# Exploring Egyptian Podcasts as an Alternative Medium Challenging Social Taboos in Egypt

**Amira Dessouki, Hatem Samir, Salma Abdelmagied\* and Sylvia George**

*Faculty of Mass Communication, Misr International University, Cairo, Egypt*

## Abstract

Podcasts started to be an alternative medium that is used in different fields which in most times escape censorship limits. Using the Uses and Gratifications theory, this research hypothesizes that there is a correlation between limited censorship on podcasts and the recent rise in podcast listeners and that the more taboos are tackled in podcasts the more demand there is for them. The tested hypotheses were correct. Nine research questions were answered with data gathered from 3 in-depth interviews and 3 discourse analyses of Arabic podcast episodes. The results showed the preferred platforms, content and types of podcasts of Egyptian youth.

**Keywords:** Podcas • Egypt • Arabs • Censorship • Education • Politics • Health • Entertainments • Alternative Media • Audio Content • Taboos • Discourse analysis • In-depth interviews

## Introduction

Podcasts are a new type of media that emerged only recently as a modernized version of radio or how some call it radio on-demand. With the pace that the world is going with, listening instead of watching or reading could be an extremely convenient way to air stories or information whilst being engaged in other activities such as work, chores, studying or hobbies. Podcasts among many other types of content such as social media and YouTube can be referred to as alternative media.

Alternative media is defined as media sources that are separate or divergent from established and dominant types of media such as television, radio and newspapers. Podcasts, social media, and YouTube are considered alternative media. As it is an independent media, it give a chance to marginalized groups to have a voice. It differs from the dominant media in terms of content, production and distribution.

Podcasts can be produced by anyone with a voice recorder and an internet connection. Anyone could express their thoughts or air their opinion on social or political matters. With podcasts, anyone can have their own 'Ted Talk' or series of 'Ted Talks' where they would have multiple episodes. The podcast user can invite guests and create a conversational podcast rather than a monologue on a certain matter. Podcasts can be used for stand-up comedy, storytelling, teaching school subjects, raising awareness on social issues or educating the growing generations of medical topics such as gynecology, ADHD and depression as well as many other psychological and mental disorders.

Until recently, some topics were not accepted in conversations due to social norms, let alone in the media. Some negative behaviors that were rarely questioned in the past are being tackled in podcasts and that plays a role in the shift from narrow-mindedness to broad-mindedness in the Egyptian society. Egypt - being a conservative society in a developing world started to accept

discussing some matters that are raised by the new generations and were forbidden to discuss in public before.

In traditional media, such subjects are still heavily censored and it was found to be dangerous for journalists and public figures to mention without being reprimanded. But censorship in podcasts is seen to be limited as many podcasters discuss topics such as sex education, narrow-minded traditions and manners in dealing with others, negative behaviors in public places, cultural alienation and class discrimination. It has been a shocking change for many traditionalists but for others who finally got a voice, it was a relief. The nature of the media is changing and there will no longer be a need to fight for representation as podcasts, blogs, social media and YouTube have given a chance for anyone to bring to light issues that were otherwise ignored in traditional media.

In this paper the researchers will examine how podcasts are an alternative medium that transcends the boundaries of censorship and societal cultural taboos. Through the lens of censorship and social taboos, the study analyzes the content of three prominent Arabic podcasts, 'Elissa The Podcast', 'Kefaya Baaa' (which means 'enough') and 'The Mother Being', through the lens of censorship, social taboos, the topics discussed, the language used in their episodes, and the impact of these podcasts on a sample of active listeners of Egyptian youth will be examined using depth interviews.

## Literature Review

### Background of podcasts as a medium

Podcasts are audio recordings that may be found online and then streamed or downloaded to a portable media device, such as a computer or smartphone. Journalist Ben Hammersley inadvertently coined the term in 2004 in an attempt to characterize a new occurrence he was reporting on. Since then, podcasts have been increasingly popular, thanks to the arrival of iPhones and iTunes in 2005, which included a podcast application that made accessing and distributing podcasts much simpler. The dissemination of these media files in a digital format is referred to as podcasting [1].

Podcasting at the start was often conceptualized similarly to radio, which was originally defined as a solely auditory media bearing no visual identity [2]. Radios are more broad, tough to get into and require equipment, plenty of editing and organization to be produced and broadcast. They don't offer much communication opportunities with the hosts and are not as accessible for everyone. In a media world ruled by mobile applications, going to a website to listen to the radio is less convenient that playing an episode over and over again whenever you like on an audio application. It is like radio on-demand

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***Address for Correspondence**: Salma Abdelmagied, Faculty of Mass Communication, Misr International University, Cairo, Egypt, Tel: 01062416943, E-mail: salma1401390@miuegypt.edu.eg*

much like Netflix is video on demand and audio streaming firms planned to do to radio shows what Netflix did to TV shows [3].

Podcasts can often be recordings of a conversation between a host and a guest speaker, just like the ones one used to listen to on the radio, or a single monologue of a person sharing his or her thoughts on a certain topic, concept, event or media [4]. Podcasting can require as little as just a digital voice recorder and software to upload the recordings onto a suitable web page. Thus, the basic technology is cheap, easy to use and portable [5].

The flexibility of listening and the relative lack of editorial and formal scrutiny in the production marks podcasts as a different, more radical, and more culturally urgent medium than what the radio is like. No matter how deep or obscure someone interests are, there will be a podcast for them, and there is little to nothing that can stop one from starting their own podcast. Podcasting culture thus manages to be both personal and communal. That is related to the active choice the listener has to exercise, and the modes of consumption whether it is through headphones, a stereo system, through the car speakers or other modes. In the end it is a one-on-one experience chosen by the user [6].

When it comes to picking a podcast, the audience know exactly what they want and go specifically for the content of their interest. The two-way communication that podcast offers is much more attainable and flowing than that of the radio that is quite inflexible. With comments and shared lives, the audience can connect with the podcaster and even participate in the discussions of the podcast. Some podcasts may be based on this type of communication in the first place, where each episode is with a bulk of the audience on a public matter. Podcasts are also more portable, flexible and accessible than the radio as it only requires an internet connection. There are podcasts on YouTube, Anghami, Spotify and apple music on every single smartphone and they don't need much effort or equipment to be produced. Anyone can produce a podcast with a recorder and a platform of choice. It's the most basic and raw way and it works.

According to podcastinsights.com, 80% of podcast consumers listen to all or most of each podcast episode and follow 7 shows per week on average. Comparing to music listeners, podcast listeners are more loyal, affluent, educated and have a higher purchasing power [3].

Podcast offer a serial production which some audio scholars saw as fitting for fictional thrillers, and described Serial as consistent of component parts that break down to form the spine of a structure that audio dramatists can use. Podcasting was found to be a viable alternative platform for content creators and storytellers especially. It plays with the humane aspect of storytelling and gossip, making listening to a podcast very similar to the act of listening to a friend tell a story. When listening to stories and thrillers during the day, the indulging experience leads a listener to start to care about what is happening and they end up not wanting leave the podcast episode without listening to the whole story [2].

There is a need to produce and upload podcast episodes at a pace where people don't forget what's happening, but at the same time, some scholars believe that the consistency of traditional public radio is outdated. Having an inconsistent release schedule is more similar to what happens in the real world with telling and hearing stories. Podcasting is fast production and unrestricted distribution process are found to be pivotal to narrative, allowing a story to be updated and diverted at any minute and enabling a more immersive and interactive narrative than traditional media might allow nowadays [2].

It was noted in a paper that studied two Brazilian podcasts, that there was an increase of listeners over the years, possibly due to the internet popularization and the rapid increase of mobile phones. Scientific content was found to be uninvestigated, despite the great interest of the public. Amusing and informal podcasts were the most appealing to the public and they usually listened to them on informal sites [7]. Podcasting not only removes global barriers to reception but also removes key factors hindering the growth and spread of internet radio, its mobility, its intimacy and its ease of use. This is a scenario where audiences are producers, where the technology we already have, takes on new roles and where audiences, cut off from traditional media, rediscover their voices and gain them back in alternative media [8].

## The uses of podcasting in education, health and politics

The learner-control and flexibility that Podcasting provides is found to be the most obvious way in which it can support constructive learning. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that experimenting with podcasting tools and technologies is pedagogically fruitful for both learners and teachers. Podcasting offers learners and teachers: flexibility and learner control as well as opportunities for learner motivation, clarity of instruction, novelty and engagement, the widening of 'locations' in which learning is situated, opportunities for engagement with and collaboration around dialogue and, opportunities for learners to get involved in the construction of learning for others by creating their own podcasts [9]. A lecturer can also give students more control by recording a lecture and making it available for download. The lecture can be listened to at a time when the learner is most receptive to it. They can also repeat it again if they feel inclined [10].

One study aimed to identify and develop teaching strategies and resources suited to large classes in science, such as creation by students of 'new media' like podcasts. There is considerable potential to link new media with modern learner-centered pedagogical approaches, where students learn through active engagement with content and with peers. Moreover, new media was found to have increasing relevance professionally and engage university students in authentic tasks and work integrated learning. Podcast were found to be used in education more frequently. For example, learning complex subjects through listening to an educative podcast on Youtube or Spotify proved to have positive results on students. Creating a three-minute podcast about a fundamental chemistry concept was set as a minor assignment in a large university and according to an anonymous class survey results, students considered this assignment a positive educational experience [5].

A pedagogical model has been suggested in Warren Kidd's study to help listeners/learners receive their information. The model was quite similar to the structure and format of any podcast not just an educational one. The model is as follows:

• Recording short files works best (between 3 and 8 minutes), making it easier to retain the attention of learners/ listeners.

• It is important to announce the program/context at the very start of each podcast.

• It helps to inform listeners of the nature of the audio if three or four key words are identified at the start of each podcast which are subsequently then picked up and used/developed through the recording in order to 'locate' the content for the listener.

• The frequent use of the technique of counting and summarizing points provides a means to locate the audience within the audio.

• Recordings can adopt the use of specialist language, and also give time for the definition of this language and its deconstruction all through the recordings.

• Each podcast recording can be recapped at the end using the same key words that it started with [9].

In higher education, podcasts offer portability, flexibility, and convenience as well as the possibility of listening anywhere at any time. It also helps with multitasking while on the move especially with the easy Internet access. Applications like Spotify offer the chance to listening to an episode repeatedly and controlling the speed of playback. It is convenient for learners and enthusiasts as it is a free and individual choice of what to listen to. With the Covid-19 pandemic the case in 2020, learning shifted to be more digitally inclined and podcasts helped a lot in the learning process as it had enhanced services to distance and online students [11].

Based on the taxonomy developed by Carvalho, et al. in 2008, podcasts could be classified into four types: Informative, where the speaker teaches different concepts, presents analysis', description of tools or equipment, reading of excerpts/poems, etc.; Feedback/Comments where the teacher provides feedback to students' assignments and group work; Guidelines in which the speaker/teacher states the guidelines to fieldwork and to practical

work; Recommendations about studying, group dynamics, reflective learning, etc. and Authentic materials, such as interviews, news, radio programming, etc. that students may listen to as examples or reference to certain subjects [11].

Many learning institutions which have integrated podcasting in their education system, have reported extremely positive results. This can be credited to the ease of producing and consuming podcasts as well as the many ways in which education podcasts improve the students' learning experience. Many advantages of podcasting in education have been found and even though podcasts are mostly characterized as on-demand internet radio talks.

With podcasts, a listener can pick and choose the content and style that fits their particular lesson or study material, and it could range from fictional stories to educational and inspirational TED talks, current events/world news to history, sports to pop culture/ entertainment, as well as investigative journalism. Using an array of styles and structures from different podcasts can help a teacher keep their teachings method in class fresh and engaging, and podcasts can also expose students to a wide variety of styles of communication, including narration, casual dialogue, scripted dialogue, and interviews. In addition to that, there is the possibility of featuring diverse subjects and materials to keep a class exciting and give students access to a whole world of knowledge and wisdom. Podcasts can provide new subject material that was not an option with traditional textbooks [4].

As for the use of podcasts in health and well-being, the ability for digital communication to improve clinical practice is quite promising. Podcasts will continue to play a significant role in interactions with students, peers, and patients, given their popularity and growing nature. Podcasts are a rapidly growing social media phenomenon in medicine, with roots in critical care and increasingly spreading to other fields. There has been a steady but considerable spread of podcast use in gynecology, aided by the quick rise in popularity of social media platforms and the benefits of accessibility, universality, and portability [1].

An intriguing aspect of constructive learning is the possibility of social presence, or online social engagements and connections with fellow learners and an instructor or expert. It can affect the quality and quantity of contact, enthusiasm, and involvement, according to the University of Southern Queensland, but it was not more difficult to form connections online than in a classroom [10].

One study showed that developing and promoting health and research-related podcasts is practical. They also stated that more research is necessary to identify the best ways to develop and promote medical educational podcast sessions to maximize audience reach. An understanding of audience reach stimulates co-learning, and help grow the knowledge of both community members and health care practitioners or researchers. For instance, podcasts are a platform often used in Free Open Access Medical education (FOAM). The FOAM movement has shifted the way health care practitioners communicate with each other and serves as a supplement to traditional pedagogical methods to grow the knowledge of medical students. In addition to that, the use of social media platforms like podcasts promotes the translation of evidence-based medicine to the medical community to increase knowledge [12].

Using self-reported data from an internally collected survey of 10,089 subscribers to The Curbsiders, Justin Berk and his colleagues found that approximately 38% identified as internists, specialists, faculty, or post-training physicians; 23% as residents or fellows; 20% as advanced practitioners such as physician assistants or nurse practitioners and 15% identified as students. Podcast audiences also extend across the spectrum of practitioners, educators, and trainees. Whether formally or informally, podcasting will undoubtedly become a key component of medical education. As more clinician educators adopt this approach, robust research should be conducted to determine how and when they may best be employed to improve learner outcomes. More research is needed to see how podcasts may be tailored for information retention while also benefiting the hidden curriculum. Clinician educators must be included in the discussion in order to build on what has already been accomplished and to determine how to critically assess resources in the future [13].

The use of podcasts in politics has been studied by many researchers. In 2012, South Korea finalized a presidential election that displayed a high level of political participation through podcast-based Internet use and smartphone access. Podcasts and social media were found to be very popular when it comes to politics and social participation. 'Naneun Ggomsuda' (NGS) is a podcast that was ranked first in the world among Korean-speaking users for political participation [14]. This important podcast is growing fast in popularity and acts as an alternative for traditional media in political and societal conversations. Those who understand Korean politics and language throughout the world can access this program, regardless of time or geographical location [14]. Koo and their colleagues described the new phenomenon of podcast media that discuss social and political issues as having an overall favorable and productive results [14].

Naneun Ggomsuda podcasters made innovative use of podcasting as an alternative medium for politics in Korea. The four producers audaciously covered controversial political issues while avoiding domestic censorship by using the iTunes server in the U.S [15]. NGS was not a professionally polished media outlet. The four panelists utilized casual and lively conversation methods to encourage listeners to perceive the podcast as a form of entertainment. The NGS team also engaged the listeners through a group of new communication platforms, both online such as Twitter and offline such as "Talk Concerts" which is a hybrid form of events between public talks and concerts as well as book signings [14].

## Censorship in the cyberspace

Previous literature has claims that we are experiencing a polarization of the 'digital native' and the 'digital immigrant' which are sometimes referred to as a 'global citizen' or 'digital citizen' whose and reference point for identity construction is cyberspace itself [9]. Thus, content such as podcasts play a big role in the awareness of the audience of some matters that may influence their personalities and educate them on various topics. This challenged censorship boundaries in certain countries as the new media emerged to be a wild and uncontrollable place for users to self-express and speak their views more boldly.

Censorship over local media varies from country to country in the Middle East and North Africa. Some impose total control of the traditional media, which tend to act as the mouthpiece of their current regime. But in some countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait and Morocco, journalists are permitted some freedom. Even still, there is always a distinct distrust by these country's young population of their country's state run media. The Middle East region is dominated by large state-owned operators such as Etisalat in UAE, STC in KSA and Omantel in Oman etc. "Most of these operators have either a direct or indirect government backing which limits the ability of operators to freely launch and/or deploy services especially the new upcoming social networking services such as social media and on-demand services like Netflix and Spotify." Purohit continued to state that these restrictions are there because of the conservative regimes adopted by most of the Middle East governments and their dictation that telecom regulators are to follow. Just like with everything else, the more you suppress things the more there public is drawn to them and the more there is emotion in using them. The same is the case with social networking services and taboo topics that can be easily tackled in said social media [16].

YouTube has allowed creators and creatives to make a name for themselves without subjecting themselves to the traditional gatekeepers of media conglomerates.

Independent performers have used podcasts and videos for commentary and for producing diverse content on various topics that would be censored and banned from other more traditional media [17]. The problem of extreme censorship and heavy gate-keeping is a problem faced by many countries such as Egypt, India, and China.

The internet was able to give its users the chance to create new 'imagined selves, and imagined worlds' and has the potential to create communities of sentiment that operate beyond the boundaries of a nation and its gate-keeping activities. YouTube and other social media platforms have definitely allowed for the arrival of these types of communities, including new media spaces and

discursive networks, such as digital comedians with large subscriber bases and commentators. Freedom of speech is not absolute in many countries and the restrictions could be for reasons such as security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, the danger of disturbing the public order, attack on decency or morality, contempt of court as well as defamation, incitement to offence and conflict and speech against sovereignty and integrity of a country. The freedom from censors and gatekeeping has become breeding ground for comedy content such as satirical parodies and comedy sketches on a range of issues such as regionalism, corruption, superstition, gender discrimination, and political and media institutions. The narratives of such comedy content use the acceptance of satire and parody as a possible way to talk about social matters and critically engage with issues in the nations. This sort of engagement might be considered a form of social movement [17].

In the middle of the global pandemic, and worldwide mandated Covid-19 quarantine, in a Twitter thread of three tweets, Kenan Thompson, longtime cast member of Saturday Night Live announced that due to boredom, having watched everything on Netflix, and looking for something new, he and his longtime friend, Tani Marole, had decided to begin a podcast called You Already Know. Thompson and Marole joined millions of other podcasters worldwide, some celebrities and highly influential people and some just your average citizen, who choose to broadcast their everyday thoughts and perspective with fans and listeners [18]. This example shows that anyone could start a podcast at any given time, talk about whatever they want and gain a niche. It is also showing how the mandatory quarantine during the Covid-19 pandemic led many people to try alternative media content, in terms of consumption and production. According to Bratcher, research on podcasts indicated that the industry was growing fast. In 2018, a report found that 73 million people in the US listen to a podcast at least once a month [18]. Even more, statistical data on podcasts showed that activity is probably going to continue to increase, especially with how podcast use has more than doubled in the last seven years, increasing 122% since 2014 [19].

For individuals looking to express themselves freely without interference from the state, it is easy to see the appeal of recording your speaking voice on your mobile and uploading it to the web. It certainly draws less attention than establishing a radio transmitter, buying studio equipment and broadcasting live over closely watched airwaves. For a group of podcasters wanting to make their voices heard in Vietnam, podcasting was found to be the perfect means to it. The first Loa.fm podcast appeared in April 2015 and was produced by a global team of contributors, under editor Quyen Ngo. It is to present time committed to covering challenging stories, notwithstanding of their level of political sensitivity, and its largest audience share whose growth is ongoing, is in Vietnam itself. Podcasts have therefore proven themselves to be the perfect tool to share knowledge and information in the world's most highly censored areas such as Vietnam [20].

### Knowledge gap and criticism

It has been found that there were no researches conducted on podcasts and podcasting in Egypt as well as podcast censorship in Egypt. There also weren't found papers and studies on self-development and mental health podcasting which are a hot trend nowadays on social media. Most of the researches found focused on the academic side of education and not self-learning on topics like psychology or sociology or self-help. None of the studies applied any distinct theory and only one has been found to apply the uses and gratifications theory which is why the researchers decided that it would be the most suitable theory for this academic research on podcast censorship.

### Problem statement

This research investigates how podcasts are challenging taboos and pushing censorship boundaries as well as exploring their effects on Egyptian youth. The research analyzes two prominent Egyptian podcasts through the lens of censorship, examining their language and their topics as well as their effect on society. This is important because podcasts are playing a major role in spreading open-mindedness in Egypt and raising awareness of negative social behaviors that need to be reduced or stopped. Theoretical framework The Uses and Gratifications theory will be the theory used for this paper. It

is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek certain media and certain content, how it satisfies their needs and gratifies them. It is an audience centered approach in understanding mass media.

Elihu Katz was the first to introduce the Uses and Gratification Approach, when he started believing that people use the media to their benefit. The idea emerged in the early 1970's as Katz and his two colleagues, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch continued to expand the perspective. This theory was a modern concept because it opposed many older views that had assumed that the audience was a passive group and consumed only what was given to them. The Uses and Gratifications Approach presents the audience as active force, meaning that they actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results or attain gratifications that satisfy their personal needs [21].

The Use of Mass Communication, "Studies have shown that audience gratifications can be derived from at least three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media per se, and social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media." [22]. Audiences use the media in diverse ways that fit them relatively. Some use it to kill time, while others to communicate with their friends and family. Sometimes, people use it to heighten their self-worth and sometimes, they use it to be updated with the events of the world.

The uses and gratifications theory indicates that motivations for information access affect user satisfaction. This theory was found to be useful in explaining the behavior of people using many new communication technologies and applications.

In 2015, nothing threatened the new media that has emerged like the digital media did with traditional media before. But many new forms of media were added to the world where the use of new technologies was not immediately obvious and so, there needed to be a theory to study and measure what exactly attracts users to specific media and how it benefits them [23].

The Uses and Gratification theory is suitable for this research because young people are disconnected from modern broadcast radio and usually seek out new forms of audio consuming online or ways to choose their own music over radio [8].

## Research questions and hypothesis

### Research questions

**Podcast preferences in Egypt:**

•What are the most popular podcast genres for Egyptian podcast listeners?

• What is the most preferred length for Egyptian Podcast listeners?

• What are the types of audio media that can be considered a podcast?

### Podcasts *vs.* Radio:

• What is the definition of podcasts for Egyptians?

• Can podcasting take the place of the radio?

• Would Egyptians like podcasts when visual media is available?

### Impact of podcasts on the Egyptian audience:

• How accessible are podcasts for the Egyptian audience?

• Can a podcast change someone's mindset in Egypt?

### Hypotheses

•There is a correlation between limited censorship on podcasts and the recent rise in podcast listeners:

Independent variable: Limited Censorship

Dependent variable: The Rise in Podcast Listeners

• The more taboos are tackled in podcasts the more demand there is for them:

Independent variable: Taboos tackled

Dependent variable: Rise in Demand

## Definitions

- **Censorship:** The suppression or prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.

- **Taboos:** A social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing.

- **Podcasts:** A digital audio file made available on the internet for downloading to a computer or mobile device, typically available as a series, new instalments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.

- **Demand:** The desire of consumers, clients, employers, etc. for a particular commodity, service, or other item.

# Methodology

## Methods

A qualitative technique will be used in the form of 2 in-depth interviews with an educated female and an educated male member of the active podcast audiences of the 'Kefaya Ba2a' and 'The Mother Being' podcasts. Content analysis will also be used in form of a critical discourse analysis of an episode from each podcast.

## Population and sampling for the in-depth interviews

Active podcast listeners, educated Egyptians aged between 18 and 24. They will be picked out from Misr International University as it has a diverse community and the possibility of having individuals who like podcasts as well as them fitting in the age group required.

## Discourse analysis discussion

The podcast episode analyzed was one by Elissa about love and relationships. It was 8 minutes long and Elissa the famous Lebanese singer spoke in a conversational and relatable manner to the audience in form of monologue about love and relations with those close to us. The style of speech is touching and intimate making the listener feel like they are with someone dear and like the conversation is happening in real life.

There is background music that helps the listener get into the mood especially with the dialect being Lebanese which could sound like a delicate romantic language to many listeners.

Elissa being a romance singer and a woman who had breast cancer and who got a lot of love and support from fans and other celebrities during and after the operation. This is something that usually doesn't happen in the media's 'moving on' nature. The messages of the podcast were motivational, uplifting and empowering especially for listeners who may be suffering from depression, mental illness or suicidal thoughts.

The podcast episode had elements of comedy, anecdotes, self-deprecating jokes that can make the audience feel closer to the podcaster and feel like they are one of them and not in fact a celebrity. Closer to the end of the episode the monologue started being more informative, inclusive of lifestyle advice, a little about Elissa's personal experiences, and a little guidance. There was a sponsor mentioned at the start if the episode which was Dove. Sponsoring in podcasts allows creators to be more creative.

# Results and Discussion

## Background information about the respondents

The Interviewees were introduced to podcast listening through friends mostly, and found them on YouTube or Apple Podcasts. The idea of alternative media seemed more appealing to some interviewees and were excited to explore this new type of media. For some it turned into a daily routine that has been ongoing for over 4 and 5 years.

## Podcasting consumption habits

The genre preferences of the interviewees varied between comedy, true crime, history, storytelling, financial independence, political podcasts, and political satire, mental health and psychology. Some preferred to consume podcasts on YouTube, others preferred Spotify or Apple Podcasts.

Most preferred to listen in the evening, after work or in commute when they were too tired to focus and preferred to listen to something interesting.

Some of the podcasts referred by the interviewees were: Dark History, Vulgar History and Psychology in Seattle, The Jordan B. Peterson Podcast, Radio Kafr El-Sheikh El Habiba, "Kefaya Ba2a, This is Love, Kalam Yenawar and Podcast 11, The Blue Planet podcast, Jules and James, Mother Being, Pajamas.

Most usually listened to their podcasts while doing other tasks, often preferring to have some kind of background noise for when they were doing an especially tedious task.

One interviewee stated that "podcasts mimic a real-life conversation and like that it can make them feel less alone and can also work well when playing in the background."

In terms of drawbacks, the interviewees had a unified opinion and it was that podcasts are not as immersive as film so distractions can take away from the attention and that some podcasts aren't consistent with their uploads which can be frustrating to the listeners. They all rated its convenience to be above 7 on the scale of 1 to 10.

## Favourite platforms of Egyptian youth

To some Spotify was found to be more comfortable for user because it consumes less data and gives more priority to free platforms than paid ones. Apple Podcasts was found to be the more convenient application for others especially with its large directoy. Other Podcast platforms mentioned in the interviews were Podeo, and Anghami.

All podcast listeners preferred the free service over the paid one in all above mentioned applications that have the option to choose.

## Attitudes towards content

The interviewees preferred the podcast hosts to be charismatic, honest, direct, informative and uncensored. Some interviewees also added the need for freshness and cleverness, requiring hosts to have suitable mannerism of voice, alertness, witty and the possession of a dark sense of humor. Most interviewees preferred monologue podcasts over celebrity ones because they find conversations with celebrities boring and less about the information and more about the publicity. They called it the "one-man show" type of podcasts because they want to feel like they are in a conversation with the host. Another trait that appeared to be important was the personality of the host, which is often, reflected in their opinion on certain public matters especially the taboo ones that the traditional media shy away from tackling.

Only one interviewee stated that there were more into podcasts that have guests and enjoy the interaction and different opinions of each guest. The reason is that with a scripted one man show the content can be planned out and delivered in a certain way that is less spontaneous that podcasts with guests. "The podcasts that bring on guests offer more Q and As and show the expertise of the guests, which I find very interesting," said the interviewee when asked to elaborate.

They were to present an interesting topic as well as good editing and non-monotonous delivery of their monologue. Most interviewees liked shorter podcasts, no more than 30 minutes long. One interviewee noted that "the audience participation is more prevalent in podcasts than in traditional media which allows for listeners to feel more involved."

# Conclusion

The in-depth interviews proved fruitful as they provided a better insight on what Egyptian youth prefer in podcasts and what their attitudes towards the content is. Podcasts are concluded to be Audio files that could vary in length, feature a host and an interesting topic. They at times are recorded in the form of a monologue and at times in the form of interviews with celebrities, experts and prominent figures. Egyptian youth view podcasts as a medium with no censorship noting that it is its biggest perk and state that it is better than the radio, more convenient and honest as well as a sort of simulation of a conversation with the host. With their growing popularity of on-demand media and the increase in the pace of a user's life, podcasts would replace the radio if it hasn't already, at least among youth thanks to its accessibility and the possibility to consume it while multitasking.

The genres most prominent among podcast listeners in Egypt was psychology, comedy and mental health in addition to other less popular genres such as true crime, history and politics. To the Egyptian youth, there are two types of podcasts which are the "One-ManShow" where the host holds a monologue about a certain topic or Podcasts with guests where several opinions could be voiced in the form of an interview. The most popular platforms of all in Egypt due to their accessibility are Spotify, Anghami, Apple Podcasts and YouTube.

Egyptians mostly prefer podcasts to be shorter lengths and don't always prefer visual media over audio. To Egyptian youth, each media has its time and place and podcasts work very well in commutes, road-trips, and before bed when one needs to rest their eyes and unwind.

When testing the hypotheses, the researchers found that there indeed is a positive correlation between limited censorship on podcasts and the recent rise in podcast listeners. It was quite clear that Egyptian listeners found the directness and honesty of a podcast host more appealing that a Radio channel's scripted audio.

The researchers also noted that while tackling taboos in podcasts didn't specifically lead to more demand for them, it didn't push listeners away and was an additional feature that was found appealing by the Egyptian youth. But the fact that it is a relatively new medium in Egypt slows its growth in popularity and currently users start listening to podcast more due to word of mouth rather than publicity.

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