


RESEARCH

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**EVALUATION OF NEWS PODCASTS: AN APPROACH TO
BROADCASTERS OF PUEBLA CITY**

**EVALUACIÓN DE LOS PODCASTS DE NOTICIAS: UN
ACERCAMIENTO A EMISORAS DE LA CIUDAD DE PUEBLA**

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ABSTRACT

The *podcast* is one of the diverse collaborative tools that are implemented in Digital Journalism, being an easily distributed format that can provide a dynamic and creative space for the social communication professional. This piece of research aims to evaluate the *podcasts* that are published on news sites in the city of Puebla, Mexico. The variables that were considered were: function, production and dissemination of the *podcast*. Research was qualitative, descriptive, cross-sectional and non-experimental. The information was collected from an observation guide. The categories used for the evaluation of the recordings were: production, journalistic function and dissemination. The results showed that *podcasts* are, mostly, full or partial recordings of live programs. Their function is primarily informative and is not applied as a channel for investigative journalism. In addition, it was identified that the stations do not track the leagues and the interaction that *podcasts* themselves generate.

KEY WORDS: podcast – podcasting – digital journalism – news portals – cyberjournalism – production – diffusion.

RESUMEN

El *podcast* es una de las diversas herramientas colaborativas que se implementan en el Periodismo Digital, siendo un formato de fácil distribución y que puede proporcionar

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un espacio dinámico y creativo para el profesional de la comunicación social. Esta investigación pretende evaluar los *podcasts* que se publican en sitios de noticias de la ciudad de Puebla, México. Las variables que se consideraron fueron: función, producción y difusión del *podcast*. La investigación fue de tipo cualitativa, descriptiva, de corte transversal y no experimental. La información se recolectó a partir de una guía de observación. Las categorías utilizadas para la evaluación de las grabaciones fueron: producción, función periodística y difusión. Los resultados arrojaron que los *podcasts* son, en su mayoría, grabaciones íntegras o parciales de los programas en vivo. Su función es primordialmente informativa, y no se aplica como un canal para el periodismo de investigación. Además, se identificó que las emisoras no dan seguimiento a las ligas y a la interacción que los propios *podcasts* generan.

PALABRAS CLAVE: podcast- podcasting- periodismo digital- portales de noticias - ciberperiodismo – producción – difusión.

AVALIAÇÃO DOS PODCASTS DE NOTÍCIAS: UMA APROXIMAÇÃO À EMISSORAS DA CIDADE DE PUEBLA

RESUME

O *podcast* é uma das diversas ferramentas colaborativas que se implementam no Jornalismo Digital, sendo um formato de fácil distribuição e que pode proporcionar um espaço dinâmico e criativo para o profissional da comunicação social. Esta investigação pretende avaliar os *podcasts* que se publicam em lugares de notícias da cidade de Puebla, México. As variáveis que se consideraram foram: função, produção e difusão do *podcast*. A investigação quantitativa, descritiva, de corte transversal e não experimental. A informação se correlatou a partir de uma guia de observação. As categorias utilizadas para a avaliação das gravações foram: produção, função jornalística e difusão. Os resultados mostraram que os *podcasts* são, em sua maioria, gravações íntegras ou parciais dos programas ao vivo. Sua função é primordialmente informativa, e não se aplica como um canal para o jornalismo de investigação. Ademais, se identificou que as emisoras não dão seguimento às ligas e à interação que os próprios *podcasts* geram.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: podcasts – podcasting – jornalismo digital – portais de notícias – ciberjornalismo – produção – difusão.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the takeoff of ICTs, many companies of different businesses decide to explore the Internet with a high level of uncertainty, since they do not know exactly what is happening in the virtual space. However, they have the certainty that, in the face of changes, it is better to be there and learn this new environment than to allow someone to occupy their market niche.

Undoubtedly, companies such as radio stations have gone through this same dilemma. The internet is a new channel that is becoming stronger as a space for millions of consumers / users. This space, as a result of the emergence of Web 2.0, has been becoming more complex. Thus, every day it increases its offer with respect to a large number of very useful formats to present information of all kinds.

In the words of Díaz Noci and Meso (1999: 21, cited in Jarque-Muñoz & Almiron-Roig, 2008), journalism moves to multimedia format because of: 1) its inability to increase or even maintain the readership; 2) the increase in information and services that are not compatible with the printed newspaper; 3) the diversification of business activity in the media; 4) the scarcity of inputs such as paper, in contrast to the increase in environmental impact that this medium produces; and 5) technical advances, such as the constant development of computers.

For more than a decade, authors like Díaz Noci & Salaverría (2003), or Izquierdo-Labela (2012) agree that journalism is in a digital stage, in which the news are not only shown as written texts. The information lines are now accompanied by digital content designed to maximize interactivity and hypertextuality.

This is how this document focuses on one of the tools that have been applied as an alternative way of presenting information. To do this, our research presents a brief evaluation of the *podcasts* that some stations have published. Likewise, the areas of opportunity that these.

1.1. Theoretical considerations

1.1.1. The *podcast* and the news portals

To all the immense universe of the current technological innovation, an important tool of wide communicative power is added: *the podcast*. What is the *podcast*? A digital archive of exclusively auditory content, which is generated by a voice record with the option of other auditory elements -environmental noise, music, effects. For a file of this type to be considered merely a *podcast*, it is essential that it be accessible to all users with an Internet connection: in a *blog*, social network, website, news portal, and so on.

In short, a *podcast* is an audio file -or a closely related set of them-, which are generated with different purposes, format, theme, style, and that can be "uploaded" to the Network for permanent protection and listening. In this sense, *podcasting* is

the way in which these types of files are distributed to the entire Web - making use of syndication - so that it is available in all types of interfaces (Laaser, Jaskilioff, Rodríguez and Lía, 2010).

The *podcast* is a tool that has been enhanced by the interaction and accessibility provided by the Internet; in large part thanks to the emergence of Web 2.0. It has become increasingly used, since almost any user with a simple sound recording device and a digital recording and editing application can create their own *podcast* (Solano and Sánchez, 2010).

The *podcast*, as a tool for storing and disseminating information, has certain advantages over other formats of the digital medium. Among them, we can mention its short duration -which facilitates its complete listening-; its low consumption of energy and data -for the devices on which it is listened-; the user is not required to permanently see the screen of his device; the ability to "follow" or subscribe to specific channels; relatively low investment in resources and time in its preparation; good opportunity for marketing, because you cannot skip ads, in addition to serving to segment publics; it involves a sense of personalization; as it is not conventional radio, it is imbued with an aura of innovation (Bullido, 2015).

1.1.2. The informative function of the news *podcast*

The news today is still the key piece and the *raison d'être* of the media. However, the core point for editors is to learn to discern which information, from all that are generated and flow daily, is really news. In addition, and as in the past, it is important to prevent people or companies from using the news genre as a pernicious way to self-promote: now through the potential enormous diffusion achievable thanks to the tools to which one has access in the Digital Age.

In the cybermedia, the news has reached greater prominence than in the printed media. On the one hand, it has been possible to truly disseminate "last minute" information. On the other hand, with cyberjournalism, the environment has been filled with interpretative dyes, since the cybernaut, based on attractive and simple headlines, is attracted by the content and the implications of each piece of news (Salaverría, 2005). This way, the facilitating hypertext conditions are given so that each user can abound in the topic of interest.

On the other hand, Izquierdo-Labela (2012) affirms that the journalistic genres that will have more weight in the digital format will be the interview and the report, since the multimedia allows us to set out different voices, sounds, texts and images, which, in the end, are attractive to the audience. This author also emphasizes the emergence of the post or the tweet as new genres that will prevail for a long time in the network.

As mentioned before, with the emergence of Web 2.0 tools, in many communicative areas it is possible to obtain the results desired by the various organizations, companies and institutions that are inserted into the digital world.

Which can have objectives as diverse as transmit knowledge, obtain information and relevant content from virtually any region of the world, create networks of specialists and interested in common topics, produce collaboratively; among others (Laaser, Jaskilioff, Rodríguez and Lía, 2010).

On the other hand, and in the news field, Briggs (2007) assures that journalism professionals often carry out reports or interviews that, in the printed version, fail to convey the emotion that the interviewee expressed at the time of the information-obtaining process. And it is precisely because of the foregoing that he asserts that a large part of the work of a digital journalistic media would benefit if they have an adjoining *podcast* - which could be accessed with a hyperlink, for example.

1.1.3. The production of the *podcast*

From the past decade - and even before -, various newspapers have been producing podcasts. In the United States of America, for example, we have *The Naples Daily News*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The San Francisco Chronicle* (Briggs, 2007). In the Mexican Republic, Grupo Televisa stands out, a company that has generated recordings continuously for its morning news. These *podcasts* address the headlines of the day, news of all genres, and even advertising.

It must be said that, in many digital media, most *podcasts* are born as *webcasts*: radio broadcasts in real time. Later, these recordings are stored and indexed s at specific sites and, this way, they properly become *podcasts* (Solís, 2010).

It has been said above that the Podcast is a great hypermedia tool today. One of its great attributes giving it that distinction is the relative ease in its elaboration. However, there is a necessary pause at this point: for a *podcast* to be considered professional, it is necessary to comply with certain technical, production and content guidelines. You need to have a well thought out script that guides the product objectives. Afterwards, it is necessary to be careful with the technical aspects - clear and quality recording, environmental noise, sounding, music, effects, diction of the speaker or speakers, among others- . Lastly, and more importantly, what is expressed must be interesting, easy to understand and it must motivate the target audience to listen (Laaser, Jaskilioff, Rodríguez and Lía, 2010).

Another aspect in which traditional radio broadcasts resemble the *podcast* is that the latter can likewise have a large number of formats, styles and contents: local, national and international information; of discussion, cultural, of diffusion, of interview, an editorial, etcetera. In short, it is a tool that makes it possible to fully use the creator's creativity (Quintanal, 2012), since you can or cannot use effects, music, only voice, ambient sound, or all the combinations that you want, in the order and frequency that you want. Of course, always for the sake of achieving the objectives set in advance.

A relevant reminder regarding the production of *podcasts* is that it is not very profitable to be too serious or formal. That is, the transcendent and rigorous contents should not be confused with a boring sermon (Solís, 2011). It is also advisable to use two or more voices in the file: insert male and female pitches, preferably (Marcelo and Martín, 2008).

In this regard, it must be said that a recurrent error in conventional radio, which is transferred to the production of *podcasts* - with the aggravating circumstance that, in listening to them, it becomes even more evident - is that of wanting the interviewer to be more protagonist than the interviewed. Something that will undoubtedly demerit the final product. On the other hand, it is necessary to avoid putting on a too much affected voice: a natural intonation will be more pleasant and better appreciated by the listener. Always keeping in mind that changes of intonation should be made, in order not to have a too monotonous rhythm and pitch.

Finally, the *podcast* should be positively distinctive: touch on original themes, open the audio with an identification -both of the broadcast and of the participants-, intersperse spaces with music, and include effects, or ambient sound (McComas, 2005).

1.1.4. How a *podcast* is broadcast

Web 2.0 implies a challenge for any organization that broadcasts news. The success of the digital press will depend on the capacity of the agencies to create sites that allow the interaction of users with the contents, and among the users themselves. It is also expected that social communicators give appropriate use to Web 2.0 tools to bring the news to potential users (Rodríguez-Martínez and Pedraza-Jiménez, 2009). Hence the importance of disseminating information content through virtual spaces such as social networks.

For the dissemination of information, the networks take advantage of, manage and optimize the use of digital space and connectivity among users. This way, there is greater performance in connections and transfers; resources generated by a service or application are shared (Caldevilla, Del Valle, & Del Valle, 2012). Frequently, they are used to share files of any kind, such as audios, and in this specific case, *podcasts*.

According to Nicolás (2015) the Spanish-speaking community is one of the most significant in the world in terms of *podcast* consumption. The countries that listen to and / or download this type of resources more often are: Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Chile. Likewise, he points out that, since the *podcast* is a non-immediate means of consumption, its real impact can be extended up to four weeks. However, an audio that reaches more than 180 downloads or reproductions is considered well placed; and when it reaches 1200, it is above average. Due to these circumstances, more and more professionals prefer to use these tools for the diffusion of information of a diverse nature to his followers, as it is a very efficient form to communicate, at a low cost, messages to one's target audience. These

results allow us to be optimistic about the potential of dissemination of the contents expressed through a *podcast*, in terms of the desired impact.

Another aspect that denotes the potential of this digital tool is the fact that finding a specific *podcast* -or a desired topic- does not pose any major difficulty, since there are several specialized search engines -in a large number of languages- for this type of files, divided into specific categories. In addition, many of the *podcasts* have the possibility of being downloaded for free (Ramos and Caurcel, 2011).

On the other hand, published audio files can be associated with Real Simple Syndication (RSS) or *web* aggregator. This way, the user is subscribed to a specific web page -periodical, *blog*, *wiki*, among others- who will receive a notification every time something new is published or the information is updated (Johnson and Grayden, 2006).

So as to obtain an optimum level of response and audience, it is convenient to establish a specific period of *podcast* publication -daily, weekly, biweekly-; and respect the established periodicity, in order that the user have the security of finding new content every time he waits for it (Tenorio, 2008).

Finally, we must say that the *podcast* is really useful in the dissemination of talks, lectures and interviews of professionals and experts, as a result of its great facility to protect itself on any website, as well as to be shared from it (Laaser, Jaskilioff, Rodríguez and Lía, 2010).

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives that were raised were:

Overall objective:

Evaluate the news *podcasts* that are published on digital platforms of radio stations in Puebla City

Specific objectives:

- a. Identify the technical elements that are implemented in *podcast* production.
- b. Delimit the content (function) aspects that are included in the published *podcasts*.
- c. Establish dissemination mechanisms that are used to make recordings known.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted with a qualitative approach, since this document was built from the experiences reported by the different *podcasts* that were considered in the sample (Sáenz-López & Rodríguez-Burgos, 2014). In addition, it is of exploratory type given that it is a little addressed topic. No manipulation of variables was performed, so it is a non-experimental piece of research. Since the information was collected in a single moment, it is considered a cross-sectional cohort, since the

podcasts that were included are the recordings that have been published until the second semester of 2017 (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado & Baptista, 2014).

For data collection, direct observation was used. This technique was implemented because it represents an everyday fact that is part of the perception of events on a day-to-day basis (Díaz, 2011). In addition, the primary source for data collection was used, in this case, the published recordings (Centeno-Maldonado & de la Garza - Montemayor, 2014).

Additionally, the construction of the observation guide was carried out based on the analysis of several documents that were collected through databases of scientific articles -Scielo, Dialnet, Redalyc, DOAJ-. The search was carried out considering the words: Podcast, Podcasting, Digital Journalism and Cyberjournalism as key terms. This search allowed us to delimit the instrument that sustains this piece of research. In addition, the following categories were implemented for the evaluation of the recordings: production, journalistic function and dissemination.

The sample was integrated by three private and one public radio stations, all located in Puebla City, Mexico. These organizations were considered because they affirm in their electronic sites and in their publicity to have *podcasts* that broadcast the news that are transmitted in their programs. It should be noted that, although two other private radio stations reported having *podcasts*, they were not included since they did not have their links enabled for their consultation. The results are presented in the following sections.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis of podcast production

As mentioned above, the production of a *podcast* considers key aspects for the recording to be attractive and have a good impact. For this observed group, it is appreciated that *podcasts* tend to be long, with an average duration of 140 minutes. Only one of the radio stations broadcasts *podcasts* lasting up to 5 minutes. On the other hand, the stations do not record the number of recordings they have of their news program: only one of them reported having accumulated 1,313 recordings until December 2017.

As for the quality of the sound, the state station and Radio Station 1 had a high level, while the two remaining stations had an average quality: there is a lot of echo and noise in the latter throughout the broadcast. In addition, the recording is not included completely or part of the recording of the following program is integrated. These elements can lead to the recipient not being interested in the program or partially listening to it, as indicated by McComas (2005).

Evaluating the characteristics of recordings, all stations comply with delimiting their target audience, having a hallmark and a correct balance between the voiceover and the other sounds that appear on the *podcast*. In terms of this category, the

station that generates a podcast with the best production is the state station. The characteristic that is not fulfilled for most of the observed units is the presentation of the information. This is because the *podcasts* that are stored are simple recordings of the live broadcast, as stipulated by Solís, (2010). Therefore, a summary of the broadcast is not made, so that the receiver should be interested in listening to the entire broadcast. Table 1 synthesizes the follow-up that was done about the production of the *podcasts*.

Table 1. *Production of a podcast.*

Observed characteristics	Private broadcaster			Public broadcaster
	Radio broadcaster 1	Radio broadcaster 2	Radio broadcaster 3	
It has a target audience -audience as a collective and as an individual-.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The production date of the podcast is identified .	Yes	Do not	Do not	Yes
It raises the information in a creative way, remembering that it is another way to take the information to the public.	Yes	Do not	Do not	Do not
There is a format to promote the program or broadcast, and / or the radio station.	Yes	Yes	Do not	Yes
Insert auditory elements that emphasize the key information - they may be recordings of interviewees, of the events that are being narrated, among others-.	Do not	Yes	Yes	Yes
It has a distinctive seal congruent with the station, the journalist and / or the reporter.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Advertising is inserted in the podcast.	Do not	Yes	Yes	Yes
It includes short and concrete ideas.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
There are "natural sounds" or background music that help to hook the audience.	Yes	Do not	Do not	Yes
There is a correct balance between music and effects, and voice over.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integrate background music to help foster identity with both the station and the news portal.	Do not	Do not	Yes	Yes

Source: Own elaboration with data of the sample.

4.2. The journalistic function of the *podcast*

This category basically reports the function that the *podcast* performs. All the analyzed stations broadcast *podcasts* that introduce the audience to the next broadcast, summarize the news and have an informative focus. In this sense, it is perceived that the postulate by Laaser, Jaskilioff, Rodríguez and Lía (2010) is applied by these content producers. Radio station 1 does not delve into any specific issue as compared to the other three stations that were analyzed. Outstanding in this

category is the fact that the descriptive and opinion approach are not taken up again. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Table 2. *Podcast function.*

Observed characteristics	Private broadcaster			Public broadcaster
	Radio broadcaster 1	Radio broadcaster 2	Radio broadcaster 3	
Introduce the audience for the next broadcast.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sum up the current news.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Go deeper into a specific topic.	Do not	Yes	Yes	Yes
It has an informative focus.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
It has a descriptive focus.	Do not	Do not	Do not	Do not
It has an opinion approach.	Do not	Do not	Do not	Do not

Source: Own elaboration with data of the sample.

Complementary to the above, the journalistic genres that are included in the recordings were identified on a daily basis -check Table 3-. The most used genre is the informative note, followed by the commentary and the report. The last one is precisely one of those indicated as preferred to be positioned within the *podcast* (Izquierdo-Labela, 2012; Briggs, 2007).

Table 3. *Genres contained in podcasts.*

Genders	Private broadcaster			Public broadcaster
	Radio broadcaster 1	Radio broadcaster 2	Radio broadcaster 3	
Reportage				
Chronicle				
Interview				
Informative note				
Article				
Editorial				
Column				
Commentary				

Source: Own elaboration with data of the sample.

4.3. Broadcast of the *podcast*

This category is very significant, because it is the starting point to adequately inform the products that are generated. For this category, it is striking that the only feature shared by all reviewed tracks is "They occupy other Web sites related to the company to promote the *podcast*". On the other hand, coincidences are detected in elements that do not cover the observation units. Thus, none of the stations uses flashy titles or a summary. Also, there is no interaction in the forums that accompany *podcasts* or in the use of RSS as recommended by certain authors (Johnson and Grayden, 2006). The *podcast* published by Radio Station 1 is the one that has better diffusion in accordance with the parameters set out in this piece of research - for greater precision, check Table 4-

Table 4. *Reported characteristics of the podcast broadcast.*

Observed characteristics	Private broadcaster			Public broadcaster
	Radio broadcaster 1	Radio broadcaster 2	Radio broadcaster 3	
The leagues (links) of the podcast are available.	Yes	Yes	Do not	Yes
Tags are added for the correct positioning of the podcast.	Yes	Do not	Do not	Do not
The podcast is described briefly.	Do not	Yes	Do not	Do not
A striking title and a summary to attract the audience is appreciated.	Do not	Do not	Do not	Do not
They add an allusive image to the content that will be heard.	Do not	Do not	Do not	Yes
They publish the link to the podcast and / or the news portal on social networks.	Yes	Yes	Do not	Do not
They promote the podcast during the broadcast, or within the programming.	Yes	Do not	Do not	Do not
They establish a discussion forum about the podcast.	Yes	Do not	Do not	Yes
There is interaction in the discussion forums about the podcast.	Do not	Do not	Do not	Do not
Insert RSS code for the audience to follow up.	Do not	Do not	Do not	Do not
They occupy other Web sites related to the company to promote the podcast.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
There is the possibility of consulting previous podcasts.	Yes	Do not	Do not	Yes

Source: Own elaboration with data of the sample.

At the same time, the social networks with which the *podcasts* are linked were reviewed. Table 5 highlights the fact that Facebook is the virtual space that is used more. The second place is occupied by Twitter. On the other hand, the *podcast* of Radio Station 1 is linked to four social networks, including Pinterest, an image-specialized site. Which is particularly striking.

Table 5. Social networks used to broadcast podcasts.

Social network	Private broadcaster			Public broadcaster
	Radio broadcaster 1	Radio broadcaster 2	Radio broadcaster 3	
Twitter				
Facebook				
Pinterest				
Google +				

Source: Own elaboration with data of the mueras.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the review we conducted, it is inferred that the *podcast* is a highly versatile digital tool (Quintanal, 2012), which has gradually positioned itself as a resource that radio stations increasingly consider important to publish.

As for the production of the *podcast*, it has been commonly done as little more than a simple copy of the news broadcasts of traditional radio. However, although such a long-duration recording is not advisable, it is consulted by its audience in a regular and promising way. In addition, by integrating all contents -including advertising- an effective mechanism is generated to place products and services.

It is observed that the main function of the *podcast* - at least in the case of the radio stations that were analyzed in the study - is an eminent informative approach, and it includes a few genres (Salaverría, 2005). So it is important that producers evaluate the possibility of inserting other approaches that motivate interaction with users, by generating controversy -such as the research article, the editorial, or the opinion article-, but at the same time invite reflection and public criticism. This would help to fulfill the functions of journalism within today's media-influenced society.

Additionally, the dissemination of the *podcast* must be carried out in a more strategic manner. On the one hand, lack of use of the RSS code is noted, which notifies the user about the new broadcasts and updates that have been inserted in the digital space of a particular website of interest. Providing relevant updates to consumers facilitates their loyalty to the website, the blog, the broadcast, or the *podcast* itself (Johnson and Grayden, 2006).

At the same time, it is essential that the content of the *podcast* be briefly described (Laaser, Jaskilioff, Rodríguez and Lía, 2010), as well as identify it by means of an image related to the theme, in order to achieve a greater audience. On the

other hand, the wide spectrum of social networks existing in cyberspace must be used to place *podcasts*. Although the social network Facebook is a very useful support, there are other options that would allow radio stations to reach a greater number of cybersquatters.

Finally, it must be said that, although the progress made by the *podcast* in recent years is notorious, it is striking that the large radio stations of Puebla City (Mexico) have not systematically adopted this tool as part of the resources that they offer to their audience. It is important that the potential of this instrument be valued in order to achieve a greater market share, especially in an era in which the digital format is breaking into the spaces that had been monopolized by the traditional media.

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