



What's Podcasting to you? Exploring Perspectives of
Consumers and Producers

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Abstract

Past research has widely investigated podcasting in academia and education. Some research has investigated motivations of podcasters and listeners using quantitative methods. However, little is known about perspectives of podcast users and producers with respect to technological and cultural changes in the medium. This dissertation outlines findings from interviews conducted with podcast users and a podcast producer that lays out thoughts about the medium on themes like technology, production, distribution etc.

Introduction

Podcasting, an automated subscription-based system of recorded audio/video content powered by the internet, finds its origins in the early 2000s and witnessed wide adoption in 2005. This makes podcasting older than Facebook or Twitter, two very popular products of the internet age. Although, podcasting has not been able to replicate the same success as those social networking sites, it has had a few pivotal moments that left an indelible impact on the digital media industry. Since 2013, podcasting has witnessed exponential growth (Heater, 2018) and continues to innovate storytelling.

I believe that the exponential growth and popularity of podcasts has only been explored through numbers and other quantitative methods. I think that breakout successes like *Serial*, *The Daily*, *This American Life* amongst others, should be investigated qualitatively to dissect the reasons behind their popularity and how underlying factors within podcasting complement storytelling. I believe that this warrants an investigation that discovers podcasting from the perspective of the podcast producer as well as the end user. My research question therefore asks “What are the contemporary perspectives of podcast consumers and producers?”

The scope of this investigation are the cultural, technological and social developments in podcasting due to which the medium has garnered eminence in the industry. This research aims to address the lack of existing research into podcasters and their audiences, especially in context of the technological changes that have enhanced the consumption of contemporary podcasts. While the literature about the developments in forms of ‘storytelling on internet’ is available widely, its focus remains on experiments with long-form or short-form text pieces, video content etc. This research aims to fill the void by studying podcasting, a medium that leverages aurality (McHugh, 2012), to garner insights from a podcast producer and a few podcast consumers. It should be noted that while this is a qualitative analysis of podcast consumers and producers, due its limited reach and non-random nature of the sample, the results may not be generalisable to the podcasting population. Although, this exploration would put forth some interesting observations that complements as well as highlights the need for further exploration in existing literature.

The research will also explore audience perceptions about smart speakers like HomePod by Apple and Echo by Amazon and enquire if consumption of audio content, especially podcasts and aural journalism would be influenced by this technology. In the age of omni-present screens, the smart speakers offer different approach to deliver news bulletins, podcasts etc by leveraging sound and voice. These speakers are dubbed ‘smart’ because they house a ‘digital assistant’ within them to communicate with the user and fetch results from the internet. With shipments of smart speakers topping 7 million in Q3 2017, a 700% jump YoY (Strategy Analytics, 2017), they are garnering interest from consumers, content producers and researchers alike. The research aims to address

the lack of exploration of the impact of smart speakers on audio-only digital content by gather insights from producers and consumers of podcasts.

I believe that this research is important to understand how podcasts are changing the media landscape. Both podcast producers and consumers will be interviewed for this research to know their perspectives about the medium, usage and future outlook.

In a nutshell, this research would investigate the state of podcasting, user motivations behind listening to podcasts, intended applications of podcasts, newer technologies to discover and consume podcasts.

Chapter I - Literature Review

Podcasting

Chandler & Munday (2016) describe podcasting in *The Dictionary of Media and Communication* as a “portmanteau term”, a combination of iPod and broadcasting. The dictionary describes podcasting as “a means of distributing digital audio content in the form of data files which can be downloaded from the internet and played on a home computer, MP3 audio player, or smartphone”. The term was coined by Ben Hammersley in his article for *The Guardian* (2004), where he hastily used it to pad his report on ‘a new boom in amateur radio’ (Wolf, 2013). Hammersley (2004) emphasised that podcasts allow for freedom from space and time for the listeners and liberation from “programming regulations” for the producers. He also noted that since podcasts are distributed using the internet and are not ephemeral like the radio, producers have greater creative liberty with limitless airtime. Berry (2006) defines Podcasts as “media content delivered automatically to a subscriber via the Internet”, it should be noted Berry uses ‘media content’ as a term that encompasses both audio and video.

Hilmes & Loviglio (2013: 49) described podcasting as “a new alternative distribution route for serially produced programming” which emerged in 2004. Hilmes & Loviglio credit the “ease of digital audio production, combined with syndicating software and web-based distribution” for the popularity of podcasts and further explain how it sky-rocketed when Apple began hosting podcasts on iTunes in 2005. Apple introduced the service was introduced, roughly 4 years after the introduction of Apple’s popular portable music player, the iPod and Apple’s then CEO, Steve Jobs described podcasting as “next generation of radio” in a press release (2005).

iTunes, originally introduced a media player for digital music in 2001 graduated into a music management tool for the iPod later that year. The software was the only route to synchronise digital music from a computer to an iPod. Apple then released their digital music store under the iTunes branding and allowed the users to acquire and synchronise songs to their iPod, this was a pivotal for the music industry recovering from the damage that Napster and other peer-to-peer

online services had caused. By 2005, Apple was also selling TV shows and movies on the iTunes Store and had also introduced their own Podcasts hosting service. While the former three services were paid and reliant on content deals with music labels, movie studios and tv networks, podcasts were independent and free.

Freire et al. (2008) remark on the similarities and dissimilarities between podcasting and other broadcast mediums like Radio by stating, "While podcasting is neither a complete break from broadcasting nor part of any kind of revolution, it is the realisation of an alternate cultural model of broadcasting", highlighting that while podcasting maybe inspired by the mediums that preceded it, it exists on its own as a concept that leverages the internet for distribution. Podcasts shun the ephemerality of radio in favour of time-shifting i.e. the ability to tune in and out of a podcast as per the user's convenience (McClung & Johnson, 2010).

In the review of literature, it was found that most of the literature related to podcasting was restricted on analysing 'production' aspect of podcasting. There are research papers that analyse the use of podcasts as a 'tool' in various social settings to achieve or experiment desired output. But, literature related to analysis of trends related to podcasts was found to be limited or lacking in depth. While industry reports like Nielsen, KPMG, RAJAR etc. give a sense of the medium through statistic, the underlying motivations of podcast listeners and podcast producers have not been documented extensively. It was also found that this research has not kept with time and technology, especially as new frontiers for production and consumption of media emerge. While podcasting remains a portmanteau term due to its close connection to the iPod, smartphone is now used for a lion's share of podcast consumption, followed by the computer (Statista, 2018). The argument being that the research into podcasting has not kept up with the technology that enables it.

Overview: Podcasting Industry

Since its wide-availability through iTunes in 2005, the podcasting industry has witnessed its fair share of climbs and declines. After initial adoption, the growth saturated and the podcasting space began to slow down (Roose, 2014) but by late 2014, podcasting saw a surge in adoption like it had

never seen before (Wake & Bahfen, 2016; Berry 2015). *Serial*, an investigative journalism show released as a spin-off from *This American Life* and the Chicago public radio station *WBEZ*, began to take the audio narrative space by storm, thereby, busting all previously held notions about the medium being a niche or fringe format (Bottomley, 2015). Despite almost-annually occurring proclamations by technology industry commentators that noted “Podcasting is dead” (e.g. Freedman, 2005; Iskold, 2007; Wolfe, 2008), the medium remained afloat though was not able to translate its innovative approach into a “mass” media product until 2014 (Bottomley, 2015). Industry observers detailed several apparent reasons for the medium to have not taken off including competition from surging online video space dominated by Youtube and less ways for podcasters to monetise from their work (Bottomley, 2015).

The ‘podcast renaissance’ as described by Roose (2014) was not achieved suddenly after *Serial*’s popularity, but it was rather a result of gradual growth and interest in the medium. While it can be argued that *Serial* could have been a “breakout hit” (Carr, 2014) that attracted attention towards the industry, it cannot be singularly credited for the surge in adoption. Apple’s podcast app on iOS devices, which had historically enjoyed a high market share (Blubrry, 2017; Statista Survey, 2017), was launched as an independent app on the iPhone in 2012 (Panzarino, 2012) as opposed to podcasts previously being baked inside the iTunes store. Apple’s move gave the app its own prime real estate on the iPhone home screen and exposed new users to the world of podcasting with a catalogue emphasising featured podcasts, top charts, recommendations and search functionality. The app also added features like sleep timer, speed toggles etc. which enhanced user experience and functionality. In addition to this, popular audio-hosting site Soundcloud, also started hosting podcasts (Wortham, 2011). Soundcloud’s approach to audio was different from iTunes because it had allowed users to upload their original songs, audiobooks, podcasts, personal logs etc. and had an additional layer of ‘social’ where people could interact with the content through comments, likes and shares. I believe that these two product enhancing developments amongst several others were also responsible for the surge in adoption of podcasting with respect to both consumers and producers. I will be investigating the importance of software in relation to podcast listening and discovery in this research.

Bottomley (2015: 165) argues that much of the literature and research surrounding podcasting was done in the medium's nascency with core focus on application within educational and instructional spaces. Some published literature like Crofts et al. (2005) contemplated on the intended application and monetisation of the medium. Others like Menduni (2007) laid out the trajectory that podcasting followed and speculated on the future outlook of the medium. Berry (2005) compared podcasting to traditional radio and remarked that the medium is disruptive enough to topple the success of radio. These publications on podcasting are now over a decade old, and even though they presented a comprehensive outlook of the medium in its early years, new angles and technologies that accentuate the podcasting experience have since emerged. As Markman (2012) succinctly puts it, "scholarly writing on podcasting is mostly dedicated to instructing neophytes or evangelising the uninitiated", bringing our attention to the fact that research surrounding podcasts has ample scope and several unexplored domains.

Bottomley (2015) also highlights the paucity of literature when it comes to podcasting cultures, audience experiences, use-case from the audiences' perspective, device of consumption etc.. Though, some researchers like Markman (2012) and Markman & Sawyer (2014) have investigated the motivations of independent podcasters and others like McClung & Johnson (2010) have investigated motivations and habits of podcast listeners using Uses and Gratifications theory as the foundation. The research by McClung & Johnson (2010) used 'fan groups' of the top 20 popular podcasts at that time that existed on Facebook and Myspace, thereby restricting the analysis of listener motivations to listeners of the top 20 podcasts who have a facebook account and are also a member of a Facebook 'fan group' related to that podcast. It should be noted that McClung & Johnson (2010) were able to find a substantial 49,000+ members in these groups but only 354 members responded to their survey. Although their work lays out some important factors for user motivation and also recommendations for producers based on those results, it cannot be said that this research gives a wholesome picture because not all podcast listeners are members of 'fan groups'. Since these investigations have occurred, several advancements in terms of hardware and software for both producers and consumers have emerged, which could potentially change the motivations of a listener or a producer. While 354 responses is still a substantial number, I believe that use of surveys does not give a complete picture of podcaster motivations, a more direct and in-depth method like interview would be more suitable to investigate this.

Most of these researches also pre-date the bump in podcasting that was seen since *Serial* (Berry, 2015) was released in 2014. Also, as Bottomley (2015) argues about “lack of scholarly consensus on the status of the medium”, diverting focus towards establishing if podcast is a subset of radio or a new medium in itself or something completely different? Berry (2016) has argued for both cases, he stated that “radio is an evolutionary animal, one which has adapted to the world around it” (2016: 8), remarking on the technological changes that the radio embraced while still commanding a respectable reach (RAJAR, 2017), makes podcasting an extension of radio. But, Berry (2016) highlights that podcast audiences are different from radio audiences, where a radio audience interfaces with an appointment based medium, podcast audiences have the greater autonomy over what they consume and when. It has also been observed that podcast audience is predominantly young, Newman (2018: 55) highlights that more people between the age of 18-34 and 35-44 listen to news on podcasts than news on radio.

RAJAR’s Midas Audio survey (2017), suggests that 6.1 million people in the U.K. (roughly 11% of the population) listen to podcasts every week, with around two quarters of them using a smartphone as their primary way to download and consume podcasts. Research also suggests that over a quarter of listening by the consumer occurs while the user is travelling. The share of audio for a podcast in an individual’s total listening hours varies widely for different age brackets. While podcasts only form 2% of an individual between 15-24 years of age, it is almost 3 times greater (at 6%) for an individual in the age bracket of 25-34 and 3% of total listening hours for an individual between 35-54. Unlike catch-up audio services or music streaming, where the split is close to even for male and female audiences, over 62% of podcast audience in U.K. is believed to be male. The data further suggests that the time of day for listening to a podcast in the U.K. sees an uptick in the early hours of morning or during early hours of evening, both of which synchronise perfectly with work hours/commute for most working professionals and students.

According to podcast consumer report by Edison Research (2017), an estimated 67 million people (over 10 times the size audience in U.K.) listen to podcast every month in United States. The split in terms of consumption based on gender in U.S. is also better than that of U.K., where 44% users are women. 44% of monthly podcast listeners in U.S. are in between the ages of 18-34 and 33%

between the ages of 35—54. It is important to note that these age groupings are different from those used by RAJAR in the U.K.

This data gives a glimpse of the podcasting market in U.S. and U.K. and puts things into perspective about a user's core listening habits. This data also gives an insight into the current state of podcasting but does not dwell into the reasons behind an individual's motivation to subscribe and download a podcast. This data also does not explore the potential reasons behind growth in listenership over the years, preferred apps/clients of consumption, genre of podcast being listened etc., these factors will be investigated using Qualitative research methods in this research.

Overview: Podcast Production

McLuhan (1964) coined 'Global Village' to outline how technology can mould into an extension of human sound and sight. The Internet rejuvenates McLuhan's term by virtually connecting communities regardless of the distance between them (Hugh et al., 2001). I believe that the podcasting community has similar microcosms of 'global village' through endless genres and unique styles that cater niche interests to cultivate audiences. Podcasting and why people make podcasts can be explained well using Deuze's (2007) argument about the fading distinction between consumers and producers of media due to the increasingly participatory nature of media & Beer & Burrow's (2007) analysis of Web 2.0, where collaboration powered by the internet attics and drives reach as well as growth.

Adam Curry, an former MTV video jockey, is believed to be the 'father of podcasting' because of his self-produced radio show, The Daily Source Code, which was launched in 2004 (Newitz, 2005). The distribution of Curry's online show relied on the evolution of internet radio, where Curry used RSS or Really Simple Syndication, scripting and a show produced in a radio format but distributed on demand, where a user can also subscribe to automatically receive future episodes (McCall, 2016). Invented by Dave Winer, RSS or Really Simple Syndication was the necessary infrastructure that led to the advancement in content distribution via the internet (Freire et al., 2008). Freire et al. (2008) also argue that "RSS dimension creates an expectation of seriality which

shapes both production and consumption practice”, I believe that this is an important tenet to consider in podcasting where the purposes of the producer and consumer are defined. When a consumer subscribes, s/he forms an expectation to frequently receive a new episode and the producer is motivated to create more episodes if subscriber interest is viable.

Marco Arment, the developer of the popular podcast client Overcast, began to explain what a podcast is on episode 286 of Accidental Tech Podcast as “it doesn’t work the way anything else on the internet works...” and then he continued, “to publish a podcast, you need audio files, you put those audio files on a server somewhere and then you need some way for people to find them and for podcast players to know when there’s a new episode. And so the way that you publish a audio files in a useful way that makes that into podcast, is that you create a special RSS feed. An RSS feed is a document that is in a special version of markup language called XML. It is kind of like HTML but a lot more strict. An RSS feed is a document that in a structured standardised way lists items in a feed format, so it could be articles, posts and if you have a special tag in your posts, called an enclosure tag, that points to the URL of the audio file, that becomes a podcast” (Arment et al., 2018). Arment’s explanation describes the evolution of an audio file into a podcast and may seem highly complex, but people are increasingly entering the podcasting space due to the ease of access that easy to use software and other third party services like Anchor have enabled.

Podcasting has grown exponentially with an expansive list of genres, topics and categories. Today, almost a decade and a half since the first podcast, 64% of U.S. population is familiar with the term ‘podcasting’, 44% have listened to a podcast before and 26% actively listen to podcasts every month (Edison Research, 2018). From a humble beginning of 3,000 podcasts on the iTunes Store in 2005 (Apple, 2005; Louderback, 2005), Apple announced that there are 550,000 active shows with over 18.5 million episodes on the Podcasts store (formerly known as the iTunes Store) in June 2018 (Heater, 2018). The cumulative downloads and streams of podcasts on Apple Podcasts since 2005 was reported to be 50 billion in 2018, with 39.7 million or roughly 80% of downloads and streams accumulated only in the last 4 years between 2014 and 2018 (Quah, 2018). The podcast ‘Stuff You Should Know’ became the first podcast to accumulate 500 million lifetime downloads and streams in June 2018 (Heater, 2018). In comparison, the highest cumulative downloads and

streams for a music artist for all of her singles combined was roughly 124 million by Rihanna (2016).

For producers, podcasting can be done using basic recording equipment and is free to host on some platforms. But it is natural that producers would like to either monetise or otherwise gain something from the efforts that they put into producing a podcast. Several intuitive tools like anchor.fm have emerged to allow for more individuals to create their own podcasts and easily publish them. Anchor is different from traditional podcasting in one respect - it allows for real-time discussion through its app (Shontell, 2016). Though, it can be argued that Anchor's efforts would only cannibalise the market further, creating a layer of required proprietary software, Anchor does allow for publishing the podcast on other hosting sites as well. Bruns (2008) uses the term 'produsage' to explain how the internet has allowed for collaborative content production, consumption and interaction through an open feedback system (Markman, 2012). It is true that a phenomenon like 'produsage' has democratised production through intuitive tools and participatory culture (Deuze, 2007; Jenkins, 2006), but some instances of diminishing quality or completely bogus content from services leveraging 'produsage' also exists e.g. speculative behaviour on a forum like Reddit has led to misinformation campaigns. While some Pro-Am websites i.e. where "amateurs who work to professional standards" (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004) like Wikipedia have mechanisms to combat attempts that vandalise collaboratively curated information, not all services have the ability to employ such mechanisms as yet.

The podcast industry recently witnessed a movement where a podcast's availability was deliberately masked by the podcast services, thereby preventing it from being indexed in their search results. The podcast in focus here is Infowars by Alex Jones, which has time and again been called out for spreading misinformation through its podcasts and videos across social media (NG & Solsman, 2018). It started with Apple removing Alex Jones' podcasts from its catalogue for violating 'community standards' (Paczkowski & Warzel, 2018), a ripple effect was witnessed across the industry soon after, with Facebook, Spotify and Youtube also removing Alex Jones' audio-video content (Nicas, 2018). Unsurprisingly, this ignited a 'free speech' debate across the internet (Feuer, 2018) but the podcast as well as video content remained off the networks since then. This Alex Jones example is one where 'produsage' can misuse a medium for propaganda, I believe that the

industry learns from the mistakes it makes and this instance would be key to drafting editorial standards and content policies that regulate the medium. Though, it can also be argued that regulating an 'open' medium like podcasting would have negative impact on its growth and potential. Even though Alex Jones' podcasts have been delisted, they can still be accessed through direct RSS link which brings us to the question of if private companies like Apple have created a monopoly to control an 'open' medium like podcasting?

This research seeks to gather inputs of podcast producers with respect to their motivations behind creating podcasts, reaching their target demographics, their expectations from the medium and what do they think the future holds.

Markman's (2012) research details motivations of independent podcasters for creating a podcast under six general categories: "technology/media motives, interpersonal motives, personal motives, content motives, process motives, and financial motives". It was observed that most podcasters who participated in this research had a combined set of motives in mind and were synonymous to the research by Nardi et al. (2004) that explores the motives behind people writing blogs. With respect to evolving media consumption and production practices, Markman's (2012) research lays emphasis on 'the long tail' (Anderson, 2006) where lowered cost of production and distribution through internet allows for proliferation of niche markets for that content. It was also observed that most podcasters expressed desire to 'do radio' as a reason for producing a podcast (Markman, 2012: 555), underscoring similarities between the two mediums that Berry (2016) has also discussed.

Markman & Sawyer (2014) lay importance on 'produsage' (Bruns, 2008) in order understand how podcasters approach podcasting. As discussed above, 'produsage' is how most of the successful internet curation services work e.g. Youtube, Wikipedia etc. but I believe that 'produsage' is only one part of the equation. Podcast producers also emphasise on other factors like intended applications of their product or analytics that shape their production style etc., therefore there is an opportunity to address these and many more to get a better understanding of a podcaster's approach to production. Dupange et al. (2009) investigated effectiveness of a video podcast in an educational setting through a series of podcasts created from videos, while the results that this

research yields may not only to audio podcasts because the respondents may choose to consume video differently, this research is one of the few that has investigated small but important space of video podcasting.

Unlike Markman (2012) who solely used surveys to investigate podcaster motivations, Besser et al. (2010) investigated podcast user goals using a multi-method approach where surveys and interviews were conducted. Although painstaking and time consuming, Besser et al. (2010) lays out a wholesome, thematic analysis of user motivations.

The crux of these researches is that podcasting is collaborative, interest-specific and application-oriented. Some big names in podcasting have either been a result of early foray into the medium or an amalgamation of independent podcasters to create a podcasting network that caters similar interests.

In 2005, Leo Laporte launched TWiT.tv, a network for technology news with its flagship show, This Week in Tech. The network has since diversified its portfolio with shows offering news, commentary, perspectives etc. in the tech sphere. Leo's efforts have resulted in the emergence of a podcasting network which also offers live video streams of when the podcasters are recording, therefore resulting in a unique, hybrid approach to podcasting (TWiT, n.d.). Similarly, in 2014, another podcasting behemoth emerged as a result of several producers getting together to form Gimlet Media. Gimlet is also a podcasting company that has several acclaimed shows in its catalogue and clocks in over 12 million downloads a month (Gimlet, n.d.).

The emergence of podcasting networks is similar to the way the TV or movie industry functions, where studios collate different genres of content to distribute them through their network. This phenomenon has its own advantages and disadvantages but if creative freedom is maintained, it allows for better sustenance of the producers. This research will later investigate this new trend in podcasting through an interview with a podcast producer.

Experimental Application Perspective

In the thesis titled 'Exploring a New Radio Audience', Alexander J. Avila (2009) studied the adoption of podcasting by weekly radio program Latino USA, which was traditionally distributed on Radio through National Public Radio. Alexander highlights that Latino USA got on the 'podcasting' bandwagon in September 2005 and describes the on-air promotion of the show's podcast as "a new era in media" (Avila, 2009) where listeners can listen to the show at their own convenience using a downloadable version of the episode. Alexander argues that this on-air announcement may have not meant much to most people back in 2005, but was the first natural step towards internet becoming an alternative source of distribution for traditional media.

While this instance may seem to define podcasting as catch-up service for missed radio shows, Liberation Syndication (libsys) was simultaneously getting popular as the preferred hosting service for podcast creators who were producing original content. In 2004, most of the new and original podcasting (audio) content was delivered through syndication and RSS and required some amount of knowledge and skills to be accessed. Some users used to sync the acquired MP3 file to their iPod to listen on the go, before Apple officially announced support within iTunes (Apple, 2005).

Podcasting operates on the 'open-access' principle where millions of podcasts are freely available to anyone with the connection to the World Wide Web. Roberts (2008: 585–593) describes his experiments of using podcasts to deliver lectures (in addition to physically delivering them) curbed the ephemerality of lectures and allowed students who didn't attend the lecture to listen to it on-demand. Roberts also remarks that this helps students to revise during exams and revisit notes that they may have missed. Roberts increased the value of physical attendance in the lecture to make sure that the students do not miss the lecture just because the podcast is a replication, Roberts witnessed minimal drop in attendance in a few lectures, signalling that the impact of podcasts was not as much. On the other hand, Lee & Chan (2007: 201-218) structured their podcasts for education as 3-5 minute short audio clips based on the view put forth by Clark & Walsh (2004) where he suggested that learning based audio content should be like music, brief yet satiating. Lee and Chan described their method to be largely successful with students finding effective using in clarifying key concepts and revisiting lectures.

These experiments and applications by Roberts (2008) and Lee and Chan (2007) bring forth the value of the 'medium' in communication. As argued by Marshall McLuhan et al. (1967) in his famed aphorism, "Medium in the message", the mode of delivery of a message could be just as critical in a communication transaction as the message itself. McLuhan used this term as the world was transitioning from radio to television, embarking on the journey from audio-only communication to audio-video communication. I believe that podcasting also showcases a similar transition, albeit with a smaller impact in the short-term. These experiments with podcasting have resulted in insights that highlight the potential in the medium and inspire ways in which it could be used in the contemporary setting from the technological standpoint. Emerging technological trends like Speakers powered with digital assistants aka Smart speakers are increasingly leveraging podcasting as one of their core entertainment and information applications, more on this respect will be discussed later on in the review of literature.

Emerging Technologies - Redefining Podcast Discovery?

McHugh (2012) defines "aurality" as "sense of hearing; in radio terms, the aural aspect of a program denotes the acoustic landscape being broadcast and the innately intimate way we absorb it". McHugh's definition is centric to radio and broadcast, but I believe that it is also true for all audio-only mediums like music, podcasts etc. McHugh (2012) then defines "orality" as "a subset of aurality", which "refers to the quality of verbal communication". McHugh has dwelled into the nuances of aural modalities, accounting for quality as well as perception of the idea. Like the radio, smart speakers also depend upon aurality and orality but in addition to that, they introduce the dimension of interactivity. Unlike radio, most content played through smart speakers is not ephemeral and can be heard repeatedly.

Equipped with multiple far-field microphones, smart speakers are internet connected speakers with an integrated virtual assistant. These speakers can act as hub of control for smart functionality like locks, lights as well as content like podcasts, news and audiobooks, without the need of being tethered to another device like a smartphone or a computer. Watkins (2018) predicts the smart speaker market to grow four fold year-over-year, with Amazon commanding the lead.

Emerging from its redirected focus after the catastrophic failure of its smartphone called the Fire Phone, Amazon's Echo devices have infiltrated millions of households across U.S. and U.K. by creating a brand new market segment of 'smart home speakers' (Bloomberg, 2016). These internet connected speakers are controlled using user's voice and a digital assistant, Alexa in Amazon's case, accepts and tenders the request. A research by NPR and Edison Research (2017) states that over 39 million Americans (16% of U.S. population) owns smart speakers with 71% of respondents saying that they are listening to more audio content since they got the smart speaker and 28% of those said that they are listening to more podcasts.

Over the past year, there has been an increasing appetite for voice-based digital assistants due to the popularity of Smart speakers like Amazon Echo and Google Home (Watkins, 2018). A departure from screens and capacitive touch centric devices that have been widely adopted since the iPhone in 2007, Smart speakers use voice based digital assistants to accept and respond to a user's commands. This can be activated by speaking a keyword before the desired command like 'Alexa' in Amazon's case, 'Ok, Google' for Google assistant and 'Hey Siri' for Apple's Siri.

To interact with these speakers, we require no more than working knowledge of a language and some fluency in speaking it, which exhibits the ease-of-use and inclusive qualities of digital assistants. As Vintsyuk (1982: 657) noted about speech recognition - "speech recognition and understanding are necessary for implementing man-machine interfaces using a means most convenient and familiar to man: speech", his argument can be used to note that the speakers equipped with virtual assistants enhance the opportunity for more individuals to discover audio-centric content in particular and computing in general.

"Sensory importance" or relative strength of every sensory modality exhibited from a product decides the kind of experience derived from it (Fenko et al., 2010). I believe that it is safe to assume that auditory modality is of the highest sensory importance in an electronic audio speaker, because experience is tendered only when the audio is heard. A study by SchiVerstein (2005) notes that multiple modalities are at play when an individual interacts with a product. This is further complicated when the increasingly life-like virtual assistants and aurally heavy podcasts become a part of your living room's soundstage. The idea being, that perceived "sensory importance" of a

speaker may not apply to a smart speaker because of the added dimension of interaction that it enables.

Kember & Zylinska (2012: 105-107) comment on Microsoft's 'Future Home' concept by explaining the aspect of 'invisibility' in smart homes of the future. In Microsoft's concept, a digital assistant with a female voice, Janet, helps control appliances and assists a user around the house with voice commands. This has extreme resonance to Amazon's Alexa, also a female voice, that reads you news, controls internet-of-things devices, sets timers and plays games. Kember & Zylinska called it the "home network" where a smart central hub controls basic functioning in a home through commands inputted by the human. Smart speakers are emerging as a new point-of-delivery for audio content housed on the internet, including podcasts. One can summon Alexa in an Amazon Echo or any Alexa powered smart speaker to play the 'Flash Briefing', which features excerpts from podcasts and news sources that a user initially selects and relays it to the user as a part of his/her routine. In fact, almost a quarter of streams of the Podnews podcast were driven by Alexa's 'Flash Briefing' (Cridland, 2018).

Smart speakers are a relatively new phenomenon and their impact on proliferation of audio-only content remains to be seen. A research by NPR (2017: 12) suggests that these speakers are largely used for Music, Weather, News, Timers etc. and 70% users that participated in the research noted that they were listening to more audio since they bought a smart speaker. Smart speakers present an opportunity for podcasts to proliferate, features like 'Flash Briefing' on Amazon Echo leverages podcasts to relay the news, but due to the fact that Amazon doesn't use the word 'podcast' anywhere in the nomenclature, users may have been unconsciously consuming podcasts. I believe that this phenomenon is worth investigating and this research would seek to gather consumer's as well as the producer's perception of these new audio-centric smart devices. Even though it has been time and again argued that voice assistants that make these speakers 'smart' has low retention rate (Rey, 2017), lack of a highlight feature that makes it stand out (Ritchie & Dawson, 2017), exhibited privacy and security lapses (Alepis & Patsakis, 2017; Diao, 2014; Lei, 2018) and do not always synthesis voice inputs correctly (White, 2018). There are still several possible applications that can make consumers prefer digital assistants as an input method for commands. Hoy (2018) argues that voice is an excellent frontier to connect those who can not

read and write, to computers and thereby reduce the information gap. Hoy also cites a research into the use of this technology to benefit users with dementia (Walters et al., 2016) and notes that while voice assistants may sound 'robotic' today, they are increasingly evolving into sounding more natural and 'humane' (e.g. Pierce, 2017).

I believe that there is ample opportunity for exploration into the smart speaker space as the adoption climbs and innovative applications of the device are introduced by the manufacturer. A smart speaker commands prime real estate inside homes, where there is more likelihood for a user to use voice commands as an input because home is a 'personal space' and a user maybe less reluctant to ask their smart device to read a message or set a calendar appointment. Also, speakers inside homes are prevalent since the radio years, a smart speaker offers that functionality and much more. I believe that podcasting also finds a place in this transaction and user and producer perceptions about this will be investigated in this research.

The Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2018: 30) highlights that with the early adopters, smart speaker usage is more than doubled in the past year. They also notes that almost 1 in 10 people in US (9%), 7% in the UK and 5% in Germany use smart speakers, which is more than double growth v/s 2017 in US and more than triple growth in the UK and 5 times growth in Germany. The report also mentions that 43% of users use the smart speakers to access the news and 14% users use them to access podcasts. While it is notable that almost half the users are accessing news on smart speakers, the research does not give a clear explanation of what it means when it refers to 'news', it has been found that news (in the form of 'Flash Briefings' on Alexa) is excerpts of podcasts that the news outlets also publish elsewhere.

With respect to technology, it should also be noted that the user has several customisation options on the software-level, that enable enhanced playback of audio content. Podcast clients like OverCast and Castro have showcased a more advanced take on increasing playback speed. OverCast's SmartSpeed feature removes silences in audio with minimal or no distortions, the app's website describes it as "dynamically shortens silences in talk shows. Conversations still sound so natural that you'll forget it's on — until you see how much extra time you've saved", saving time allows the listener to squeeze in more podcasts.

On the other hand, Lagomarsino (2015) argues otherwise, he notes that radio relies on “passage of time to play with anticipation, tension, and release”, remarking that the purpose behind pauses and silence within narrative audio is strategic. Lagomarsino’s argument accounts for the thought-process behind a production, where the creator accounts for the thought & its assimilation that the content may provoke in the mind of the listener. He notes that, “a conversation between two hosts is riddled with pregnant pauses and interruptions designed to head off miscommunications”, highlighting that the halts in audio are a part of the larger design. He later asks, “Why, then, should we mess with that balance in the name of efficiency?”, and further emphasises on the need to consume podcasts at their original playback speed by remarking that the world around us continues to move at 1x. Similarly, one would normally not listen to music at a faster playback speed because they are carefully produced pieces that are continuous and it is not conversational like most podcasts.

Infinite Dial 2018 research (Edison, 2018) notes that 19% of the total 2,000 people they interviewed said that they listen to podcasts at an increased playback speed in order to listen to them faster. It should be noted that Smart speakers do not allow for an accelerated playback speed at the moment, and further investigation can seek to know if playback speed can hamper the decision to consume podcasts on smart speakers. This preference and motivations behind speeding up playback will be investigated in this research as well.

Some Pivotal Shows and Highlights

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Serial, a spin-off podcast from This American Life released in 2014 is seen as the pivotal moment for the podcasting world in terms of adoption as well as revenue generation. Season 1 of Serial, with its 12 episodes, has been downloaded over 300 million times on iTunes so far (This American Life, 2018) and continues to be very popular on the iTunes store. Serial was one of the many boldly experimental podcast initiatives that we’ve witnessed since the beginning of the phenomenon. But, Serial was the first one to go ‘viral’, reigniting the podcasting movement and leading to emergence of several thousand similar investigative-journalism style podcasts since. As Berry (2016) remarks “Although Serial was radiogenic in nature and created by radio producers employed by a radio business, it was not

intended for radio broadcast”, pointing out that despite some similarities in Radio programming/ broadcast and Podcasts, a show could showcase success in one medium and not in the other. Chivvis, a producer at This American Life notes that podcasting allows them to tell the story “exactly how we wanted to tell it” (Chisholm, 2015), free from constraints of time and space that broadcast mediums like radio or TV possess. It is hard to speculate if a show like Serial would have had the same success if it was broadcasted on radio, especially when those mainstream mediums have restrictions for profanity and follow a linear broadcast model (Berry, 2016).

The success of Serial has also led to experiments in other genres of podcasts as well, as a result of which, podcasts like 99% Invisible, launched in 2012 after a very successful Kickstarter campaign (Adweek, 2012), The Daily by NYT and others have emerged as listener favourites. Serial is often seen as a gateway for a lot of new listeners into podcasting, after which they explore the universe of podcasting and diversifies their choices. Serial’s sponsor ‘Squarespace’ found their campaign to be very successful and this led to large corporations as well as internet startups investing more heavily into advertisements in podcasts, thereby increasing the revenue generation capabilities of the medium (Ulanoff, 2015).

Since Donald Trump’s campaign in the 2016 U.S. elections, his controversial statements and over-the-top rhetoric have led to an avalanche Trump themed stories across all mediums. This has had both negative as well as positive impact on podcasting; negative because an endless string of podcasts both supporting and rejecting Trump have propped up, creating chaos in a medium where content creators already struggle for discoverability (Resler, 2017). It is hard to say if these podcasts would retain relevance for posterity after Trump presidency ends, but currently seem to reap the benefits of interest (Fuller, 2018). On the positive side, 5-days-a-week podcasts like Outline World Dispatch, The Daily, Today, Explained etc. aim to divert focus to the ‘burning issues’ (which may or may not be related to Donald Trump).

Methodology

Deacon (1999: 3) describes research methods as a 'mechanic's toolbox' where each method has its own set of functions, limitations and use cases to accomplish a job. Deacon also suggests that a few tools can be used together to approach a problem. Deacon's analogy is noteworthy and appropriately fits the large expanse of methods available for research that distills down to Qualitative and Quantitative modes of inquiry. Stake (1995: 39) argues that while quantitative research methods take the scientific path to search for cause and effect, qualitative methods lay importance on the "uniqueness of individual cases and contexts" to establish an understanding. Qualitative methods was be employed for this research through a semi-structured interview.

This dissertation leverages an empirical design to investigate the research question through interviews. This is an exploratory research that investigates podcasting from the purview of podcasters and consumers and the role of emerging technologies in the same. The research seeks to discover perspectives of consumers and producers of podcasts across themes like production, distribution, software, smart speakers and podcasting trends.

After reviewing prior research that investigated podcast producers (Markman, 2012; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; Dupange et al., 2009 etc.) and podcast consumers (Chadha et al., 2012), it was observed that all these investigations used survey as their primary research method. Meanwhile, Besser et al. (2010) used a multi-method approach, where users were both surveyed and interviewed, to investigate user motivations. The method used by Besser et al. resulted in a wide body of observations and literature providing a delightful insight into podcast users. Inspired by the approach that Besser et al. (2010) leveraged, I chose interview over survey method for this research. I believe that I was able to seek a much greater depth of information in responses given through interview v/s survey, although I am fully aware that it is a very time consuming method, which means that I will only be able to interview a limited number of people due to time constraints.

The criterion for identifying the sample for this research was that the participants are consumers/ producers of podcasts. Non-probability convenience sampling was used for this research due to limited time and resources (Stake, 1995: 4), where both producers and consumers who were

invited to participate in this research were invited because they were 'first at hand' (Denscombe, 2017).

I and the participants of this research were already acquainted through our mutual interest in podcasting and were invited because they either consume podcasts or create them or both. While this does not influence the data collected, in fact, I believe that more natural responses were registered because of the researcher-participant relationship that we had, where the participant and the research share a common interest which is coincidentally also the focus of the research.

The sample size was six - five consumers and one podcaster from four different countries, namely, India, United Kingdom, United States of America and Italy. While it may seem that the sample size is very small but due to limited time, this was only feasible. All efforts would be made to make detailed enquiries that seek rich responses in the interviews.

Interviews

"The interview serves as social technique for the public construction of self"

- Kvale & Binrkman (2009: 12)

The interviews were the core instrument for data collection in this research. Due to the versatile nature of this method, it allowed for collection of data across circumstances and settings (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011: 171) and was key to gathering users' perspectives and motivations about podcasting. As Bingham & Moore (1959) describe it, an interview is "a conversation with a purpose" and I believe that the research question can be answered effectively through a conversation that allows for in-depth analysis and the opportunity to seek continual clarifications and justifications from the respondent (Paget, 1983; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011: 172).

Due to the nature of the sample, rapport formation was quicker and easier, though, a clarity of purpose (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011: 194-195) was exercised throughout the interview to seek organic and detailed responses. The interview was semi-structured and in-depth, conducted either face-to-face or over Skype in audio format and there was an emphasis on seeking elaborations on the

interviewee's interests (Denscombe, 2017: 184). These interviews were conducted in the last week of August 2018.

One individual, Raj, involved in production of podcasts as host, creator or a guest contributor was interviewed. The classification of this interview borders 'informant interview' and 'respondent interview' (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011: 177-180) due to the nature of his involvement with the medium as well as their role as a consumer of podcasts. It should be noted that Raj had only recently entered the domain of podcasting in terms of both production and consumption. It was my intention to cover the Raj's motivations to start a podcast, his ideal demographic, his expectations out of the industry, his perspectives about smart speakers, if he feels that he can have a political impact through their work, what marketing ideas are they implementing etc.

Five consumers of podcasts were also interviewed in the similar fashion to investigate their frequency of use of podcasts, apps that they use to access it, medium of consumption, genre predilections, views about voice assistants and speech, expectations from smart speakers, their insights into how podcasts can integrate better etc.

All six of these interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions that elicit detailed responses. While the sample is an aware and avid consumer of podcasts, the respondents may/may not be aware about smart speakers. Therefore, information about smart speakers and their applications were detailed in the information sheet as well as orally explained during the interview.

The aim was to gather genre predilections, time a user spends listening to podcasts each week, ideal place and time for listening, speed of playback, platform used, mode of discovery etc. These factors would help in analysing the podcast consumption, especially to compare it with responses from the producer interviews.

The inputs received through the interviews would also be computed to secondary data, which largely consists of industry reports, interviews and analyst commentary. This will help understand the consumption trends and patterns across audiences, and establish relationship between responses from interviews with larger trends. Data reports published by Nielsen, Edison Research

(2018) and RAJAR (2017) that break down podcast listeners by age, device of consumption, hours spent, genre of podcasts heard etc. would be key to seek a market perspective. The evaluation of this data is necessary to get a layout of podcast market and connect observable patterns of adoption and growth in the industry to technological advancements and emergence of popular podcasts/podcasting networks.

Since this was an oral, open-ended interview, a high volume of information was exchanged. Therefore, in order to capture all the information during the interview, sound recordings as well as note-taking were done. The consent to record the conversation between me and the respondent was procured prior to the interview and after the respondent needed no further clarifications regarding the research after going through the information sheet. The respondents were provided with a digital version of the information sheet for them to keep.

The consent form laid out the the following points:

1. Participation in this research is voluntary, the respondent has the right to withdraw at any point and can request deletion of their data and inputs.
2. Respondent has gone through the information sheet and is satisfied with the conditions and has understood the idea behind the research.
3. Respondent understands that the data thus collected will be anonymised that the respondent would not be identified personally anywhere in the research.
4. Respondent understands that the interview will be recorded in audio form for transcription and analytical purposes of the research.

I took the following steps to safeguard the collected data:

1. The audio recordings, which will be made on my iPhone on the Voice Memos app, will be stored safely on my iCloud account secured by two-factor authentication (2FA). A copy of these recordings would be stored safely on my password protected laptop.
2. The transcripts of these audio recordings would be made on my laptop using QuickTime to play them back at a slower playback speed and the responses would be transcribed in a note-taking app called Ulysses. A copy of these transcripts would also be stored on my iCloud account with 2FA in addition to a local copy inside Ulysses on my password protected laptop.

3. The consent forms with name and signature of the respondent would be stored digitally after they are e-signed by the respondent or scanned and stored digitally if they are handed over physically by the respondent. Digital copy of these would also be stored on my iCloud account with 2FA.
4. The respondents were promised that the audio recordings of the interviews will be securely deleted at the conclusion of the research.
5. Respondent's actual name would not be used in the research, the research would be using a pseudonym to ensure anonymity when quoting or citing the respondent (Denscombe, 2017: 200)
6. Specific information like employer's name, colleague's names, producer's own podcast's name etc. has been redacted from transcript to maintain anonymity of the respondent.

Strengths of this method:

1. The semi-structured, open ended nature of the this interview allowed for a detailed enquiry into the respondent's perceptions about the medium and their personal use-cases.
2. This method was relatively easier to use and ensured more valuable responses v/s a questionnaire. Five interviews were conducted over Skype audio calls, which were both cost effective and swift and the conversation was easily recorded using QuickTime player. One interview was conducted face-to-face and recorded on Voice Memos app on my iPhone.
3. Out of the 10 invitations for interview that were sent out, 6 invitees accepted and were interviewed. This translates into a response rate of 60% which is much higher than what I've witnessed with other methods like Surveys in the past. Due to the formal, schedule-based nature of interviews, proper appointments were made with the respondent hence increasing the likelihood of participation (Denscombe, 2017: 202)
4. There were instances in the interview where feedback, clarifications and elaborations were gathered during the line of questioning. The active engagement of the respondent allowed for more accurate data collection (Denscombe, 2017: 202).

Limitations of this method:

1. The longest interview was slightly over 40 minutes and the shortest one was around 10 minutes, the average length of the interviews was about 20 minutes. It is evident from this that interviews can be very time consuming, especially in a semi-structured setting where the respondent has the

liberty to answer a question for as long as required. Therefore only 6 individuals could be interviewed for this research.

2. Transcribing the interviews took even longer. Depending on the pace at which the respondent spoke, I had to tone down the playback speed between 40%-60% of original speed to be able to assimilate and transcribe the responses. The longest interview took roughly two hours excluding the breaks that I took in between.

3. While all efforts were made to engage with the respondent in a professional, courteous manner that makes the respondent relaxed and comfortable, there are chances that 'interviewer effect' (Denscombe, 2017) yielded less genuine responses. Where necessary, clarifications and anecdotal answers were encouraged throughout the interview to minimise the impact of this limitation.

4. While analysing the data from interview, several challenges were faced in making generalisations. Despite posing questions across a similar theme, it was challenging to synthesise some very different answers from different respondents.

Findings, Discussions and Analysis

As detailed in the methodology, a total of six participants from four different countries namely, United States of America, United Kingdom, Italy and India, were interviewed for this research. Out of these six participants, Raj (name changed) is a podcast producer and also an academic at a university in USA, he is also a regular consumer of podcasts. The remaining five participants were podcast consumers, of which four are students and one individual is self-employed.

After an interesting set of interviews with the participants, some very compelling points emerged. While some of these findings accentuate the literature that was discussed and evaluated in the literature review section of this research, others either contradict or bring in a new perspective to the understanding.

This section of the dissertation would analyse, compare and evaluate the findings and discuss the outcomes of this research. The findings will be showcased under larger themes that they represent and would include the inputs from the participants who were interviewed. The interviewees were briefed about the objectives of research via an information sheet emailed to them after they accepted the invitation to be interviewed. After exchange of pleasantries and making sure that the participant was ready and comfortable to begin, participants were verbally briefed about the objectives of the research again. They were also informed that the conversation would be recorded and it was ensured that the recordings would be stored securely and their responses would be used anonymously (Leech, 2002: 666). Throughout the conversation that had occurred till now, every effort was made to make this exchange feel like a natural conversation rather than a formal exercise (Weinberg, 1996: 83).

Podcasting

The opening question for every interview was “What’s podcasting to you?”, intended to act like an ice-breaker, the responses to this question helped in establishing the participant’s understanding of the medium and how deeply they care about. I believe that this question invigorated the

participant's thought-process towards the concept of podcasting and it also allowed me to shape the line of further questioning based on the responses that I received.

The responses were wide-ranging and formed an initial picture of the participant's understanding of the concept. A common theme that emerged from all the responses to this question was that the participants largely viewed podcasting as a tool of information acquisition.

Raj gave a fairly specific explanation by calling podcasting a "convenient, easy and widely accessible way to reach a potentially large number of people about a very specific interest or a set of interests", he continued, "something that allows you control... creative control, intellectual control but also gives you the flexibility and allows you to reach a very wide audience". This explanation represented the perspective of an individual who's connected to podcasting through the production as well as consumption of the medium and I found this explanation to be a comprehensive account of how a producer could view podcasting. His views resonated the description of podcasting given by Freire et al. (2008), where the stress is on an "alternate cultural model of broadcasting", thereby catering to a specific interest, as noted by Raj. Hilmes & Loviglio (2013) have also expressed that "ease of digital audio production" is one of the highlights of podcast production, so it was interesting to see that reflect in the answer given by Raj. Overall, Raj did put forth a description that was synonymous to definitions and qualities of podcasting that have been explored in the literature review.

The participants who were the consumers of podcasts described podcasting in unique ways. Jasmine (name changed) described it as a way to educate themselves on topics related to their coursework, Marco (name changed) called it a tool to know more about a certain 'issue' or topic, Mel (name changed) referred to it as an audio-based journalistic body of work that is easy to consume, James (name changed) said it is a tool for listening to research briefings and Monal (name changed) simply said that it is listening to someone speak. It is interesting to note that Mel immediately connected podcasting to journalism and it emerged through a follow-up question that Mel thought so because of the way podcasts were produced and distributed and she also mentioned that most podcasts that she heard were news-based.

James, who viewed podcasting as a tool for listening to research briefings explained that he used podcasts as a banking professional to have industry reports read out to him instead of reading them. Hammersley (2004), who's credited for coining the term 'podcasting', emphasised on the medium's ability to cash in on unlimited space and time that the internet allows for. Audio research briefings and industry reports that this participant referred to, are only possible on limitless mediums like podcasts on open platforms that host them and are enabled by the internet. This use-case solidifies Hammersley's argument as well as bring forth an interesting application of podcasts where the user prefers spoken word over written text and James even went on to say that podcasts gave him "a much better feel of what was happening in the market rather than reading it". James noted that Podcasts replaced 'narrated emails' that his car read out to him during his hour long commute to work in London, he highlighted that the emails were the same content as in the podcast but sounded 'robotic'.

Two other participants, Jasmine and Marco, stated that they viewed podcasting as a way to explore a topic or listen to things related to their coursework. Academic literature that tests the efficacy of podcasts in academia is plentiful (Lee & Chan, 2007: 201-218; Walsh, 2004; Roberts 2008: 585–593 etc.) and they explore several dimensions of consumption. Though, these may also include podcasts that are not specifically built for an academic environment or are in fact general podcasts that research a certain issue. Most of the prior research in the space is centred around use within academic spaces, so these responses did highlight the need for further research into application of podcasts for purposive information acquisition.

One striking observation is that each one of these responses cited how the participant used podcasts when asked what the term 'podcasting' meant to them, this is synonymous to the use of Uses & Gratifications theory in the research by McClung & Johnson (2010) which investigated user motivations. The Uses & Gratifications theory investigates 'what people do with media' (Mcquail, 1997), which resonates in the participant responses to this question, where the first thoughts were how or what they use podcasting for.

As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, podcasting is defined in multiple ways but most definitions (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Hammersley, 2004; Hilmes & Loviglio, 2013: 49) appear to

stress on the fact that it leverages digital audio. All six responses to the opening question also represent use-cases that largely depend on podcasts being delivered aurally. But, it should be noted that podcasts can be both audio as well as video (Gatewood, 2012: 90). In fact, there is a treasure trove of scholarly work investigating the impact of video podcasting on academia (Dupange et al., 2009; Kay, 2012; Kletskin & Kay, 2012; Copley, 2007 etc.) similar to the researches that have investigated impact of audio podcasts on education (Lee & Chan, 2007: 201-218; Walsh, 2004; Roberts 2008: 585–593 etc.). Therefore, while emphasis on the aspect of audio was the highlight of the enquiries made during the interviews, the fact that none of the participants referred to podcasting as a medium that can also include visuals, shouldn't be missed. Interestingly, some mainstream definitions of podcasting (Hilmes & Loviglio, 2013; Hammersley, 2004) also do not account for the possibility of a podcast in video format, although some definitions like that by Berry (2006) uses the term 'media content' to describe podcast content.

The first question was followed up with an enquiry about the first podcast that the participant had heard and how long ago was that? This was asked to get a sense of the genre with which the participant started listening to podcasts and since how long s/he has been listening to podcasts.

Mel had been listening to podcasts for the longest amongst the participants. She started listening in 2014 began with *This American Life*. Marco started listening to podcasts in 2015 with a BBC program, his motivations were not the content but the information being relayed in English language. Marco used that podcast to learn new English words in addition to knowing the news. The first full-length podcast that Raj heard was the one that he was invited to participate as a guest contributor in, in 2016. James also heard his first podcast in 2016, it was an industry report generated by his employer. Monal heard her first podcast in 2017, it was a Bollywood talk show and lastly, Jasmine heard her first podcast only a few months ago upon my recommendation, it was *99% Invisible*.

Software

Four out of six participants used Apple's Podcasts app as their primary client for consuming podcasts. Interestingly, all four of these participants solely consumed podcasts on their iPhone using that app and all of them discovered new podcasts through friend's referrals, app's featured, top charts or recommendations made by the app based on the podcasts that they already listen to. James was the only participant who preferred to listen to Podcasts in his car when he was commuting to work.

Only Mel said that she prefers some podcasts at a higher playback speed and noted that, "it depends on how fast that person speaks and especially what content is it?". Jasmine said that she has considered increasing playback speed but never got around to doing it.

The other two participants used Soundcloud and Saavn as their primary clients to consume podcasts, respectively. The individual who used Soundcloud was Raj and upon further enquiry, he remarked that the content that he likes, especially Indian podcasts are more easily found on Soundcloud. He also noted that he uses Soundcloud to host his own podcast and that the website also works on his laptop through a web browser. Monal used Saavn, an Indian online music service, she remarked that she uses Saavn because she easily finds the content related to her interests i.e. Bollywood news and talk shows, through search and recommendations. In fact, she was introduced to podcasting through that app when the app recommended her a Bollywood talk show podcast while she was listening to music on the app. In these latter two cases, availability of content took precedence over the choice of app, which is an interesting phenomenon because research centric to podcast user motivations (McClung & Johnson, 2010) have only taken the Top Charts from iTunes as their reference point to establish sample. While the RSS feed that these services syndicate maybe the same, the top charts would differ because each has a unique set of users. While it is understandable that services like Soundcloud, Saavn, Stitcher, TuneIn etc. have emerged only after McClung & Johnson conducted their research, these results show that there are new opportunities to make enquiries into user motivations again.

It also emerged that a user may choose to use one app over another because of the ease of finding content that they like, other factors like app's ease of use, user interface, color scheme etc. also come in to play. When enquired, not everyone was able to portray their motivations other than content to use the client that they use, but Raj explained that Soundcloud was more accessible on his laptop because it could be running on the browser tab in the background, playing podcasts as he works. It should be noted that this question question gathered some interesting responses and perspectives but the consensus still remained with the Apple Podcasts app or iTunes, which has also been documented to have a sizeable market share in industry report (Statista Survey, 2017).

Smart Speakers

Out of the 5 consumers, four had heard about Smart Speakers and only Mel owned a Smart Speaker, though all four had tried interacting with a smart speaker before. Upon initial enquiries, Marco remarked that a Smart Speaker is not enough to overcome the kind of problems that he faces when he tries to access podcasts in Italy, like constant network issues, which is a deal-breaker, because Smart Speakers require internet to work.

Monal and James had tried Smart Speakers before but hadn't considering buying one. Monal argued that she doesn't find any utility in Smart Speakers because if she wanted to play something on a speaker, she could simply connect the speaker to her iPhone via bluetooth and play it. She was also not impressed with the accuracy of virtual assistants in the speakers and doesn't believe that a 'Smart' speaker would make a massive difference in experience. When asked about if she thinks audio storytelling can gain edge over visual narratives? She disagreed by noting that "impact of visuals is unique. If you see something, the image sticks and that's not something possible with podcasts", Monal's arguments were justified especially because smart speakers have not been widely adopted in India so far, despite concentrated efforts by Amazon and Google's to promote them widely (Sekhose, 2017). While efforts are underway to optimise the speakers and underlying software for Indian languages and content (SN, 2018), only time would tell if the market matures in the country.

Mel, who owned an Amazon smart speaker, admitted that she hadn't used it in a while, though the way she answered, was quite interesting. When I asked, "Do you consume news on your Amazon Echo?", Mel responded, "I haven't turned her on in a long time". It pains to admit that I did not pay much attention to this response while interviewing Mel, but when I was transcribing the interview, I found this observation very interesting. Mel, used an impersonal pronoun i.e. 'her' instead of 'it' which is normally used to describe inanimate objects, to refer to her smart speaker which has a digital assistant called Alexa in it. I felt like this showcases relatable-ness and humanisation of digital assistants in the perception of the consumer. It was fascinating to note that Mel had inadvertently referred to the inanimate digital assistant as she would refer to another living being. As smart speakers proliferate, and continue to don digital assistants with feminine names like Alexa, Siri etc. and female voices as default (Griggs, 2011), it would be interesting to investigate further on how virtual assistants develop an identity and a personality (Zilnik, 2016).

Three out of four users believed that they would trust a smart speaker to make content decisions for them based on their past predilections. Even though Mel mentioned that she ends up listening to only 1 out of every 5 new podcasts that she discovers, she said that she is "yet to see anyone actually making use of them (smart speakers) in a substantial way". Marco argued that the first step would be to establish dependability with better networks, devices and simpler interfaces, only then, he would consider smart speakers for his daily routine. Marco also mentioned that in terms of automated, personalised choices, the algorithms should be smart enough to simply answer the query with the most relevant solution which could be a video, a podcast or a website or anything else, just that the turnaround time should be negligible.

The participants' views on smart speakers were a mixed bag, while some believed that the speakers have potential, others believed that they don't serve a specific purpose yet. None of the participants showcased confidence in the current state of digital assistants, where James, Jasmine and Marco pointed out that the assistant did not always comprehend their queries perfectly. While the voracious appetite for smart speakers is evident in countries like US, UK and Germany (Watkins, 2018; Newman et al., 2018: 30; NPR & Edison Research, 2018), the medium still lacks the maturity and utility that the smartphone has attained in the past few years.

In the research question and literature review, I analysed the concepts and literature that forms the foundation of smart speakers. McHugh's (2012) concept of "aurality", which uses radio as its north star to argue about the intimate ways in which we consume audio; and "orality", which signifies the quality of verbal communication. I argued that despite McHugh's concept being primarily applicable to broadcasting, it could also be applied to podcasts, music etc., and the responses from the interviews have corroborated this to a certain degree. When Mel used an impersonal pronoun, 'her', to refer to her smart speaker, she revealed the intimate relationship that she has formed with her smart speaker, or more specifically, the virtual digital assistant Alexa, inside that smart speaker. Despite being an inanimate object that houses a virtual assistant, Mel's unique way to refer to the speaker reveals an interesting intimate connection.

Vintsyuk's (1982) argued about speech recognition and stressed on how inculcating natural and artificial language into "man-machine interfaces" can encourage wider access to computing. I noted that with a smart speaker, no more than working knowledge of speaking a language is required to interact. But, the majority of respondents doubted the efficacy of smart speakers to synthesise speech and tender to queries, hence dismissing the notion that smart speakers cannot be the focal point for a user's audio needs, as yet. As argued by Lazarevich (2018) and Tuttle (2015), the next frontier for smart devices is 'Natural Language Processing' where a digital assistant's purpose is beyond tendering to basic queries. The respondents' concerns about accuracy are valid and have time and again been documented (Murnane, 2018; Chen, 2016 etc.), but industry experts are experimenting with continually improve a digital assistant's algorithms and therefore the performance by making them learn through past uses i.e. the more an assistant is used, the better it gets at getting things done (Horwitz, 2018).

Production, Distribution and Tech

Raj was asked about how he got into podcasting and it was found that he was inspired to create a podcast after he was invited to be a guest contributor in another podcast. While he notes that he had previously considered incorporating podcasts in the classes he takes at his university and that he researched and reviewed production techniques for podcasting as well as video casting, he

never got around acting on it. He still thinks it will be a good idea to restructure his course to accommodate podcasting into his teaching methods.

It is interesting to see podcasting in academia and education emerging again and again in the findings. Because, in the literature review, I remarked that detailed research into podcasting has so far only considered the potential application perspective related to academia and I also cited Markman (2012) who said, “scholarly writing on podcasting is mostly dedicated to instructing neophytes or evangelising the uninitiated”. While this does not make up for the lack of literature on other themes related to podcasting, it is becoming clearer that podcasting has potential benefits when viewed and used as a tool to facilitate learning. This also corroborates arguments made by Lee & Chan (2012) who researched use of podcasts for distance learning and concluded that podcasts have the ability to counteract the lack of teacher student interface.

Raj continued answering the question by noting that he got a better sense of what a podcast was when he participated as a guest contributor in one. He remarks that it was professionally recorded in a proper studio with professional microphones, mixers and an engineer and says that it is not the kind of setup that he has. He credits his colleague, who is also the co-podcaster on his show, who suggested him to convert the success of his Twitter account into a podcast. The Twitter account, which was regularly used to tweet political and topical commentary, used to witness substantial user engagement, so his colleague suggested him to try podcasting. He points out that their first podcast was up within a week of his colleague’s suggestion, but he admits that it was an amateur effort with fairly low quality and they didn’t receive much traction.

When asked about the production setup, Raj said that they record the conversation on a computer with external mics and a \$25 add-on to Skype that captures audio and video. He then exports the files, does a little bit of editing and processing using Audacity and then uploads the file to Soundcloud. He said that they’ve recently also started to upload it on Youtube with a static artwork, but they get most streams on Soundcloud and the RSS feed makes sure that the podcast is simultaneously available for iTunes, Stitcher, TuneIn etc. He also talks about an interesting development where podcast distribution platform audioBoom has come to an agreement with them

to syndicate their feed on audioBoom's platform. In turn, the version of podcast on audioBoom has added advertising on the otherwise ad-free podcast and generates some revenue.

On the question of why he chose a weekly release schedule instead of a daily or a fortnightly, Raj explained that they record 2-3 episodes in a single 1-1.5 hour session and then schedules them for a phased release over a week or 10 days. Their default model is to pick one topic and then talk about it at length, but at times they do episodes with 3-4 stories, and each episode is 10-12 minutes long in both cases.

When asked if they've considered a daily release cycle for their podcast, Raj noted that the closest they've come to is 4 episodes in a week. He says that since podcasting isn't his or his colleague's full-time job and that they have to maintain a work-life balance, they can only spend an hour or hour and a half, typically on a Sunday to record these episodes, in a one go, without any rehearsals. While they do have conversations in between recordings where they exchange feedback to fix any lapses witnessed in the previous recording, they plan content ideas through the week via exchanging messages on instant messenger services. The producer notes that they reach a point of saturation after recording three episodes in one go, but he still finds the idea of a daily release cycle interesting and that they could adapt that model if time allows.

With respect to the question of consulting analytics and if they make any impact of their production decisions, Raj said that it is interesting to check them out and make some sense, but they do not bother much. He notes that what started as a project to merely archive their thoughts about things happening in India, gathered attention and traction by people who started engaging with it. He said that they used analytics from audioBoom, where they've recently started syndicating their podcast and from Soundcloud. Though, analytics have not influenced any changes that they've made to their podcast yet. Raj also admits that he does not know if analytics from Soundcloud account for the streams that they receive through their RSS feed.

Raj said that he has a smart speaker, a Sonos with Alexa in it, and that he has tried the 'Flash Briefing' feature on it. When told that the 'Flash Briefing' largely consisted of excerpts from podcasts by participating publications (Cridland, 2018), Raj was surprised and found it interesting,

he noted that he shall investigate adding his own podcast to the 'Flash Briefing'. Raj continued by saying, "We're in a golden age of visual storytelling, both cinema and TV but perhaps especially in TV", and similarly "radio maybe be given a second lease of life by podcasting, so just as you had dramas on radio, similar trend is happening with podcasting". He also argued that if use of podcasting by features like 'Flash Briefing' can be "foregrounded" and the smart speakers begin to make a customised bulletin based on user's interests, it could lead to a better awareness and discovery of podcasts.

The last enquiry to Raj was made about subscription models in podcasting when he mentioned the term "podcast version of Netflix" while elaborating on customised bulletins. Raj mentioned that he would "personally prefer a paywall to remove advertising" in podcasting, but also said that the content should remain free, with ads, for those who would not like to pay for podcasts. He thinks that there is market for both models to exist and cites Spotify as an example, which provides unlimited streaming with no ads for a certain subscription amount but also offers a free service that has certain restrictions and is advertising driven. Raj notes that this debate is prevalent across the media industry and the answer remains unknown but also says that "a market for paid audio content for niche genres and topics does exist" and people are willing to pay to skip ads. He then closes his arguments by mentioning Wall Street Journal & Financial Times, two publications that are known for their quality content that people pay top dollars for.

Raj's arguments and perspectives were incredibly rich insight into a podcaster's outlook on podcasting. He makes some interesting points that agree with the literature discussed in this research and some others that add on to already established arguments. Let's begin with how Raj got around creating a podcast, where he mentions that the idea emerged from a suggestion from his colleague. Some of Markman's (2012) six general motivations for independent podcasters apply in this condition, where Raj's motivation was derived from translating the success of his Twitter account into a podcast, thereby clearly showcasing content and media motives (Markman, 2012). But, the fact that Raj builds upon the brand that was already established on Twitter should not go unnoticed, discoverability of any media content has been a challenge lately (Resler, 2017) and while Markman and others have investigated motivations of an independent podcaster, they have not considered situations such as the one Raj represents, where a some cross-media

production is involved (Erdal, 2009; Aarseth, 2006). Raj also points out that he was able to create the podcast within a week of ideation, bolstering another claim by Markman (2012) about 'the long tail' (Anderson, 2006), where low production cost and swift distribution through internet eases production for independent podcasters.

It was also interesting when Raj described his production and distribution process, where he talked about a phased release process after he records 2-3 episodes in a single sitting. This dynamic works very well in cases where you have to accommodate schedules for co-podcasters or guests. Previous studies have not investigated this aspect of production and even though no generalisations can be made from this single example, I believe that investigation into this would still help analyse correlated aspects like, if there was a common theme of all episodes recording in a go?

This discussion also brought us to the release cycle that Raj's podcast follows, as Greene (2018) points out, the daily release model is lucrative and has proliferated in the past year. Raj expressed interest in that model but he remarked that as long as podcasting is not his full-time job, 4 podcasts a week that are 10-12 minutes long each, is the most he can do.

With respect to smart speakers, Raj viewed it as an opportunity. After he was made aware of the fact that Alexa's 'Flash Briefing' feature uses excerpts from podcasts as news, Raj remarked that he shall investigate the possibility of listing his own podcast in there. The 'Flash Briefings' space also provides an opportunity for discovery of podcasts and podcasters, as Jayagopal (2018) points out, "What would you rather compete with? 5+ Billion YouTube Videos (or) 1+ Billion Websites (or) 550,000+ Podcasts (or) 5,500+ Alexa Flash Briefings". Jayagopal organically received listens by simply publishing his podcast on 'Flash Briefings' and notes that there is "semblance of discovery on the platform", remarking on the opportunity for podcasters in this feature.

Raj also expressed interest in a podcast bulletin that was tailored for the user as another new way to discover podcast. As discussed in the theme 'software' in this chapter, four out of six participants discovered new podcasts not only through the built-in catalogue and featured section in Apple's Podcasts app but also through recommendations that the app gave based on the podcasts that

they listen to. The latter is an interesting observation because the users are essentially letting the algorithms make listening decisions for them, even if the user may or may not like the recommendation. Raj's point is similar to this but applied in a different space i.e. Smart Speakers, where recommendations aren't a tappable cover art (as in the Podcasts app) that the user can see and choose to hear, but rather an aural expression. So, for a case like this to exist, recommendations would have to be a lot more personalised for people to depend on them in a medium that only accepts commands through voice.

Raj observes that a market for paid podcasts has the potential to exist and he would personally prefer to subscribe to it to avoid advertising within podcasts. Markman (2012) emphasised on the podcasting's ability to be available for niche interests and markets, similarly Raj believes that just the WSJ or FT exist on the brand of quality journalism, quality podcasting can command a role in the industry with unique storytelling.

Closing Remarks

It is interesting that Podcasting as a concept has been viewed through how it serves a user's purpose i.e. Uses & Gratifications theory (McClung & Johnson, 2010). This also showcases how mediums and content can dissolve into one another.

Despite historically existing as a medium that is free and open, a podcast producer noted that a subscription-fee based model for podcasts could work and enhance the quality of overall content with it. The podcaster also expressed interest in a budding product like Alexa 'Flash Briefings' to enhance reach and engagement with his podcast.

There were two cases where the availability of content that personally interests the podcast listener, dictated which podcasting service the user would use. This is reminiscent of how the online video streaming space functions today, where content differentiates Netflix from Amazon Prime and Hulu. This further lays out possibility for exclusive podcast content on a certain client, though it'll be a deviation from the principle of podcasting being free and open.

Conclusions

This investigation into audiences and producers of podcasts was conducted to fill the void in available literature on podcasting, some very interesting observations have since emerged. I started this research by asking “What are the contemporary perspectives of podcast consumers and producers?” in my pursuit to unravel how producers and consumers approach the medium. I must admit that the assumptions that I made in the literature review regarding the inculcation of emerging technologies like smart speakers, enhanced playback speed etc., were overblown. While results have made it evident that the consumers as well as the producer are willing adopt these emerging technologies albeit after they attain robust functionality. It can be argued that some of these technologies like virtual assistants and smart speakers are still in their nascency and only the early adopters form its core user base (NPR & Edison Research, 2018). Although the research findings have expressed optimism for the future of medium and its potential application in the podcasting space. One surprising highlight of this was when Mel used an impersonal pronoun to refer to Alexa, the digital assistant in her smart speaker, and it can be argued that it reflects “aurality” (McHugh, 2012) and the intimate relationship that it enables.

My arguments on overabundance of data researching its application in academia and learning (Lee & Chan, 2007: 201-218; Walsh, 2004; Roberts 2008: 585–593 etc.) were also proven wrong in the findings of this research. All participants of this research laid emphasis on information acquisition as their primary motive to consume podcasts, this revelation was surprising especially because the sheer number researches exploring podcasting in academia began to dwindle as the medium got older leading to my assumption that podcasting may not have a serious impact on learning. But, as evidenced in the findings, even the podcaster who was interviewed for this research admitted to have explored and still plans to inculcate podcasts in his teachings at his university.

Another interesting observation that emerged from the results is that some mainstream definitions of podcasting (Hilmes & Loviglio, 2013; Hammersley, 2004) do not account for the possibility of podcasts existing as videos. It was also fascinating to draw parallels between the definitions and qualities of podcasts as prescribed by academics (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Hilmes & Loviglio, 2013) and those that were explained by the participants.

The podcaster described his perceptions in a wholesome manner and expressed optimism in the medium, especially with respect to storytelling and narratives. He discussed his interest in contemporary release models, as showcased by *The Daily*, and argued that podcasting could one day adopt an ad-free, fee based model.

When the respondents described their understanding of 'podcasting', it can be observed that the responses had resonance to the Uses & Gratifications theory because the participants defined the medium by remarking how they used it. If time would have allowed, I would have preferred to inculcate this theory as a part of my methods.

All in all, the findings were in line with themes reflected in literature (Markman, 2012; Markman & Sawyer, 2014; McClung & Johnson, 2010 etc.) but due to the fact that an interview method was used for this research, more personal and anecdotal responses were obtained and wider conclusions were drawn. While the influence for using the interview method was drawn from Besser et al. (2010), which leveraged a multi-method approach to gather user motivations, the scope of this research could have been wider if there was more time at hand. Looking back, I would have ideally adopted a multi-method approach to identify specific attributes and motivations of the users before graduating to the interview stage, this would have also allowed me to design the interview in a more personalised and direct fashion. Also, the sampling method used my favoured convenience and was non-random, therefore minimising chances of generalising the observations of this research to a the wide landscape of podcasting.

This research adds some interesting observations to the existing body of literature that could benefit from further enquiry. As was observed, while the frequency of published research of podcasts into academia has decreased, the findings highlighted the need for a continued enquiry that takes technological advancements into account. There is also scope for an enquiry into use of podcasts as an information acquisition tool in addition to a tool for entertainment.

Aurality and humanisation of digital assistants is another area where further research can be done to seek ideas for designing better interfaces. Similarly, dissatisfaction with present hardware/

software leading to non-use also emerged as an observation from this research, a research into this could help hone in on improving the user experience.

This research tried to evaluate podcasting from the point of view of those who frequently engage with it. While Markman's (2012) podcasting motivations were applicable to the podcaster who was interviewed for this research, the responses from the podcaster went above and beyond those general categories prescribed by Markman. Markman's methodology was a survey whereas I tried to dig deeper with an in-depth interview. Similarly, McClung & Johnson's (2012) approach to study podcast producers was also survey, while I tried to gather perspectives that delved into complete role of podcasts in a user's life. Although, I acknowledge that the interviews alone are not feasible to make generalisations, I still believe that this research points future work to a new direction. At the end, some questions emerge - In the light of podcasts like Pod Save America gaining traction, what is the impact of politics on podcasting? Would a podcast still be a podcast if it is exclusive to a service? Would smart speakers, as they exist today, be pernicious to podcasting?

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Appendix I - Transcripts

1) Pseudonym - Raj

A: What's podcasting to you?

R: I'd say a convenient, easy and widely accessible way to really reach a potentially large number of people about a very specific interest or a set of interests that you might. So something that allows you control, creative control, intellectual control but also gives you the flexibility and allows you to reach a very wide audience

R: The first full length podcast that I heard was an episode from something called a Sin talk series. It's basically an initiative that gets together people from different backgrounds and generally it's basically fairly advanced level discussion on a topic. So for instance, the one that I was invited to was, you know, something about memory and there was me, who's you know, person in the Humanities/Social Sciences who works in memory, there was someone who's neuroscientist and the third person was a psychoanalyst. (...) Before that first full-length episode, I've heard a few snippets here and there. This was nearly 2-2.5 years ago.

A: Where do you listen normally?

R: I don't listen to as many podcasts as I like, I often listen to them in fragments. I do listen to in the car which is what many of my friends do. I might listen to them on my mobile phone, or I might just put one on Laptop while doing something else. Or you know, like cooking or doing mechanical or I might, you know, if I'm doing like routine work like just emailing students, I might have podcast running in the background.

A: Podcast clients?

R: I do have the Podcasts app on my iPhone but I usually listen to it on Soundcloud. Sometimes on Stitcher, it depends, so you know, TuneIn... these are, I actually learnt about these when we were starting our own podcast. But Soundcloud is generally the platform on which we hear a lot of stuff and then this couple of Indian podcasts, I don't know the platform exactly but it might be Soundcloud as well

A: So is it the content that takes you to Soundcloud or is it UI?

R: It's the content I would say.

A: Essentially Apple's Podcasts app is not indexing the content that you listen to?

R: It might be, you know it might be. Because I use soundcloud and you know and I always have a window of soundcloud opened. We use soundcloud as our platform to host our podcast. But I know that for instance, our podcast is also available on our podcast. Because it is the RSS feed that it reads.

R: I might, I don't know if it more sort of convenient or if it streams and consume less data etc. while I listen to it in the car but I don't listen to it much in the car like other people do. But at home on wifi I stream it over soundcloud.

A: On the laptop it's iTunes?

R: Either iTunes or Soundcloud.

A: Do you listen to podcasts at normal playback speed?

R: I prefer listening to it at normal playback speed but you know I also like... unless it's something that is say very strictly related to my research or a topic that I'm very very interested in, you know often like hear it for a little bit like listening to show on radio. As far as I can tune in and tune out.

A: What inspired you to get into podcasting?

R: It's good question actually. You know, not quite. I want to say that there's a bunch of different things. At some point of time I was, I thought doing one. I thought it would be interesting to do one. There's people I know who are in the digital realm and I virtually sent out a couple of questions and people gave me some replies. And I, the idea behind that point of time was, say 3-4 years ago, I thought it would be useful thing to incorporate in my classes. and it still would be good and also sort of in some ways involve, you know more efforts, restructuring of courses etc. I found some information about what you know, what are the things you can use. If your iPhone should be enough (to record) and I got information both podcasting and about videocasting as well. That was, you know, I got some information but I didn't really go ahead and work on it. And then, I did get a better sense of what a podcast was when I participated in one and in that particular episode

'Transient memory'. Now I should add is that the way that those people do is very professional, they have a professional recording studio in Bombay. (...) They don't do it for money, they do it for posting intellectual conversation and debate. There's a pro mic and a sound mixer and an engineer. So obviously I knew that that's not the kind of setup I can do. Credit for this really goes to my colleague, because he had a suggestion saying that "Hey, you have this Twitter account and there are people who engage with it and some of it is trends on political views etc, people react strongly but it seems that people are also interested in getting into a conversation, why don't we try doing this?" and that was about a little over a year ago. SO, it started out literally as a conversation on Monday or early in the week and by Sunday we had our first podcast up. So we didn't, we had pretty low views. Yes, it was an amateur effort, it was low cost and fairly low quality.

A: Your approach to production is still the same? You record it on a handheld device and upload to SC? Or is there an extra step involved?

R: So we do it on our computers but there's been a little bit of back and forth. Sometimes, for weeks it would be okay and then sometimes we'd get connection problems. We record it on our computers with mics, you know, so I record it using my \$25 Skype recorder and that's about it, I then just export the files and a little bit of processing using Audacity and then we upload it on Soundcloud, we also upload the same thing on Youtube but soundcloud is where we get most of our hits. And then we have the RSS feed formed out to a number of different platforms like Sticher, iTunes, TuneIn and then on other big development has been that I want to say starting last November or December, Audioboom India got in touch with us and we have an agreement with them to syndicate it out. We still keep the product, we just share the feed with them. Moving from Soundcloud to Audioboom completely is something that we are not looking at it because we have a good share of subscribers on Soundcloud. So we syndicate to Audioboom and Audioboom runs it with some ads sometimes. Audioboom India is trying to grow the podcast market in India and my sense is that they are trying to develop a very broad range of interesting podcasts (originals and

A: Do you know about The Daily by NYT?

R: I've seen it, I have not listened to it but it is advertised prominently on their website and on billboards in the US.

A: So, The Daily essentially emerged as a reactionary movement to Trump Bump to tone down the noise and communicate what's important. Does your podcast also try to emulate a similar strategy when it comes to India and the Modi Wave?

R: So, you know, we believe our podcast is a topical podcast and tries to cover everything that's happening in India and you can say that everything that happens in India is more or less related to Politics. While you cannot call <redacted (podcast name)> political per se, but if you notice the pattern of the episodes we've done, so there are some episode we label as special episodes and then there are others that are numbers. So there are about 79 regular episodes and about 15-18 special episodes, so somewhere we're in the ballpark of a hundred and we'll do a lot which would be stories that wouldn't be overtly political also. (...) Throughout the week I have a chat with my co-podcaster and we think about what stories we're going to do and there are some stories that you have to do because they are so topical and significant. (...) Majority of our last 5-6 episodes have been on very grim issues and sometimes on a more positive notes. Usually it shakes out organically like one story one politics, one story on some general issues and social relevance which may not be super political and a third story which is a off-beat story. That's kind of ideal and often it pans out that way but sometimes we are deliberately producing it that way.

A: What made you choose the 'Weekly' distribution model?

R: It's not weekly exactly, we've been somewhat inconsistent with that. We record once a week for most part but we try and upload 2-3 episodes a week, which are essentially 2-3 chunks of the recording we make that week. I would say we average about 2 per week but in a good week we can do 3 sometimes. It is also mutated and evolved, we were doing episodes that were longer but we still do some that might go 15 minutes. We've been experimenting with episodes that focus a lot on one particular story. Our default model is to take one event or one story that's been covered in mainstream media. Sometimes we try and do more general run, where we look at pattern or we combine 3-4 stories, the ideal is to stick to about 10-12 minutes and 2-3 episodes in one session and then phase their release over a week or 10 days.

A: Have you considered the daily model?

R: The daily model, you know the closest we've come to is 4 episodes. But we have full time jobs and work-life balance etc. so we take out about an hour or hour and a half and we do this on a

Sunday typically. I think what happens is that even on those days we have other things and I think after we do the episodes in one shot with rehearsal, we do spend a couple of minutes before the episode and sometimes after one episode we stop to exchange feedback that increases back and forth instead of monologue in the next episode which is to be recorded. So, between that, by the time we're done with three, I think we feel that we are pretty saturated, but it is an interesting idea. If we could make more time or down the line we could move to a model where we actually become semi-professionalised or get some assistance, we might be able to do.

A: analytics?

R: It is interesting to see and it makes some sense. It is surprising to us that we started this podcast to do it for ourselves and our friends, we thought this would be an interesting archive of our understanding of what India was like. We're fully aware of the fact that we are not on the ground in India 24x7 so that will come with both its limitations and certain kind of distance and flexibility. So we thought it would be interesting to record our understanding and create this archive and if some people listen to it that'll be great. We had some inkling that there was some market for it and some audience for it. So, ya we have some interest in analytics and we do follow them but it is very difficult to get the cumulative number of plays you're getting when you factor in the numbers you get from RSS feed because I don't know if it is the correct picture. Audioboom is giving us pretty concise numbers, similarly Soundcloud numbers are also clear but I don't know if they factor in plays on Tunein or Stitcher. We also have been putting up static audio on Youtube with just a still image as placeholder and we have just started doing couple of short videos. But as far as podcast itself is concerned, the most numbers are the numbers we get from Soundcloud. Some episodes and some topics always tend to more plays than others.

A: Have you heard of Smart Speakers? Do you own a smart speaker?

R: Well, if you mean something like Alexa, yeah I do have a Sonos with Alexa in it.

A: Do you use it often?

R: Not for the podcasts but separately to listen to music, information and weather.

A: So by information do mean the Amazon's 'Daily Briefing' feature?

R: Yeah, when you ask “Alexa, what’s the new today”, it gives you news from sources like NPR, WSJ etc.

A: So, fun fact: the news that Alexa plays is in most cases excerpts from podcasts of those publications that were released that day!

R: Oh wonderful, I didn’t know that. That’s excellent.

A: Yeah, not a lot of people know that, and people are unconsciously consuming podcasts in that way.

R: Oh that’s a very very interesting point.

A: So one of the things that I’m trying to evaluate here is, if these smart speakers would therefore enhance the adoption of podcasts. So what happened with Serial back in 2013, which was pivotal for podcasting. A similar trend is being observed again with The Daily and other podcasts. Do you believe that storytelling is going to change with podcasting or as aural media adoption increases with Smart Speakers?

R: So we’re in a golden age of visual storytelling, both in cinema and television but perhaps especially in television. It is very interesting that you raised this point. I was talking to a number of people and we all felt that, despite the fact you have a large number of book being produced in Fiction, many of them are not that compelling or captivating but on the other hand so much good writing is happening in television. So in the audio video medium, we are in the golden age. So what might happen is that radio maybe given a second lease of life by podcasting, so just as you used to have dramas on radio, similar trend is happening with podcasting.

A: So do you believe smart speaker could lead to better discovery of podcasts therefore?

R: Sure, I think this fact is something I didn’t know. If there are other ways in which podcasts can be used, so if news is broadly speaking excerpted from other podcasts, you know, if this fact can be foregrounded and you can start getting customised news bulletins on your podcasts if you get customised news bulletins, then you’re creating a market for people to produce those kind of customised podcasts.

A: So, Reuters is doing some stuff in that area with their Apple TV apps that creates bulletins for you based on the time you prescribe

R: So, the elements that go into this bulletin are more or less pre-produced packages. So it will be interesting to see when a model like this goes more mainstream and what the demand supply of it would be. We could move into something like a podcast version of Netflix.

A: So you'd prefer a Netflix i.e. a original content model or a Hulu i.e. content curation model?

R: Well, I feel there's space for an amalgamation of both.

A: Yeah, but do you believe a model like that would put a paywall on access to podcasting?

R: I would prefer a paywall to remove advertising, but the content can remain free if the podcasts are advertising-driven. There's space for both of them to exist. So for instance Spotify free uses advertising and certain access restrictions but it essentially free music but with Spotify Premium there is unlimited streaming and no ads. Debate around advertising model and subscription model continue to remain prevalent throughout, so are if there's going to be a new model for payment and consumption? - I don't know. It is something can't anticipate at the moment, the other thing is that given the existing possibilities, a combination of paid and advertising driven model seem tenable.

A: So you do believe that there is a market for people paying for podcasts?

R: Yeah, I absolutely think so. It's a question of quality and a question of consumer interest. WSJ and Financial Times London I think two very good examples of how quality content that's specialised and exclusive has a market. I don't think WSJ or FT are looking for massive numbers in the same way that Facebook is, so Facebook remains free and WSJ does not. Strictly speaking nothing is free, you're sharing your data in case of Facebook, so I believe that a market for paid audio content for niche genres and topics does exist.

2) Pseudonym - Marco

A: What's podcasting to you?

M: I don't use podcasts daily, sometimes I look at the opportunity to find podcasts on some issues and so I download all the content from the podcasts and listen to them. This is because I think it is difficult to constantly update my lists. Also, in Italy, there's no robust network where I live and if I use my cellular network to download, it'll take a lot of data. Similarly in the UK, you have good network in the city but in the country side the network is not so good. And podcast requires a lot of bandwidth to be updated constantly. In addition to this, I have to say that there are a lot of apps that are very well done, but instance I was using podcasts for information, for news but now I saw that there are lot of applications for national news and national tv providers that are very well done when compared with previous releases. So now I prefer apps over podcasts, so for instance the national TV of Italy has a new app - one for TV content and one for radio content. Very well done and more useful and complete v/s podcasts - for that information.

A: So does the app that you talk about has the feature to download content for offline consumption?

M: Yeah, and you can listen to catch-up episodes. It is very similar to the podcasts app, I used to listen to their podcasts on the podcasts app before, but now I stream it on their app. So I download things like Live Music and then listen to it later. I think this app is also more simple to use than podcasts.

A: If you could describe the podcasts app that you use? Do you listen to podcasts on your computer?

M: It's the Podcasts app on my iPhone. I don't listen to podcasts on computer. I only listen to them on my iPhone and my iPad.

A: Do you remember the first podcast that you heard? When did you hear it?

M: I think it was something related to national news, it was from a British broadcaster - BBC Radio 4. I was learning English at the time, so I used it for knowledge acquisition as well as to train myself with the English language. But I stopped listening BBC podcasts due to a misconception about license fee but I continued to listen to other podcasts. For a period, I used them everyday. I

used to listen to Radio 4 news everyday because it was updated everyday and I had the ability to listen to daily news but then their feed stopped updating one day. After several tries, I deleted the podcast. I heard my first podcast in 2015.

A: How do you discover new podcasts?

M: I use the podcast app and podcast store to discover new podcasts and also use the search feature to search topic specific podcasts.

A: Motivations to listen to podcasts?

M: What I like is that they are thematic and like radio programmes and work like music downloads. I also listen to podcasts related to music like Reggae or Rock and I've subscribed to a few, they download automatically and I can listen to them whenever I want. I believe that is the best characteristic of podcast. I think podcasting is a way of sharing information that is very attached from the other means of communication. So, you're not always aware about the possibilities of podcasts. Unless you go on to search or are lucky to find out a podcast or a friend refers you to a podcast, I think it is very difficult to use podcasts with a purpose.

A: Are you also using it for your educational purposes? Are you using podcasts for your PhD?

M: No, mostly for improving my English. There are a lot of podcasts, other than listening to the news, I used to listen to language podcast of BBC, 5 minute grammar, 6 minute English. And you can subscribe to them and they automatically download. Or as I did once, I downloaded 3 years worth of podcasts at once and started listening to them at my pace and leisure.

A: Genres?

M: Language, News and Music would be top 3.

A: If we could now talk about Smart speakers. Do you believe Alexa, Siri etc. inside speakers which are inside people's homes could motivate people to listen to more podcasts?

M: Actually I don't know. I think that the use of podcasts go together. I think development of technology with better network, better devices, better connection and they have to be simple to use to have a constant facility. Because if you use them one day and on the other day you cannot, you

get frustrated and you may stop listening to them altogether. It is something that has to be constant, in their use. Even if people try, they get frustrated shortly because there could be several problems that hinder the experience, as it happened with me due to slow internet. And then you ask yourself, "Shall I follow a podcast or shall I follow an app?" and if the app performs better, I'll choose the app (of a specific publication) over the Podcasts app.

A: So, consider this - If Alexa or Siri understand you better, give you recommendations based on what you've heard in the past. Would you be willing to try those recommendations?

M: Maybe. It's complicated. It should be more easier (to use), for it to enter your daily routine. It should be easier to access, use and constant in performance. If the app takes too much time and has too many glitches, or if you're spending a lot of time searching or asking for something interest, in my opinion it is not worth spending a lot of time on that. So if it is fast and efficient, I'll consider it.

A: Have you heard about The Daily by NYT?

M: No.

A: What do you think about the future of this medium?

M: So, as I said, it is to be parallel to advancement in technology. There should be something that works and should be reliable in terms of connectivity. There should be easier way to use podcasts on your devices.

A: So would you consider smart speaker as a step towards making that possible? So for instance, if there's a smart speaker in your room, you can simply command it to play a specific podcast using your voice. If it takes less time for you to find it, type it etc.

M: I think yes, but in addition to that, you shouldn't have to look for a specific podcast. So for instance if you ask your speaker the recipe for pasta and if the speaker finds a podcast, an app or some web content, it's fine. Discovery shouldn't be your problem, all you need is content. Then if this content is in a podcast or in a website, it shouldn't be your problem. In my opinion, the machine should be able to make the decision and that will be very useful.

A: How's podcasting is being used in Italy? Is it a tool for propaganda by any chance?

M: No, podcast is too slow for propaganda. If someone has to do propaganda, they'll use Facebook. Podcast is too serious a medium in Italy and usually contains the 'smart stuff'.

3) Pseudonym - Monal

A: What's podcasting to you?

I: I think listening to someone speak, a podcast is essentially someone talking so a one-sided conversation maybe?

A: Do you remember the first podcast that you heard?

I: I've heard probably one or two only, but I think the first one was a talk show, a bollywood talkshow - entertainment genre

A: How long ago was that?

I: About a year ago.

A: Did you use the podcasts app on your iPhone to hear it?

I: No, I heard it on Saavn.

A: So all the podcasts that you've ever heard have been on Saavn.

I: Yeah

A: And you used your phone to access Saavn?

I: Yes, only my phone.

A: How did you discover this podcast?

I: I was listening to music and I saw the option for a podcast so I was like, "hey why not? Lets listen to this"

A: So your motivation behind listening to it was that you found that show interesting?

I: It was basically to kill time, I didn't want to watch something but I wanted to listen to something

A: And did you like it then? Did you like the concept of podcasting?

I: Yeah, I did actually. And then heard the entire series then.

A: So you binge-listened a podcast?

I: Yeah

A: Any other genres that you've tried?

I: I've downloaded a few news podcasts but never for around listening to them.

A: But you were motivated to discover new genres?

I: Yeah, I did.

A: Do you know what a smart speaker is?

I: You mean like Alexa?

A: Yeah, have you tried it? Do you have one?

I: No I don't have one, but I have tried it.

A: Do you believe that a smart speaker could lead to growth in podcasting etc. like people can tell it to play news, music etc.

I: Um, I don't really think so. I think you can connect your phone to the speaker and play a podcast. I don't think it is making a massive difference.

A: Do you believe that oral content can someday replace some of the heavy visual material? Like replacing news on TV with quality audio content delivered through a podcast? Would you as a consumer be interested?

I: I don't think so, impact of visuals is unique. If you see something, the image sticks and that's not something possible with podcasts.

A: Any other thoughts about podcasting?

I: Not really, since I don't really listen much. But I would want to try News podcasts, I get notifications all the time but I haven't bothered yet.

A: Have you heard about The Daily by NYT?

I: No.

4) Pseudonym - Jasmine

A: What's podcasting to you?

V: I see it as just a way to educate yourself. Just a way to gain more information and it can be anything really. But I mean I only use it for medical stuff, which I think is kind of nerdy.

A: Do you remember the first podcast that you heard? When did you hear it?

V: 99% Invisible, only a few months ago. That was the first one and then I would say I've heard it in phases. I would get into it for a bit and listen to a few and then I wouldn't listen to one for weeks. And then I'd be like oh let's do that again.

A: And when you listen, do you listen to whole episodes or do you listen to them in chunks?

V: Usually whole episode, because I usually listen to them while I'm walking into uni and my walk's around 35 minutes and most podcasts I listen to are about 30 minutes long. So I normally do a whole one and then start a new one.

A: And do you listen to them at normal playback speed?

V: Yes, normal.

A: Do you only listen to them on your phone?

V: Yeah I use the podcast app (Apple podcasts) on my iPhone.

A: If you could describe the genres that you listen to?

V: Generally it's all educational or comedy medical ones. So there's one which is a comedic medical one, it's about funny things or interestingly funny medical anecdotes and that's mainly it.

A: Do you know what smart speakers are?

V: No.

A: DO you use Siri on your phone?

V: Not really, I know I have Siri on my phone but I don't use it.

A: Have you used Alexa?

V: No.

A: So, hypothetically there's a speaker in your home and that's a speaker that you can talk to, and command it to play. Would you be more likely to listen to music on it or podcasts on it?

V: Currently I do listen to music while I'm just at home, I normally play it out of my laptop. I've never really listened to a podcast off of my laptop. Just because I feel like music can be in the background but with podcasts I like to listen and so when I'm walking, that's fine but if I'm doing jobs, i'll be less likely to listen to podcasts.

A: What are your perceptions about this medium? Do you see it growing?

V: I think it has potential, like I know a lot of people who do listen to podcasts and people who enjoy them a lot. And I think they do have a place where they're not music and they're not video. So they are in between and they can be very useful and educational. I've got one friend who's very into it and listens to a lot of podcasts about a lot of topics and she's like an advocate, she encourages other people to listen to podcasts as much as I would say you are as well. And I think it's a really good thing and she's made me like them, I want to listen to them more. So I think if more people did that, more people would be aware. There are a lot of people who haven't even thought of listening to podcasts and I think they would enjoy them. It's like so many different podcasts and there's something out there for everyone.

A: When you're listening to somebody speaking in a podcast, they're normally speaking at a slower pace, as they do in audiobooks, so would you be more likely to increase speed when you're more accustomed to it?

V: Yeah, well I've thought about making it faster before because sometimes you don't need it to be that slow. When there's no two way conversation, it's just there and you just listen to it. I have considered that and I don't think I've ever looked into 'how do I increase the speed' though.

A: Is your coursework using podcasts as a learning tool?

V: Not really, we sometimes have resources but they always come along with a video. There's someone sat in front of a computer explaining things through a series of pictures.

5) Pseudonym - James

A: "What's podcasting to you?"

D: "Look, as I've told you I'm not a very tech-savvy person. What podcasting means to me is essentially where I first came to know when I was working at <redacted> bank and research is one of the topics that is close to our hearts, market research. So, they said 'Oh, we've got a podcast, listen to it. So they put an app on my phone and I click on it and it updates with the latest research piece. Now, what I've found useful ofcourse, that two things, one is, um, although I say I'm not tech savvy, but the car that I drive actually reads my emails, so what used to happen in the past... I used to actually get my car read my research mails but it was a bit annoying because I used to drive into work everyday and the drive into work was 45 minutes and the drive back was more than an hour because london drive. So, you know, how do you make best use of time? So how do you make the best use of time? So I used to listen to emails but the problem with the emails was that sometimes the research guy used to send the emails to the whole world, but when the car reads out it used read out every person's email and which is very funny and there was no way for me to control it. So what I did was that I stopped using it for that purpose and then I came to know that there's something called podcast and that was a much better way for me to listen and it was a very effective use of my time, driving in and out of work number one. Number two, anytime I used to listen to the reports rather than read it, I used to prefer it. I thought that gave me a *much better feel of what was happening in the market rather than read it. **"

D: From there I graduated to other things you know, I've been very closely following the Aarushi Talwar murder case and then there was a series of podcasts that came and subscribe to that and I listened to every single podcast. Then, you know once in a while I listen to some podcast mainly on educational stuff and you know, environment and those sort of things. But I would say, that the say that the research is like 90% is what I listen to.

A: How long ago was the first podcast that you heard?

D: You could completely rubbish me but I think it was about 1.5-2 years ago but I don't even know that podcasts were there at that time?

A: No, podcasts have been here since 2004

D: Oh! So I heard it only 2 years back.

A: Do you use the Apple Podcasts app on your iPhone or some other app?

D: I use a purple coloured-app, yeah that is Podcasts app

A: In your car you essentially use bluetooth to play these?

D: That's right, yeah.

A: How do you discover new podcasts? Do you go to the Top Charts?

D: When I go to podcasts, it just gives me all the podcast and then when I... it says there are new podcasts, you want to download and I click on them it just comes up. And while I've just done that, I've just realised that I've also used podcasts for learning german.

D: I extensively used to podcasts.. I used to just listen to language... there's a learning thing there.

A: Have you heard of The Daily by NYT?

D: No, not yet.

A: DO you know what a Smart Speaker is?

D: No.

A: Amazon Alexa, Siri?

D: Alexa, I've got a friend who's got Alexa at home and he tells it to turn the TV on and all those things.

A: So, have you tried it?

D: The only thing I've tried is really Siri and not any others.

A: How do you find Siri in terms of getting things done?.

D: Siri is good honestly but you know sometimes it doesn't understand my accent to be honest with you with you but it understands my daughter's accent very well. I do use Siri, And ill tell you when I use Siri... Largely when I use Siri - while driving

A: So, Apple makes this product called the HomePod, which is essentially a speaker with Siri in it.

DO you believe that a speaker with a Siri in it that could play podcasts on voice commands?

D: Absolutely.

A: So you'll use that if that's the case, if there's a speaker and you can command it to play podcast maybe in the kitchen or?

D: Yes.

A: What is your perception about podcasting? Do you feel it has some future in terms of journalism, narratives being created?

D: Absolutely. I think for me.. given that you know I like to close my eyes when I'm sitting in the train though I rarely go by train or when I go by car... for me listening to podcast is *much more value than listening to music. I'd much rather listen to .music when I'm at home but in the car I like to keep myself more keen fully occupied. *

A: Anything else you'd like to say about the medium?

D: I think its the right technology only thing is that the idea is... as you said 2004, I didn't know about it for 12 years.

A: So, if you consider... Lets consider India Explained, that happens to be a topical podcast. They have a weekly release on a particular topic.

6) Pseudonym - Mel

A: What's podcasting to you?

L: I suppose it's like journalism, reporting but in a more easily consumable form, in audio.

A: So, you look at with as something related journalism?

L: Often its. Well, the ones that I listen to are news based, and that's journalism.

A: Is the way podcasts are produced and distributed, does that make you treat it as a journalistic product?

L: Yeah, especially when rolling, so that's why they rolling and don't

A: Do you remember the first podcast that you heard?

L: Not really, the one I listened to often was This American Life.

A: Was it the off-shoot Serial or was it TAL by itself?

L: By itself

A: How long ago was that?

L: 3-4 years ago I suppose, 2014 I think.

A: Where do you listen to podcasts?

L: On my phone

A: Do you use the Apple podcasts app to listen to podcasts?

L: Yup

A: Do you listen to them at normal playback speed?

L: Usually, yes.

A: But you prefer some podcasts on a higher speed?

L: Uh, I guess it depends how fast a person speaks and especially what the content is. If it is dense, I will keep it at a normal speed.

A: How do you discover new podcasts?

L: Through you and some of my podcasts recommend me other podcasts, friends and I often check the catalogue on the app.

A: So, if you were to give me a ratio of the podcasts that you've heard and never got around to listening another episode of it and the podcasts that you ended up latching on to, what would that be?

L: I stick with 1 in 5 podcasts that I listen to

A: If you could describe the genres that you listen to?

L: That would be news, economics and tech.

A: Do you also listen to podcasts on your Amazon Echo (Smart Speaker)?

L: Not at all

A: Do you consume news on Amazon Echo?

L: I haven't turned her on in a long time.

A: But, have you ever used the 'Daily Briefing' feature on the Echo?

L: Yeah, that was the only feature I thought that was good.

A: Okay, so fun fact: The Daily briefing sound excerpts are essentially excerpted from podcasts of those news sources.

L: Oh, right. I knew that they were, like the Economist one was.

A: Yeah, so people have been inadvertently consuming podcasts even though they don't that it is a podcast

L: Ah, that's interesting.

A: Do you believe aurally (podcasts, audiobooks etc.) that isn't music but delivered through a speaker could on day have more impact v/s video?

L: Oh v/s video, um, in my mind, podcasts are replacing text based news or books and things rather than video. I think, yeah, its obviously much lower cost to create a podcast v/s creating a video. So people who write blogs could be recording podcasts, in my mind. I don't think it would replacing video, they are different things.

A: What are your perceptions about the medium? Do you think going the same way? Do you see it subscriber model? Do you see it putting a paywall on it?

L: I mean Youtube hasn't put up a paywall.

A: Well, Youtube has Youtube Red?

L: Why would people pay for Youtube?

A: No ads.

L: But then we have ad blockers for people to get their way around ads?

A: But podcasts don't have ad blockers, right?

L: No, but on Youtube they work.

A: Yeah, but Youtube is also bundling original content and other features with this subscription. So, podcasts have historically been free and everyone can access it but do you believe putting up a paywall would segregate the market and therefore could tank this medium?

L: Well, I mean people who don't want to pay for this have been putting up with ads. So, I don't see that it would hurt the medium.

A: But you do believe that podcasting can function as a paid, ad-free service? Do you think there's a market for it?

L: Yeah, I think so. I remember you saying that NYT was giving podcast episodes earlier to subscribers before others.

A: Yeah, that was Caliphate by NYT. Have you heard The Daily by NYT?

L: Yeah, I've heard it a couple of times.

A: What are your thoughts about the 'daily' model of podcast production?

L: Can you elaborate?

A: So if a podcast is being distributed every single day of the week, the weekdays. Do you believe that's better or a weekly or fortnightly model is better?

L: I think that depends what the content is. If it's like to keep people updated about the day's news and not like something that takes longer to produce like a one hour show, where it makes sense to be released on a weekly cycle.

A: What takes you to podcasting?

L: I suppose mainly because I can listen to them without the need for constant attention.

A: Does that mean passive consumption?

L: No, its not passive. Its making productive use of the time that would be wasted otherwise like walking to work and I have limited time in my life. And also, quality of content is often better or atleast different from what's on Youtube.

A: So in a sense Niche?

L: Yeah, I guess yeah but I think quite strongly that making youtube videos is a lot of effort and you've got to make all the visuals. But with podcasts, what you want to say just needs spoken word. So a lot of people have a platform where they wouldn't make video but they can do a podcast.

A: Lets talk about digital assistants in smart speakers. Do you believe that digital assistants and thereby a personality with a smart speaker, do you think that it is an element that attracts people to go to their speaker to consume content?

L: So, in my own life and the people in my life, I'm yet to see anyone that actually making use of them in a substantial way.

A: How do you compare podcasts to radio? Have you have ever been a consumer of radio before, like particularly consumed a radio station or show?

L: Not really, I think because my generation is so in between the time when radio kind of died out and the internet came in. So, I've never really had a radio playing device. I've only listened to music on cassettes, CDs and playback on BBC.

A: How would you compare podcasting to radio?

L: I think they are similar in the sense that they are both in audio format. But they are different in terms of production where an individual making podcasts has unlimited space. So it's like Youtube's the unlimited version of TV and podcasts are unlimited version of radio.

A: Politics and podcasting, do you think one influences the other? Can you remember any instance where it may have?

L: Maybe there's a demand for political news in podcasts, so I think there is a relation between them. But I don't think I would specifically make that connection.