

The Growing Appeal of Podcasts in Digital Media

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Abstract: The rapid evolution of digital technologies has significantly transformed communication channels, with podcasting emerging as a powerful medium for content dissemination. This study focuses on a particular and revolutionary trend in the always changing field of communication: the emergence of podcasting and its significant impact on communication patterns. The field's larger technical advancements—such as voice-activated devices, artificial intelligence, and 5G connectivity—are acknowledged, although the main focus is on the innovative and democratizing nature of podcasting. The findings reveal that podcasts offer flexibility, accessibility, and personalized content, making them an appealing alternative to traditional media. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of podcasts in democratizing voices, providing marginalized communities a platform for expression, and fostering deeper audience engagement. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital media, offering insights into the evolving communication dynamics and the implications for content creators and businesses in India.

Keywords: Podcasting, Digital media, Audio content, Media consumption patterns, Indian digital media

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by fast technology advancement, the digital media landscape has undergone profound transformations, influencing how we consume and produce content. The increase of interconnectivity in the world and the rapid growth of digital platforms have changed the way individuals communicate and engage with media. One of the most significant changes in recent years has been the shift towards on-demand audio content, particularly podcasts, which have emerged as a dominant force in modern communication. The fast and furious progress in technology, combined with evolving values and ethics, has reshaped how individuals connect and engage with content.

From communication via newspaper, radio, and

television, people have now shifted to a single device like cellphones, where everything is at their fingertips. Of all the platforms, podcasts have been emerging remarkably. These podcasts have transformed audio reporting, offering deep-dive discussions on significant events like the Black Lives Matter protests and the COVID-19 pandemic. Podcasts have also evolved from an alternative media format into a mainstream tool, integrating into the strategies of major communication players (Cardoso & Villaça, 2022). They extend existing speech radio forms, particularly benefiting public broadcasting (Madsen, 2009), and have proven effective in a variety of sectors, from health information dissemination (Johnson & Grayden, 2006) to corporate communication (Elhordoy, 2020) and language skill improvement (Kavaliauskienė, 2008). Podcasting emerged in the early 2000s as a digital publishing tool allowing for easy subscription and mobile access to audio content. It has evolved into a distinct medium within the digital media landscape, creating a new aural culture. The flexibility of podcasts, enabling listeners to consume content while multitasking, has contributed to their growing popularity. They provide flexibility and accessibility across multiple platforms, offering opportunities for communication and education that traditional media formats cannot match (Azhima et al., 2023). As smartphones and high-speed internet become increasingly accessible, podcasts are uniquely positioned to capture the attention of diverse audiences across India, reflecting a growing demand for specialized, on-demand content. Television, radio, and print have always dominated Indian media, but throughout the past ten years, digital media has been constantly expanding. The emergence of podcasts has added a new dimension to this media ecology. A number of factors have contributed to the growing popularity of podcasts, including the widespread use of smartphones, high-speed internet, and the rising level of computer literacy among Indians. Podcasts have

also gained traction due to their ability to cater to niche audiences, offering personalized content that appeals to a wide range of interests, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

The way we consume content has changed dramatically in recent years due to the explosion in popularity of podcasts. What was once a specialized medium has now become a widely used tool for information, education, and entertainment. Using podcasts to learn new skills and knowledge is a flexible and practical approach. Podcasts allow industry specialists to impart their knowledge to a larger audience. They promote a mindset of ongoing education and self-improvement. However, as podcasts continue to grow, “platform-ization” shapes the industry, affecting content creation and governance (Sullivan, 2019). While podcasting presents numerous opportunities, understanding listener preferences and addressing challenges such as production quality and market saturation are critical (Shim et al., 2006).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of podcasts represents a significant shift in how audio content is consumed in the digital age. Podcasts have become a key format within digital media, offering on-demand audio content that aligns with modern preferences for flexible and mobile consumption (Sandmeier, 2023). This global phenomenon has seen rapid growth, particularly in countries like India and Indonesia, where the medium is gaining traction due to technological advancements and an increase in smartphone usage (Aryan, 2024; Irwansyah, 2021). The flexibility of podcasts allows listeners to engage with content while multitasking, contributing to their appeal across diverse demographics, including younger, tech-savvy audiences (Dowling & Miller, 2019).

II.1 Global and Regional Growth of Podcasts: The rise of podcasts is notable worldwide, with countries like India and Indonesia seeing significant adoption due to factors such as increased access to high-speed internet and the proliferation of smartphones. Aryan (2024) highlights that in India, podcasts cater to a wide range of interests, offering content in multiple languages, making them accessible to diverse audiences. Similarly, in Indonesia, podcasts have

become especially popular among urban youth, driven by the availability of affordable digital devices and industry support for content creation (Irwansyah, 2021). This popularity is further supported by the relaxed storytelling style of podcasts, which resonates with audiences preferring a more conversational format (Alamsyah Kusumadinata et al., 2023).

II.2 Educational and Professional Implications of Podcasts: In academic settings, podcasts offer a unique opportunity for libraries, educational institutions, and professionals to disseminate information in an accessible format. Worcester and Barker (2006) discuss how podcasts have become an alternative communication channel in academic environments, allowing for knowledge dissemination beyond traditional print and digital formats. More recently, Kurniasari et al. (2024) have demonstrated how podcasts can be leveraged as an effective educational tool, enhancing student learning outcomes by providing a flexible and engaging medium for content delivery. Additionally, podcasts in professional environments allow industry experts to share insights with a broad audience, fostering continuous learning and skill development (Casares & Binkley, 2020).

II.3 Podcasting as a Cultural and Commercial Medium: The cultural significance of podcasts has also emerged in tandem with their commercial potential. According to Llinares, Fox, and Berry (2018), podcasts have developed into a distinct aural culture, maintaining relationships with other media while creating their own niche. This dual role has allowed podcasts to not only democratize content creation by giving marginalized voices a platform but also to evolve into a viable medium for monetization (Yücel, 2020). Successful podcasts, such as "The Ranveer Show" in India (Aryan, 2024) and "Serial" in the United States (Dowling & Miller, 2019), illustrate how immersive storytelling and high production values can attract large audiences and create opportunities for advertising and sponsorships.

II.4 Challenges in the Podcasting Industry: Despite the widespread growth of podcasts, challenges remain. Zellatiffanny (2020) outlines key issues, such as the competition from video-based platforms, production quality concerns, and the need to optimize content length to maintain listener engagement. These

challenges are particularly relevant in markets like Indonesia, where the focus has traditionally been on video content.

However, as Rafiza and Irwansyah (2020) note, podcasts still hold considerable potential, particularly in niche markets such as education and tourism, where the medium's adaptability and storytelling capabilities offer unique advantages.

II.5 Technological Advancements Driving Podcast Popularity: The rapid advancement of technology has played a pivotal role in the podcasting boom. Injany, Agustina, and Lutfiputri (2023) emphasize the role of internet connectivity, smartphones, and audio platforms in making podcasts more accessible to a global audience. In India, the availability of affordable data plans and mobile devices has facilitated a dramatic rise in podcast consumption, with platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts becoming key players in this ecosystem (Sandmeier, 2023). This shift is part of a broader transformation in the media landscape, where traditional boundaries between different media formats are blurring, leading to the convergence and remediation of content across platforms.

II.6 Audience Engagement and the Future of Podcasts: As podcasts continue to grow in popularity, their ability to foster deep audience engagement through personalized and niche-driven content remains one of their strongest advantages. Stephani et al. (2021) highlight the role of podcasts in providing "edutainment" to urban youth, who are drawn to the medium for its convenience and ability to deliver content tailored to individual preferences. Furthermore, podcasts create a sense of community and connection between hosts and listeners, often promoting interactive engagement through social media (Zellatiffanny, 2020). This interaction reinforces the idea that podcasts are more than just an audio format; they are part of a broader, participatory media culture that is reshaping how information is consumed and shared.

In summary, podcasts have evolved from a niche format into a mainstream medium with significant cultural, educational, and commercial implications. While challenges such as competition with video platforms and content saturation persist, the flexibility, accessibility, and personalized nature of podcasts ensure their continued growth and relevance in the

digital media landscape. Future research should explore the long-term sustainability of podcasting as an educational tool and its potential for fostering deeper connections between content creators and their audiences, particularly in emerging markets like India.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design is descriptive research with a cross-sectional survey approach. This study utilized a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of podcasts on communication dynamics and listener preferences. The research aimed to quantify the factors contributing to the rising popularity of podcasts, the influence of niche content on listener behavior, and the perceived effects of podcasts on communication practices.

Data was collected through a structured survey, which was designed to gather comprehensive insights from podcast listeners. The survey included close-ended questions to ensure consistency in responses and facilitate quantitative analysis. The questions addressed various aspects, such as the reasons behind the increasing popularity of podcasts, the impact of specialized content on listener preferences, and the perceived effects of podcasts on communication dynamics. The survey instrument was developed based on established literature on media consumption and communication trends, ensuring the relevance and validity of the questions.

A sample size of 61 active podcast listeners was targeted for this study. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling methods, reaching out through online platforms and podcast communities to ensure a diverse representation of podcast listeners. The survey was administered online through a web-based platform to facilitate easy access and completion. Participants received invitations via email and social media channels, with follow-up reminders sent to enhance response rates. The collected data was cleaned and coded to ensure accuracy and consistency. Incomplete or invalid responses were excluded from the analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic information and key findings from the survey, while inferential statistical methods, such as correlation analysis and regression, were employed to examine relationships between variables and test hypotheses.

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout

the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. The study complied with relevant data protection regulations.

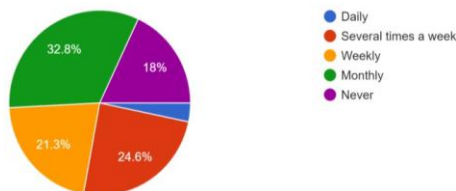
IV. ANALYZING DATA

Quantitative analysis: To evaluate the survey's close-ended responses, quantitative evaluation will be used. **Thematic analysis** is going to be applied to find themes, patterns, and recurring ideas in the quantitative information. Reactions will be classified according to similarities and contrasts, enabling the discovery of important themes about the impact of podcasting.

IV.1 Interpretation:

The majority listeners are between the age of 18 to 25, while the podcasts are consumed by elderly consumers as well.

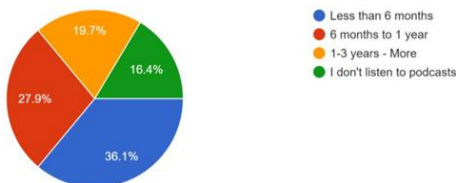
2. How often do you listen to podcasts?
61 responses



As podcasts are still on rise people are simultaneously consuming the contents daily, weekly, monthly according to their lifestyle. Also a significant rise in the listeners has increased over the decade.

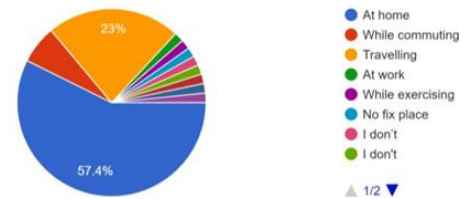
Duration of Podcast Listening: 36.1% of respondents have been listening to podcasts for less than 6 months. 27.9% have been listening for 6 months to 1 year. 19.7% have been listening for 1-3 years or more. 16.4% of respondents do not listen to podcasts.

3. How long have you been listening to podcasts?
61 responses



Location of Podcast Listening: 57.4% of respondents usually listen to podcasts at home. 23% listen while commuting. Smaller percentages listen while traveling, at work, or while exercising. There's also a group with no fixed place for listening.

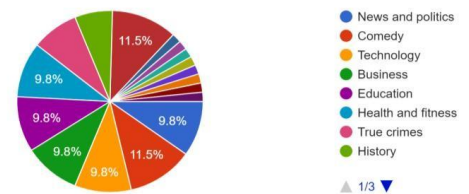
4. Where do you usually listen to Podcasts?
61 responses



Method of Podcast Listening: 82% of respondents listen to podcasts on a smartphone. Other devices like tablets, smart speakers, and laptops/computers have lower usage percentages.

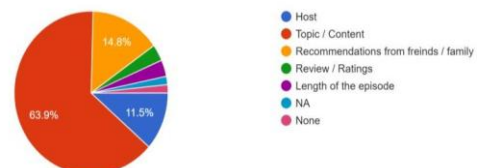
Since COVID-19, social media has taken over the world, as the result the content online has more number of consumers than pre COVID. Podcast being one of the main segment of social media the users have been drastically increased in number. As smartphones are convenient to use anywhere and easily available internet in today's world, making it possible for everyone to be connected anywhere. Hence, the podcasts viewers reaching a great numbers of listeners every day.

6. What genre of podcasts do you listen to?
61 responses



Genre of Podcasts: Respondents listen to a variety of podcast genres, with no single genre dominating: 11.5% listen to News and Politics (highest percentage). Other popular genres include Comedy, Technology, Business, Education, and Health and Fitness, all with percentages around 9.8% to 11.5%. Smaller percentages for genres like True Crime and History.

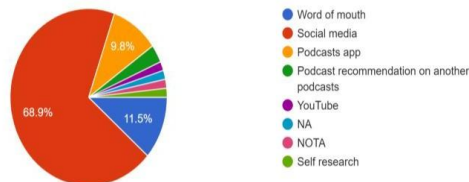
7. What factors influence your decision to listen to podcasts?
61 responses



Factors Influencing Podcast Listening: 63.9% of respondents are most influenced by the Topic/Content of the podcast. 14.8% are influenced by Recommendations from friends/family. 11.5% consider the Host as an important factor. Other factors

like reviews, ratings, or episode length have minimal influence.

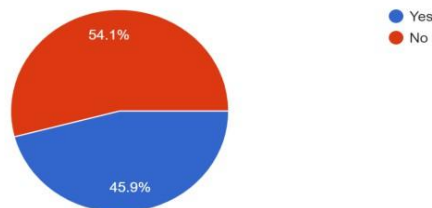
8. How do you discover new podcast?
61 responses



Discovery of New Podcasts: 68.9% of respondents discover new podcasts through Word of Mouth. 11.5% find them via Social Media. 9.8% use Podcast Apps for discovery. Other methods like YouTube or self-research are less common.

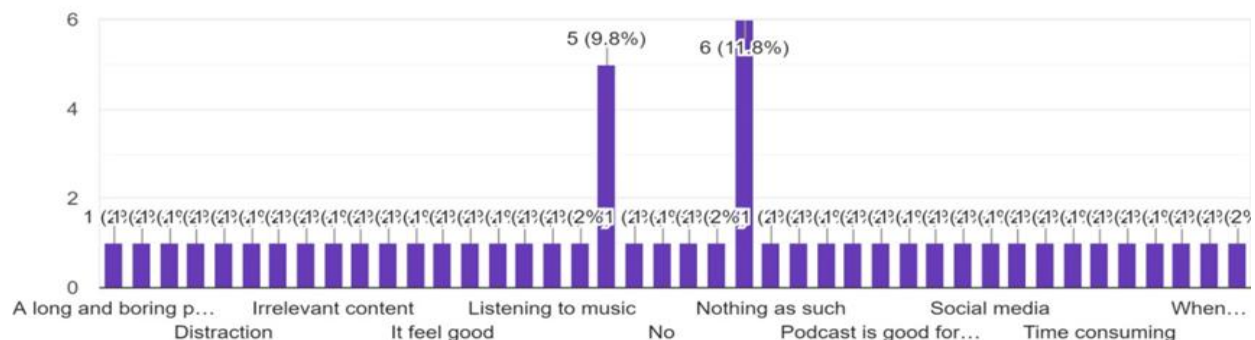
Listeners are free to have their own preferences based on their cultural values and norms, Hence, are free to select the content they want to be exposed to. The freedom gives the boost to the rise in the consumers based on their liking.

9. Do you follow any podcasts or podcast host on social media?
61 responses



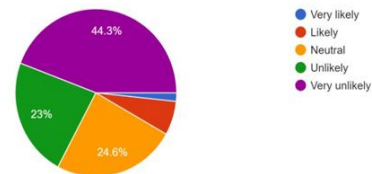
Following Podcasts on Social Media: It shows the percentage of respondents who follow podcasts or podcast hosts on social media. The image suggests that many respondents do engage with podcasts on social media platforms.

12. What would make you stop listening to a podcast?
51 responses



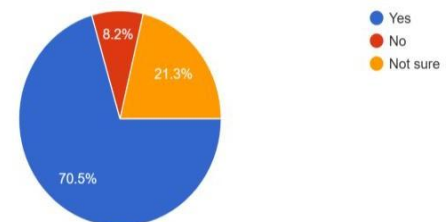
In Spite of the many pros, podcasts also have certain cons i.e the limitations faced by the listeners For example: Long contents and over exaggeration of a topic might make the podcast boring and may result in

10. Have you ever purchased a product or a service because it was advertised on podcast?
61 responses



The majority of respondents (44.3%) are neutral about purchasing a product or service advertised on a podcast. 24.6% of respondents are "Likely" to purchase, while 23% are "Unlikely" to purchase. A small percentage of respondents (8.1%) are on the extremes, with 4.1% being "Very Likely" and 4% being "Very Unlikely."

11. Do you think the popularity of podcasts will continue to grow?
61 responses



A large majority of respondents (70.5%) believe that the popularity of podcasts will continue to grow. 21.3% are unsure ("Maybe"), while only 8.2% believe that the popularity will not continue to grow.

A famous host or a famous podcast show can influence the listener's choice. Some podcasts are commercialized for advertising purposes and goals. Podcast have been indulging into the business sector as well, making it possible to stay in the long run.

have much lower response rates, indicating they are less likely to stop someone from listening to a podcast.

IV.2 Summary of Findings

The results of this study indicate that podcasts are increasingly becoming a preferred medium for a diverse audience in India. The data reveals that listeners are drawn to the flexibility, diversity of content, and convenience that podcasts offer. However, the challenge remains for content creators to consistently deliver engaging material that resonates with niche audiences while expanding their listener base through effective marketing strategies. The findings suggest that podcasts will continue to play a vital role in the digital media landscape, driven by technological advancements and evolving listener preferences.

V. CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

This research paper offers a significant contribution to the study of digital media, particularly in the evolving landscape of podcast consumption in India. While podcasts have gained widespread popularity globally, there is a gap in understanding their specific growth trajectory and consumption patterns in the Indian context, where traditional media such as television, radio, and print have historically dominated. This study fills that gap by examining the key factors driving the increasing appeal of podcasts in Indian digital media, with an emphasis on how technological advancements, such as the rise of smartphones and accessible internet, have catalyzed this shift.

Moreover, this research provides new insights into the role of niche-driven content in shaping listener preferences. By focusing on the consumption dynamics, production patterns, and audience engagement with podcasts, this study highlights how the democratization of media through podcasting is fostering a more diverse media landscape. It extends the current literature by offering quantitative data on Indian podcast consumption trends, particularly among the younger, tech-savvy population, while also delving into the reasons behind podcast growth, such as multitasking convenience and mobile accessibility. Ultimately, this study paves the way for future research in understanding the long-term implications of podcasting on media consumption, content production, and communication dynamics in both

India and other developing digital economies. Its findings can serve as a foundation for further exploration into the integration of podcasts in education, business, and social engagement, making it a timely and valuable contribution to digital media scholarship.

VI. LIMITATIONS

While this study provides valuable insights into the growing appeal of podcasts in Indian digital media, several limitations should be acknowledged: The sample size was limited and skewed toward urban, younger (18–25) respondents, which may not fully represent India's diverse podcast audience, particularly older or rural listeners. The predominantly quantitative approach, using close-ended questions, restricts deeper qualitative insights into podcast preferences and media behavior. Geographical and technological biases, such as assumptions of smartphone and internet access, further limit generalizability. While a variety of podcast genres were considered, the study lacks a segmented analysis across demographics. Conducted post-COVID-19, the findings may reflect temporary shifts in digital media use. Additionally, the research is India-centric, offering limited cross-cultural comparison, and only briefly addresses how podcasts affect broader communication dynamics compared to traditional media.

VII. CONCLUSION

The growing appeal of podcasts in India reflects a significant shift in media consumption patterns, driven by technological advancements and evolving audience preferences. As this study demonstrates, podcasts have carved out a unique space in the Indian digital media landscape, offering flexibility, accessibility, and the ability to cater to niche audiences. Their rise is fueled by the increasing penetration of smartphones and affordable internet, making podcasts a versatile tool for information dissemination, education, and entertainment. The findings highlight that podcasts are not only an emerging medium but also a platform that democratizes content creation, enabling marginalized voices to reach wider audiences. The personalized and interactive nature of podcasts fosters a strong sense of community between hosts and listeners, contributing to their continued popularity. However, despite their rapid growth, podcasts face challenges such as

competition from video-based platforms, content saturation, and maintaining high production quality. Addressing these issues will be crucial for sustaining the medium's momentum and ensuring its long-term relevance.

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