



RETOS Y DESAFÍOS DEL PERIODISMO DE INMERSIÓN:


narrativas, formatos y
prácticas profesionales

The power of digital audio. The great transformation of radio

EL PODER DEL AUDIO DIGITAL. LA GRAN TRANSFORMACIÓN
DE LA RADIO

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Resumen

Este artículo parte de la pregunta: ¿Cómo imaginas el futuro de la radio? Esta pregunta se hizo a través de una entrevista realizada de 18 expertos en audio. Según las respuestas obtenidas, existe una alta probabilidad de que los medios sean versátiles con múltiples contenidos y una amplia variedad de canales. La mayoría de los expertos comparten la idea de que la experimentación determinará el futuro

de la radio, también la industria y los nuevos contenidos, las nuevas narrativas, los nuevos modelos de negocio y un nuevo concepto tecnológico para la distribución de contenidos.

Palabras-clave:

Audio digital; Podcast; Podcasting; radio online; transformación raidofónica; radio bajo demanda; plataformas.

Abstract

This article is based on the question: How do you imagine the future of radio? This question was asked through an interview conducted with 18 audio experts. Based on the answers obtained, there is a high probability that the media is versatile with multiple content and a wide variety of channels. Most experts share the idea that experimentation will determine the future of radio, as well as the industry and new content, new narratives, new business models and a new technological concept for content distribution.

Keywords

Digital audio; Podcast; Podcasting; Online radio; Radio transformation; On demand radio; Platforms.

Sumario / Summary

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1. The introduction of the situation as it stands: radio and podcast a new business format

The future of radio should not vanish in the new media context; instead it has to be a part of a new picture formula. The radio industry is living in a transformation stage; Orrantia (2022) claims that a business model can suffer different types of transformations: one active change made day by day, a proactive action, and finally a reactive model which is the current model. Therefore, the key for a business model to develop, is to centre on the user, the product and the innovation which is the practical implements of ideas. Eventually the evolution will become with the creation of new professional profiles such as content administrators with big data knowledge, professionals that will guide the user experience and subscription profiles.

It's surprising to see the new opportunities online radio is bringing, resetting the old model. Business models however, surprising to see how podcasting is resetting classic models of information and entertainment diffusion. (Herchmann and Kischinevsky, 2008).

Delpueyo, (2022) claims that the great challenge of online radio is to make live streaming content. Podcasts offers many opportunities for platforms to develop different types of genres such as humour, fiction and documentaries etc.

The key is to understand that podcasts are a format that creates community in a segmented scenario; through the listener it shows the personal demands and personal explorations; the new tendency does not demand contents for large audiences. As a result, brands must keep into an account that transition to segmented audiences follows some stages: meeting its audience, creating an interest and desire, the listening itself and finally the engagement.

Zumeta, (2021) claims "if it keeps going on like this, the average age of Spanish radio by 2040 will be 61 years old. Meaning, lost of relevance and influence" As Rodero explains, (2020) for Prodigioso Volcan, our new ways of lifestyle are making a boom in audio. Audio reaches new horizons, that adapts to daily life activities like: work, doing exercise etc

However, the radio industry is not taking a step forward on the uncountable challenges that arises.

There is no other sound media with a hundred years worth of experience that keeps a high rate credibility and an outstanding versatility. However, there are clear signs that the current global radio industry is changing.

2. The objectives and hypotheses

The main objective of this research was to make a prospective study about possible scenarios for the radio industry in the future. The most important matter is that it will allow us to find out which are the strategies the industry has to use to anticipate the upcoming challenges, perhaps this will allow us to guide the impel that the industry needs along its chain value.

The following questions were asked:

- Question 1 Is a podcast a suitable educational tool?
- Question 2 Will the new technologies change the way of audio consumption? Question 3: In what ways will the current radio transform?
- Question 3 Will the new technologies affect the way audio is produce or consumed?

The following hypotheses were made:

- H1 The podcast can be an effective educational tool, with potential developments and it will be accepted within the university community.
- H2 There is a perception that technology innovations, the native podcast or radio on demand will surpass the contents broadcasted of traditional radio. There is a perception that the radio industry will plainly integrate podcasts on their platforms. When there is a huge demand from the audience.
- H3 The development of artificial intelligence in the Voice Assistant or the smart speaker will search and propose podcasts according to our preferences or subscriptions.
- H4 The principal radio broadcasts are going to be audio platforms that will innate contents of own production or production from others.
- H5 The Radio industry should establish synergies and create audio platforms to face the global giants like Amazon or Spotify.
- H6 For a young audience, podcasts will be the new addition, to generational change of developing the potential future of audio.
- H7 Podcasting sets challenges to the radio industry regarding production, creation and programming.

3. Methodology

For this research, a qualitative method was employed, like Salazar affirms (2008), human life is conceived as a permanent transformation process. Regarding the current situation which can change the future with individual requirements.

Conversely, qualitative vision tries to explain reality; the data collected is not previously defined, leaving it to be the researcher in an interview with respondents. However, an interview is a respected scientific method that cannot be substituted, to make approximations and understand a reality with different meanings that are not usual (Olaf, 2016).

However, Garvin (2008) claims that interviews give reliable information using fewer resources, a traditional research tool, like large surveys; this is one of the main reasons of its increase usage.

In this regard, qualitative techniques will be employed to analyze subjective and emotional parts of the interview: "qualitative data is identify in the speech with the use of words, terms, descriptions, reports, comments, and opinions" (Olaz, 2016 p.15).

In fact, in-depth interviews were made in this research that allowed more versatility to understand reality. Previously, a good plan that did not condition the development of the interviews was necessary to reach out objective results.

Therefore, it was significant to design a plan to reach out the objective of the research, where the individual interviewed is the main character of the open process. The interview had to be fluent because is where the interviewer had to put all the attention in what to say and how to say it.

However, it was taking into account the relevance and the knowledge of the radio industry to select experts interviewed. Equally, the principal publications and impact studies in the field were checked.

Professional profiles such as researchers, academics, and experts in podcasting, radio or communication development were searched for the interviews. In addition, it was intended to be incorporated in an interview, with other types of professionals with more technical profiles, such as experts in podcasting productions or audio content, radio professionals of well-known prestige or audio content, directors of influential companies. Lastly, it must be said each interview had a proximate duration of one hour.

Therefore, taking into account the relevance and the knowledge of the radio industry that were more linked to the object of study. With this first basis, a group of 18 experts of well-known prestige were selected (annex 1), experts of different profiles like programme directors, content managers in radio, and academics.

Therefore, in-depth interviews will be employed to find out more information about the changing reality of the radio industry. Open questions, which allowed the interviewer to show the approach wanted. Likewise, the interview focused on four blocks:

- Block 1 Great transformation of the radio: current picture of the radio industry.
- Block 2 New audiences - old audiences.
- Block 3 Technology, radio and social media
- Block 4 University radio and educational podcasts.

4. The results of the Discussion

4.1. The great transformation of radio

To start the discussion, some reflections from experts have to be considered. Pablo Fernandez, innovation department for PRISA, **(SI)** believes that the changing landscape can be measure on technology progress, audiences and formats; data that helps to analyze the evolution. Radio and podcast build the audio environment, and now it is the appropriate time to reset.

In October 2021, the second commercial radio group in the United Kingdom modified its structures and placed radio and podcast under the same epigraph: Audio - changing its name to Bauermedia Audio.

Meaning, a redefinition of the internal organization, to face the changes of the sound environment and handle the incorporations of new audiences.

Espinosa de los Monteros (2020) claims, we live in the era of “audification”, every time audio is more present in many aspects of daily life, taking more relevance.

Therefore, radio stations are platforms that already included text, video, infograph or audio, it is very probable they will develop synergies; their web pages will soon accommodate content of self or content from others, similar to television networks’ relationship with independent producers:

- (Gallego, 2021); Zumeta 2021; Bonet 2021; Sellas 2021)**(SI)**.
- (Pedrero 2021; Sellas 2021; Bonet 2021; Gallego 2021)**(SI)**.

The radio has been an important media for society in its 100 years of life; it has gathered massive audiences making an important impact along its history. Although the new competition is threading to take space from the radio industry, radio keeps having main advantages like “live streaming” and the quickness to reach the audience.

Cabrera, (2021) claims, radio is a great source to generate audiences that build community, turning into a system of products. Regarding, we have audio

content, a window of opportunity, the challenge is to know where to take the business model - micro payments, subscription etc...The podcasts to radio is a space to conquer, the audience niches and collects metadata to give to companies. In addition, the claims that radio must face the relationships with the talents which has to change, it is not about hiring them to make one programme, but to represent a concept. A programme is a concept that can turn into a system with multiple contents and can be used universally.

The radio companies make use of the advantages and opportunities that bring today's technology. They have to learn how to face challenges and threads that giant global companies go through with their audio platforms.

A change that is not consequences of companies' or professionals' evolution but consequence of new demands of a society that presents very different demands and that is prepare to play a main role (García-Lastra and Pedrero, 2019; p.25)

How can we do it? García-Lastra and Pedrero, (2019) point out that radio companies must know: how to reset in this surround, how the contents should be, how to adapt contents with the new channels, how to set the business model to make it achievable and how to be measure metrics on a fragmented audience. They know how to make contents with quality, and we are in the appropriate moment for experimentation.

"Let's experiment!" For instance, narrative podcasts, are a new format of making stories, indepth into a topic away from media spotlight. Contents that require the journalist to implicate in the story making with careful quality, tended to transmit emotions to the listener with intimate listening. In addition, these podcasts that aim to be long-lasting, require a careful elaboration and serialization to accomplish loyalty and complicity. (Gutierrez, Sellas and Esteban 2019). Sound fiction is back on scene:

Many are the advantage that makes us claim back and support sound fiction (...) the genre's nature itself, the liberty of contents, the major expression force, popularity among the audience and brand identity of the audio company itself (...) it has two effects for the listener that makes it unique: its capacity to stimulate mental images (...) and ability to emotionally touch the listener. (Rodero, Perez-Maillo and Espinosa, 2019 pp170-171)

Even though radio is a very conservative media, the idea of creating a great audio platform arises, where principal Spanish radio stations, group together around podcast and radio. Like this, every radio station could merge the production on a platform under the company's image and regain strength taken

from global depredators. Pedrero, (2021) **(SI)** claims, that if radio is an industry, it must act like such. –making joint actions for the sector. The many experts that are still in favour of wave broadcast, under the argument that it is free, accessible and mobile. This perception will last what the audience and the business model allows: “the production of native sound contents obligates the people in charge of broadcasting stations to search for new forms of monetizing these products” (Ribes, Perez-Alaejos and Porta 2019, p192). Equally, making use of the advantage which current affair gives:

simultaneity of events (...) it has been, and it keeps being (...) perhaps its capacity to adapt (...) is still a privileged media to broadcast current affairs content (Legoburu, Garcia and Dorado, 2019, pp. 66-67).

Pablo Fernandez, innovation department for PRISA, claims that audio enters into the listeners’ brain directly, the advertisers like this a lot, and like this, we can offer a smart advertisement experience without saturation. An interesting reflection although searching for new ways to generate incomes is something that still needs research, the audience atomization provokes segmentation, having a point of support in big data. **(SI)**

Podcasting can be the leverage to convert the listener into a consumer of branded content or brand radios; big data is on the bases of this approach, used as a tool of audience identification. The audience segmentation gives radio advertisement a centre concept of the user, allowing the brand to impact the listener no matter the station they listen to (Ortiz Sobrino, Castillo and Carrazoni 2019 p. 103).

Coutinho, (2015) claims, we are in the era of constant information flow, if we managed to know which are the indicators we need to count on with reliable data, we can move on to a podcasting business model.

This can be possible using KPLs methodologies and indicators, a Key action-nd,cator)”... to respond to all the different types of consumption and identify the different devices used” (Herrera, Amoedo and Domingo, 2019 p238). This said, Mendez (2021) in his neurological research for Neuro Lab of Australian Radio Network, states that: the use of applied neuroscience to traditional marketing will give a more complete landscape of how the listener interacts with audio content.

The truth is that the sector must search for a significant change, the current business model does not guarantee sustainability for the future but all the opposite. Cerezo, (2019) Expert in digital transformation for Medias, claims: that in press there was an agreement. In addition, claims that in order to build a new scenario three points that can perfectly be applied to radio have to be noted:

diversification to explore new income sources, hybridizing and innovation to give the user satisfaction.

Radio will have platforms that lodges live streaming audio and on demand in podcast format. Cerezo for Mediaaventurados, radio specialize blog, agrees with this idea and claims. that we are talking about audio instead of podcast because it is much more. Also indicates that until now our relationship with technology and screens were "touch", now we are in a new era, that will last ten or fifteen years in which the interaction will be through the voice. The key for this can be that we have forgotten the user and have centered on the device.

Therefore, it must create audiences and community. For instance, Heili (2021) digital strategist, references this data on one of his podcasts about "the radio that is coming": "placing a monthly advertisement spot on the New York Times daily podcast costs more than \$200.000".

The radio has not managed very well with digital transformation, instead, press with daily podcasts has occupied this space from audio. Resulting in, the radio must be reset and occupy the spaces for audio services.

To sum up, podcasting has come to stay, it is not going to substitute traditional radio, but it will be its i+d+r. Taking the initiative, of what you do well and in developing using the correct strategies, avoiding external agents like global platforms. Equally, create a community under a brand quality that radio stations have, and develop sound ecosystems to gather major spaces possible. Making it possible to generate resources and regain the media relevance. By not doing this, other platforms will keep taking subscribers, benefits and advertisement shares to their close digital grounds. These platforms have seen the value of distribution; they ask for registries, big data finishes the work.

Radio must think on having a delimitate ground and decide if it is going to charge for its contents. Therefore, it must take into account that its spaces can be open but managing the users' fidelity and transforming it into profit. Avoiding global platforms to keep audio by using diversification strategies and using the data audience which gives set strategies.

5. New audiences

Traditional radio is unidirectional; it does not allow interaction or content selection. This is one of the main reasons why young people have turned their backs on it: "the younger generation are an audience the radio has not been able to seduce, this medium is lacking the talent to captive them or to even attract their attention in the first place, even thought its future depends on doing just that" (Marti, Martinez-Costa and Escobedo, 2019 p. 282).

It is therefore crucial that, in order to survive, radio needs to make more concerted efforts to bring in young listeners. In retrospect, conventional radio never cared for young people nor designed strategies to attract them, therefore, it has lost its relevance and it does not feature as part of young people's digital diet.

They do not even know there is a device called FM.

Austin, (2021) consultant for music radio, believes that the biggest challenge the industry has to face is captivating the younger generation. In order to do so, it is necessary to reflect within their content, their fashion style, their way of speaking, their music, etc. however, radio has not managed to make an ally from the smartphone:

It must be flexible and listen to the audience needs in order to give something different, radio keeps having an emotional component that conquers listeners (Moreno, Areense and Moreno Cazalla, 2019, p.212)

Afuera Heredero, is a radio journalist for Cadena SER, believes that a smartphone is a camera, a movie player, a direct line with the crew and a radio player. Younger generations are not going to have radio players in their bedrooms. Industry must reset, create new contents and narratives for this younger audience.

In this respect, it is worth mentioning Bretos (2021), radio journalist for Cadena SER, who claims "I am learning to create content for people who want to disconnect" Although some experts like Lopez-Vidales, Lain or de Dios stated: in an interview, that radio is at reach of a mature age because it is conceive that a reflexive listening is needed, therefore no one argues that the audience of radio is getting old. It can lose its social influence in few years if it does not renew. **(SI)**

Gallego (2021) the logic that radio is only making content for Baby Boomers, they work, generate incomes and bring business to the radio industry. The motto seems clear "exploit this resource until it's last" podcasts are far behind from generating something alike.

However, new questions come up: why young generations are not including radio in their life? On the other hand, why do they include Spotify in their life? Young people's disregard the radio that is clear, there is lack of content selection and the distribution does not reach their audience.

Ortega (2021) explains that the problem with the radio is not about format, but content and distribution models. Global companies create new products that generate new experiences. However, radio holds the same business model, dropping as well as the audience, turning its back on young people who do not feel represented by this media.

Izuzquiza, podcaster and producer for Yeswecast, claims: that the change will come from producers who will be able to generate content for every generation.

San Luis (2021) professor of “Radio Genres” at UDC and author of the podcast “En la Redaccion”, also claims: that it’s possible that traditional radio is not useful for younger generations, but podcasting could act as labs to innovate products which could be tested. This generation wants to be informed, wants to disconnect, and learn new things.

In this regard, Lain, programme director for RNE, claims: the radio must give much more than a playlist perhaps, persuade the user with a friendly voice.

Equally, Peinado (2021), claims: that sports contents may have the key to attract a younger generation, many students want to be sports journalist **(SI)**.

Summing up, the younger generation is an audience the traditional radio has not been able to seduce even though its future depends on doing just that. Perhaps taking note: on the current BBC strategies could give clues to persuade this audience: we have to talk like them, dress like them and feel the same life concerns. The key for the future is flexibility and attending the demands of this younger audience. All experts believe that making contents with quality for this demanding younger audience can give results in a way of an engage audience. It is possible that radio formats share some similarities with television format, as it’s broadcast has its own content and content from others. The Podcast audiences forum has their own environment by making innovative products designs. However, radio as music content, subscribers must regain their place that they used to have in the last decade; sports content and music are attachments for the younger generation.

6. Tecnology, radio, social media and generation Z

Orrantia(2019)claims a change has occurred from analog and broadcast to digital, narrowcast and multi-device, where smart devices interact through audio.

PRISA group has collected all podcasts in the same platform now called PRISA AUDIO. Other radio stations are taking note of PODIUM Podcasts. The first audio group in Spain lead by Maria Jesus Espinosa de los Monteros.

Radio has been making progress, but it certainly demands more:

Besides storage and podcast playing, the increase of smartphones in our lifes has given the proper impel for mobile radio development and made possible the consumption of personalized contents on spare time (...) Smart speakers or devices with virtual assistants increase the chances of audio listening (Pineiro-Ortega, Terol and Vila, 2019 p. 113).

Loewenthal, (2019) claims that the combination of podcast and smart speakers enhances voice interaction, as well as business opportunities for the Media mass that include AEO strategies using voice search.

Lain, (2021) believes that the challenge is to maintain the success of the radio content, making contents with quality that will make the difference.

Cabrera, (2021) claims that radio stations must create a solid company which identifies and encourages branding. Secondly, using the contents will help to create community, a direct relationship with companies to record the metrics "... measuring data is not necessarily improving but it cannot be improve, what is not measured" (Herrera, Amoedo and Domingo, 2019 p.238). Thirdly, it is crucial for the content to be outstanding, specialized for a niche, and have capacity to control profiles and popularity. Lastly, the radios webpage must have visibility on the web browsers index.

Ortiz-Sobrinó states: that radios stations will become the platforms for contents, the content is going to choose the audience (SI). Other experts believe that small audio producers will have an important role to play for this change. On the other hand, other experts believe the opposite:

Auto production linked to people or non-professionall groups seems not to have the proper impel to make the change for itself, therefore; only those that economically dominate the sector will precipitate or slowdown the implementation of audio as an alternative to traditional broadcast (Marti, Martínez-Costa and Escobedo p. 274)

Therefore it is crucial to make the connection with local affairs using the brand, on one hand music radio for the younger generation, on the other hand a radio for other audiences (Herrera, Amoedo and Domingo, 2019).

Summing up, a change has occurred from analog and broadcast to digital, narrowcast and multi-device, where smart devices interact through audio. Even through radio keeps the same business model, technological innovations have moved its structures, but still lack changes. Innovation is the key to success, new contents with new narratives for new channels of distribution. The advances of artificial intelligence which will undoubtedly have an impact on this field. Certainly, the changing in technological landscape is forcing the radio to reinvent itself. Finally, radio has professionals who understand the audio business better than anybody. The industry should use these assets to experiment with new business models. It needs to innovate without neglecting the quality of its content, while also taking part in technological advances. As always, success lies in balance.

7. Educational podcast and university radios

Many university professors are carrying out teaching innovation projects that are at the center of the use of podcast and the development of educational audio

platforms as educational tools for teaching and learning. Platforms and contents that could be shared between universities with similar projects. Undoubtedly an innovation for audio that will give results in the up-and-coming years, with the creation of new professional profiles for the radio industry.

Likewise, Ortiz Sobrino claims: that the success of educational podcast will come with new university politics that allow presence and online teaching. Audio or trasmedia content that will obligate universities to adopt new models. **(SI)**

Similarly, Pedrero, has been in favor of Edu-casting and believes that it is going to be a breakthrough for the sector that audio takes academic relevance. **(SI)** Gallego, (2021) claims: that university radios need impel from the rector perhaps to make powerful podcast platforms to promote competitions. **(SI)**. Likewise, the experts claim: that functions that perform these radio stations must be rearrange. Sella, (2021) states that these stations should be Media-labs, a place for experimentation directed by professionals of the sector and a place for observing the current landscape of podcasting to help set the correct approach. Making the local radio stations places for students to learn about the professional career in the sector. **(SI)**. Zumeta believes that radio professor' methods are obsolete, using the same teaching tools for the last 30 years. **(SI)**.

Professor Peinando sets the example of Inforadio, university radio where 200 people work fluently, the perfect place for students to learn all about radio. A radio that streams on twitch, Instagram, etc... but not on traditional broadcast.

Lopez-Vidales: believes that university radios should lead the innovation.

Summing up, educational and collaborative podcasts are an excellent learning tool, and it's the key to success for educational innovation projects. Likewise, universities radios could establish synergies as global platforms for experimentation. It is a fact that university radio has to reset; it should consider including them in media-labs to experiment creation and distribution of contents, where the younger generations and future professionals play an important role.

8. Conclusion

After merging the results and putting them under scrutiny, the first hypothesis.

- H1 can be substantiated, as the majority of experts interviewed believe that podcast has great potential as an educational tool, which could be useful in the learning processes.
- H2 it is accepted, as it can be said that podcast business is at a starting point where it still has to fully integrate in the business model. Moreover, experts interviewed believe that podcast will search the audience, mea-

ning, when accepting web cookies, we also accept big data and artificial intelligence to offer content. Therefore, hypothesis.

- H3 Accepted: Regarding the fourth hypothesis.
- H4 Corroborated: as all experts believe that the key to success is the content. Conversely, the fifth hypothesis
- H5 Rejected: Although the idea of an unify radio industry to face global platforms claims to be an interesting idea, the strong competition between the radio stations and the obsolete structures of the medium makes less probable to happen.
Regarding the sixth hypothesis
- H6 Accepted: as all expert believe that smartphones is much more than younger generations' radio players. Radio industry has not put all the attention in creating spaces for younger generations.
For last, the seventh hypothesis
- H7 Accepted: as podcasting sets new challenges for the radio industry regarding production, creation, and programming.

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Anexo 1

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