

The Reality of Algerian Podcast Production in the Era of Digital Radio

"An-Nasr Podcast" and "Ihya" as Case Studies

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Abstrac:

With the shift from analog to digital broadcasting, digital radio emerged enhancing audio content quality and expanding the production of radio programs. It also contributed to the rise of specialized radio stations and new audio content, such as podcasts, which have gained widespread popularity and attention, experiencing their golden age since the COVID-19 pandemic to the present.

Our study uses interviews with podcast hosts and producers of this audio content to explore the reality of Algerian podcast production in this digital environment. The study concludes that Algerian podcasts are in their early stages, fluctuating between individual efforts and collaborative production teams. Their emergence responds to consumer culture and aligns with the global podcasting revolution. The study also recommends the

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	creation of a unified platform for all Algerian podcasts, named *Algerian Podcast*, to serve as a publishing space with rules and regulations, thus organizing the content and paving the way for its international expansion..
Keywords:	Digital Broadcast System; Digital Radio; Podcast – Hosts; Podcasters

Introduction:

Radio is one of the oldest and most established forms of media, and even after over a century since its first broadcast, it continues to hold a prominent place in the media landscape. Despite the rise of various other media platforms, radio still retains its charm. The flow of the human voice, expressed through sounds, music, songs, and gestures, along with its ease of reception and its ability to stimulate the imagination of listeners, have all contributed to its lasting appeal. Radio has accompanied individuals, nations, and societies through many historical moments, providing up-to-date news, guidance, entertainment, and serving as a primary source of information. Broadcasting via radio waves with minimal cost has made it an accessible medium, where producing a single television program costs as much as producing four radio programs (Dua'a Raba'a, *The Origin and Development of Radio*).

The discovery of radio came from wireless communication technology. After numerous attempts, the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi succeeded in transmitting the first radio broadcast in 1896. Since then, extensive research has focused on improving radio's sound quality, moving from AM to FM frequencies, and eventually transmitting radio channels through satellite television and internet radio. The continuous evolution

and seamless incorporation of new technologies have been crucial to the enduring growth and resilience of radio.

With the advent of New Media, driven mainly by modern technologies and social media platforms that have impacted every aspect of life, becoming a lifestyle in itself, it became necessary for radio to evolve and merge with the digital system, which replaced the traditional analog model. This led to the emergence of digital content and digital radio, which, while preserving the essence and goals of traditional radio, also introduced new methods, formats, and types of content, including new radio hosts. Podcasts, an offshoot of radio broadcasting, represent audio or visual content produced, edited, and shared on social media platforms by content creators, whether they are professional broadcasters or amateur bloggers (podcasters).

The origins of podcasts date back to 2004, but their massive growth and popularity surged with the rise of social media during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, turning podcasts into a preferred platform for many. Researchers and specialists agree that this period marks the "golden age" of podcasts, as evidenced by the increasing number of podcast programs and rising daily listening figures. Hence, our study aims to shed light on the reality of Algerian podcast production in the context of digital radio, addressing the central question: What is the reality of podcast production in Algeria under the digital radio system?

To thoroughly address this question, the following sub-questions were formulated:

1. When did digital audio content first emerge in Algeria?
2. What is the impact of digital radio on radio work?
3. Who are the leading figures behind podcasts in Algeria?
4. What are the techniques and methods for producing podcasts in Algeria?
5. What objectives do Algerian podcasts seek to accomplish?

Importance of the Study:

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The importance of this study arises from the timeliness of the changes involved. Digital radio and podcasts, which are a modern form of digital radio, represent a new media model. Understanding the reasons behind the shift from traditional broadcast to the digital space, and the advantages that distinguish digital broadcasting from analog systems, as well as exploring the fundamentals of digital radio in Algeria, all contribute value to the study. This research examines the details of podcast production in this digital environment, attempting to uncover the nature of its creators, the content they offer, the stages of its production, its goals, and the extent to which the digital environment influences the success of this digital audio content, as well as the growing demand for it day by day.

Objectives of the Study:

Through this study, the researcher aims to achieve a set of goals, including:

- Understanding the concept of podcasting.
- Providing a clear picture of the nature of digital radio in Algeria and assessing its progress in the wave of digital broadcasting and the new broadcasting systems it relies on, as podcasting is seen as a new innovation making its way toward wider adoption.
- Expanding the study of the podcasting experience and exploring the stages of its creation, from choosing the topic to its delivery to the listening audience, especially since the podcasts analyzed in the study are produced by both professional hosts and amateur bloggers. This represents an angle of the study that the researcher aims to explore in order to contribute a new addition to scientific research.

Theoretical Framework:

To ensure the study is grounded in existing theory, it is important to base our research on a solid theoretical foundation. Theories provide perspectives on potential social changes and the impact of media on these changes. Our study focuses on podcasting as a new and innovative product emerging from digital technology, which has become a necessity. Modern radio had no choice but to adopt

it in order to maintain its position amidst fierce competition from social media platforms, which offer diverse services and have significant impacts. Therefore, we believe that the Diffusion of Innovations Theory is the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

This theory, developed by researchers Rogers and Shoemaker in the early 1960s, suggests that innovation refers not only to material goods and products but also to new concepts and radical changes. According to Rogers, individuals in any society differ in their speed of adopting new innovations, and he categorized them into distinct groups. (2023, June Kaminski, *Diffusion of Innovations Theory*)

1. Innovators: This is a small but crucial group because they are the first to embrace the innovation and are responsible for introducing it to others. They share it with their friends and the community.

2. Early Adopters: Often seen as opinion leaders, their endorsement of the innovation plays a key role in its spread.

3. Early Majority: This group takes time to adopt the innovation, waiting to see results from others' experiences before trying it themselves.

4. Late Majority: More resistant to change, this group wants to test the innovation and use it themselves before taking the risk of trying something new.

5. Laggards: Known for their high resistance to change, laggards are often difficult to reach through marketing campaigns because they are less exposed to media.

According to Rogers, an innovation goes through stages of diffusion before it becomes widespread and adopted, which include:

- **Awareness:** The individual becomes aware of the idea.
- **Interest:** The desire to learn more about the innovation develops.
- **Evaluation:** The individual assesses the information they have received about the innovation.

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- **Trial:** The individual attempts to experiment with the new ideas.
- **Adoption:** A psychological change occurs, and the individual forms a positive attitude toward the innovation.

When applying this theory to our study, we can consider digital radio as an innovation that is gradually expanding. Countries like Norway have reached the adoption stage, with other countries like the UK and Switzerland following suit. However, the experience in the Arab world is still modest, as is the case with podcasts, which originated in 2004. The widespread adoption of this innovation required time and certain circumstances, passing through the stages and categories previously mentioned. Evidence from prior studies indicates that certain groups, such as the Laggards category defined by Rogers, remain unaware of podcasts and digital radio.

Operational Concepts:

1. Digital Radio: Digital radio refers to radio broadcasts that use digital technology to transmit audio waves via binary systems (0s and 1s), converting the audio signal from its electrical form into high-quality digital signals, instead of the traditional analog method (The Future of Digital Radio, EBU, Viewpoint). Examples of adopted digital broadcasting systems include DAB+, DAB, and DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale) which is implemented in Algeria (Youcef Maallemi, 2018).

2. Digital Radio Broadcasting: Radio broadcasting is the transmission of sound from radio stations to research centers responsible for the transmission, and then to the listening public. Digital radio broadcasting, on the other hand, is a more advanced broadcasting system that relies on newer, improved technologies such as DAB+ and others. It is characterized by high sound quality, coverage in remote areas, and other advantages that make it superior to traditional analog systems (Prezemyslaw Falkowski-Gilski, *Digital Transformation of Terrestrial Radio*). This added value improves the quality of radio transmission.

3. Podcast: A podcast is an audio content format distributed through the internet using apps available on both Android and iOS

systems, and broadcast on popular podcast platforms such as Spotify. It is also considered a new media phenomenon, a product of radio broadcasting that has been enhanced with additional features (Tiziano Bonini, *Podcasting as a Hybrid Cultural Form Between Old and New Media*).

This audio content, which saw significant growth during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, has now become widespread. There are over 4 million podcasts worldwide, with more than 1 million new podcasts launched in 2020 alone (Podcast Index). Arabic and Turkish languages rank among the lowest in podcast production, following languages like English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Indonesian (Abdullah, Mohamed). It is also noteworthy that the number of podcast listeners has risen significantly since 2020, reaching 332.2 million listeners (16.5% of internet users), and is expected to rise to 504.9 million listeners by 2024 (23.5% of internet users) (BlogPasCher.com).

Podcasts offer unique media content, providing on-demand listening that can be accessed at any time. They also offer flexibility and interactivity, transcending social and cultural hierarchies. For example, podcasts are available in colloquial Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, foreign languages, or even mixed languages. Podcasts are known for their boldness, addressing topics that traditional media rarely touch, which is why they have gained so much popularity.

In summary, podcasting is the result of the fusion of personal blogging with radio broadcasting and digital audio.

Previous Studies:

Since both podcasts and digital broadcasting are phenomena of the present era, numerous studies have been conducted on these topics. Some studies aimed to explore the motivations behind podcast usage and the satisfaction derived from it, while others focused on the impact of podcasters on their audiences or analyzed the content presented in podcasts. In our study, we review the most relevant studies, including the following:

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1. Prezemyslaw Falkowski Gilski (2021): This study examines the shift from analog radio broadcasting (Frequency Modulation) to the digital broadcasting system (DAB+ Digital Modulation). The study discusses the results of this transformation, concluding that DAB+ will soon become widely adopted, similar to social media platforms. The author praises the importance of this development for radio, which allows it to maintain its prestigious position in the communication world. Falkowski recommends that opinion leaders and investors should focus on digital broadcasting or what he calls "High-quality services to the end user," as radio and audio have always been a preferred medium for audiences across different social classes and throughout history. He emphasizes that adopting high-quality sound, such as that provided by digital broadcasting systems like DAB+, will offer an exciting experience. He concludes by suggesting that authors and researchers should develop a specific guide for digital broadcasting, aimed at radio workers and university students, to facilitate the widespread adoption of digital radio.

2. Sumaya Al-Yaqoubi (2020): This study, described by the researcher as exploratory, aimed to analyze the experience of Al Jazeera's podcasting operation and explore the behind-the-scenes process of podcast production, including the requirements of the work and the type of content provided to listeners. The study used in-depth observation as its primary research method, with the researcher attending Al Jazeera's studio and following all stages of podcast production, from selecting the topics to the preliminary research, the editorial meeting, guest selection, script review, recording the episode, and finally, the audio design and promotion across the channel's platforms. The researcher also employed a quantitative content analysis method on a random sample of podcast episodes and concluded that producing podcasts requires attention to research, which is critical to creating the content of the episodes. This includes the role of producers in writing the content and researching relevant information about the topics discussed.

3. Karima Boufalaga (Unpublished, 2023): In her study presented at a conference on electronic broadcasting at the University of Algiers 3, titled *Podcasting: When Digital Audio Content Gives New Life to Radio*, the researcher posed the following questions: What is podcasting? What are its characteristics? What is its current status? And what are the characteristics of its audience?

The researcher reached several key conclusions, including:

1. Podcasts first appeared in Algeria in 2019 with 11 programs, followed by 68 programs in 2020, 70 in 2021, and 25 programs in 2022.
2. Podcasts attract more amateurs than media organizations (166 platforms produced by amateurs compared to 3 platforms produced by media institutions).
3. The Algerian audio library is considered poor compared to other Arab countries, which lack the wealth, historical, or scientific knowledge resources that Algeria possesses (according to Yasser Al-Arabi, founder of the "Go Radio" platform).
4. The podcast industry in Algeria is a modest and recent experience compared to other Arab media institutions.

4/ The study by Marta Ramona, titled *From Traditional Radio to Podcast or To A La Carte*, compared podcasts created by professional broadcasters (referred to as "Professionals") with those created by podcasters (referred to as "Amateurs"). Ramona discusses the remarkable paradox that podcasting has created: this fascinating medium not only continues to pull the rug out from under traditional radio, drawing more and more listeners away from radio programs, but it has also compelled major media organizations, both radio and television, to create their own podcasts.

This comparative study focused on identifying the differences between professional and amateur podcasts, particularly in terms of production, emphasizing podcasting and radio as two mediums focused on audio content. The researcher used interviews as her

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primary method, which involved 12 podcasters and broadcasters from France and Romania.

Her study concluded several key findings, which are detailed in her research:

1/ The podcast is rather a transition from traditional radio, from fast-radio to personalised, a la carte one. A collaborative medium where producers work independently.

2/ From one-day listeners, they become the podcasters of the next day, full-fledged publishers who participate in the development and broadcasting of content in the same way as the mass media.

3/ The digitization of radio has been a major challenge in terms of production, distribution and consumption methods. Thus, its evolution is going through the new technologies that promote listening mobility such as DAB+ services and voice assistants.

4/ Although podcast and radio, both represent an auditory experience. Still podcast seems like an expressive form of communication and not a classic means of communication.

Commentary on Previous Studies:

Research related to the variables in our study is extremely important because it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and the specific aspects being studied. This avoids repetition and fosters innovation. In preparing our paper, we came across many studies that either intersected with or diverged from our topic. We selected one local study, one Arab study, and two foreign studies, and we will now comment on them in relation to the structure of our research.

Gilski's Study: This study, which focuses on digital transformation, was particularly useful in understanding the differences between analog and digital radio broadcasting systems. It provided an international perspective on the adoption of digital broadcasting, which is central to our study of digital radio. It also helped us position our research in relation to the global landscape of digital broadcasting.

Al-Yaqoubi's Study: This study also supports our work by exploring the production process of Algerian podcasts, from the

initial idea to promotion and distribution, as well as the equipment and financial resources required. It aligns with our study's aim to explore the nuances of podcast production in Algeria.

Boufalaga's Study: Although Bouflakha's study explored podcasting from various angles, it intersects with our research in many ways, especially in examining the state of podcast production in Algeria.

Ramona's Study: Ramona's research is particularly relevant to our work, especially in terms of methodology. She used interviews with broadcasters and bloggers (both amateurs and professionals) to examine the differences and similarities in content creation between broadcasters and podcasters. Though the number of interviewees differs between her study and ours, both studies aim to identify the distinctions and similarities in how content is produced by both groups. Our findings will reveal the points of overlap between our study and previous research.

Methodology of the Study:

Our study falls under descriptive research, which focuses on tracing the production of digital audio content within a digital environment and describing the various stages this content undergoes before reaching listeners through various distribution channels. We adopted a survey method to explore the intricacies of digital radio and podcast production.

The research community for this study includes *"Al-Nasr Podcast"* and *"Ihyaa Podcast"*. The sample consists of two individuals: Yasmin Boljari, the host of *"Al-Nasr Podcast"*, and Amin Hussein, the production manager for *"Ihyaa Podcast"*. To collect data, we used a structured interview tool, which was framed around four main themes that correspond to the research questions and align with the issue under investigation.

First Theme: Personal Data of the Interviewees and an Overview of the Presented Podcast

Second Theme: The Production of Digital Audio Content in Algeria, where we explore the impact of digital broadcasting on radio work, recording studios, funding, and podcast marketing.

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Third Theme: Podcast as an Audio Radio Content, in which we aim to study the podcast as a content type, its form, and its interaction with guests.

Fourth Theme: Broadcaster or Podcaster? An Analysis of the Similarities and Differences in Radio Production and Audio Content Presentation: Professionalism vs. Blogging. Each theme was centered on four core questions.

Areas of Study:

Temporal: This refers to the time period spent on the study, covering both the theoretical and practical aspects. The researcher spent about three and a half months investigating the topic, reviewing previous literature, and preparing Algeria for this transformation. A work plan was followed to achieve the best results, including selecting the study sample, preparing for the interview, and creating a scientific interview guide for analysis. We relied on qualitative analysis of the themes around which the interviews were based.

Analysis and Presentation of Results:

First Theme: This section introduces the podcast presented and the background of the people involved. The first podcast analyzed is *"Al-Nasr Podcast"*, produced by **Al-Nasr Newspaper**, hosted by journalist Yasmin Boljdari, who is currently in charge of scientific media at the General Directorate of Scientific Research and Technological Development. She is also the editor-in-chief of **Al-Shihab Scientific Magazine**, published by the Research Unit for Scientific Mediation. Yasmin worked at **Al-Nasr Newspaper** for 15 years and holds a Master's degree in Media and Communication and a Bachelor's degree in Translation.

The second podcast analyzed is *"Ihyaa Podcast"*, produced by **Al-Anis TV Channel**. It is managed by Amin Hussein and hosted by podcasters Mariam and Miloud. Amin's academic background is not related to media (he holds a Master's in Islamic Law), but he has undergone media training through courses inside and outside Algeria, focusing on production, presentation, filming,

television production, and media management. This raises questions about the role of academic training versus fieldwork experience in media practice: Is academic training essential, or can hands-on experience suffice in delivering the media message? These are questions we hope to answer through the results of the interview themes.

The first broadcast of *Al-Nasr Podcast* was on November 29, 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly facilitated the spread of podcasts. *Al-Nasr Podcast* is considered the first public podcast associated with a public institution, while *Ihyaa Podcast* is relatively new, with its first episode released on August 1, 2024. This places *Ihyaa Podcast* in a challenging position as it competes in an already crowded media landscape. The question arises: Is podcasting experiencing its golden age, or has it simply become a trendy phenomenon?

Podcasting has, undeniably, provided many positive features, such as easy access to audio content and the ability to listen to it at any time. However, podcasting is also very easy to create. The radio listener of yesterday has become today's podcaster and content creator (2020, Marta Ramona Novaceanu). This shift has resulted in a saturation of the platform, causing some to feel that its prestige and appeal have diminished. In this regard, Khawla Chnouf states:

"Podcasting has not been immune to falling into the trap of imitation. Despite the few useful programs, it has become like any other media platform—no longer reflecting our reality or fulfilling the interests of the Algerian audience, especially with the growing reliance on some social media influencers. Their shows on the platform have become carbon copies of other programs, characterized by monotony and often evoking disdain" (Khawla Chnouf, Al Jazeera website).

While we do not generalize the author's idea in the course of this paper, a closer reading might suggest that despite the ease of creating podcasts, they have moved away from fulfilling their intended purpose. There are numerous podcasts where you feel as

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though you're listening to a routine daily conversation, one you might hear regularly within your family or work environment, far from professional standards. A podcast is not simply a microphone where a host and guest sit together. In this regard, one blogger states: **"The most important feature of podcasting is its ease of creation. In practice, anyone who has space on the web, a computer, and a microphone can create a podcast. One of the main reasons for success is knowing exactly what you are publishing on your podcast."*

(Reema15.blogspot.com)
The two audio content samples under study are classified as interview podcasts, where a guest is invited and interviewed on the episode's topic. The key difference is that **"Al-Nasr Podcast"* is audio-only and airs once a week, or sometimes once a month, whereas **"Ihya Podcast"* is both audio and visual, first broadcast on **"Al-Anis TV"* every Thursday evening, before being uploaded to other platforms. Naturally, **"Al-Nasr Podcast"* has more episodes (59) than **"Ihya Podcast"* (7), given the latter's more recent launch.

Both podcasts share an intellectual and cultural focus, covering a variety of topics such as medicine, astronomy, politics, engineering, economics, technology, history, national memory, women, education, and more. In a word: they are diverse podcasts rather than specialized ones. Regarding listener interaction, both interviewees described the engagement as neither excellent nor minimal, but rather moderate—there is interaction from listeners and viewers, which motivates them to continue producing content.

Second Theme: The Production of Digital Audio Content in Algeria

This theme examines podcasting as an industry, focusing on several key questions, starting with: When did digital audio content start to gain traction in Algeria? Both interviewees agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic played a major role in the widespread adoption of podcasting as digital audio content, both globally and in Algeria specifically. The period of lockdown negatively affected people's mental health, and there was an

increased desire to find ways to spend time. Social media use grew not only for news and awareness about the virus but also for entertainment purposes. This opened up a vast space, not only for platforms like Netflix in film production but also for podcasts as a content form and their associated platforms, including YouTube, which became a fertile ground for video podcasts.

The idea of podcasting began with passionate amateurs who wanted their voices to be heard by others, starting in the early 2000s with the emergence of the second generation of web technologies and applications that enabled interactivity and sharing of multimedia links, both audio and visual, moving away from the traditional model of online forums and message boards (Zahra Boujefjounf, 2018, p. 138). The term "podcast" is derived from the iPod, meaning anyone with a digital recording device can generate content and thus create a podcast. By the end of 2008, podcasting began to spread in the Arab world, but its reach was still limited compared to the rapid growth of social media in Arab countries. By 2016, podcasting saw an upward trend in terms of content, audience, and growth (The Syrian Podcast, previous reference, p. 6).

Amin Hussein, the production manager of "Ihyaa Podcast", was right in saying that podcasting in Algeria came very late both globally and within the Arab world. The first Arabic podcast was produced in the Gulf region in 2009 by Dr. Mohamed Qasim, with the "Sciware Podcast", and its origins were specifically in Oman, Kuwait, and the UAE (Podcast Revolution: The Radio of the Future, amaz.com).

As for the development of podcasting in Algeria, it only took its first steps in the first quarter of 2019, with a few individual attempts by young people. In April of that same year, the first episode of "Podcastech" was recorded by Chouki Dlimi, who chose technology as the topic for discussion, following in the footsteps of the "Sciware Podcast". The podcast used Modern Standard Arabic as its language of discourse. This was followed by various scattered attempts, with the pace of production

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increasing by early 2021. Notable podcasts include *Tawali Podcast* by Tawali Company (October 2021), *Joe Podcast* by *Joe Digital Radio* (March 2021), and *Al-Nasr Podcast* by *Al-Nasr Newspaper* (November 2021).

Regarding what digital audio content has added to radio content in Algeria, Yasmin Bouledjri, the host of *Al-Nasr Podcast*, views podcasts as a complement to traditional radio content, particularly in terms of the nature of the topics and the quality of the guests. She also highlights that podcasts offer audiences the ability to re-watch or listen to episodes at any time, unlike radio programs. On the other hand, Amin Hussein, the production manager of *Ihya Podcast*, sees podcasts not only as a radio product but also as a lifesaver for traditional radio, revitalizing it. He suggests that, given the struggle of radio to keep up with technological advancements and the dominance of social media over various age groups, it seemed as though radio had lost its relevance. However, the emergence of podcasts, which combine traditional radio formats with modern technology and the basics of digital broadcasting, has helped restore radio's significance, reach, and appeal to a large audience, particularly among the youth.

Anyone following podcasts, whether Algerian or otherwise, will observe that podcasts have significantly enriched radio content. The freedom of expression that podcasts offer is not typically found in traditional radio stations, which adhere to the policies and editorial lines of their respective media organizations. As a result, podcasts tend to be bolder and able to delve into topics that might be considered taboo in traditional radio. The content of podcasts is often more personalized, covering subjects from social and cultural to political topics, while traditional radio content used to be a broad mix aimed at various age and social groups, forcing listeners to tune into all programs before consuming the content they are interested in. Here, we can clearly see the influence of the ease and availability that podcasts offer, with listeners able to simply click an icon to access the content they want.

For example, research has shown that podcasts and audio books have had an impact on political awareness among audiences and experts. Podcasts create an open, dynamic environment for information that allows listeners to adopt new knowledge. The war in Ukraine, for instance, has been a fertile topic for these media, which aim to raise global awareness about the consequences of such conflicts. Podcasts, as diverse audio worlds, are increasingly sought out, particularly by the youth, as a way to escape the limitations of traditional local media and the noise of social media. (2021, Yeromin, cited in Ahmed Ben Souidan, p. 103). Regardless of their themes, podcasts serve listeners by providing content through sound. For example, in the educational field, the *Coffee Break Podcast* is one of the most popular podcasts for teaching English, while *"Fanjan Podcast"*, the most popular Arabic podcast from *Thamaya Digital Radio*, achieved nearly 113 million views on its episode with Dr. Yasser Al-Huzaymi within a year of its release, entering the Guinness World Records, surpassing Joe Rogan's episode with Elon Musk, which only reached 65 million views after five years. These numbers indicate that podcasting is a powerful medium with deep societal influence.

In Algeria, there are also meaningful and goal-oriented podcasts, such as *Al-Nasr Podcast* and *Ihyaa Podcast*, which regularly host prominent figures in the fields of science and thought, helping raise awareness of Algerian intellectuals. Additionally, *Brainer Podcast*, a motivational podcast, inspires young people with its guests to work on their own projects, achieve personal growth, and contribute to society.

While this view contrasts with that of Khawla Shnouf, who believes that Algerian podcasts do not reflect the country's reality, describing them as mere imitations of ideas, styles, and dialogues, with content that is often irrelevant to anyone except the hosts and their close friends, the fact remains that many Algerian podcasts are striving to offer substantive content. Khawla Shnouf criticizes these podcasts for hosting influencers who discuss personal,

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emotional issues or their ongoing social media battles (Khawla Shnouf, previous reference).

Regarding the recording locations and equipment used in producing podcast episodes, there were clear differences between the two. Yasmin Bouledjri records *Al-Nasr Podcast* from her office, while *Ihya Podcast* has a dedicated studio at *Al-Anis TV*. The equipment also differed: *Al-Nasr Podcast* uses basic but sufficient tools, such as a microphone, phone, and computer. However, technology plays a significant role in the production quality. Just as the quality of a camera affects the image, the sound quality in *Ihya Podcast* is also crucial. *Ihya Podcast* has a professional team dedicated to recording episodes. In addition to the podcaster (host) and the production manager, there are photographers working with three fixed GH5S cameras (Full HD/1800), two soft boxes to ensure sound quality, two LED lights, and a sound technician who connects a Zoom 16 sound recorder with a high-quality Rode microphone.

The difference between audio-only podcasts and video podcasts is clear both in terms of effort and technology. After the recording phase, there comes a pivotal stage in podcasting that determines whether it will thrive or fade—this is the publishing stage. Therefore, we asked about the publishing strategies used by their institutions. *Al-Nasr Podcast* publishes once a week and sometimes monthly across various digital platforms for podcasts, such as YouTube Music, Spotify, Facebook, and the newspaper's website, and it stops there. In contrast, *Ihya Podcast* follows a comprehensive marketing strategy. Before broadcasting an episode on *Al-Anis TV*, a promotional teaser video with a special image for each episode is shared on Instagram and other platforms, such as TikTok and YouTube. The production manager described this as "post-episode promotion," publishing teaser clips to draw in viewers after the episode airs.

Although both podcasts rely on their associated media institutions (the newspaper's website and the TV channel), they differ in the platforms they use for publishing. *Al-Nasr Podcast* focuses on

podcast-specific platforms and social media, while *Ihyaa Podcast* expands its reach to broader social media channels. The researcher believes this difference is natural, given the contrasting audio and video content. The production manager added that they intentionally use these platforms because the content of *Ihyaa Podcast* is not time-bound or universal, and they aspire to contribute to the development of Algeria's audio library for future generations to explore and learn about the country's history and culture.

When asked about the funding sources for creating the podcast and whether it generates profits, this question exposed the fact that the Algerian podcast scene is still far from being a fully established industry, having not yet moved beyond the stage of becoming widely known. As a result, neither of the podcasts generates any profit. Yasmin Bouledjri, the host of *Al-Nasr Podcast*, mentioned that audio podcasting requires minimal resources, so the newspaper does not allocate special funding for it. On the other hand, *Ihyaa Podcast* relies on the contributions of the TV channel's owner and advertising revenues to sustain its financial support.

Comparing this to the podcast industry in the Gulf region, the revenue generated by publishing companies like Thamaya Publishing—which is famous for *Fanjan Podcast* hosted by Abdulrahman Abu Malih, *Socrates* by Omar Al-Jiraisi, and *Sawalif Business* by Mashhur Al-Dubiyani—reached 4.42 million riyals in 2020, with net profits amounting to 1.16 million riyals by early 2021. (Alarabiya.net). Moreover, global podcasting profits are also impressive. For instance, in a 2019 income report for the top podcast programs on the platform, *The Joe Rogan Experience* topped the list with \$30 million, followed by *My Favorite Murder* with \$15 million and *The Dave Ramsey Show* with \$10 million. The dominance of major personalities is also clear, as platforms are competing to sign high-profile hosts in order to attract their global fanbases. This strategy has become one of the most important competitive advantages. For example,

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Apple has exclusive rights to Oprah Winfrey's podcast. (Revolution of Podcasts: The Radio of the Future).

Overall, the issue of financial sustainability is a challenge facing Arab podcasts. Hence, there is a need for a specialized and professional business model that would support a business mindset to ensure continuous development and sustainable growth for podcast content creators. (State of Podcasting in the Arab World, Dubai Press Club, 2023, p. 18)

Section Three: Podcast as Audio Radio Content

Having discussed podcasts as an industry in the previous section, this section focuses on podcasting as content. One of the key questions raised was about the type of content provided and whether it adheres to certain standards and objectives. Both podcasts under study share a commitment to providing diverse content that discusses a wide range of issues, often focusing on current events. Both also rely on a conversational format, where the host engages in dialogue with a guest.

The conversation length differs between the two podcasts: *Ihya Podcast* often exceeds two hours, whereas *Al-Nasr Podcast* tends to be shorter, usually under half an hour. However, long podcasts can be off-putting to listeners, especially if they fail to engage them from the outset, considering the digital age's preference for quick access to content, speed, and variety provided by social media platforms. Modern listeners, particularly digital natives, are prone to quick boredom and a desire for fresh and up-to-date content. *Ihya Podcast* is no exception, with some episodes exceeding three hours, similar to *Fanjan Podcast*, which recently hosted Algerian historian Mohamed Amin Belghith in an episode lasting over four hours, discussing the history of Algeria.

Ultimately, the duration of a podcast depends entirely on the creator's decision. As for the standards they adhere to, the host of *Al-Nasr Podcast* mentioned that they follow the same standards used in daily journalistic practice, which includes a focus on accuracy, objectivity in presenting topics, and engaging with

experts in the field. The primary goal is to provide a public service to the audience and attract a young audience. On the other hand, regarding *Ihya Podcast*, the production manager stated that although there are no clear, defined standards, their guiding principles are what best serve their objectives, which include:

- Strengthening the Algerian identity through its religious, Arab, and historical values.
- Connecting Algerian history with the broader Arab and Islamic history.
- Highlighting Algerian intellectuals, especially those whose work is often marginalized.
- Showcasing the capabilities of Algeria's educated and competent youth, distancing them from the negative image of "lost youth" or the TikTok generation.
- Contributing to the documentation of Algerian cultural and audio content.

These are noble goals pursued by the creators of these podcasts, and their vision offers hope for a meaningful contribution to the Algerian media scene, away from superficiality and artifice. The content they provide is not made out of thin air; it is preceded by research and effort. As stated by the host of *Al-Nasr Podcast*, the quality of the content depends heavily on thorough preparation and understanding of the subject, while the presentation is more spontaneous and natural. In contrast, Yasmin Bouledjri oversees both the pre-production and production stages, while the digital media manager and a digital journalist are responsible for post-production.

From the above, we can conclude that *Al-Nasr Podcast* is more of an individual effort, primarily carried out by the host, compared to *Ihya Podcast*, which involves an entire team working together to produce the show. This approach is similar to *Al-Jazeera's* "After Yesterday" podcast, which follows a clear structure involving: self-selection of topics, scheduling of topics according to a research agenda, editorial meetings, guest selection, research, script review, recording, sound design, and promotion.

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(*Sumaya Al-Yaqoubi, Podcast: Work Requirements and Content Features*). While *Al-Jazeera's* podcast is more professional, especially in the guest selection process, which is based on current events and fits within their planned agenda, guests are briefed about the show and are coached on how to manage the tone of their voice and the nature of their contributions, which distinguishes the format from traditional radio and TV interviews. In the case of the Algerian podcast scene, however, it is more common to select the guest first and then tailor the topic around them, especially when it concerns a notable figure. This approach detracts from the professionalism of the podcast, as it would be more ideal to select guests based on a clear agenda rather than the other way around. This brings us to our next question regarding audience studies. It seems that, aside from focusing *Al-Nasr Podcast* on a youth demographic and *Ihyaa Podcast* on the educated elite, there are no real audience studies in place. The production manager also added that the name "Ihyaa" (meaning "revival") was not chosen randomly; its mission is to revive Algerians' awareness of their identity, culture, and history.

Section Four: Host or Audio Blogger?

Moving to the fourth section, which concerns the nature of those behind the podcasts, we aimed to gather more details about the people responsible for the content. The first question we asked was about who runs *Al-Nasr Podcast* and *Ihyaa Podcast*. *Al-Nasr Podcast* is hosted by Yasmin Bouledjri, who is a journalist at *Al-Nasr Newspaper* with academic studies in the same field. On the other hand, *Ihyaa Podcast* is presented by Miloud Chibana and Meryem Bzi, whose academic backgrounds are not related to media (economics and Sharia). Their involvement in podcasting is more a personal interest or hobby, as they seek to explore the medium. This situation raises a question about the distinction between professional journalists and amateur podcasters. Previous studies, such as the one by David Garcia Marin, which focused on Spanish podcasts and the role of

podcasters in influencing their audience, might help shed light on the evolving nature of this field.

It was concluded that podcasting, much like radio, was initially considered a form of entertainment before it transformed into a powerful media tool. In the same way, although podcasts are often presented spontaneously and by amateurs rather than specialists, they still fulfill a media function similar to other forms of media. The researcher also pointed out that Spanish radio itself began as an unprofessional activity, with thanks given to the efforts of radio enthusiasts at the time, who knew how to benefit from the developments in radio broadcasting in the United States to establish Spanish radio. The same can be said for podcasts today, which, though largely driven by amateurs, have now become essential for every media organization to have its own podcast. (David Garcia-Marin, *New Media, New Practices? A Study of the First Spanish Podcast Community and Its Pioneers*, 2022). In the researcher's view, this answers the question posed in the first section. On the other hand, a study by Marta Ramona concluded that, although podcasts share similarities with radio in that they both offer audio content, they remain distinct.

It was concluded that, despite the fact that podcasts share with radio the characteristic of providing audible radio content, podcasts remain a communicative and expressive medium, far removed from being a classic media outlet like radio (Marta 2020, Ramona, *From The Traditional Radio to Podcast or To the A La Carte*). The situation is similar with Algerian podcasts, leaving us in a state of anticipation, as the experience itself is new compared to what was previously mentioned in the study. We do not want to do an injustice to amateur podcasters or overstate their importance, and we will leave the answer to this question to time and future studies in this area.

Regarding the qualities that a podcaster should possess and the skills they should master, Yasmina Boualjdiri expressed simple

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requirements, far from academic training, including the ability to handle diverse topics, as well as skills in writing and presenting. The production manager expressed similar conditions, adding the necessity of having a pleasant voice, proper language, being cultured, and having intellectual interests. They also emphasized the importance of being familiar with podcasts and the basics of working on them.

For Arab content creators (including Algerians), it is expected that they be professional, curious, multi-tasking, and that those working in Arab podcast production behave as facilitators, skilled interviewers, distinguished presenters, deep thinkers, explorers, researchers, and communicators of ideas that society is ready to accept, engage with, and think about. This is the current state of podcast production in the Arab world (previous reference).

As for the reason behind entering the world of podcasting, the host of "Al-Nasr" podcast stated that it was driven by two factors: a passion for radio work and keeping up with the podcasting revolution, which has become a staple in every media organization. The same reason applies to "Ihya" podcast, or even "Ra'id" podcast, which focuses on economics and business development, also broadcast by Al-Anis TV channel. The production manager of "Ihya" stated that the move to podcasting was to keep up with the podcast revolution and maintain the overall image of the channel, explaining that, as someone who has worked in the field since 2015, it saddens him to see the value of podcasts deteriorate in Algeria. While countries and media organizations invest in podcasting as a media industry and an effective, close-to-the-audience tool that generates huge profits, here, anyone who owns a microphone declares themselves a podcaster with a podcast of their own, without any specific purpose or carefully planned content. He added, "So if it weren't for keeping up with the trend, I wouldn't have entered or thought about working in it." This view contrasts completely with the

findings of the Dubai Press Club's study, which surveyed 60 podcast content creators in the Arab world. Passion for the field and creating content on digital platforms was the overwhelming majority choice, followed by a desire to connect with others and inspire and motivate young people through building an online community. Self-fulfillment and alignment with the future of media were at the bottom of the list (previous reference). This also reminds us of the early days of online journalism and its threat to print journalism, which became traditional, and how, little by little, it imposed itself. It eventually became a necessity for every newspaper to have its own website.

From the responses of the interviewees, we can deduce that podcasting is no longer just an auditory content form, with features such as accessibility and ease of content retrieval, but has become a new broadcasting medium that is forcing radio stations to have their own podcasts in order to keep up with the demands of the media market and retain their listening audience.

Regarding training in audio content creation, unfortunately, there was a complete lack of training at both organizations. While Yasmina Boualjdiri relied on self-training, the team at "Ihya" podcast also relied on a few workshops offered at the channel for "Ihya" podcasters. This presents a surprising and disappointing reality in the absence of proper training at the two media institutions where the podcasts studied are based.

Podcasting, with its diverse identity, requires investment through pioneering collaborative partnerships in the field and the provision of material and technical resources.

Study Suggestions:

In conclusion, our study proposes the following:

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Academically:

The study suggests that Algerian universities and academic institutions should give more importance to podcasting by introducing specialized courses that address audio blogging, its basics, and production techniques. This would prepare today's students, who could potentially become the podcasters of tomorrow. The study also recommends increasing the number of seminars, study days, and conferences on the theme of "Podcasting: The Radio of the Future."

Media Institutions:

The study recommends that media institutions focus on training in the field of audio blogging and podcast production by organizing training workshops and exchanging expertise with Gulf countries. The Ministry of Information and Communication is also advised to create a specialized and professional operational model or guide to eliminate the chaos and unproductive saturation in the podcasting field, as a step towards organizing the work of audio blogging and adding professionalism while ensuring freedom and independence in presenting audio content.

Additionally, it is suggested that a unified platform for all Algerian podcasts under the name "Algerian Podcast," be created. This platform would serve as a space for publication under regulated terms and laws, aiming to organize content and take it beyond national borders.

Amateur Bloggers:

The study recommends that amateur podcasters review previous experiences, research the fundamentals of podcasting, receive training, and join specialized courses to ensure the continuity of content and enhance the quality of their materials. Furthermore, the study advises all podcast producers in Algeria to

work on improving content quality, increasing production, and developing effective methods to generate income and achieve financial sustainability.

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