three people doing what I do on my geographic-based pods, but much more in-depth) often breaks the two-hour mark. But in neither case does the length feel wrong, because of the nature of the pod itself, and the content within.

As to the audience in general, in early August 2022 Buzzsprout collated several surveys across Podcasting, mainly with an American bent to be honest, and came up with the following stat:

Just over 100 million Americans listen to podcasts regularly. That's a little over a third of the entire population. And 80 million specifically listen weekly (it doesn't say to how many). And while Americans do feel more 'switched on' than many other countries (accounting for 48% of all podcast listeners, according to the same article), remember a) it proves wherever you are, there'll be an audience for you, but also b) your podcast is available worldwide so even if you have content that's specific to, for example, hiking in England's Peak District, you'll have a potential audience worldwide. Like, the One Step Beyond podcast I mentioned earlier - it often talked about hiking in the Catskills and Adirondacks of NE USA; I'll probably never go there and hike them, but it was interesting to hear about them - because as I say on my own blogs, 'I go to these places so you don't have to', and, just like a David Attenborough nature documentary, you watch it and travel vicariously through it to experience things and places you may never get to in reality. And anyway, most podcasts aren't travel-based - a true-crime podcast is a true-crime podcast whether that crime takes place in Mansfield Ohio or Mansfield Nottinghamshire. Indeed the vibe is that the most popular podcasts are those about music, then TV/film, and then lifestyle and hobbies.

Buzzsprout also say that, on average, podcast listeners subscribe to an average of six shows, and listen to eight. I subscribe to 16 podcasts through my pod app (Castbox), although one of them is my own, for error-checking reasons (that's a tip for podcasters btw - I don't download any but I subscribe to my own podcast purely to make sure that my pod has been released correctly, on the grounds if I can see it in my pod app, it's definitely Out There. I never used to do this, until I had a ... problem with one episode during my time in Sheffield that took a while to release, without my knowledge). Also, six are effectively 'dead' but I've kept subscribing just in case they go live again. Of the remaining nine, two are weekly, five appear to be fortnightly (one of which releases in seasons), and two are monthly (and one of those is also in series - given this is the aforementioned 80 Days Podcast, I'll forgive their episodes being rare!). This means in any given week I could have as few as two new podcasts, or as many as nine.

Importantly though, the answer is not 'one'. It's not an either-or situation. As a podcaster, you're not competing with other podcasters, although sometimes it might feel like that. Rather, you're competing for your audience's *time* - you have to persuade them not that you're better than another podcast, but that you're better than then doing something else. And the beauty of podcasts, especially over video, is you don't have to have their full attention. For instance, Buzzsprout say 28% of US adults listen to podcasts while driving, as if it were a radio station. I listen to podcasts while walking, going to the supermarket, cooking, and while lying in bed. Anecdotally, I have friends who listen while jogging, or in the gym, or at work. And the numbers are rising; it's predicted 160 million people in the USA alone will be listening to podcasts by the end of next year, while in many countries, expected growth of listeners will be above 40%. The biggest market seems to be in Latin America, lo cual es una pena, porque no hablo español.

As an aside, Buzzsprout's blog says a third of podcasts are between 20 and 40 minutes in length, but a sixth are either under 10 minutes or over an hour. So all my angst about 'how long should an episode be' was largely unfounded. In addition, they've found a third of podcasts have episodes released every 3-7 days, so effectively 'weekly' (I'd love to hear why someone would release a pod episode every 4 and a half days, on the nose), while 40% are released every 8-14 days (so, effectively, either late-running weekly, or fortnightly). 6% of podcasts are released with a frequency up to 2 days; though it's not stated in the data, if that's not 6% of the 15% that are less than 10 minutes long, I can only conclude some people have too much time on their hands, or they're journalists cutting corners with their broadcasting profile.

One of the things I wondered when I started was 'can I make money from this?'. In truth, I've never tried, but I do know podcasters that have gone down the advertising and sponsorship route (including Lisa Nand on The Big Travel Pod, who does it seamlessly), and Buzzsprout have reported stats on this: 60% of podcast listeners have bought something from a podcast ad, and 81% of people say they pay more attention to ads on podcasts than on any other media. Also, 49% believe podcast hosts actually use the product they advertise. This means the podcast host is seen as a trusted individual, much more so than even actors on TV ads. I've always vowed to never have advertising on my blog, partly because I have a day job and this is not my career so I don't need it, but also because blog ads are, I mean less face it, they're ugly as mud, and many people have adblocker apps anyway. But podcast ads? I'm open to this. Doubly so if I can read them myself.

Buy Brand X Washing Powder. Just as good as anything else on the market, and 4 pence cheaper.

But anyway.

The only awkward thing I've found is with personal podcast statistics. Because podcasts are available on so many platforms, getting actual stats for listeners for individual podcasts is quite vague - there's no Google Analytics for podcast downloads. I get them from my podcast host, but aside from overall 'how many, and from where' stats, there's very little to go on. Also, again because there are so many platforms, there's no easy uniform way of getting comments and feedback from them all without checking every single one. Listener, I don't do this. If you've left me a comment on Spotify, or Apple Podcasts, or Goodpods, or wherever, there's a fair chance I haven't seen it.

Sorry.

{end main body podcast jingle}

Well, that's about all for this episode. Next time, as long as everything goes to plan, I have quite an unusual, interesting, and specific subject in mind, one that you may never have thought of. Sometimes I do plan ahead, although again it's a very last minute thing so we'll see. Anyway. Until then, keep listening to podcasts, and if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro theme tune, same as intro, just a different bit of it}

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}