

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

What happens when you tell listeners the host is an AI

Aloudable tested whether describing a podcast host as AI changes what people actually do. The same recording was presented two ways, so the only thing that moved was the label on screen.

ALOUDABLE LISTENING STUDY | AUGUST 2026 | 160 UK PARTICIPANTS | 640 CLIP PLAYS

The Study

Aloudable recruited UK listeners to test how AI disclosure affects podcast engagement. Each person played short clips in three formats: a traditionally labelled host, an AI-labelled host, and a guest-only solo cut. Engagement means a listener reached the 90-second mark and chose to keep listening. The primary analysis covers 160 participants and 640 clip plays. Everyone heard all three formats, so each listener also serves as their own comparison.

Same audio. Different label.

The traditionally labelled and AI-labelled clips were the same audio file. Only the on-screen host description changed, so any gap between them comes from what listeners read rather than what they heard.

Headline Results



Engagement rate: the share of clip plays that reached 90 seconds and continued. Bar lengths are proportional to one another.

88.5%

of a traditional host's engaged listeners retained by the AI-labelled version, on the best estimate

98 of 160

participants behaved identically towards AI-labelled and traditionally labelled clips

22% vs 15%

of clips skipped in the first 15 seconds, AI-labelled against traditionally labelled

3.20 vs 2.72

naturalness out of 4 for identical audio, named host against AI label

Key Takeaways

Disclosure moved opinion more than behaviour

Listeners rated the same audio as less natural once the host was described as AI, 2.72 out of 4 against 3.20. Behaviour shifted far less: 34.0% engagement against 38.4%.

The first impression carries the effect

The skipping gap appeared almost entirely in the opening 15 seconds, where 22% of AI-labelled clips were dropped against 15% of traditionally labelled ones. Listeners who stayed past that point behaved much like anyone else.

Guest-led storytelling is a promising format

The solo cut recorded the highest engagement in the primary analysis and met the threshold set in advance for not being meaningfully worse than the interview. It was built by recutting real guest recordings, with short AI-generated bridges.

What This Means For Brands

- **High-quality AI-assisted production can still hold an audience.** On the best estimate, the AI-labelled version kept 88.5% of the engaged listeners the traditional one kept.
- **Guest-focused formats are a practical way to reuse interviews you already have.** The solo cut performed best here, drawing on recordings most firms already hold.
- **How AI involvement is introduced may shape how the work lands.** We tested one blunt on-screen label. Other wording or placement was never tested, so treat that as a hypothesis.
- **Content and production care matter more than assumed rejection of AI.** Most listeners here did not treat the two labels differently.

Explore how Aloudable turns expert insight into engaging audio.

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About this study. 186 UK participants were recruited in August 2026; 26 were set aside under rules written before launch, leaving 160 in the primary analysis across 640 clip plays. The analysis plan and thresholds were fixed before any results were read. The solo format passed the predefined non-inferiority threshold. The AI-labelled format did not: its point estimate retained 88.5% of traditional-host engagement, above the 80%

bar set in advance, but the surrounding uncertainty reached below it. The study does not show that AI labels have no effect, that audiences prefer AI hosts, or that the two formats are equivalent. Listening was desktop and foreground only, with one label wording across four episodes.