

Podcasting as audio technology Development prospects

KEY WORDS

podcasting, crowdfunding, platform podcast, promotion podcast

ABSTRACT

The paper presents podcasting as one of the audio industry's technologies. The enquiries search the key factors in the development of podcasting, including tools that enable distribution and the enlargement of the audience. It also points to the fact of the low popularity of podcasting in Poland in comparison to the largest markets in USA or Canada.

The term "podcasting" introduced in 2004 by the BBC journalist Ben Hammersley, is a portmanteau – combination of particles "pod" after the name of the MP3 player – iPod – and "cast"¹ from the word "broadcast". The term was to describe the emerging phenomenon of production of audio content and putting it on the internet, with the possibility to subscribe, using special software. Podcasting is both producing podcasts (audio files, sometimes also video), as well as the technology to download them via an RSS reader that allows storage of podcasts on a computer, MP3 player, or mobile phone using free software such as iTunes or Juice.

Since its creation in the first half of the first decade of the 21st century, the evolution of podcasting is divided in two trends:

- amateur (*non-profit*), represented by individual users trying to express themselves, activists, scientists, members of cultural and religious associations and enthusiasts;
- commercial, created mostly by former radio stars and celebrities of the show business world, shunning traditional media and using new media for paid distribution of their products. Also independent podcasters (often choosing Pro-Am model)², unrelated to

¹ T. Bonini, *The 'second age' of podcasting: reframing podcasting as a new digital mass medium*, "Quaderns del CAC" 41, Vol. 18 (2015), pp. 21–30.

² The term "Pro-Am" means amateurs working in accordance with professional standards, see C. Leadbeater, P. Miller, *The pro-am revolution: How enthusiasts are changing our economy and society*, London 2004, p. 12.

any media institution, creating forms that are sometimes close to radio art, at other times are a type of a blog or graphic presentation with recorded voice-overs.

Over time, this commercial trend has become a significant element of the audio industry, which covers podcasting along with offers of radio broadcasters, services that provide music and other *on-demand transmission services*. Although the strength of the audio industry continues to depend on radio broadcasts, audio “on demand” only provides a fraction of the profit limited to music *streaming*. Podcasting is, however, an interesting phenomenon catering changes to the model of the entire audio sector from an ordinary audio transmission towards increasingly popular *on-demand* models. The change is primarily dictated by commercial reasons and the prospect of higher profits. A necessary condition for its existence is access to simple tools, allowing both independent and professional creators to distribute podcasts, thus expanding the audiences.

In the first development phase (since 2004), podcasting was only used to expand the offer of radio stations through sharing of free fragments of selected broadcasts on radio websites. However, after less than a decade (in 2012), the first social platform emerged that allowed the financing of podcasts and the best productions offered as podcasts migrated from radio, gaining the conditions for independent functioning without institutional constraints. Podcasters profits grew along with the interest from potential sponsors. Podcasting turned into a profitable business.

The considerations contained in the article are to isolate the main factors affecting the development of podcasting and motivations of podcasters and their patrons.

History of podcasting

Impetus for the development of podcasting came from two pioneers of the internet industry, who discussed how they could download and share their favourite content. Dave Winer (RSS creator) and Adam Curry asked themselves what technology would enable the automatic capture of web content. Curry, after fruitless attempts to convince developers to work together, decided to independently create a simple program and published it on the web within an *open source* formula, so that others could develop and improve it³.

The first broadcasters recognised the podcast as a tool for listeners, and most podcasts were shared free of charge. The pioneer of this trend was the BBC, when in 2004 it started sharing podcasts on its website in the form of a series of *The Reith Lectures* that is radio

³ <https://internationalpodcastday.com/podcasting-history/> [accessed: 05.08.2016].

lectures, present on the air since 1948. In ten weeks, they were downloaded more than 50,000 times. The experiment was gradually extended to other programs, such as historical *In Our Time* (channel 4) and interviews from the morning show *Today*, also on channel 4. In 2007, the BBC implemented regular podcast services. In the US, a leader in this field was the public radio network (NPR, the National Public Radio), whose podcast service has been launched by August 2005, and already in April 2006 it had recorded 26 million downloads⁴. When it comes to the content, verbal communication dominated, because of the need to respect music content copyrights. It is true that in 2006 a commercial broadcaster in the UK signed an agreement with Phonographic Performance Ltd., the organisation dealing with creators' copyrights, which enabled introducing music to published podcasts, but in fact it involved only music fragments lasting less than half a minute⁵.

Another milestone in the development of podcast was the creation of a new crowdfunding platform called Kickstarter, in 2012. Thanks to it, the best podcasts migrated from radio, freeing from its funds, and relying on subsidies coming directly from listeners. For example, in 2012, two South American authors, Daniel Alarcón and Carolina Guerrero, collected 46 thousand dollars through this platform to start the production of *Radio Ambulante*, a series of radio *features* on Latin America in the form of podcasts⁶. Similarly, in 2014, a documentary program *Radio Diaries* gathered 61 thousand dollars, and Roman Mars raised 620 thousand dollars thanks to Kickstarter for the *Radiotopia* project, associating narrative podcasts⁷. Podcasts started to be perceived from the business perspective as a potential source of income. The fact that among the leaders in the world of podcasting famous journalists, originating from public radio, began to appear, such as Ira Glass, Sarah Koenig and Roman Mars (sometimes called the *storytelling stars*), guaranteed a high-level storytelling, worth paying for.

In addition to podcast networks, such as PodcastOne, or intermediaries like Midroll (advertising network of leading podcasts), which were able to generate revenue for established podcasters, other hosts started to emerge, supporting novice podcasters in this

⁴ H. Jaffe, *NPR leads the way in podcasting*, "Washingtonian", May 9, 2006, <<http://www.washingtonian.com/articles/people/npr-leads-the-way-in-podcasting/>> [accessed: April 6, 2015] [after:] T. Bonini, *The 'second age' of podcasting ...*, op. cit., pp. 21–30.

⁵ S. Jędrzejewski, *Radiofonia publiczna w Europie w erze cyfrowej* [European public broadcasting in the digital era], Kraków 2010, p. 181.

⁶ M. Fernández Sande, *Radio Ambulante: Narrative radio journalism in the age of crowdfunding* [in:] *Radio audiences and participation in the age of network society*, eds. T. Bonini, B. Monclus, London 2015, pp. 176–194.

⁷ E. Steuer, *Roman Mars: the man who's building a podcasting empire*, "Wired", January 2015, <http://www.wired.com/2015/01/podcaster-roman-mars/> [accessed: 04.08.2016].

regard. Podbean integrated its platforms with a crowdfunding platform for audio creators, Patreon, making it easier for podcasters to be financed directly by the audience. BlogTalkRadio platform enriched the software with automatic applications and ads related to published podcasts, and resulting profits supply the accounts of podcasters who use it.

Since podcasting has become a profitable business, it is analysed more thoroughly, also in terms of the quality of available tools for podcast creation and reception. Google conducted a survey in a group of about 2,5 thousand independent suppliers of various types of audio material on the conditions of their functioning in this sector⁸. More than 80 percent of respondents highly rated the tools offered to them in applications, but most of them pointed out that they need help in increasing their audience and profit generation. More than 75 percent of surveyed podcasters expressed their dissatisfaction with the available methods for obtaining users. In percentage terms, the results of the survey were as follows.

Positive evaluation of the respondents covered such elements as:

- Podcast creation tools (+92 percent)
- Hosting and distribution (+83 percent)
- Presence on the Internet (+69 percent)
- Analytical tools (+56 percent).

Negative evaluation covered such items as:

- Presence on social media (-51 percent)
- Increase in the number of listeners (-56 percent)
- Presence in apps (-66 percent)
- Generated revenue (-73 percent)
- Increase in the number of listeners and apps (-76 percent).

Respondents recognised the need for better promotion through social media, as well as for changes to the way in which podcasters are presented in those – not as music providers, but as creators of interesting narratives.

Potential and development strategies

With the commercial potential of podcasting the media companies began to seek growth in podcasts audiences. One of the most successful new businesses – Gimlet Media (company

⁸ <http://www.slideshare.net/clammrapp/20150617-future-of-podcasting-2015-clammr-v-f> [accessed: 04.08.2016].

creating a network of podcasts and producing high-quality narrative podcasts) released the hugely popular radio show – *This American Life*⁹. Panoply’s podcasts network and Radiotopia¹⁰ that belong to Public Radio Exchange, started cooperation in distribution of high quality independent radio shows. Another approach was taken by the New York station WNYC, which created a tool in the form of a podcast accelerator¹¹ focused on the dynamic growth in potential of independent producers through a presence on the New York Public Radio platform. Thanks to that, some promising start-ups gained an opportunity to increase their audience. Another service – Spreaker¹², gathered individual podcasters under an integrated platform that offers both the tools for production and distribution by its own service, which involves more than 4 million users. PopUp Archive transcribes and indexes podcasts for search engines dealing with audio content. A user can upload a file with the spoken word, and the service software transcribes and tags it. Transcription can be edited with insight tools or one can rely on automatic keyword search¹³. With the audiosear.ch service and programming interfaces, users can search the contents of audio files in text form. By typing words occurring in the audio file into a search engine, they can reach the full version¹⁴. Additionally, a data base of podcasts and auditions is created, for the benefit of others¹⁵. In turn, Audio Player Clammr adopted a strategy similar to Twitter or Instagram (operating with short fragments of the content), transferring the formula of a short message to the world of sounds. Visitors who listens to a short, 18-second sound fragments placed there as posts, can tag them and share them with friends on Facebook or Twitter. The most interesting ones refer the users to the full audio version and the author's website. Even Internet companies related primarily to the area of *on-demand* music, promise to integrate their content with podcasts. For example, Spotify announced a partnership with the Libsyn network, a pioneer in the podcast business, one of the first podcast hosts and publishers¹⁶.

Sources of podcasts popularity

Weekly, up to 75 percent of podcast users in the US in the age group of 12+ listen to online radio. Podcasts take over radio listeners, accustomed to performing a variety of activities

⁹ P. Parvizi, D. Silverman, *The future of podcasting*, “Tech Crunch”, July 7, 2015, <http://techcrunch.com/2015/07/18/the-future-of-podcasting/> [accessed: 04.08.2016].

¹⁰ www.radiotopia.fm [accessed: 04.08.2016].

¹¹ This is a business and training program for podcasters, offering to the authors of the most interesting positions the possibility to use the mentoring of experienced audio industry creators, and producing pilot podcast episodes under their direction.

¹² <https://www.spreaker.com> [accessed: 10.09.2016].

¹³ <https://www.popuparchive.com/about> [accessed: 17.06.2016].

¹⁴ <http://www.spokenlayer.com/> [accessed: 10.09.2016].

¹⁵ <http://www.spokenlayer.com/> [accessed: 19.06.2016].

¹⁶ <http://www.poynter.org/2015/nprs-programming-vp-heads-to-audible-com/344959/> [accessed: 02.08.2016].

accompanied by the sounds of the receiver. This is a phenomenon that can be attributed to the legacy of the radio, shaping in the recipients a need and habit of listening to the word and sound patchwork. It has nothing to do with music streaming. Radio (and podcast to follow) guarantees the presence of a second person, speaking to the listener. Besides, radio does not acquaint the listeners with the potential podcast offer (favourite leads, most interesting auditions). It should also be admitted that the quality of podcasts realisation is constantly increasing, their production is accompanied by marketing and expert activities, and the very aesthetics of communication becomes attractive for customers.

Another reason for the popularity of podcasts is purely economic. Production of a typical podcast is much cheaper than TV or even a radio program. All you need is a microphone, a free software (Audacity or another sound editor) and internet access. In conjunction with the talent of the creator and the right marketing, it can bring measurable benefits. For example, a podcaster and vlogger known as PewDiePie owns the most subscribed YouTube channel, despite competition from major media companies operating on this platform.

Advertising rates for a highly successful podcast are several times greater than the costs of production. Best podcasters say their CPM (*the cost to an advertiser per thousand impressions*), that is the cost of reaching a thousand customers for an advertiser, is formed between 20 and 45 USD¹⁷. Podcasts can charge higher advertising rates due to a format called, the so-called *single-host*.

An important factor in podcast popularisation, in addition to the interest of the advertising industry and the personalities of podcasters themselves, is the development of communication technology in the automotive industry. From the very beginning, the secret of popularity of radio was its role as a travel companion. In the United States, it is estimated that 44 percent of audience listens to the radio in a car. What characterises them? They are focused on the message, turn on the radio for a long time, thus being valuable to advertisers. However, the monopoly of radio in the car is now a thing of the past. Both Google and Apple have developed platforms (respectively Android Auto and Apple CarPlay), and most new cars sold in the United States have the ability to integrate a phone with the car audio system. It is estimated that by 2025 all cars produced in the US will be connected to the internet.

¹⁷ K. Roose, *What's behind the great podcast renaissance*, "New York Magazine", October 2014, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/10/whats-behind-the-great-podcast-renaissance.html> [accessed: 10.08.2016].

Cars equipped with this communication system provide benefits for the whole streaming industry and for podcast creators, whose activities fit perfectly to the model of listening in a car. Podcast also received the support of software developers. Apple, whose iTunes provided access to most of the early podcasts, gave the podcast its own unremovable application in the latest version of its mobile operating system. With these tools, the first podcast start-ups already gathered over a million dollars (as in the case of companies of Roman Mars and Alex Blumberg). “Radio managed to avoid the shock which was the case for media. It has been somehow frozen in time for 50 years. Now, as everybody has a cell phone in their pocket, which is also the radio receiver, and cars are gaining connection to the internet, radio forms can flourish again”– says Blumberg¹⁸. Thus, the podcast appears in the eyes of its creators as transformation of the radio formula, made possible by new technologies.

Another factor for the popularity of podcasts is their original formula that gives the creator (often a single person) full control over what they do. Lack of censorship or institutional producer provides the creator with the freedom to work with longer forms of expression. Podcasters value the audience’s *feedback*. Comments under the podcast (blog entries, reviews, comments on the Facebook profile) are an important source of knowledge about customers, allowing the establishment of personal relations with the audience. It should be emphasised that the podcast benefits from the audience’s interest in narrative, a story about oneself or others, drama – word, formula disappearing in modern media promoting fuzzy, blended genres, lapidary, less and less reflecting natural interpersonal communication, or actually distorting it (by avoiding direct contact). Besides, through its technology, podcasting attracts those listeners, who value comfort in contact with the medium. They can listen to the recording, at any time in any place, while its formula does not preclude taking other actions (even at work).

Podcasting – interest and audience

Google’s statistics show that global interest in podcasts is slowly growing (fig. 1)

¹⁸ Ibid.



Fig. 1 Interest in searching the term “podcast” on a global scale in time (from 20.11.2011 to 20.11. 2016)

Source: Google Trends [accessed: 20.11.2016]

Significantly, it is strongly conditioned by geography. Podcasts enjoy the greatest interest in Sweden, Ireland, the United States, Canada and Australia. In terms of the audience size, this means that the largest market of podcasts is North America.

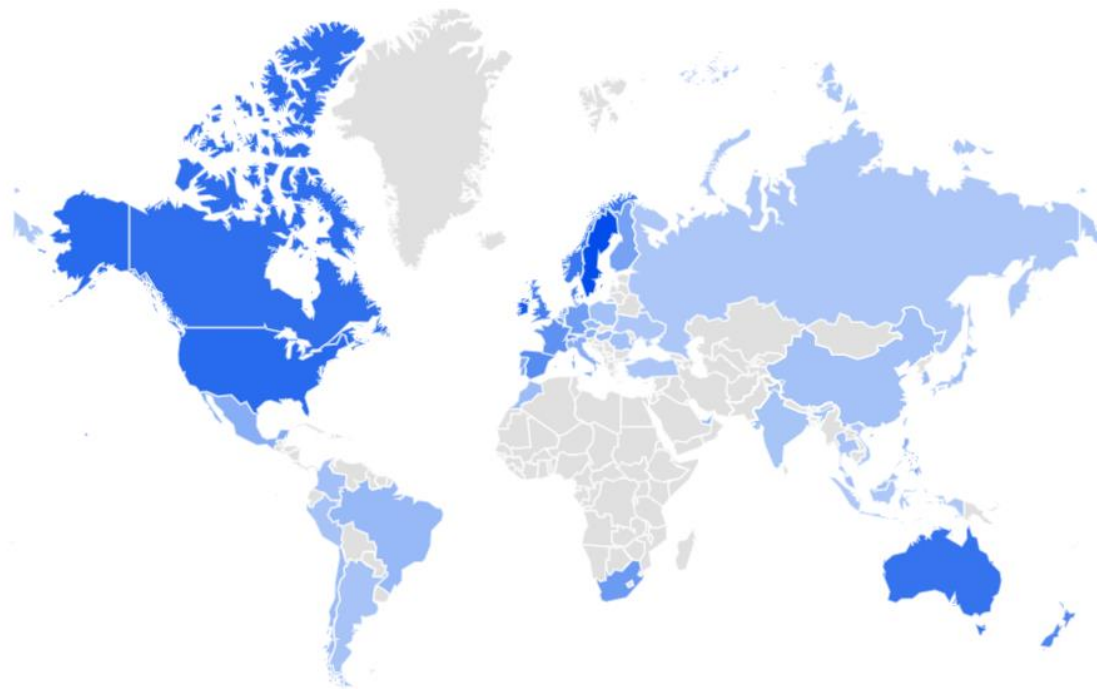


Fig. 2 Interest in searching the term “podcast” on a global scale in geographical terms (from 20.11.2011 to 20.11. 2016)

Source: Google Trends [accessed: 20.11.2016]

According to data from Edison Research from May 2016, in the USA, 39 million people listen to podcasts every month¹⁹. 55% of respondents are familiar with the term “podcast”. The fastest listeners growth has been recorded for the age group of 12-24 years (27%), but most podcasts consumers belong in the range of 35-54 years (71%). In the USA, listeners use smartphones, tablets or mobile devices to listen to a podcast. Most people (53%) listen at home, 14% at work, 21% in a car, 21% in public transport vehicles. As much as 79% listen to the podcast immediately after clicking, 49% uploads podcast manually and listen to it later, 36% subscribe (they are then automatically uploaded for later listening).

Against such a background, Poland looks very modest. Data from TOK FM, the official app of Radio TOK FM available since 2004 and offering free live broadcasts and information about auditions and leads, show several thousand downloads²⁰. This is despite Poland joining other countries quite early when podcasts appeared. The first Polish podcast was broadcasted in February 2005 by the programmer from Lublin, Jacek Artymiak. The popularity of this technology began to grow, when in February 2005 in the Warsaw extra to the “Gazeta Wyborcza” newspaper, an article appeared about two Italians, who created their online audition *Warsaw Calling*. However, the word “podcast” did not appear in the article. The creators, Pierluigi Peggiani and Leonardo Masi, did not use it as well, claiming that their main objective was to simply create an independent radio production²¹. For some, the first Polish serially-broadcasted podcast was the *Psychomagiel* audition, created by Paweł “Konjo” Konak and Skiba, which appeared regularly on a weekly basis on the Wirtualna Polska website²². It is, however, difficult to speak of growing increase in recent years in Poland. It is rather constant (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 Interest in searching the term “podcast” in Poland in time (from 20.11.2011 to 20.11.2016)

Source: Google Trends [accessed: 20.11.2016]

¹⁹ <http://www.edisonresearch.com/the-podcast-consumer-2016/> [accessed: 03.08.2016].

²⁰ http://www.tnsglobal.pl/coslychac/files/2015/05/POLSKA_JEST_MOBI_2015.pdf [accessed 2.02.2016].

²¹ S.M. Stanuch, *Audycje na życzenie* [Broadcasts on demand], „Press”, May 2005, <http://www.press.pl/magazyn-press/artykul/1484,audycje-na-zyczenie> [accessed: 07.07.2016].

²² <http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/boom-na-podcasty> [accessed: 08.05.2016].

In Poland, in 2010, while podcasting was growing rapidly, only about 10% of internet radio listeners were interested in podcasts²³. Clearly, there have been no changes in this regard. On Spider's Web Twitter, there are answers of the readers for two questions: "Do you know what a podcast is?" (81% affirmative) and "How often do you listen to podcasts?" (68% answers were "rarely" and "not at all"). This shows that our market is very different from the American one. It is also confirmed by a lack of broader research on this phenomenon²⁴, while detailed research is conducted globally. BInAR consumer survey of 2011, conducted online with a sample of 1278 respondents, indicated that podcasts are less popular than online radio (listened to by 61% of respondents at least once a week). Podcasts were used by 28% respondents, half of whom did it less than once a month. They were mostly listened to on the computer via a website²⁵.

The low potential of native podcasting may be to some extent attributed to the delay in the availability of MP3 players in Poland in relation to the United States and Western Europe. It was also a consequence of little popularity for audiobooks, popularised for decades in the USA in cultural institutions²⁶. However, in 2015, market saturation with smartphones in Poland stood at 58%, which means that in the pockets of the Poles over the age of 15 years, there were over 19 million smartphones²⁷. Technological potential to use podcasting is thus better than the actual use. The previously mentioned increased podcasts ratings in cars connected to the internet in the United States may soon involve also the Polish internet users, 14.4% of whom admit to currently use the internet in a car, while another 27.7% is interested in that in the near future.

Perhaps, analysis of native podcasting will be supported with the project on youtubers. In 2015 in Poland, a partner network for Youtube, Lifetube (associating more than 200 channels with more than 100 million impressions monthly), and Instytut Badania Rynku i Opinii Publicznej Millward Brown [Millward Brown Public Opinion and Market Research Institute] commenced cooperation within the InScore research, which is the indicator to measure the youtubers image. This survey is unique on a world scale. It allows to optimally match the youtuber to the appropriate brand, thus increasing marketing potential of such created combination. For the first time, this tool goes beyond testing the popularity of artists

²³ http://www.badaniaradiowe.pl/aktualnosci/BINAR_raport.pdf [accessed: 21.09.2016].

²⁴ <http://www.spidersweb.pl/2015/11/podcasty-w-polsce.html> [accessed: 04.08.2016].

²⁵ <http://www.rzecznioprasowy.pl/media/binar-2011-najpopularniejsze-stacje-internetowe-to-te-znane-z-eteru,tekst,1374.htm> [accessed: 05.03.2016].

²⁶ <https://podcastsportowy.wordpress.com/podcast-a-co-to-jest/> [accessed: 12.06.2016].

²⁷ http://www.tnsglobal.pl/coslychac/files/2015/05/POLSKA_JEST_MOBI_2015.pdf [accessed: 02.02.2016].

and “also includes the measurement of liking to indicate how a given person is liked and the measurement of media noise, i.e. how much do people talk about a given person, both on the internet, and outside it”²⁸.

Podcasting financing in Poland

According to data from English-speaking countries, covering the years 2014-2015, it was radio broadcasters (mainly Australian Broadcasting Corporation, British Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and National Public Radio in the USA) who mainly benefited from podcasting success. Podcasts like Radiolab (NPR) or In Our Time were (and still are) popular both among national listeners and worldwide²⁹. Also in Poland, among radio stations pioneering podcasts, is Polskie Radio [Polish Radio], publishing online versions of their broadcasts since 2007, on <http://www.polskieradio.pl/podcasting/>). It featured selected programs of radio channels and the Teatr Polskiego Radia [Polish Radio Theatre], Studio Reportażu [Reportage Studio], Dokument [Documentary] and Naczelna Redakcja Programów Katolickich [Chief Editorial Office of Catholic Programmes]. Subscriptions included, among others, *Sygnaly dnia*, *Z kraju i ze świata*, *Śniadanie w Trójce*³⁰. Podcast channels were later launched by radio RMF FM, Radio Zet, TOK FM; TVN24 offers programs in the formula of video podcasts.

As already mentioned, in view of the financing, 2012 in the United States was crucial for podcasting, as Kickstarter has been launched, allowing the funding of favourite podcasts by their listeners. In Poland, a service enabling the listeners to provide such a support is patronite.pl, which brings together dozens of podcasts. The Patronite idea was born at the end of 2015, and in February and March 2016 first tests started. Then the service went online³¹. It is characterised by a slightly different formula than the globally recognised *crowdfunding*, where funds are collected only for a single project, and as soon as the amount is raised, the project ends and another one opens, with a new author. Some crowdfunding actions even exclude the possibility to renew the same project – if the necessary amount is not collected, all funds go back to the donors. Patronite works on the principle of regular support, so-called subscription. If one decides to be an author’s patron, he/she pays a monthly amount,

²⁸ <http://www.millwardbrown.com/docs/default-source/poland-downloads/news/inscore15072015.pdf> [accessed: 23.09.2016].

²⁹ R. Berry, *Part of the establishment: Reflecting on 10 years of podcasting as an audio medium*, „Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies” Vol. 22 (2016), no 6, p. 3.

³⁰ <http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/serwis-podcastowy-polskiego-radia> [accessed: 11.09.2016].

³¹ Based on the podcast “Okragły podkastól” in which Borys Kozielski is talking with Mateusz Górski, co-founder of Patronite.pl, after: <http://boryskozielski.podkasty.info/> [accessed: 19.09.2016].

depending on what the author has established in the so-called thresholds, or “constructs containing the amount of the sponsorship, but also prizes provided for patrons for supporting the author”³². This special honour for the patron may be mentioning in the end credits of an episode, entering on the special list of patrons, a bonus in the form of an exclusive recording, the ability to decide on the podcast topic or subject of the question that will be asked during the podcast. Patronite sometimes uses this system of mutual benefit as a specific field of communication. Patrons can get closer to the authors, while a certain community, donating money, allows the author to operate completely independent of advertisers or institutional funds requiring the author to meet the specific criteria or to subordinate to a thematic or formal requirements. Payments can be done through PayPal, as well as the payment provider – tPay (transfer from the account). The first support threshold suggested to the authors is approx. PLN 2-3 (to cover, with a surplus, the PayPal commission for each transaction). Statistically, the shortest patronage period is three months. Patronite provides authors with an internal system of communication with the patrons, through author panels with visible data of people supporting their operation (name, last name, email). In addition, each author can add posts that go exclusively to patrons, along with an email notification. The author has the ability to modify the conditions of sharing of individual posts, depending on the amount of payments (e.g. from PLN 30 and higher). Each author on patronite.pl selects whether to put several podcasts on one profile, or to open separate profiles for individual projects (e.g. podcast plus drawing comics). The profile contains thresholds, targets and business card describing what the author is doing. Patronite always gets 5% of each payment from a patron³³. In addition to the subscription, the service also provides an option called the Patronage, enabling companies to exercise care over those podcasters who do not have too much financial support as they have not build their community yet, but they implement worthwhile projects, often in harmony with the nature and mission of a given institution. In such case, Patronite receives the money and distributes it among the authors in the form of grants transferred to their accounts.

Patronite supports authors in different categories: music, photography, painting, crafts, graphics, blog, games and more. Monthly support of vlogger and comedian Krzysztof

³² Ibid.

³³ Except payment operators commission; in case of PayPal – 2.8%. + 80 groszy on each transaction, in case of tPay – approx. 1.8% on each transaction. In average, about 92% of the amount paid by the patron goes to the author. Polish law does not give a clear interpretation of how to qualify the transferred money, whether it is a donation – as the prizes from the author are symbolic, or fee – when it is a form of exchange, for example the author sends a piece of work to the patron. The author must decide how to define his funds, e.g. in the tax settlements.

Gonciarz, who has 1,423 patrons, amounts to nearly PLN 25,000³⁴, this is a fair cash injection for the average Pole. Gonciarz himself, on his profile, says about his success: “I have been making things on YouTube since 2011, operating a travel, lifestyle and comedy channel. I have been living in Japan for 2 years now, making films about this country. My YouTube channels at his very moment have more than 800 thousand subscribers”³⁵.

This is one of the few examples of spectacular success on the Polish podcasts market. What is more, its author is relatively young in terms of online experience, not a knowledgeable producer, as we do not lack those, just as we have a lot of prestigious success in the industry.

Podcast in Poland – entertainment, fandom or art?

Analysis of native podcasts operating outside major media raises the question about their identity. Are they an offshoot of the entertainment industry, or closer to the high genres – news, current affairs, sometimes even works of art? Or maybe a rather narrow circle of artists and listeners creates a kind of fandom, the community of fans of niche phenomenon of podcasting? It seems that this is the case, partly. Radio journalist Borys Kozielski, producing programs in the form of podcasts since 2005, is so far the only Polish podcaster who won the European Podcast Award 2010 in category *non-profit* for the podcast for the Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy [Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity] and the European Podcast Award 2012 in category *professional* for podcast *My player* that found itself on the first place among the best podcasts in Poland. It is not, however, about the skills, but rather about understanding the very essence of podcasting, as well as the expectations of the audience. Martin Lechowicz operates in the Wolne Radio Enklawa [Free Radio Enklawa], and, just like Borys Kozielski, is a dinosaur of the Polish podcasting. In his view, podcast does not have a bright future: “This is the way it is. The product begins to live, then there is a boom, then it’s decreasing. This decrease is already behind us”³⁶. A podcast is a specific medium for him, not really mainstream, so it is hard to reach people through it. He explains his enthusiasm for creating audio content using irrational reasons (personality traits of podcasters), but above all, the simplicity of the editing, which allows you to focus on the content of the podcast. This is why for podcasters it is easier to get out to the public. The very philosophy of the new medium in Poland seems to be different than in the rest the world. Podcast listeners are treated

³⁴ www.patronite.pl [accessed: 5.09.2016].

³⁵ <https://patronite.pl/kgonciarz> [accessed: 22.09.2016].

³⁶ Statement during the session: PolCaster 2016: Podcasterka a inne media (radio, audiobooki) [accessed: 20.09.2016].

by the artists themselves rather as a narrow group of people who are able to devote their exclusive time to listen, while wide coverage is not the primary goal for a podcaster, because the podcast, working with audio form only, is not an attractive medium and does not have the kind of force to attract people that video has. It is longer than the videocast and requires recipient's focus and favourable circumstances. "I have never heard from someone on some junior high school party to say: hey, let's listen to the podcasts! For our sect, audience consists of people who want to listen for a longer time, who are more mature, more patient – and this eliminates 90% of Poles" – says Martin³⁷. Of course, Polish podcasters also see some positives resulting from podcast specifics. While Youtube is rather to quickly browse the contents – frequently poor quality recordings taken with smartphones – podcasts are more intimate. They beat YouTube if the recipient is jogging, performing manual operations, needs tranquillity.

Wealth of podcasts on the internet is partially ordered by directories such as www.podcastalley.com, www.podcastdirectory.com, www.odeo.com. In Poland, an attempt to organise podcasts is undertaken e.g. by www.polskiepodcasty.pl directory. Ranking is won by the podcast called *Molium*, describing itself as "memoir audition for bookworms", and the author "enjoys free monologues containing the impressions from lecture, topped with many digressions"³⁸. However, the website is missing updates and inventiveness. On the other hand, these attributes can be assigned to the second PolCaster podcasting national conference. Two editions in 2015 and 2016 have shown that the podcasters environment is strong, but needs tools and support in order to expand the audience. Particular deficit concerns the profits from advertising appropriately configured with the message. In the West, the advertising potential of podcasting caused podvertising to flourish. In 2015, spending on advertising in podcasts amounted to approx. 80 million dollars. Advertisers are derived mainly from the circle of podcast patronage companies (e.g. Hewlett Packard) or Audible.com selling audiobooks. In Poland, it is currently difficult to speak about podvertising. Podcasters themselves argue that they invest first, to sell their products later, hoping for eventual grow in the popularity of the podcast and the opportunity to earn from accompanying ads. Data on the popularity of their production usually comes from Facebook. The conversion, which is the ratio of views on Facebook in relation to how many people will go to the podcast, does not have to be impressive to continue the activities (5% is not bad at all). Podcasters are trying to popularise their productions by contacts from the distribution list (those who like the podcast, subscribe

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ <http://polskiepodcasty.pl/molium/> [accessed: 22.09.2016].

in there), selling books, recorded courses, etc., advertising on Facebook tailored to the target (interests, gender, age), where consumers provide the data about themselves or about the reception method (computers or mobile devices). Also, location is significant (expansion of references to the podcast websites through the network of friends and fans on Facebook). To increase the number of people who like the podcast, the authors monitor the residing areas of fans and manage their ads there. Usually, friends are geographically correlated. A similar effect results from cooperation with related profiles, exchange of posts and “likes”, posting interesting content on the fan page that can trigger interest in a link to the podcast. Podcaster’s activity on related thematic groups contributing to community involvement is also rewarded by Facebook, which suggests (free of charge) to like the page of a given podcaster. Another promotion tool can be reversed guest posts – content created by the author is accepted by a different host and made available to their audience (and he leaves his link there)³⁹.

Summary

Podcasting technology, after more than a decade since its creation, is still being perfected, and the creators who use it gain popularity in the mainstream media. The most famous podcasters landed in leading TV stations, and podcasts hosted celebrities from the world of politics and culture. Sarah Koenig, the hostess of one of the famous American podcasts *Serial*, appeared in a well-known program *The Colbert Report* run by an American comedian, actor and producer, Stephen Colbert. Arnold Schwarzenegger participated in the show of a widely read American writer Tim Ferriss, and Barack Obama visited the Marc Maron’s Garage to appear in an episode of the series of podcasts *WTF*⁴⁰. Podcasting has its official day – 30 September – called the International Podcast Day. Its chief task is to promote the podcast through education and social commitment⁴¹. Such examples point to the podcast as a phenomenon that has already gained its place on the media map.

Referring to the question posed at the beginning of the article, about the factors supporting the development of podcasting, we should – on the basis of those considerations – indicate the following:

- availability on mobile devices, especially smartphones
- modernisation of phone apps increasing search engines speed and comfort of listening to podcasts

³⁹ M. Jaworski, *Reklama i marketing podcastu* [Advertisement and marketing of podcast], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yEXVdntbzs> [accessed: 13.07.2016].

⁴⁰ <http://www.wtfpod.com> [accessed: 20.09.2016].

⁴¹ <https://internationalpodcastday.com/about-npd/> [accessed: 10.09.2016].

- popularisation of crowdfunding websites
- development of the advertising potential in podcasting
- integration of telecommunications networks with mobile audio systems

Smartphone users have access to cutting-edge technology to listen to podcasts on their phone by *search* option without the need to subscribe, with the navigation on the bottom of the screen, ability to pause, rewind and accelerate, and to browse the internet or use the phone while listening⁴². A magnet for listeners would also be the reception mode allowing to select favourable circumstances for listening to the content. Source of podcasting popularity lies partly in the radio-originated habit of listening while carrying out other activities. This means that the sound does not interfere with the work performed, but it can even prevent from its monotony.

Increased interest in podcasting revealed its advertising potential, which resulted in the development of podvertising, usually stimulated by large patronage companies. As for the questions about the motivations of entities in the podcasting market, it should be noted that the success of podcasting is the result of mentality and efficiency of audio industry decision makers and the progress of projects that integrate the best podcasters and support them in attracting the larger audience. Therefore, despite the global trends, lack of monitoring of podcast market in Poland prevents the implementation of a coherent strategy for its development. The habit of supporting podcasts' creators with voluntary regular donations in form of crowdfunding is still shaping in Poland, and podvertising barely exists. Without innovation in this field, podcasting in Poland will be additional, though modest source of revenue for radio broadcasters and a hobby for individual creators who are satisfied with minimal profits that secure the podcast existence and small number of fans.

Does podcasting have the potential to revolutionise the audio industry formula? In recent years, Google's statistics noted a 30% growth per year, but, on the other hand, only 17% of the population listened to podcasts every month. In fact, the growth of podcasts ratings has been halved in the past two years⁴³. In addition, the strong tradition of listening to the radio among older users, and the popularity of videocasting and new technologies among people aged 16+ diversified the podcasts audience. It seems, however, that in addition to the technological factors that generate growth in the number of devices and apps which enable

⁴² <http://techcrunch.com/2016/04/20/now-you-can-listen-to-podcasts-right-in-googles-mobile-app/> [accessed: 12.04.2016].

⁴³ <http://techcrunch.com/2015/07/18/the-future-of-podcasting/> [accessed: 15.05.2016].

listening to podcasts, the key to expand the audience would be both the quantity and quality of available materials.