

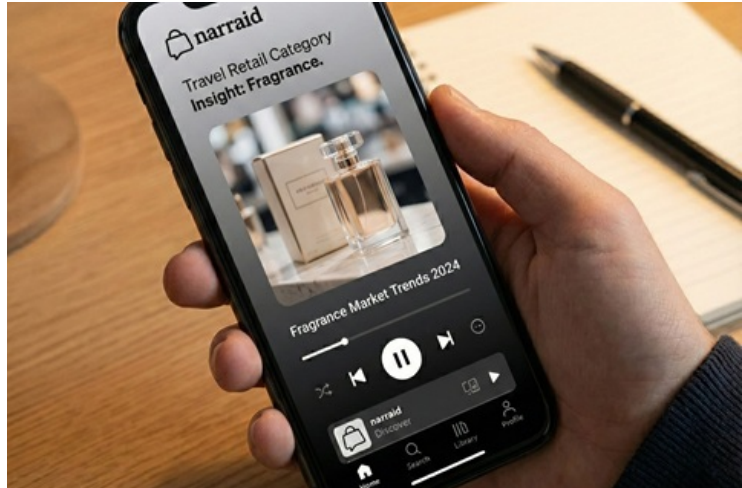
Can podcast learning transform training in travel retail?

By Kevin Rozario | Friday, 12 December 2025 18:34

As often repeated by top leadership – from Avolta’s CEO Xavier Rossinyol to Starboard’s Lisa Bauer – store sales depend on their customer-facing staff. Good training is essential, and a new way of doing that – learning by listening – is claimed to have a high impact.

“Travel retail stores rely on frontline staff to turn passenger flow into sales – but many employees receive fragmented, one-off product briefings that are hard to remember and even harder to keep up to date,” said travel retail veteran, Melvin Broekaart, who is now Vice President of Growth at Narraid. The company is an AI-first, audio-training platform that helps retail staff share more compelling brand narratives with customers.

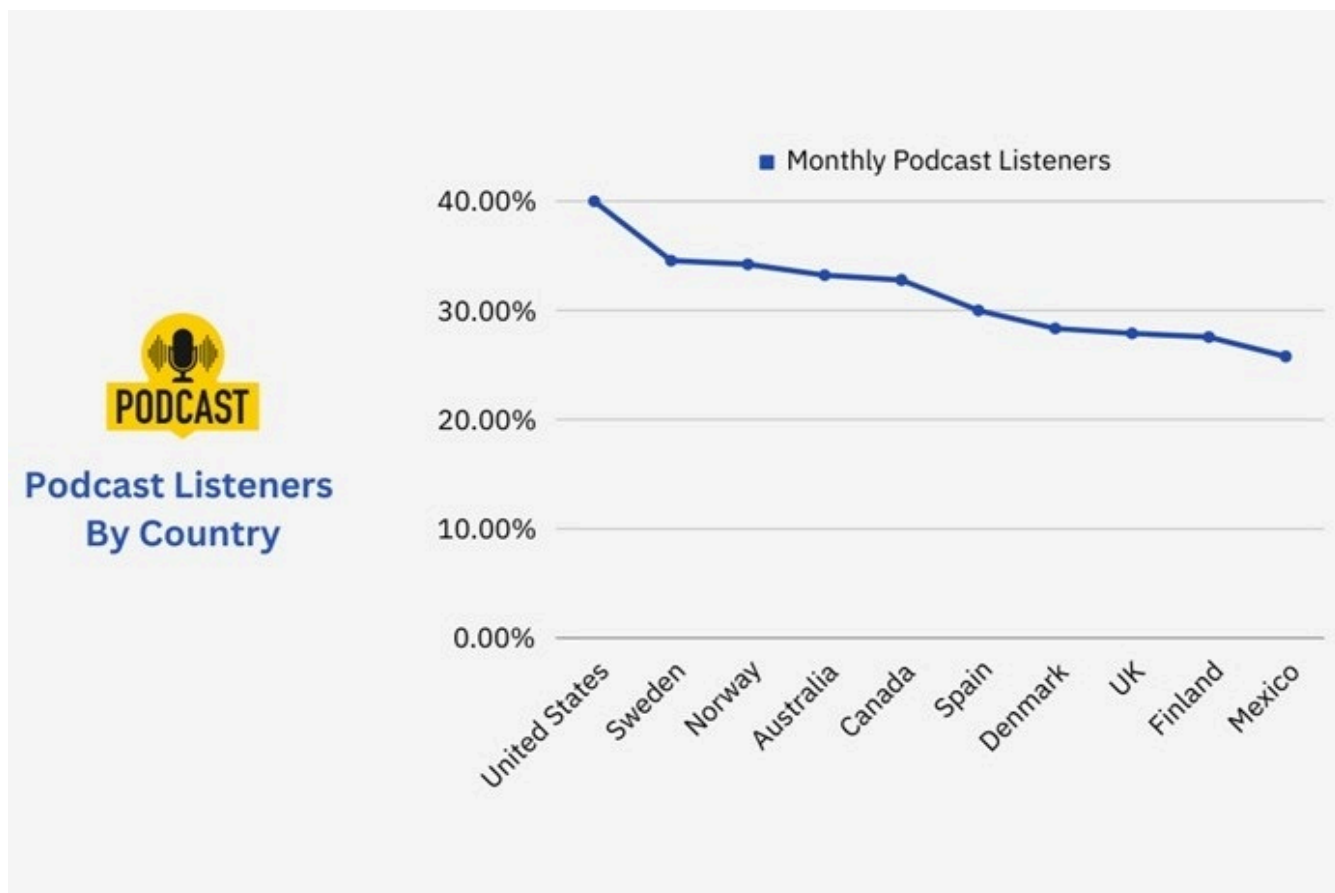
Image Credit: Narraid



Always-on training from Narraid.

Narraid believes that since staff are already listening to hours of audio each week via podcasts when commuting, multitasking, or relaxing, this is an obvious and familiar channel for training. Priori Data says that global podcast listeners have grown from well below 300 million in 2019, to an [estimated 631 million](#) by the end of 2025.

Image Credit: Priori Data



Listening to podcasts has become a popular activity in major markets. [Click image to enlarge]

Broekaart told TRBusiness: “At Narraid, we focus on empowering frontline staff – the human interface between brands and travellers. When staff understand and can tell a brand’s story engagingly – be it on sustainability or innovation – travellers respond and the sales outcome improves.”

In a white paper using academic sources, Narraid has outlined its position as to why learning by listening could be the way forward for the travel channel. Below, TRBusiness has outlined the core elements of the paper.

With podcasts already a popular way of digesting information, this style of microlearning can potentially be a powerful tool for travel retail education. Academic research across cognitive science and multilingual communication shows that learning by listening is not a compromise but an evidence-based accelerator of knowledge, confidence, and recall.

Overcoming travel retail’s structural challenges

When applied to travel retail, audio learning directly addresses the sector’s structural challenges of high staff turnover, multilingual teams, limited training time, and constant product change.

1. Listening supports knowledge gains

Reviews in higher and medical education show that educational podcasts can match or outperform traditional lectures when used as part of a blended approach. Learners use them to revise complex topics, prepare for assessments, and stay up to date.

Image Credit: Narraid



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For travel-retail staff, this means audio can carry real product knowledge – brand stories, hero SKUs, ingredient explanations, regulatory nuances – without requiring classroom time or long documents.

2. Episodic listening improves retention

Microlearning research consistently finds that listening in up to 10-minute units can improve attention, retention, and completion. For travel retail, this is crucial because staff often have only a few minutes between tasks. A five-minute episode on ‘What makes this fragrance unique?’ or ‘How to explain a cask-strength whisky’ fits naturally into their day. Short episodes reduce cognitive overload and enable staff to apply their learning immediately.

3. Listening activates deeper processing

Cognitive science shows that people learn more effectively from conversational, human voices than from formal scripts or synthetic narration. Podcasts naturally use this style: two people talking, telling stories, asking questions. For travel retail staff, this means information feels more relatable, easier to absorb, and easier to repeat to customers.

4. Listening in one’s native language

Multilingual research is unequivocal: workers understand and retain information better when training is delivered in their first language. In travel retail, where staff may switch between multiple languages in a single shift, native-language audio reduces misunderstandings, increases accuracy, and builds confidence. It also ensures that brand messages are delivered consistently.

5. Listening fits into the rhythms of real life

Podcast analytics show that listeners complete most episodes they start, usually while commuting or multitasking. This means travel-retail staff do not need to create a new habit; the training simply rides on top of an existing one. Learning becomes continuous, and knowledge stays fresher.

Narraid says that for travel retail staff, listening generates confidence because episodes are short, memorable, and easy to replay, the conversations with customers are story-driven and more natural; and that there is better consistency when it comes to brand narrative. This can improve upselling and conversion.

For staff, they can reduce their cognitive loading (compared with long PDFs or dense PowerPoint presentations), and can do refreshers more frequently because they can learn at their own chosen times.

In short, Narraid wants to turn training from a burden into a habit – one that fits the working lives of frontline sales teams. “Rather than taking a purely transactional approach, we focus on narrative-driven retail: enabling staff to become storytellers who can connect emotionally and authentically with consumers,” Broekaart told TRBusiness.

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