

# The Importance of Platforms (or Why I Hate YouTube and Love Podcasts)

A friend sent me some YouTube videos recently and I couldn't get into it. When the same guy from the videos came up again in a different context, from a different friend, I tried again, still to no avail. Finally, yet another friend Tweeted a podcast episode with this same guy. I tried one more time and I loved it.

I love podcasts. Everything about the platform is superior to YouTube with the exception of shareability. A good episode or soundbite is locked into the iTunes feed and the podcast experience is an isolated one, not a social one. (Even this has some small benefits.)

I know a good many serious people who love to consume ideas via YouTube. I don't know how. I hate YouTube as a way to consume ideas, unless they are ideas which can only be conveyed using video. But lectures, monologues, interviews, books, soundbites, or podcasts...why would you ever go to YouTube for those?

It's distracting with all the other stuff cluttering the screen, it requires more attention, it can't be consumed on a walk, it has no organized, consistent system for moving from one to the next or tracking progress, and it's hard to even stay on a single account without getting autoplayed to something unrelated.

Podcasts are so neat and tidy. You subscribe, your feed autopopulates episodes in chronological order, you can see which you've listened to and where you left off, you can listen while doing other things and not staring at a screen, and you don't have to contend with clutter, distraction, and randomness. Oh, and mercifully, no comments.

[Both YouTube and Apple's podcast platform suffer from horrible search functions (odd for YouTube, given that Google, the master of search, owns it.) So bad that sometimes even typing in the title word for word fails to bring up the result you want.]

Besides congruence with my listening and cognitive tendencies, podcasts have another advantage. If you go to YouTube to learn what kind of stuff Richard Dawkins, or Mike Rowe, or Ryan Holiday think, you'll get all kinds of cut up videos with wild titles like, "Dawkins Totally Owns Evangelical Christian!", and other loud sensationalism. The message is mixed up, not by the medium of audio/video so much as the platform on which it's delivered.

Search any of those names on a podcast app and you'll find interviews where you get a chance to hear them flesh out a core idea, or maybe they have their own podcast where they create a broader arc around their body of work.

Maybe YouTube is for fans, while podcasts are for inquirers. Or maybe I'm just boring.

I'm not being judgey or anti-YouTube. It's a great platform for tons of stuff and I love what it's done ushering in the long tail model of content creation/consumption. But I have noticed that if someone's primary platform for consuming an idea is YouTube, they are more likely an activist or agitator or casual fan of the idea than if their main platform is a book, blog, or podcast. Maybe YouTube is more for catharsis than exploration. I have no idea. All I know is that, if you want me to be able to quiet my mind enough to explore an idea, send me a book, article, or podcast. Please don't make me go to YouTube.

And never, ever, under any circumstances, read the comments on a YouTube video.