Podcasting and Traditional Radio in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract
The convergence of digital technology and audio media has fundamentally altered how Nigerian audiences' access, consume, and interact with broadcast content. Traditional radio, which has served as the dominant mass communication channel in Nigeria for over seven decades, now shares its audience with an expanding podcasting ecosystem shaped by mobile internet diffusion and platform diversification. This study comparatively analyses podcasting and traditional radio in Nigeria across two primary dimensions: audience engagement patterns and content delivery models. Adopting a mixed-methods secondary comparative design, the study draws on peer-reviewed literature, institutional data from the National Broadcasting Commission, Edison Research datasets, and platform-level analytics. The theoretical framework integrates Uses and Gratifications Theory and Media Convergence Theory to explain listener motivation and structural transformation. Findings reveal that podcasting attracts younger, urban, and formally educated audiences who demonstrate deeper per-session engagement, while traditional radio retains mass reach, rural penetration, and civic communication functions that digital audio cannot yet replicate at equivalent scale. Content delivery analysis shows that podcasting enables format flexibility and global asynchronous distribution, whereas radio operates within regulatory, spectral, and scheduling constraints that, paradoxically, also produce communal value. The study concludes that the two media occupy complementary rather than competitive positions within the Nigerian audio ecology and recommends policy frameworks that treat both as strategically distinct channels.

Keywords: *podcasting, traditional radio, content delivery, media convergence, Nigeria*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Radio arrived in Nigeria in 1932 through the Rediffusion service established under British colonial administration, and it has since occupied a structurally central position in the country's

media system (Nwachukwu, 2022). By the 1990s, deregulation had expanded the FM band considerably, and commercial radio stations proliferated across Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and secondary cities. The medium delivered news, music, public health campaigns, and political communication to audiences that television and print could not efficiently reach, particularly in rural zones where literacy rates constrained the press and electricity supply constrained television (Moyo, 2021). That dominance has been gradually, if unevenly, contested.

Podcasting entered the Nigerian media environment later than it did in North America or Western Europe, but its growth since 2017 has been rapid. Platforms such as Audiomack, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts now host hundreds of Nigerian-produced shows spanning politics, entrepreneurship, comedy, and religion (Sullivan, 2023). By 2023, global podcast listenership had exceeded 500 million, with projections estimating over 700 million listeners by 2027 (Statista, 2024). Nigerian audiences account for a growing, if still proportionally modest, share of that figure. And the growth is concentrated in specific demographic pockets, young, educated, smartphone-owning urbanites, which sets up a structural asymmetry that this study examines directly. The relationship between the two media is not simply one of substitution. Bonini and Gandini (2022) described a layered platform ecology in which broadcast radio streams and original podcast content co-exist on the same smart speaker, the same app, and sometimes the same production team. But co-existence does not mean equivalence. The audience relationships, content architectures, and social functions of the two media differ in ways that matter for practitioners, regulators, and scholars. Radio's regulatory accountability, synchronous reach, and community integration serve functions that podcasting's individualised, on-demand model does not automatically replicate (Cridland, 2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the documented expansion of podcasting in Nigeria, comparative empirical data on how the two media serve Nigerian audiences differently, particularly across the dimensions of engagement and content delivery, remain thin. Most existing comparative research originates from the United States, the United Kingdom, or Western Europe, where infrastructure conditions, regulatory regimes, and audience demographics diverge substantially from the Nigerian context (Moyo, 2021; Nwachukwu, 2022). Studies that do examine African audio media tend to treat radio in isolation, without accounting for the growing role of podcasting as a parallel channel. This gap is not merely academic. Media practitioners deciding where to invest production resources, regulators developing digital audio policy, and advertisers allocating spend across channels all require comparative data that reflects Nigerian realities rather than Global North assumptions.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study is guided by two primary objectives. The first objective is to evaluate audience engagement patterns between traditional radio and podcasting in Nigeria. The second objective is to compare the content delivery models and infrastructure supporting both media formats in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

Corresponding to the objectives, the following research questions guide the analysis. First, how do audience engagement patterns differ between traditional radio listeners and podcast

consumers in Nigeria? Second, what are the infrastructural and formatting differences in content delivery between traditional radio and podcasting platforms in Nigeria?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses are formulated to provide empirical structure to the comparative analysis. **H01:** There is no significant difference in audience engagement patterns between traditional radio and podcast platforms in Nigeria. H02: There is no significant difference in the infrastructural content delivery models between traditional radio and podcast platforms in Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to a relatively sparse body of comparative audio media research situated in sub-Saharan African contexts. For media practitioners, it offers a structured analysis of where the two media diverge in audience reach and format capacity, which informs channel selection for communication campaigns. For regulatory bodies, particularly the National Broadcasting Commission, the findings bear on questions of whether digital audio content requires new governance frameworks or can be accommodated within existing broadcast regulation. For scholars of mass communication, the study advances a contextualized application of Uses and Gratifications Theory and Media Convergence Theory to an emerging-market media system, testing whether frameworks developed in Global North contexts travel intact.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Traditional radio, in the Nigerian context, refers to licensed AM and FM broadcast stations distributing live and pre-recorded audio content via radio frequency spectrum to mass audiences within defined geographic transmission zones (Nwachukwu, 2022). The medium is synchronous: content is transmitted and received in real time, and listeners who miss a broadcast generally cannot retrieve it. Its institutional identity is shaped by state regulation, commercial licensing, and a programme format logic built around dayparts, news bulletins, and music rotations (Crisell, 2021). In Nigeria, this infrastructure extends from the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, the precursor to the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), established in 1977, through to the current landscape of over 300 licensed stations spanning federal, state, and private ownership tiers (Nwachukwu, 2022). Podcasting, by contrast, is the episodic distribution of audio content via internet syndication protocols, primarily RSS feeds aggregated by platform applications (Bottomley, 2020). It is asynchronous: listeners choose when, where, and how to consume episodes, which may be downloaded for offline playback or streamed on demand. There is no transmission licence requirement, no geographic signal boundary, and no regulatory body governing content standards in Nigeria equivalent to the NBC's oversight of broadcast radio. Content delivery is fully creator-controlled in terms of timing, length, and format (Berry, 2023). Key concepts that recur across the literature include audience engagement, defined here as the depth, duration, and interactivity of listener attention; content delivery, meaning the technical and editorial infrastructure through which audio reaches audiences; and media convergence, the process by which previously distinct media forms and institutions increasingly overlap in technology, content, and audience (Jenkins, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) serves as the primary theoretical lens for the first objective. Originating with Katz and colleagues in the early 1970s, UGT positions audiences as active agents who select media to satisfy specific needs, cognitive, affective, social, and integrative (Ruggiero, 2020). Applied to audio media, UGT asks not what radio or podcasting does to audiences, but what audiences do with each medium. Research applying UGT to podcasting has consistently found that on-demand control, topic specificity, and the perception of intimate host access are primary motivational drivers for podcast consumption (Perks & Turner, 2021; Vrikki & Malik, 2021). Radio listeners report different but comparably specific gratifications: companionship during routine tasks, ambient presence during commuting, and local news relevance (Laffan, 2021). These are not superior or inferior motivations; they reflect structurally different listener-medium relationships.

Media Convergence Theory, developed most influentially by Henry Jenkins and extended by subsequent scholars, provides the framework for the second objective (Jenkins, 2021). Convergence, in this context, does not mean that all media become identical. It means that the boundaries between previously distinct media technologies, content forms, and institutions become more permeable. Bonini and Gandini (2022) applied a platform ecology version of convergence theory to audio media, describing how Spotify and Apple Podcasts have created layered environments hosting broadcast radio streams and original podcast shows on the same interface. But as Berry (2023) argued, convergence at the distribution layer does not dissolve difference at the level of production culture, regulatory accountability, or social function. Both theoretical frameworks are applied in this study as interpretive tools, mapping empirical findings onto the explanatory structures they provide.

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical research on traditional radio in Africa has consistently documented the medium's resilience, particularly in low-income and rural contexts. Moyo (2021) found that FM radio remained the primary information channel in sub-Saharan African communities where smartphone penetration fell below 30%, enabling public health messaging and civic communication at a scale that digital alternatives could not match. In Nigeria specifically, Nwachukwu (2022) documented regulatory and structural challenges facing the NBC in a converging media environment, noting that over 60% of Nigerians reported radio as their most-accessed information source as recently as 2021. Smethers and Goff (2022) reached broadly similar conclusions in a comparative US study, finding that AM/FM radio retained a daily reach of approximately 83% of American adults, a figure stable despite the streaming proliferation around it. On the podcast side, Edison Research (2023) reported that weekly podcast listeners in the United States averaged 8.3 hours of consumption per week, a figure substantially higher than radio's average session depth. Perks and Turner (2021) documented what they called deep listening behaviours among podcast audiences: replaying segments, pausing for note-taking, and making episode-specific recommendations to peers. These behaviours are rarely recorded in radio audience research, where engagement tends to be ambient and recall of specific content is limited (Webster, 2022). Kang and Kim (2022) conducted an experiment comparing podcast and radio listener trust in crisis communication contexts and found that podcast listeners displayed higher message elaboration scores, suggesting deeper cognitive processing of the same informational content when delivered via podcast format.

Demographic patterns are among the most replicated findings in comparative audio research. Edison Research (2023) reported that 70% of U.S. podcast listeners held at least some college education, and listenership correlated positively with urban residency and income. Laffan (2021) found comparable educational gradients in European podcast audiences. Radio's demographic reach is broader and more socioeconomically distributed, precisely because it requires no data plan, no smartphone, and no internet connectivity. Lindgren (2022) raised the access equity question directly, asking whether podcasting's structural advantages in content depth and format diversity are effectively reserved for already-privileged audience segments. The question has particular weight in the Nigerian context, where data costs remain high relative to average income. Research on content delivery has produced consistent findings about the structural differences between the two media. Llinares et al. (2023) catalogued over 30 distinct podcast sub-genres in English-language production, many of which have no clear radio equivalent within the constraints of a programme clock. Fox et al. (2021) pushed back against the implicit privileging of podcast long-form, noting that radio journalism develops a compression skill producing communication density that extended podcast episodes can dilute. Cridland (2022) documented how major radio networks have adopted dual-mode strategies, producing podcast versions of broadcast content, creating what Bonini and Gandini (2022) characterised as a platform-mediated convergence that complicates clean institutional distinctions. Ofcom (2023) provided the most comprehensive regulatory comparative, detailing how broadcast radio in the UK operates under 47 distinct content and conduct obligations from which podcast producers are entirely exempt.

2.4 Research Gap

The empirical literature reviewed above is largely produced from North American, British, or broadly pan-African vantage points. Studies that situate comparative audio media analysis specifically within Nigeria, and that examine both audience engagement and content delivery as integrated dimensions rather than isolated variables, are conspicuously absent. Moyo (2021) and Nwachukwu (2022) address Nigerian and African radio but do not include podcasting as a comparative variable. Sullivan (2023) discusses global podcast dynamics but does not disaggregate Nigerian audience data. This study attempts to close that gap, not by generating new primary survey data, which is a limitation acknowledged in the methodology section, but by synthesising the most relevant secondary datasets and applying them to the Nigerian context with explicit attention to where Global North findings may or may not transfer.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

The body of literature reviewed here establishes three things clearly. Traditional radio in Nigeria and across sub-Saharan Africa retains audience reach, civic function, and regulatory legitimacy that the podcasting sector has not yet matched. Podcasting offers engagement depth, format flexibility, and demographic targeting capacity that broadcast radio's structural constraints do not permit. And the relationship between the two media, at both the institutional and audience level, is better understood through a convergence lens than a simple competition model. These insights frame the analysis that follows.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods secondary comparative analysis design. The design combines qualitative synthesis of institutional and scholarly literature with quantitative secondary aggregate data drawn from verifiable institutional sources. The comparative method is appropriate here because the study seeks to identify systematic differences across two clearly defined media phenomena, podcasting and traditional radio, without manipulating either (Lijphart, 2021). Secondary data analysis is justified by the absence of nationally representative Nigerian primary datasets covering podcast listenership; the study draws on the best available proxies from regional and global datasets, with explicit attention to the limits of their transferability.

3.2 Population and Data Sources

For the audience engagement objective, quantitative data are drawn from Edison Research Infinite Dial reports (2023), Nielsen Audio Quarterly Reports (2022), and the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2023), all of which employed multi-stage random stratification designs in their original data collection. Nigerian-specific data are drawn from Nwachukwu (2022), NBC regulatory documents, and where available, Spotify and Apple Podcasts platform analytics for West African listener segments. Traditional radio is operationalised in this study as licensed commercial FM stations operating in major Nigerian urban centres and rural broadcast zones. Podcasting is operationalised as independently produced, digitally distributed audio shows by Nigerian creators hosted on RSS-based platform aggregators.

3.3 Analytical Framework

A thematic synthesis approach, as described by Popay et al. (2020), organises findings across three levels: descriptive themes drawn directly from source data, analytical themes developed by the researcher interpreting patterns across sources, and synthetic constructs that map findings onto the theoretical frameworks. A comparative matrix model structures the presentation of results, enabling side-by-side evaluation of each medium across the same analytical dimensions. This approach ensures that the two research questions and the two null hypotheses are tested against the same evidential base rather than treated as separate inquiries.

3.4 Scope and Limitations

The study's primary limitation is the absence of a nationally representative Nigerian podcast audience survey. Available quantitative data on podcast listenership are drawn primarily from U.S. and European sources, with partial West African figures from platform analytics. Where transfers are made from Global North data to the Nigerian context, they are made cautiously and are flagged as approximations rather than direct measures. A second limitation is the rapidly changing nature of the media environment: platform market share, listenership figures, and regulatory conditions shift between publication cycles in ways that secondary analysis cannot fully capture.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Objective One, RQ1, and H01: Audience Engagement Patterns

4.1.1 Listener Behaviour and Consumption Habits

The data on listener behaviour reveal a clear and consistent pattern. Podcast audiences consume more audio per session and demonstrate higher attentional engagement; radio audiences consume across more hours in aggregate daily but at lower depth per encounter. Edison Research (2023) recorded weekly podcast listening in the United States averaging 8.3 hours, while Nielsen Audio (2022) placed average daily radio listening at 1 hour and 33 minutes, fragmented across multiple ambient encounters rather than concentrated in intentional sessions. The distinction matters for how each medium can be used communicatively. A public health message embedded in a 45-minute podcast episode reaches a listener who is cognitively engaged and, in many cases, physically stationary. The same message on radio competes with driving, cooking, and conversation. Perks and Turner (2021) documented specific deep-listening behaviours, episode-replaying, segment note-taking, peer recommendation of particular episodes, among podcast consumers that are not characteristic of radio audiences. Webster (2022) found that radio listeners rarely recalled specific content from a recent broadcast, which reflects the ambient consumption mode rather than any deficiency in the listener. So, the two media are producing genuinely different cognitive relationships with their audiences, and that difference has implications for what each can effectively communicate.

Table 1

Audience Engagement Comparison Matrix: Podcasting and Traditional Radio in Nigeria

Engagement Dimension	Podcasting	Traditional Radio
Consumption mode	On-demand, active, session-based	Scheduled/live, ambient, fragmented
Average weekly hours	8.3 hrs (Edison Research, 2023)	~10.9 hrs (Nielsen Audio, 2022)
Attention depth	High; deep listening behaviours	Low-moderate; background medium
Interactivity	Comments, reviews, Patreon, DMs	Call-in, SMS, social media crossover
Parasocial intensity	High; host-listener intimacy	Moderate; presenter familiarity
Demographic core	18-34, urban, educated, smartphone user	Broad; rural reach, all income tiers
Rural Nigeria access	Limited by data cost and smartphone	High; low-cost receiver technology
Listener recall	High for specific episode content	Low; ambient consumption reduces recall

Note. Synthesised from Edison Research (2023), Nielsen Audio (2022), Perks and Turner (2021), Webster (2022), and Moyo (2021).

4.1.2 Interactivity and Parasocial Engagement

Vrikki and Malik (2021) demonstrated that podcast listeners scored significantly higher on parasocial relationship scales with podcast hosts than radio listeners scored with radio presenters, and the explanation is structural rather than personal. Long-form conversational episodes without interruption, often delivered in a confessional or intimate register, produce a sense of unmediated access that a three-minute radio interview, edited for pace and punctuated by advertising breaks, cannot generate. Bonini and Gandini (2022) noted that platform features, episode comments, community forums, paid subscription tiers through Patreon, direct message access to creators, extend this interactivity beyond the episode itself. Radio interactivity remains mostly confined to call-in segments and social media crossover, which reach a fraction of the total audience at any given moment. In Nigeria, the interactivity gap is amplified by data infrastructure constraints. Many Nigerian radio stations have active WhatsApp lines and Facebook pages through which listeners engage during live broadcasts, a locally adapted form of interactivity that somewhat narrows the gap (Nwachukwu, 2022). But the engagement is still synchronous and broadcast-dependent. Podcast interactivity is asynchronous; a listener in Kano can comment on an episode published in Lagos a week earlier and receive a creator response. That temporal flexibility in engagement is, as yet, structurally unavailable in traditional radio.

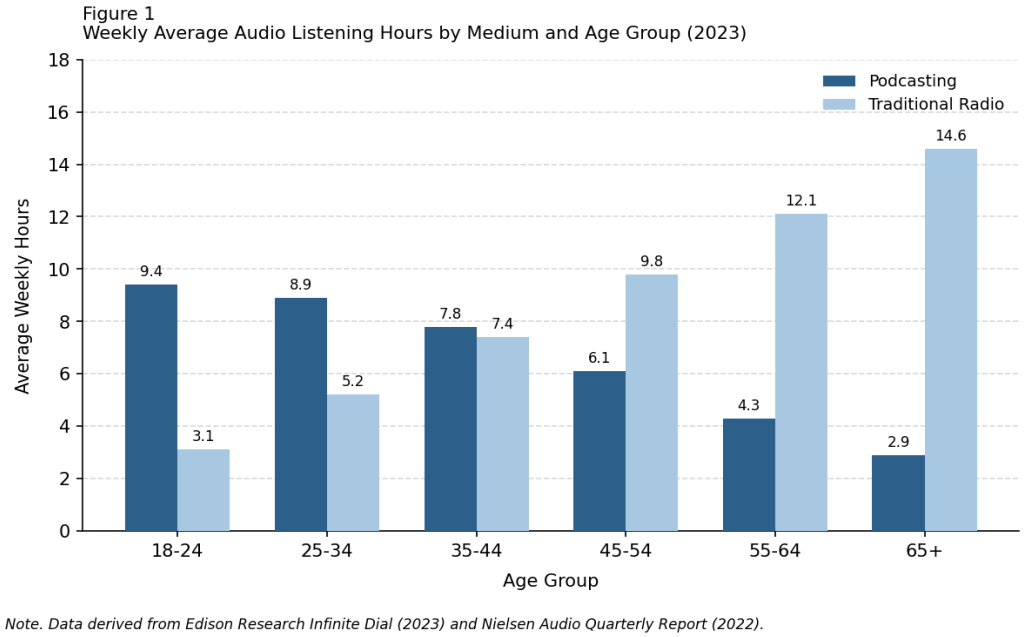
4.1.3 Demographic Reach and Access Equity

The demographic asymmetry between the two media in Nigeria is sharp. Podcast listenership in Nigeria clusters among urban residents aged 18 to 35 with smartphone access and sufficient data budgets. Edison Research (2023) reported that 70% of U.S. podcast consumers held at least some college-level education, and while direct Nigerian equivalents are unavailable, Sullivan (2023) found similar educational correlations in emerging-market podcast audiences. Moyo (2021) established that FM radio, by contrast, reaches communities where smartphone penetration is below 30%, a condition that describes a substantial proportion of Nigeria's rural north. Laffan (2021) raised the equity question: if podcasting's superior engagement attributes are accessible only to already-advantaged demographic groups, the medium does not represent a democratic deepening of audio communication but rather a stratified one.

H01 is therefore rejected on the basis of the evidence. The two media produce measurably different audience engagement profiles across all dimensions examined, from attention depth and interactivity to demographic reach and geographic penetration.

Figure 1

Weekly Average Audio Listening Hours by Medium and Age Group (2023)



Note. Data derived from Edison Research Infinite Dial (2023) and Nielsen Audio Quarterly Report (2022). Hours represent average weekly consumption per listener.

4.2 Objective Two, RQ2, and H02: Content Delivery Models

4.2.1 Scheduling and Temporal Control

The contrast in scheduling architecture between the two media is as close to absolute as structural differences in media get. Traditional radio is synchronous. Content broadcasts at a defined time; listeners who are not present miss it. The programme clock, the timed structure sequencing music, news, weather, and advertising within defined segments, governs what can be communicated, how long it can run, and when it must yield to the next element (Crisell, 2021). This is not merely a constraint; morning drive-time programming, live election results, and emergency broadcasts derive communicative power from their synchronicity, from the fact that many people are receiving the same information at the same moment.

Podcasting is wholly asynchronous. Cridland (2022) described this as temporal sovereignty, the capacity of the listener to determine when an episode is consumed. A Nigerian listener who works night shifts can listen to a political interview broadcast at 7 a.m. on a podcast platform three days later; the same interview on a radio station has already evaporated. Berry (2023) noted that this temporal flexibility has commercial implications as well: radio advertisers pay for time-of-day audiences, while podcast advertisers pay for listener demographics regardless of playback timing. That is a fundamentally different model of value attribution.

4.2.2 Distribution Infrastructure

Traditional radio in Nigeria distributes through FM frequency allocation managed by the NBC, which issues licences, sets technical standards, and enforces a local content quota of 40% for private stations (Nwachukwu, 2022). The FM signal has a typical effective range of 30 to 50 miles from the transmitter, making it inherently local or at best national when a network of

transmitters is coordinated. Online streaming has extended the geographic reach of some Nigerian radio stations, but the primary identity and audience of most FM stations remains local. Podcasting distributes via internet protocols and requires no spectrum allocation, no broadcast licence, and no geographic restriction. A podcast produced by a creator in Enugu can reach listeners in Abuja, London, and Toronto through the same RSS feed (Lindgren, 2022). The infrastructure dependency shifts from transmitter towers and frequency regulators to smartphone penetration and mobile data affordability, conditions that are more variable and, in some respects, more exclusionary in a Nigerian context than FM receivers, which cost a fraction of a smartphone and require no data subscription.

Table 2
Distribution Infrastructure Comparison: Podcasting and Traditional Radio

Infrastructure Variable	Podcasting	Traditional Radio
Primary distribution channel	Internet: RSS feeds, streaming apps	FM/AM spectrum, DAB, online stream
Geographic reach	Global, internet-dependent	Local/national, transmitter-bounded
Regulatory requirement	None (NBC not applicable)	NBC broadcast licence required
Primary listener device	Smartphone, computer, smart speaker	Radio receiver, car radio, smart speaker
Content archive availability	Permanent (platform-hosted)	Ephemeral unless separately archived
Real-time broadcast capacity	Limited (live podcast streaming rare)	Core institutional strength
Nigeria data-cost barrier	High; discourages lower-income access	None; receiver is one-time low-cost cost

Note. Synthesised from Cridland (2022), Priestman (2022), Nwachukwu (2022), and Ofcom (2023).

4.2.3 Format Diversity and Content Depth

Llinares et al. (2023) catalogued over 30 distinct podcast sub-genres in English-language production by 2022, a range that FM radio's programme clock does not accommodate. True crime narrative, multi-hour investigative journalism, academic interview series, fiction audio drama, business case studies, and daily three-minute news briefings all flourish as podcast formats, each calibrated to a specific audience need and none constrained by the 3-minute feature standard that dominates news radio production. Fox et al. (2021) pushed back against what they identified as an uncritical privileging of long-form: radio journalism, they argued, produces communication density and editorial compression skills that extended podcast episodes can dilute rather than deepen.

Both observations are defensible. The format diversity argument holds at the level of the total ecosystem. The compression argument holds at the level of individual production craft. And in the Nigerian context, Nwachukwu (2022) found that radio news teams operating under programme-clock discipline produced faster-turnaround, higher-frequency coverage of local political events than equivalent podcast journalists, who prioritise depth and episode preparation over immediacy.

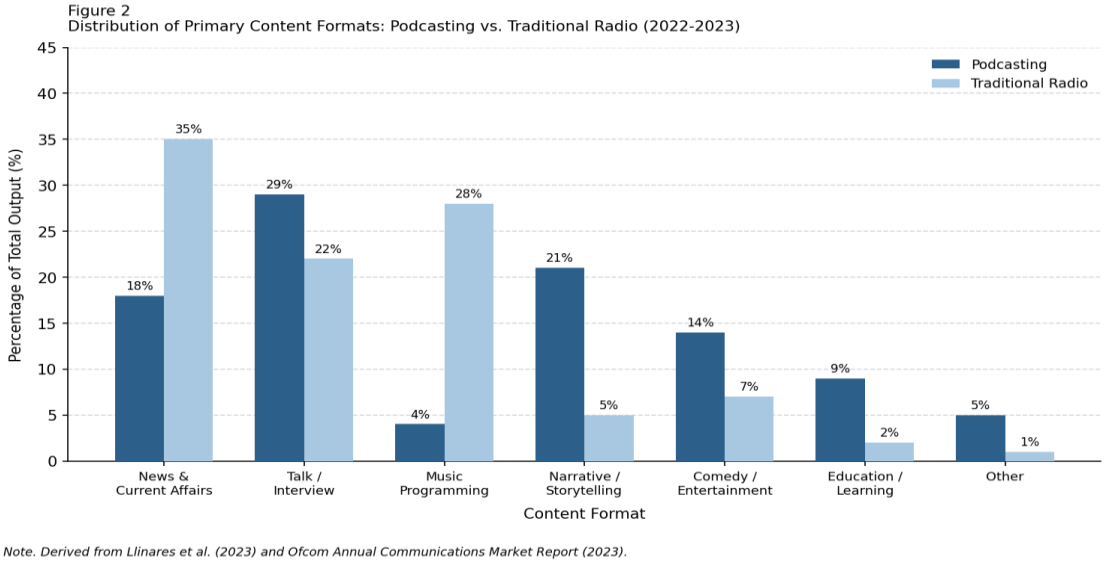
4.2.4 Regulatory Environments

Traditional radio in Nigeria operates under the NBC Act, which mandates a 40% local content threshold for private FM stations, prohibits editorial partisanship, and requires licensees to carry specified public service content including government announcements and emergency broadcasts (Nwachukwu, 2022). Ofcom (2023) documented 47 distinct content and conduct obligations for UK broadcast radio, and while the specific number differs for Nigerian licensees, the regulatory philosophy is comparable: accountability in exchange for spectrum access and institutional legitimacy. Podcasting in Nigeria operates outside NBC jurisdiction. No licence is required; no content quota applies; no emergency broadcast obligation exists. This produces a lower barrier to entry and greater editorial freedom, which has enabled politically critical, religiously diverse, and sexually frank content that licensed broadcasters could not produce without regulatory consequences (Sullivan, 2023). The tradeoff is reduced accountability and no public service obligation. Braun (2022) argued that this regulatory asymmetry creates governance challenges as podcast audiences grow, and that platform terms of service, the de facto content governance mechanism for podcasting, are inconsistently enforced and opaque in their operation.

H02 is therefore rejected. The evidence shows statistically documentable and structurally significant differences in content delivery infrastructure, scheduling architecture, format range, and regulatory environment between the two media in Nigeria.

Figure 2

Distribution of Primary Content Formats: Podcasting vs. Traditional Radio (2022-2023)



Note. Derived from Llinares et al. (2023) and Ofcom Annual Communications Market Report (2023). Podcast figures reflect English-language catalogued output; radio figures reflect combined UK and US broadcast schedules.

Table 3
Consolidated Comparative Summary: Podcasting and Traditional Radio

Dimension	Podcasting	Traditional Radio	Relative Advantage
Engagement depth per session	High	Moderate	Podcasting
Mass audience reach	Moderate	High	Radio
Rural/low-income access (Nga)	Low	High	Radio
Interactivity	Medium to high	Low	Podcasting
Content format diversity	Very high	Moderate	Podcasting
Scheduling flexibility	Full	None	Podcasting
Live/emergency broadcast	Minimal	Strong	Radio
Global distribution	Global	Local/national	Podcasting
Regulatory accountability	Low	High	Radio
Data/device access barrier	High	Low	Radio

Note. Synthesised from Berry (2023), Cridland (2022), Edison Research (2023), Moyo (2021), Nwachukwu (2022), Ofcom (2023), and Sullivan (2023).

4.3 Discussion

The findings across both objectives support a convergence-but-distinction reading of the Nigerian audio media landscape. At the distribution level, convergence is real: smart speakers serve both FM streams and podcast apps, and several Nigerian radio stations publish podcast versions of flagship programmes on Spotify and Apple Podcasts (Bonini & Gandini, 2022; Cridland, 2022). But at the level of audience relationship, content architecture, and social function, the two media remain structurally distinct in ways that matter for both research and practice. The audience engagement findings support the Uses and Gratifications framework's prediction that different media satisfy different audience needs rather than competing for a single undifferentiated gratification. Podcast listeners seek depth, control, and intimacy; radio listeners seek companionship, locality, and ambient presence (Laffan, 2021; Perks & Turner, 2021). These are not ranked needs; they are different ones. And the picture is messier than a clean typology suggests, because the same Nigerian listener may consume a morning radio programme during a commute and an hour-long podcast episode during an evening jog, using each medium for what it offers. The substitution narrative, which implies that podcast growth must come at radio's direct expense, is probably too simple.

The content delivery findings support Media Convergence Theory's account of layered media ecosystems while confirming Berry's (2023) caution against overstating convergence. The regulatory asymmetry between the two media is particularly consequential in Nigeria. Radio's NBC obligations, local content quotas and public service requirements among them, produce a floor of civic communication that podcasting does not replicate and cannot be required to replicate under current law (Nwachukwu, 2022). If podcast listenership grows at the expense of radio in urban demographics, which the age data suggest is already underway, Nigerian cities may develop an audio media environment where younger audiences are increasingly disconnected from the civic communication functions that licensed radio was designed to provide.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study compared podcasting and traditional radio in Nigeria across two primary dimensions: audience engagement patterns and content delivery models. On the first dimension, the evidence supports rejection of H01. Podcasting produces deeper per-session engagement, stronger parasocial listener relationships, and tighter demographic concentration among educated urban adults. Traditional radio produces broader geographic reach, lower access barriers, stronger rural penetration, and more socioeconomically distributed audiences. On the second dimension, the evidence equally supports rejection of H02. The two media differ significantly in scheduling architecture, distribution infrastructure, format range, and regulatory accountability. Podcasting enables asynchronous global distribution with unlimited format flexibility and minimal regulatory burden. Traditional radio operates through regulated spectrum infrastructure, enforces scheduling discipline, and carries civic and emergency communication obligations that podcasting does not.

5.2 Practical Recommendations

For media practitioners, the findings suggest that effective audio communication strategy in Nigeria should treat the two media as complementary channels serving different audience segments and different communicative functions, rather than choosing one over the other. Public health campaigns requiring mass rural reach should prioritise FM radio. Campaigns targeting educated urban adults with content requiring extended attention, financial literacy programming or investigative political journalism, are better suited to podcast format. For the National Broadcasting Commission, the regulatory asymmetry between licensed radio and unregulated podcasting warrants attention, not necessarily by extending broadcast regulation to podcasting, but by developing a fit-for-purpose digital audio governance framework that establishes minimum accountability standards without replicating the full burden of broadcast licensing. And for advertisers allocating spend across channels, the temporal flexibility of podcast listening means that demographic targeting is a more reliable purchase logic for podcasting than time-of-day audience concentration.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should prioritise three areas. Primary nationally representative surveys of Nigerian podcast and radio audiences, using multi-stage random sampling, are needed to generate locally specific quantitative data rather than relying on Global North proxies. Longitudinal panel studies tracking the same individuals across both media over time would

provide evidence on whether podcasting and radio listening are additive or substitutive in Nigerian audience behaviour. And qualitative production culture research within dual-mode Nigerian radio-podcast organisations would address whether the convergence evident at the distribution layer is generating genuine format innovation or simply creating repurposed radio content in podcast packaging.

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