PODCAST DISCOVERABILITY:
RE-CLASSIFYING PODCASTS USING NEW POTENTIAL META-DATA

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Discoverability is thought to be one of podcasting's "key problems" (Berry 20). While recommendation engines play an important role in a podcast listener's experience of the medium by directing them to new podcasts they may enjoy, recommendations are still "far from optimal in most podcast catalogues" (Heeremans 73). Many algorithm systems gather data from podcasts' RSS feeds, and rely primarily on genre, keywords and descriptions. By analyzing podcasts from a more granular perspective, this paper outlines an approach to thinking about discoverabily in terms of podcasts' underlying characteristics, rather than simply by their genres, keywords, and descriptions. Participants were asked to rate various popular podcasts based on a set of characteristics that we determined, through a review of existing literature, to be particular to podcasts. These characteristics -- a sort of 'genetic code' of podcasting -- include storytelling, informativeness, authenticity, emotion, humour, celebrity, sound design, production quality, niche, and timeliness. These characteristics may be important determinants in listeners' preferences. Results of the study show that podcasts of similar genres were rated comparably on these characteristics. More importantly, we found that podcasts that do not share common keywords or are not of the same genre, nevertheless share similar ratings in one or more of these underlying characteristics. This paper proposes that use of this rating system could a) form the basis of a new set of meta-data for recommendation engines which may augment their usefulness; and b) help listeners to understand what the underlying qualities of their podcasts they appreciate are, enabling them to discover a wider range of podcasts they will also enjoy.

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