

THE PODCAST AS A FORM FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RADIO PRODUCT

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Abstract

The radio product, over time, has experienced several stages of evolution, all of them related to the degree of technology in the field and the requirements of the media market. If originally the radio message producers were concerned about the transmission of messages at a distance, subsequently the basic objective was focused on the radio's ability to conserve and transmit the product over time too. Thus, certain features of the radio message such as ephemerality and the impossibility of hearing a particular type of radio product have become history. Thanks to audio podcasts, today's radio products are more accessible and varied. The access to favourite programs in the free time of the media consumer, not in broadcast time according to the program grid, determines a high degree of loyalty towards the public, especially today when the people signal out a continuous shortage of time.

Keywords: *podcast, radio product, information technologies, digital audio file, radio program, digital format, online radio, multimedia elements, hypermedia, broadcast, radio streaming, listening audience, the broadcast.*

The modern society is characterized by a continuous and accelerated development of information technologies, which implicitly contributes to the emergence of new ways of creating and disseminating the radio message which is "an asset produced by a group of specialists and of technological endowments" (COMAN, 2016). That is why, due to the evolution of these two components, of the human factor and of the technological one, a continuous modernization of the radio product takes place, as well as its forms, techniques and methods of distribution. A newer form of spreading the radio message is the podcast.

Like most of the foreign words that entered the Romanian language, the term "podcast" is interpreted differently, depending on the user's area activity, that is, it has a plurality of meanings. Those who work in the video field use the term "podcast" as a synonym for "vlog," but most often it can be met with reference to an audio sequence,

as a matter of fact the dictionaries also register this term as "a stored radio program in a digital format that can be downloaded from the internet for being listened to on a computer or on an MP3 player" (DICTIONARY CAMBRIDGE, n.d.).

In other sources, there also appears the materialization for the types of programs: "an accessible (musical or debate) program, in digital format, to be downloaded from the internet" (MERRIAM-WEBSTER, n.d.) which can be listened to by the consumer at any time and repeatedly, if he desires.

The definition given by the Oxford Dictionaries fully covers the meaning of the term "podcast," although it does not explicitly specify "radio program"; instead, this definition announces the fact that podcasts are in series: "a digital audio file accessible to be downloaded from the Internet, -on a computer or a mobile device, usually in series, which are automatically received by subscribers" (UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, n.d.).

At the same time, the term "podcasting", which represents a method of distributing multimedia files on the Internet, has also come into modern language. A podcast author is called podcaster. Podcasting sites can provide files for downloading and listening off-line or for direct online playback. The basic method, however, is that one of downloading through a content reader.

The term "podcast" appeared at the beginning of the 21st century and was formed from "iPod", Apple Computer portable music lecturer and "casting," which means transmission. At the same time, the podcast did not replace the broadcast, but coexists within the growing media market conditions.

In the context of the new technical and technological realities, it was natural that radio stations from the West and the US to be the first

to reorient their radio products towards the Internet. The process has grown in the developed countries. Less than a year after podcasting emergence, public stations such as BBC, CBC Radio One, NPR, and Public Radio International have placed many of their shows on the iTunes platform. At the same time, other major local stations such as WNYC in New York City and WHYY-FM - radio from Philadelphia, KCRW in Los Angeles have gradually moved their programs to sites and then on iTunes too.

«The podcast is not a very popular term» (BUHNICI, 2014) in Romania, recognizes the journalist George Buhnici in the "I Like IT" column on Pro TV station. The term came into the use of Romanian consumers due to the musical component, the so-called mixes. Today, free and legally recorded radio shows can be found online and posted on the internet. As the formats of specialized radio stations are almost completely missing, on the iTunes there can be found several categories of podcasts: technology, science, religion, self-development, art, comedy, and so on. The variety of accessible podcasts on the Internet has created an unlimited universe of information, advice and fun, where the listeners can find the mixes of some favorite artists, but they can also listen to podcasts where scientists talk about new discoveries.

In the Republic of Moldova, as opposed to other countries, the new technologies appeared later and entered with more difficulty in the editorial offices of radio stations. However, with the advent of the Internet in the consumer homes, the sources of information have also changed for many citizens.

Thus, "the data provided by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for 2005 show that 72% of the total number of households were equipped with radio equipment, which represents about 3/4 of the Moldovan households (GOTIȘAN et al., 2012). The surveys made during that period indicate a tendency to diminish the influence of radio in informing citizens. Therefore, "if in 2005, 44% said that the radio was the first source to get information from, then in 2010 (May) only 36% said that this media information was a priority for them" (INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY, 2010; INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY, 2005). The BOP data of 2018 (May) show, first of all, that only 7% of the population get information from the radio.

On the other hand, in recent years, a pronounced trend is the increase in the number of computers, a fact which has also favored the increase of the number of Internet users. Thus, household endowment with computers increased approximately 3 times since 2005 until 2010. If in 2005 their percentage was 6 computers per 100 households, at the end of 2009, their number was about 20 computers per 100 households. The technological process of the Moldovan society is increasing in the years to come. In this respect, in October 2013, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approves the National Strategy for the Development of the Information Society "Digital Moldova 2020".

A similar situation is evident in most developed or developing countries, people being attracted by new technologies give up the old information and entertainment traditions.

According to the literature in question, the online environment has certain peculiarities. For example, professor John Pavlik identifies five features to this one: multiple ways of communication, hypermedia, increased public implication, dynamic content, personalization (PAVLIK, 2001).

The most relevant features of the online radio, taken over from the traditional radio or acquired together with the implementation of the new production and broadcasting parameters are:

- *Its immediate character.* The radio has retained its potential to inform in real time.
- *Possibilities of putting on the Web page.* The time factor disappears, limiting the traditional radio broadcasting journalism.
- *The use of multimedia elements.* An online radio station is not limited only to audio, the Internet reception can be completed with pictures or graphics, texts, web chat cameras and other links found on the station's site.
- *The production of new broadcast formats.* Together with the widening of broadcast range, or the changing of the broadcast channel, special programs appeared for the target audience. For example, in the grids of the programs there have appeared shows for the diaspora listeners.
- *Archiving.* Unlike the traditional radio, the online environment allows storing information and the public access to this information at any time from anywhere in the world.

- *Free construction and reception of content.* Being informed from a traditional radio station, the news consumers have to receive the content as it was broadcasted or to change the station. The on-line radio allows the receiver to select the programs, the materials that interest him.
- *Interactivity.* Thanks to the new technologies, on the social media pages of the online stations, consumers “have the option of reacting immediately to the journalistic material, expressing their agreement or disagreement, suggesting ideas, subjects etc” (WARD, 2002).

Therefore, we can say that the online radio, also known as: internetradio, webradio radio, netradio, streaming radio or e-radio, represents a more advanced form than the traditional one. Thanks to the use of new technologies, it is also a strong competitor of the traditional radio that comes to the media market with a specific radio product.

Due to the evolution of technical factors, the radio product has experienced a perpetual transformation from the gender perspective too, which has changed and generated variations and even new species. “The new information technologies, which asserted themselves at the end of the last century, substantially altered the methods of producing and transmitting information” (STEPANOV, 2015), so that the producers of these media products had to acquire new skills both to manipulate the technical equipment with which the radio materials are produced and to draft them on absolutely new principles.

Today, in the era of the Internet and digital technologies, certain information media such as vinyl records, audio tapes and CDs have become history. The connection to the global network also makes it possible to transfer information immediately to any corner of the world. At the same time, the Internet is the place where various audio editing software can be downloaded and where some instructive video tutorials can be found on how to use these editing programs. Therefore, the new technical conditions are those that have propelled the imagination of the audio material maker into new ideas.

Easy access to new technologies creates the impression that anyone can make a radio material without much effort and without thorough knowledge in this area. However, a good radio journalist builds up over time by accumulating an increase in theoretical knowledge and practical skills, that is, by acquiring professional skills that would enable him to fulfill his job duties.

The radio message remains a mirage, “a distance magnet”, generating, by participating in certain programs, the idea that it is not difficult to become a radio producer and presenter. Practice, however, demonstrates that “the radio is a media space that requires knowledge of programelaboration techniques, of the programmimg strategies and policies, of the target audience profile, and of the immediate and distance effects of these productions” (RUSU-PĂȘĂRIN, 2012).

With the evolution of the radio, new features and types of radio products have emerged and others have disappeared. Cameramen have joined the teams of the radio stations and the number of reporters has dropped considerably, so some radio stations have given up radio journals and others broadcast news and programs taken over from news agencies, from the social networks and other media institutions. Under the conditions created as such, radio station managers should be aware that technology development does not mean diminishing the role of the radio journalist. Only the strengthening and the improvement the editorial staff can provide a quality radio product.

An experienced journalist can impress both through his editorial correctness and his technical expertise to illustrate an audio information. The ability of a reporter to choose a subject may be shadowed if his or her material were badly recorded or rudimentary edition. The news editor of a radio station could not edit a sound in a studio if he did not know at least a software program. Microphone, headphones, dictaphone, studio, desk, software - all these notions of recording and editing must be well known by a radio journalist. With a minimal technical endowment, but with a well-developed sense of novelty and a little radio text-writing talent, the journalist, from anywhere, can produce as successful materials as those edited in a radio station. From here, we also unravel the flexible nature of the radio journalist profession. Much more dependent on the production technique are the television journalists and less operative in the dissemination of information are the written media journalists.

In spite of all the transformations that the radio has sustained throughout its existence, it has retained its graceful identity, above all, the sound that has remained intact and constant. Beyond the words, it is the sound that gives the radio journalist the opportunity to play back the emotion of a subject. The atmosphere from an event is best transmitted with the help of ambient sounds. The sound description of a landscape

using words and sounds makes sense with a good software editing. And if the technical endowment is not the most appropriate, the experience and inventiveness can help the radio journalist in the audio illustration of a subject.

Reorienting the listening audience to the Internet has prompted most radio stations to fortify their online broadcasts variations and to focus on producing new program formats that would meet the information and entertainment needs. This is how the podcast compartment appeared on the web pages of some radio stations.

In the context of the increasingly rapid evolution of new technologies, the modern mobile phones make the radio message more accessible. Due to the fact that the podcasts, along with the radio broadcasts archived on the web page of the radio station, can be heard anytime, anywhere the internet is and whenever the listener wants it, the radio messages are no longer ephemeral.

With the penetration of the new information technologies in the media institutions (press, radio, TV), the conditions for collecting, processing and disseminating information were equalized. What can attract a media consumer to a particular media product is the quality, the novelty, and the balanced approach. Today, a podcast can easily be downloaded to be listened to when the consumer has free time, whether it is about radio broadcasts or separately recorded materials. It is a very effective way of informing the consumer, in a 10-15 minute break, about the themes that interest him.

Because it is an audio method of information or entertainment, it can also be used while the media consumer is driving the car, and whether he is in public transport, walking or doing sports in the gym. The opportunity to do two things or more simultaneously is a new trend that characterizes the modern man. Also, thanks to new podcasting applications that have expanded their linguistic coverage too, the contents are available in more and more languages.

Another advantage of the podcasts is that they have a functional feed. The idea of co-participation to a radio broadcast has brought the listeners closer to one post or another, all the more so now, when the new technical conditions provide

more techniques to engage in the carrying out process.

In order to be looked for, listened and recommended, the podcasts must be: convincing, creative and interesting. The acute lack of time that more and more people are reporting has prompted the radio journalists, especially the online ones, to produce subjects that are as concise as possible, but which fully respond to the information and formation requests of an opinion based on the listened to comments and debates.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the need to create and distribute audio contents in the form of podcasts is plenary justified, since:

- radio programs follow a strict broadcast format and time;
- on the radio station, only one broadcast can be transmitted at a certain hour;
- the budget for creating a classic broadcast is bigger;
- the responses to the broadcast content appear later.

At the same time:

- the length of a podcast varies depending on the concept of the developer;
- the podcasts do not necessarily have a fixed structure;
- the podcast that interests the listener can be selected;
- the podcast can be stopped and resumed at any time.

Thus, as a result of the application of modern information technologies in radio production, the radio stations managed to diversify their products, to identify and use new forms of dissemination, to obtain and manage feedbacks. In recognition to the identity of the podcast and its importance in the process of dissemination of audio messages, the International Podcast Day - September 30, was also set up.

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