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*Comparing Podcast Systems: a theoretical framework
for the analysis of news-podcasts in Europe*

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to establish a connection between the realms of podcasting and journalism through the specific theoretical perspective of «journalism models», as introduced in 2004 by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini. After a brief review of the literature concerning the relationship between Media Systems and digital media, this study seeks to answer two research questions. The first investigates whether the variables used to study journalism models can also be applied to news podcasts, examining them one by one with a focus on podcasting. The second question takes a more practical approach, attempting to apply the methodological framework described above through the study of two news podcasts from different European regions, each representing distinct «journalism models»: *Giorno per Giorno*, the podcast of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, and *Forklart*, its Norwegian counterpart from *Aftenposten*. The findings highlight the potential applicability of this research framework to podcasts, despite limitations related to data availability and the restricted scope of the two selected cases. These findings pave the way for future research to expand the field.

KEYWORDS: podcast; media systems; journalism; digital media; interviews

Introduction and research questions

The relationship between podcasting and journalism is well-consolidated, both from an empirical perspective – considering the number of informational content designed specifically for the podcast format and distributed as such – and from the point of view of research on this type of content. The reasons for this relationship partially stem from the historical phase podcasting is currently experiencing, characterized by a steady increase in listeners year after year (Edison, 2024).

The question «What is a news podcast?» has arguably been most comprehensively addressed by Nic Newman and his collaborators in two specific reports: *Daily News Podcasts: Building New Habits in the Shadow of Coronavirus* (2020) and the *Digital News Report* of 2023.

These studies classify informational podcasts into four categories: News Round-Ups, Deep Dive/Explanatory, Microbulletins, and Extended Chat (Newman, 2020: 13), with the subsequent work adding a fifth category, *Documentary* (Reuters Institute, 2023: 49).

These five types of news podcasts (henceforth referred to as NPs) have, on the one hand, contributed to conceptualizing the phenomenon, and on the other hand, clarified the complexity of the landscape, particularly in relation to how different information actors utilize this medium. In his book, David O. Dowling (2024) highlights how podcasts can contribute to the information sphere in various ways, a topic closely tied to Newman's categories. As Dowling himself notes: «Each genre defines its past and current trajectory in terms of business model, sound design, narrative aesthetic, and journalistic principle» (*Ivi*: 8).

Thus, it is currently impossible to draw a definitive line of meaning that encapsulates the relationship between podcasting and journalism. This paper focuses on the concept of *journalistic principles* and how these are influenced by the dynamics of podcasting.

Both Newman's categorization and Dowling's observations further emphasize the idea of podcasts as socially constructed products, a notion underscored by Bonini and Perrotta's definition of podcasts as «a complex hybrid cultural form constantly shaped by human and non-human actors» (2023: 34).

The cultural component (Bonini, 2022; Berry, 2022) must take precedence when addressing issues related to this medium. This is because, as stated in the aforementioned definition, podcasting encompasses both intrinsic characteristics – primarily its on-demand consumption model – and numerous aspects derived from radio (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Bonini, 2022). Consequently, any discussion about podcasting necessitates essential cultural premises.

The purpose of this study is to bridge the cultural aspect of podcasting with the journalistic sphere, adopting the perspective proposed by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini's theory of journalism models (2004). This perspective, which centers on the question «Why is the press the way it is?» (*Ivi*: 5), prioritizes cultural components tied to specific geographical areas. Accepting the established connection between podcasts and information, this paper questions whether certain characteristics of Hallin and Mancini's framework could also be applied to the podcasting domain, narrowing the scope to NPs, despite their diversity.

This type of analysis serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it advances the already extensive field of comparative media systems analysis. Indeed, large-scale studies such as Humprecht *et al.* (2022) have highlighted the need for this specific framework to include more focused, qualitative studies on distinct aspects of the media world (*Ivi*: 159).

The first research question can therefore be structured as follows:

RQ1: Can the dimensional variables proposed in *Comparing Media Systems* be applied to the study of news podcasts?

An explanation for choosing a specific medium like podcasting is promptly given. As will be seen, the impact of digital media on media/journalistic systems is highly significant, as the «form of news» affects these systems (Benson

et al., 2012: 24). Considering Newman's classification, NPs represent a specific mode of journalism tailored to this particular medium. Research such as Benson *et al.*'s demonstrates how focusing on single elements within the media system, such as online versions of newspapers, reveals new aspects of media systems as they are understood (*Ibidem*). Therefore, this study focuses on programs explicitly designed as podcasts, avoiding formats that can be easily identified as adaptations from other media.

On the other hand, this study could benefit podcast-specific research by offering an embryonic attempt at classification and comparison. It seeks to determine whether podcasting aligns with pre-existing characteristics (continuity line) or develops according to its own logic (divergence line). In part, this follows the question posed by the original authors regarding the general homogenization of the three models due to factors such as new technologies (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 225). The question is whether podcasts "inherit" the characteristics of different models, leading to the formulation of the second research question:

RQ2: Are NPs influenced by the variables characterizing the different¹ models?

The journalism models' framework is thus "borrowed" for podcasting as a tool for analysis and classification. Referring again to Bonini and Perrotta, the final chapter of their book addresses the question «Where is the medium heading?» (2023: 117), primarily offering arguments focused on comparisons with radio and books. This research aims to provide an additional perspective on that question.

The next section, which also serves as a theoretical framework, delves into the growing importance of digital media and specific case studies in comparative information studies.

Media systems and digital world, a short recap

The journalism models framework has undergone significant evolution over the years, primarily due to attempts at operationalizing its dimensions (Hallin & Mancini, 2017), with Bruggeman's (2014) work remaining one of the most comprehensive in this regard.

Revisiting some essays published after the original work, an important aspect emerges: the need to account for digital media.

The traditional landscape of media systems – originally referring only to

¹ We use "various" without referring to a precise number because from the original models described by Hallin and Mancini, the literature has brought out new ones, with new dimensions and new indicators to refer to.

print and audiovisual media – was challenged by the concept of the *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013). This framework partially formalized the influence of digital media on the previously established panorama, shifting the focus of research towards the relationship between media and politics. While the preferred area of study for HMS themes has been political communication, its implications for journalism and its ontology cannot be overlooked.

Since Chadwick's work, much of the research building upon Hallin and Mancini's original themes has reserved space for the digital realm and its impact on the characteristics of the three models.

In the 2017 update published by the original authors, largely dedicated to attempts at operationalizing dimensions, there is also a section on online media (Hallin & Mancini, 2017: 164). The question posed by the authors partially echoes Benson (2012), though it expands to include a third possibility. They ask whether online information follows a line of convergence or continuity with the models' characteristics, or whether it is influenced by the latter while developing patterns distinct from traditional media.

Internet-based media might be a force for convergence, introducing logics rooted in technology or in a globalized economic models or cultural practices that would undermine existing national differences [...] Another possibility is that we might expect continuity: that Internet media would vary by system, shaped by the already-existing structures and practices [...] A third possibility is that new media would develop differently in different media systems, but in a way that might be discontinuous with previous patterns, depending on niches available in the existing media ecology (Hallin & Mancini, 2017: 164).

However, the two authors do not mention Chadwick's work. A connection between these concepts is instead offered by Mattoni and Ceccobelli's analysis (2018), which aims to expand the theoretical framework of journalism models by considering the characteristics of HMS. Their insight suggests that the original four dimensions are no longer fully sufficient in an increasingly complex media system. They propose a fifth dimension, «grassroots participation» (*Ivi*: 548), encompassing bottom-up forms of information dissemination that do not originate from legacy media.

Today, it is impossible to ignore the impact of non-traditional participation forms on the media landscape of at least Western democracies², whether in terms of citizens' influence on media agendas or their active participation through content production. In this regard, podcasting has become central to

² Consider, for example, the role of podcasts in the last American elections: https://www.stronculture.com/p/il-ruolo-dei-podcast-nella-rielezione?utm_source=publication-search

the appearances of political figures and their role in the public sphere (Koo *et al.*, 2015; Park, 2017; Rae, 2021).

The need to incorporate HMS into comparative media system analysis is also emphasized by Marco Bruno and Alessandra Massa. In their revision of the models (2019), they observe that the internet revolution interacts with multiple dynamics in national information spaces, suggesting: «The study of peculiarities makes it reasonable to maintain national references, which are only partially eroded by internet interconnection» (*Ivi*: 127). This underscores how, on the one hand, the theoretical framework of comparative analysis considering the characteristics of individual models remains valid; but – on the other hand – the most effective way to understand it is to focus on specific aspects that yield the most empirical and observable results.

A more “official” acknowledgment of this issue comes from Mancini himself (2020), who explores a series of viewpoints and considerations regarding the new digital media landscape in relation to the original dimensions:

Digital revolution does not change just the structure and the procedures of the existing media systems, but it also dramatically affects our knowledge at their regard [...] the idea of the national media system is challenged by globalization, but national borders still correspond to specific cultural attitudes, practices, and mostly regulations that determine relevant differences able to identify and limit specific national media systems (Mancini, 2020: 5764).

The final work considered in this brief review is Humprecht *et al.*'s (2022), arguably the most comprehensive empirical study on the relationship between digital media and journalism models for at least two reasons.

First, regarding indicators, the authors' extensive research effort can be seen as a direct continuation of Bruggeman's work in 2014, which successfully experimented with operationalizing dimensions (Hallin & Mancini, 2017: 158). Following the same approach, Humprecht *et al.*'s research also worked on indicators while considering the digital world.

Second, regarding outputs, the study not only introduced a new model – the hybrid model (Humprecht *et al.*, 2022) – but also marked the decline of one of the three originals: «The liberal model as described by Hallin and Mancini has vanished» (*Ivi*: 145).

Beyond the characteristics of the newly identified models, this latest study unequivocally confirms not just the relevance of digital media in a narrow sense but their dynamic impact on the evolution of models.

In conclusion, the authors emphasize:

The results of our study provide a multifaceted picture of how media systems vary in the digital age [...] We emphasize that quantitative approaches such as cluster analysis do not allow us

to describe media systems in their entirety. Therefore, the choice of indicators and countries strongly affects the cluster solution. (*Ivi*: 156).

This further highlights the impact of digital media on the information world and the diverse facets of how this impact manifests.

Methods and results

To answer the two research questions, this study involves two stages of analysis. The first stage involves revisiting the variables – and their respective indicators – proposed by Hallin and Mancini to evaluate their potential application to podcasts, aiming to identify which of these can serve as analytical tools for future empirical research.

The second, more practical, phase consists of analyzing two NPs that – at least theoretically – belong to two different journalism models: *Forklart*, the leading informational podcast by the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, and *Giorno per Giorno*, its Italian counterpart from *Corriere della Sera*. The analysis focuses on semi-structured interviews with the hosts of the two programs, David Vekony (*Aftenposten*) and Francesco Giambertone (*Corriere della Sera*). It is important to note that the research does not aim to generalize the interview results to broader models or establish any formula for generalization. The purpose of this investigation is solely to provide a primarily qualitative interpretation of journalism models in relation to digital media, using NPs as a case study.

Podcast indicators: comparing dimensions

The main challenge of analyzing a single media element rather than the entire system lies in selecting the most relevant indicators. Since 2004, the various iterations of the theoretical framework have been possible largely thanks to operationalization efforts, i.e., deciding which aspects of the dimensions to consider. Similarly, in the case of podcasting, certain aspects appear more pertinent than others, given that podcasts constitute only a part of the media system. It is not feasible to capture all the elements used to “measure” the entire system within a single media component.

Taking into account the references from the previous section, the five³ dimensions characterizing media systems are reviewed below.

³ The original dimensions, as well as those used in the more substantial research by Bruggeman (2014) and Humprecht *et al.* (2022), are four. However, the frame proposed by Mattoni and Ceccobelli (2018), which also considers the grassroots element, characteristic of digital media, will also be considered here.

Podcast market

The podcast market appears to be steadily growing. A range of national and transnational studies demonstrate how podcasting has firmly entered users' media consumption habits (Edison, 2005; Newman, 2020; Reuters Institute, 2023; Ipsos, 2023). While growth trends are consistent, it is challenging to delineate a precise line for NPs specifically.

The indicator used to measure this dimension is perhaps the most straightforward: the numbers related to informational content (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Data on newspaper circulation or radio listenership, with country-specific variations, are generally well-documented and easily accessible.

For digital-only media, however, the situation is more complex. While detailed reports on the overall phenomenon of podcasting are available, no specific data exists on informational programs. This issue is compounded by the role of distribution platforms (Spotify, Apple Podcast, Audible), which restrict access to listenership data, making it difficult to conduct research on digital media without considering these platforms' influence.

Nevertheless, some of the limited data provided by platforms can be leveraged to formulate research hypotheses, even though they do not provide detailed insights. For example, by using the Chartable platform, one can compare the most-listened-to podcasts on Spotify across different countries, noting the positions of NPs to observe trends, similarities, or differences. However, this approach has clear limitations; some programs opt out of mainstream platforms for distribution.

Another potential research approach involves using «uses and gratifications» theories (Perks *et al.*, 2019; Craig, 2023) to profile NP listenership across various models. This second approach is likely more comprehensive, as it delves deeper into audience consumption dynamics, potentially aligning with other indicators proposed by Mattoni and Ceccobelli (2018: 554).

Professionalization of podcasters

The professionalization aspect is arguably the most intriguing to analyze. On one hand, it relates to the increasing professional recognition of the podcaster's role – not in formal terms, but in terms of duties and responsibilities, albeit within the broader category of content creators (Kolo, Haumer & Roth, 2022; Kolo, 2024). On the other hand, it is the aspect most closely aligned with the nuances proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Focusing on individual programs, this analysis examines hosts and creators, particularly two factor: (1) autonomy and (2) background in digital literacy.

Autonomy has been a core theme of professionalization since the original 2004 work. Hallin and Mancini questioned whether and to what extent media professionals perceived editorial pressure in terms of «control over the editorial

process» (*Ivi*: 35). This aspect is particularly relevant to podcasts, especially those produced by journalistic outlets, as it allows observation of the characteristics and interaction dynamics of podcast teams within newspapers. Examples of potential research questions include: 1) How many members make up the podcast team?; 2) What is the relationship with the newspaper's editorial board?; 3) What are the dynamics of editorial meetings?; 4) How is space allocated for podcast content selection?

The background of hosts also lends itself to research practices. Drawing again on Mattoni and Ceccobelli, it is notable that some indicators identified to measure what they call «training in digital literacy» (2018: 552) can also be applied to this study. This analysis would focus on the professional profiles of various speakers to determine the extent of their training and socialization in podcasting practices. Examining the training levels of podcast operators would provide further insight into the significance media outlets attribute to this medium and how they conceptualize it.

These arguments, however, lose relevance when attention shifts from “institutional” podcasts to independent ones created by individual users without mainstream editorial support. Even in such cases, it is possible to trace analytical lines, though they inevitably intersect with the dimension addressed in the next section.

Grassroots participation

One of the defining features of digital media and their associated practices is the opportunity for individuals to actively participate in media processes following bottom-up dynamics. In journalism, the logic of citizen journalism has found wider application with the evolution of technology (Franklin, 2014; Hirst, 2018).

Podcasting is deeply rooted in these dynamics; its origins are characterized by a propensity for independence and leveraging the early Internet's characteristics (Berry, 2006). Although subsequent technological and social evolutions have partially curtailed this inclination toward independence and freedom by confining it to the «walled gardens» of platforms (Sullivan, 2019), podcasts remain a democratizing tool for information creation due to their low entry barriers.

To accurately understand the media-information landscape of a particular model, it is increasingly necessary to include sources of information that are not tied to “legacy” outlets.

The most illustrative example is *The Joe Rogan Experience*, a program whose impact on public opinion⁴ demonstrates how information through podcasts,

⁴ Please refer to the *Digital News Report 2023*. Page 50 of the report lists the *top news podcasts* surveyed in the US, UK and Australia, Joe Rogan's show ranks in the top five in each country.

independent of traditional logic, can influence public perception and, consequently, the structure of information within a specific model. Therefore, understanding how grassroots NPs contribute to media consumption in a given country is critical.

Translated into indicators provided by the literature, the focus could be on the «presence of alternative media outlets» within the podcast domain. Operationally, all programs that have built their work on the opportunities offered by the Internet and new technologies, but with a significant following relevant to the investigation, could be compared. For example, the French podcast *Actus du Jour* by HugoDécrypte is grounded in precisely these premises.

The grassroots aspects of news podcasting intertwine with professionalization. When these programs gain specific relevance within their media landscape, it is also valuable to examine how these actors manage their apparent independence from specific outlets or publishing groups.

Political parallelism

Political parallelism is perhaps the most challenging dimension to address. A deeper examination of its relationship to podcasting quickly reveals the convergence of several previously discussed aspects. In *Comparing Media Systems*, the authors already noted the link between this dimension and professionalization (2004: 39). Within podcasting, things are further complicated by the grassroots dimension. Indeed, it becomes harder to place a particular program within a specific and structured political context, partly due to a general decline in this dimension's relevance. As Mancini notes, «The links became more volatile and less direct, being based just on common ideological and cultural frameworks» (2020: 5769).

This refers to common political matrices that are less tied to specific parties than they once were. Nevertheless, the dimension remains highly useful for analytical purposes. Even if political influence seems less dominant, other factors related to a form of parallelism can still be identified.

Two aspects, in particular, are particularly suited for studying NPs: (1) the connection of professionals with other organizations and (2) the distinction between commentary and news in programs.

The first point relates to what could be seen as a contemporary form of connection with other associations. For instance, branded podcasts, where content is necessarily vetted by funding entities, may be tied to political matrices.

The distinction between news and opinion, meanwhile, has always been integral to media system studies and remains a valid analytical indicator for this dimension. This aspect is relevant given that the “more journalistic”⁵ NPs

⁵ Considering the classification proposed by Newman, as varied as the universe of news podcasts is, it can be perceived in each case which of them have a more “news-oriented” vocation in the strict

often feature a central professional whose recognizable style fosters audience loyalty. The content of such programs frequently blurs the line between factual reporting and personal opinion.

State intervention

In relation to podcasting, this dimension cannot be extensively analyzed as it primarily addresses systemic rather than specific aspects.

However, some nuances could provide interesting insights. For example, analyzing podcast production by public broadcasters could help determine the extent of their investment in this medium in terms of volume and focus, observing which countries pay more or less attention to it. This analysis could be complemented by additional targeted observations, such as examining individual programs or interviewing networks to understand the relevance of podcasts for public service broadcasting.

*Comparing news podcasts in Europe: *Giorno per Giorno* and *Forklart**

The second part of this study consists of analyzing two NPs belonging to different media systems. The aim is to test the approach described in the previous section and address the second research question. The two programs are examined across three⁶ of the five dimensions to identify similarities and differences, with the goal of outlining distinctions.

The central element of the analysis is the semi-structured interviews conducted with the hosts of the two programs.

Podcast description

The selected programs belong to two distinct media systems according to the consulted literature. To ensure the most comparable data, both are “institutional” programs, meaning they operate under similar organizational dynamics.

Giorno per Giorno (GpG) is the flagship podcast of *Corriere della Sera*, Italy’s leading newspaper in terms of circulation⁷. Conversely, *Forklart* (Fk) is its Norwegian counterpart from *Aftenposten*⁸. The two newspapers are generally asso-

sense, both in terms of their relationship with newspapers and in terms of the topics covered.

⁶ Being two “headline” podcasts, the grassroots dimension was not taken into account. *State intervention* also considers aspects that cannot be assessed from the observation of only two products.

⁷ Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/729663/top-daily-newspapers-italy/>

ciated with the Polarized Pluralist model (Italy) and the Democratic Corporatist model (Norway), suggesting that they exhibit differing characteristics.

Despite sharing a similar origin, the two programmes exhibit distinct characteristics that both unify and differentiate them, as outlined in the following brief analysis.

Both programs are freely accessible on their official websites as well as on major streaming platforms. They are produced daily, with an average of one episode per day from Monday to Friday. Exceptions occur on special occasions when multiple episodes are released in a single day, or when releases take place on Sundays. The typical episode duration ranges between fifteen and twenty minutes; however, certain special episodes of the Norwegian podcast, which addresses broader topics⁹, may extend up to fifty minutes.

Another notable similarity concerns the approach to news coverage. Both podcasts rely on interactions with journalists from their respective newspapers to develop content. Each episode follows a consistent structure: an initial brief introduction to the topic by one of the hosts, followed by an in-depth analysis presented by a journalist from the newsroom, and concluding remarks. In both cases, the role of the hosts is primarily limited to introducing the topics to be discussed, while the responsibility for content presentation falls to journalists selected based on their expertise. This characteristic is also highlighted in the descriptions of the podcasts on their respective websites. However, a key distinction emerges between the two countries: the Italian program places greater emphasis on the lead host, Francesco Giambertone, explicitly crediting him with the editorial oversight of the podcast¹⁰. Conversely, the Norwegian program does not prominently feature the hosts' names; instead, an official email address is provided for listeners to submit questions or feedbacks¹¹.

The primary difference between the two podcasts lies in the number of news topics covered. Although both can be classified within the deep dive genre (Newman, 2020: 13), which focuses on an in-depth examination of a limited number of topics, *GpG* covers three news items per episode, whereas *Fk* focuses on just one. Consequently, the time allocated to each news story differs significantly.

In terms of audio production, both shows share similar characteristics. Each episode opens with a background music track accompanying the presentation of the news items, and the editing is kept to a minimum, with cuts made solely to enhance the fluidity of the speech.

⁸ Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/633203/ranking-of-newspapers-in-norway-by-circulation/>

⁹ Cited Episode: "*Kan det bli fred i MidtØsen?*" On Middle-East Issue, 19/01/2025 <https://www.aftenposten.no/podkast/ap/program/100194>

¹⁰ *GpG* Homepage <https://www.corriere.it/podcast/daily/>

¹¹ *Fk* homepage (Cfr. note n. 12)

The interviews

The hosts, Francesco Giambertone (*GpG*) and David Vekony (*Fk*), were asked six questions covering the following themes, aligned with the various dimensions described:

- The role of podcasting in newsrooms.
- The impact of podcasting on the world of journalism.
- The relationship between podcasters and their audience.
- The process of constructing the podcast (selection of news, publication timing, discussions with editorial staff).
- The relationship with distribution platforms (e.g., Spotify).
- The qualities of a good podcaster.
- The relationship between podcasts and “quality” journalism: can everyone do podcast journalism?
- Information via podcasts: objectivity or commentary?

Analysis

Regarding distribution, as previously noted, access to numerical data is unavailable, but certain observations can still be made. Firstly, checking Spotify’s rankings for the most-listened-to podcasts in the two countries reveals that *Fk* is ranked ninth¹², while *GpG* is fifty-seventh¹³. This indicates a significant difference in the two podcasts’ “relevance.”

GpG’s lower position aligns with Giambertone’s comments during the interview, where he noted that his podcast occupies a marginal role within the newspaper’s editorial operations and that there is still limited awareness of the medium’s potential.

In contrast, Vekony described the origins of *Fk* as follows:

There was a sort of a hole in the market where we saw that we could be first [...] It made us a large podcast, and we’ve kept that position. [...] But now we have had a competitor; the State broadcaster has made their own version with a quite similar name and the same concept (Vekony, 2024).

The competitive language used suggests differing perspectives between the two newspapers, which correlates with their respective rankings.

To evaluate professionalization levels, the study explored the educational and professional backgrounds of the two hosts and the dynamics of their podcast teams, particularly in relation to the broader ecosystems of their respective newspapers.

¹² Chartable: <https://chartable.com/charts/spotify/norway-top-podcasts> (29/11/2024)

¹³ Chartable: <https://chartable.com/charts/spotify/italy-top-podcasts?page=2> (29/11/2024)

Francesco Giambertone did not begin as a podcaster and received no specific training in the medium. During the interview, he detailed his journey to hosting *GpG*. After attending a journalism school, he gained diverse experience in journalism, working as a television reporter and covering local news.

Vekony, on the other hand, does not have a journalism background. He studied economics but later developed an interest in audio production, which became his career and ultimately led to his role at *Aftenposten*. It appears that *Corriere della Sera* places more emphasis on the journalistic training of its podcasters, treating them as regular editorial staff with a specific role. Conversely, *Aftenposten* prioritizes technical expertise and audio experience.

The autonomy variable does not reveal significant differences between the two podcasts:

The topics are very much dependent on *Corriere della Sera*. I mean, no one tells us what we should cover; we decide with complete autonomy. But at the same time, given the format we've chosen, it makes sense to follow the newspaper's hierarchy of news [...] no one tells us what to do [...] it's all up to us, and we're very free in this sense. But we are also very marginal within the newspaper's operations (Giambertone, my translation).

Our model is to use our own journalists mostly when we have someone who has written about things. They know the story best and are in a good position to explain it to the listeners. So, we're quite integrated with the newsroom, using their work to make our podcast. But we don't have any guidelines from the editorial staff about what we should or must produce; we have quite some leeway to do what we think meets our target audience's needs best (Vekony).

Both editorial teams describe a model that is content-wise independent but format-wise intrinsically tied to their respective newspapers. Both podcasts utilize the newspapers' journalists to discuss selected topics, each within their area of expertise. However, the interviews reveal a slight difference in topic selection: *GpG* adheres to the newspaper's general news hierarchy, while *Fk* tailors its content to a specific target audience – primarily young people – choosing topics of greatest interest to them.

As noted earlier, the political parallelism dimension poses unique challenges for digital media due to its diminished relevance. Nevertheless, it can be observed through indicators such as the distinction between news and commentary. Neither podcast is tied to particular personalities but opts for a collaborative approach with their respective editorial teams, featuring the voices of various journalists. Despite this, a question about the issue was posed to both hosts:

You can still be objective with what you're relaying to the audience, like which perspectives you're bringing, how you're balancing cases with different voices, and always sticking to the facts. We don't subscribe to alternative facts. We think of the facts as facts, and I think you have to be aware of that. But I think it's possible to be objective. Also, our newspaper often is quite strict in its ethical guidelines. We focus on being objective, neutral, professional journalists. We don't bring ourselves into the stories; we have commentators for that (Vekony).

It makes more sense to do a podcast on current events [...] not so much opinion pieces. But [...] journalism in Italy isn't a journalism where opinions and facts are always clearly separated. That is, there are news articles where you can tell what the writer's opinion is. Even in our segments, we sometimes evaluate whether what a colleague is saying makes sense [...] explaining that reality by also offering an interpretation (Giambertone, my translation).

The two realities seem to operate on decidedly opposing principles. In line with the standards of its parent newspaper, *Fk* emphasizes an almost enforced objectivity. In contrast, *GpG* adopts a journalistic approach that appears to accept that news and opinions cannot be entirely separated – at least in Italy.

Conclusions

This research aimed to develop an innovative methodological framework for analyzing podcasts – specifically, news podcasts – by incorporating the dimensions of Hallin and Mancini's journalism models and the main post-2004 additions to their framework. The goal was twofold: first, to test a research model that considers a single element of the system (in this case, podcasts) through a primarily qualitative lens; and second, to provide an additional interpretive tool for understanding the impact of digital media on the information landscape.

After exploring the various aspects and possibilities offered by this framework, answers to the two research questions can be provided.

RQ1: While it is possible to identify elements within news podcasts that align with all the dimensions proposed by the journalism models framework, some dimensions appear more applicable than others and yield more significant results. Certain elements, such as the podcast market or state intervention, are inherently “truncated” due to the scarcity of available data. The interplay with distribution platforms complicates these types of analyses, which, as shown, can be traced through the limited available information but do not produce comprehensive results.

In contrast, professionalization and political parallelism seem to provide particularly insightful findings. These aspects are well-suited to podcasting research, partly because they do not rely on numerical values like the previous two and partly because podcasts are often associated with identifiable individuals whose professional profiles and, to some extent, political leanings are an evident part of the program.

The grassroots participation dimension remains an open question. While it is partially related to the two preceding dimensions, it is difficult to identify in terms of selecting case studies. The universe of independent podcasts – that is, those not tied to specific outlets – is vast, and choosing which programs to analyze may be misleading in any case. This study proposed a research hypothesis focusing on programs with the largest followings, but this approach risks overlooking numerous “mid-tier” products, which, in aggregate, constitute the majority of the podcast universe.

RQ2: This study also aimed to provide a practical framework for analysis through the examination of two programs from different media systems, using both secondary data and interviews. The results demonstrated that the two podcasts, while similar in context (both are institutional programs) and format, exhibit significant differences. Beyond enjoying varying levels of audience recognition in terms of reach, the two programs also diverge in the professional backgrounds of their hosts and their approaches to news. The similarities lie in their relationships with their respective editorial teams and the degree of freedom in selecting topics, though even here differences were noted in terms of the programs’ objectives.

Despite significant limitations due to the small number of interviewees and the focus on only two programs, the research yielded meaningful results, demonstrating that the analytical framework outlined in this chapter can be applied to podcasting from a comparative perspective.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlighted some distinguishing traits of podcasts from different parts of Europe, though they are limited to the two case studies examined. This opens the door for future research that considers (1) a larger number of programs, potentially from other reference models, and (2) the study of listenerships to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Investigating the diverse models of podcasting is essential to understanding both the future development of this medium, which is still on an undefined path, and – on a broader scale – more in-depth aspects of contemporary information dynamics.

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