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DEFINING THE PODCAST ECOSYSTEM IN TURKEY AND SERBIA
THROUGH LISTENER HABITS***

The topic of podcasting has been analyzed from different perspectives in academic studies, mainly in developed countries such as the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, and some European countries. However, this is different for developing countries such as Serbia and Turkey. The reason for including these countries in this study is the limited number of academic studies on podcasting in countries like Serbia and Turkey. This study uses a quantitative approach and surveys Serbian and Turkish podcast listeners to examine their tendencies toward the podcast ecosystem. According to the data collected from 923 podcast listeners, podcasting in Serbia continues to be part of the visual culture on digital platforms, while in Turkey, podcast environments have been adopted by listeners. In addition, podcasts in Serbia are much longer than those in Turkey. However, Serbian listeners are more demographically diverse than Turkish listeners, and podcasting has been found to reach a wider audience in Serbia.

Keywords: Podcast, Podcast Listeners, New Media, Serbia, Turkey.

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Introduction

Sound is treated in different ways in various academic fields. It is approached as a "power" metaphor, such as the voice of God in religion or the voice of society in politics. Humans use sound to communicate their needs, thoughts, or desires to the world. It is also seen as a medium of artistic and aesthetic expression. This approach dates back to ancient times and has gained significance in different art disciplines, such as theater and music. Sound is perceived as corresponding to a physical or physiological organ. In other words, the sound is an essential area of interest in acoustics, anatomy, physiology, hearing, nose, throat, and speech pathology. Finally, the sound is understood as an object of love, a place where desire is collected (Peters, 2004). As seen from the earliest societies until now, sound has always been a fascinating element in humans and, above all, a communication phenomenon.

Initially known as audio blogs, the first examples of what we now know as podcasting emerged in the early 2000s as part of the digital age. The evolution of audio blogs into a series of content production and the subsequent ability to download that content from the Internet was the beginning of the podcast (Martinoli, 2020). Technically, the current form of the podcast is the work of two pioneers, Dave Winer and Adam Curry. They thought about sharing and downloading their favorite content. Curry tried to have a program coded, but when he did not receive a response, he learned how to code a simple program himself and posted it on the Internet for "open source" programmers to use and develop (Berry, 2006). Dave Winer is the creator of Real Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS, also known as Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary in early versions, means that when a listener subscribes to a podcast, new recordings uploaded by the podcast producers are automatically sent to the listener's device (Bottomley, 2015). Podcasts, which cannot be considered independent of the Internet and new technologies, were originally seen as a means of storing radio programs but can now be understood as a new media tool in their own right. The term "podcast" encompasses both the content and the distribution method. Podcasting can be understood as a transition from mass broadcasting to individualized media broadcasting (Bonini, 2015).

There are different factors affecting podcasting in Serbia and Turkey, and podcasting is taking shape in these countries according to the current conditions. The subject of this research is to examine the consumption trends of podcasts in these two countries that show different levels of development and to understand how

podcasting is affected by different economic, cultural and social structures by revealing possible differences and similarities.

Podcast research data mainly covers the podcast ecosystem in Western countries. In this sense, including data on the consumption stage of the podcast ecosystems of Turkey and Serbia, two countries with unique economic, social and cultural values that are developing differently, makes this study important and unique. Furthermore, there are very few academic studies on podcasts in Serbia, as podcasting has only started to develop recently. Therefore, this research will significantly contribute to podcasting in Serbia and provide an essential dataset for podcast studies in Turkey.

Most academic studies focusing on podcast listeners have a significant drawback: the consideration of only specific social groups. University students or listeners of a particular program are often researched, while other listeners are frequently neglected (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022). This study aims to approach and analyze the research by considering the socio-economic and socio-cultural diversity of the listener audience in Turkey and Serbia. The data was collected from 923 podcast listeners, and information was collected through an online survey on the listeners' demographic characteristics, familiarity with podcasts, listening habits, listening motivations, and preferences.

Literature Review

1.1. Podcast: What is it and what is not?

Podcasts, as a significant example of sound-based new media, are the existence of previously accumulated media opportunities in a new environment. The roots of podcasting go back to 2004. The term podcast was first used by Ben Hammersley, a writer for The Guardian newspaper, in February 2004, and its name is derived from the combination of the word "iPod," Apple's portable listening device, and "casting," meaning broadcasting (Bonini, 2015; McClung & Johnson, 2010).

Indeed, the iPod has played a significant role in the rapid popularity and adoption of podcasts by listeners and producers (Berry, 2016a). The history of podcasts began with the iPod (Skinner, 2020). Journalist Hammersley (2004), speaking of the essential characteristics of this new medium, similar to the radio but not radio, says: "it is a good thing to free listeners from the constraints of time and place and to allow them to speak again with program makers. It's even better to free the program makers". When the sincerity of the sound, the interaction of the

environment, the ease of downloading MP3s and the portability of the tool come together, it becomes a handy tool for the listener and the producer. Most importantly for broadcasters, thanks to the possibilities offered by the Internet, there are no limits or restrictions on airtime, similar to corporate radio, or any rules.

Hammersley, who named this new tool, was talking about podcasting. Podcasting is a media environment that brings together sound, web, and portable media devices. It is also a technology that challenges some practices and biases related to listeners, consumption, production, and distribution in the radio industry. Information can be shared and broadcasted automatically on websites via RSS (Avila, 2009). The RSS technology distinguishes podcasting from streaming sound and many other audio media files that can be downloaded online (Bottomley, 2020). As a result, podcasts are not only downloadable audio files but also their unique distribution method. Podcast subscribers automatically receive and listen to it anytime they want.

In 2004, Apple made a significant step towards the widespread use of podcasts by releasing iTunes 4.9 and its podcast application (Yücel, 2020). When podcasts were added to the iTunes application, the audience grew rapidly, and in the first two days, more than one million people became podcast subscribers (Markman, 2012). By 2018, there were 550,000 active podcasts on iTunes. However, as of December 2021, Apple Podcasts houses 2,395,995 podcasts (Gray, 2021).

Podcasts allow for time and location shifting. The specific software has also been developed to add files to an RSS feed and make subscribing to podcasts easier. German podcast scholar Nele Heise defines podcast as "a method of transmitting audio and/or video files for downloading and playing on various devices." According to Berry (2006), podcasts are integrated media tool that combines sound, web infrastructure, and portable media devices. Podcasts are media tools based on audio recordings, such as radio. Producers range from professionals in the radio and other industries to amateurs. In other words, podcasting offers traditional broadcasters an opportunity to expand their areas of operation while also providing amateur individuals with the opportunity to become media producers (Markman & Sawyer, 2014). At the same time, listeners have different demographic, social, economic, political, and educational characteristics, thanks to the opportunities offered by the internet environment. As an audio recording, podcasts reach listeners through different technologies (smartphones, computers, portable other devices) and offer options for storing and sharing this content. In addition to audio-based podcasts,

there are now options to download and save podcasts with video, called vidcasts or vodcasts. According to a study conducted in 2019, only 17% of podcast publishers record their podcasts in video format (Gray, 2021). Podcast content carries different opinions, ideas, thoughts, and knowledge (Yücel, 2020).

In particular, the importance of podcasting has increased along with digital broadcasting platforms, especially in 2010. There is a multi-dimensional interaction between listeners, producers, advertisers, and others on these platforms, which is of great importance for the development and widespread use of podcasts. With the emergence of social networks, content providers, and mobile applications, podcasting has taken on a whole new dimension. This leads to two unique critical features: active listeners and a cheap production process. In other words, compared to radio listeners, podcast listeners choose and subscribe to the podcasts they want to listen to, download and listen to at their preferred time and place, making them much more active (Tufan, 2020). In other words, podcasts have brought more control and personalization to media consumption by allowing listeners to change their time and place (Morris & Patterson, 2015).

Due to the opportunities provided by digital technologies and the internet, the passive listener of traditional media has become involved in the production process. They can share the broadcast content, make suggestions or complaints, and influence new content to be released. The second feature is related to the capital held by prominent media organizations and professionals. Now, both amateurs and those without capital can be producers. On the other hand, because podcasting is based on free subscriptions, it provides easy access to everyone. Particularly, with the development of smart devices, connection quality, and new free applications emerging since 2015, producing, broadcasting, and sharing podcasts has become even easier for users (Yücel, 2020). However, it should not be forgotten that the effort of producers to make their content free leads to advertising-supported business models (Morris & Patterson, 2015), which, although not present in the early years of podcasting, has become widespread today.

According to Martinoli (2020), listening to sound, content and research through podcasts has regained importance, and this tool continues to evolve with exceptional communication, production and sustainability techniques. Moreover, podcasts combine sound, thought and text as a hybrid medium. It also allows the exchange of ideas and is free of viral advertising and visuals. It does not require any effort to attract the listener's attention. However, podcast culture is both personal and social.

It covers topics that may not be widely known or of interest to small groups while at the same time promoting the broader dissemination of lesser-known topics in society (Birsen, 2020).

A study conducted in America showed that more than 50% of the population has listened to a podcast at least once. In 2019, the number of people who regularly listen to podcasts increased by 6% compared to the previous year. There was also a 27% increase in podcasts (Yücel, 2020). According to a study conducted in 2021, 1,900,000 podcasts and 47 million podcast episodes are available. 28% of those who have listened to a podcast in Europe identify themselves as podcast listeners (Updated from Feldman by Grett and Jakobs, 2021). The "second age" of podcasting, as referred to by Bonini (2015), began in 2012 when some of the most popular American public radio podcasts began to be funded entirely by listeners rather than public radio funds and through new crowdfunding platforms.

According to Lindeberg (2019), podcasting can be divided into two phases in its history. The first phase, which started in 2004 and lasted for about ten years, is characterized by existing programs broadcast in other media being broadcast as podcasts. The second phase began after 2014 and involved the production of content specific to the online environment and the development of podcasts as an independent, separate and unique media platform. In addition, the interest of the media industry and the perception and understanding of podcasts are different in these two phases (Martinoli, 2020). In other words, existing media companies initially saw the podcast environment as a means to share existing content. Later, however, they began to see it as a new media tool to reach new audiences and to produce and share new content.

1.2. A Listening Practice as a Podcast: New Listeners

While podcasting may sound like radio, it also has unique characteristics that may contradict traditionally accepted concepts of radio (Berry, 2016b). Perhaps radio had to change in order to be listened to by new generations, and that changed into podcasting. Listening habits at breakfast, lunch, while traveling, and late at night show that listeners still want to listen, which has been made easier by digitization (Berry, 2006). People have not stopped listening; they have preferred the ability to listen when and where they want. The transition from radio to podcasts can also be described as a move from the macro to the micro. While radio appeals to larger

audiences, podcasts appeal to smaller groups and address their interests and problems.

A study on podcasts shows that users listen to podcasts for various reasons, such as entertainment, avoiding time constraints, building a library, and social aspects. Furthermore, the 2014 Edison Research study revealed that podcast fans tend to be "super listeners" and, over time, consume more audio than AM/FM radio or other listeners (Bottomley, 2020). In addition, those who download podcasts are composed of individuals with higher education levels and higher salaries than those who do not use podcasts (McClung & Johnson, 2010). However, such a general listener type is different for radio. It is not possible to make generalizations on the scale of radio listeners in the same way as podcast listeners.

Today's digital age audience has unique characteristics. Social media and various digital platforms used today significantly impact the consumer. However, the consumer's decision-making process and behaviour are changing, and it becomes complicated to find the most suitable environment for their needs and expectations (Grett & Jakobs, 2021). According to Jenkins (2006), the change in the relationship between consumers and producers is a part of the bonding process. At the same time, another result of the bonding process is to move podcast listening from a background activity to an active process and increase the frequency of program listening.

Through podcasts, the listener has been able to reestablish a relationship with words lost due to the role of today's radio as a music player. On the production side, there are many advantages. There is no centralized editorial process; the content is rich and diverse; there is no time limit for either the producer or the listener; it allows everyone to broadcast, it creates the opportunity to create a less formal and more intimate environment, and a good income can be earned with the right strategy (Birsen, 2020). However, podcasts have also created a space for new voices to be created and presented, giving producers more access to listeners (Berry, 2016a).

The new type of listener, the podcast listener, is exposed to new technologies, online platforms, and social media and has unique characteristics. Therefore, understanding the podcast listener and why users adopt podcast technology depends on several factors. Streaming platforms that offer many options can complicate the listener's decision-making process and may not match their preferences or expectations. In particular, the personal recommendations provided by social media,

or the recommendations and thoughts shared by people on social media can significantly influence the listener's decision-making process about what to listen to. Analyzing the impact of social media on podcast platforms can help advertisers, companies, and podcast producers develop marketing strategies. Another factor is the choice between subscription options on digital platforms such as Spotify, Amazon Music, and Apple Podcasts. Although new technologies provide smart devices such as computers and mobile phones, it is necessary to have at least one of these devices (Grett & Jakobs, 2021). Although the influence of media tools in shaping society over time is great, new media and new technologies have changed this situation. Today, media changes society while being changed by society.

Method

Using a quantitative approach, this study was conducted through an online survey of podcast listeners in Turkey and Serbia. The survey technique helps study the perceptions and behaviors of a society, as it allows researchers to collect various types of information from large samples. It also provides a much faster and more practical option for data processing and storage (Jones, Baxter, and Khanduja, 2013). In this survey, participants answered questions regarding their demographic characteristics, podcast listening habits, and motivations. The questions were adapted from the study "Understanding Podcast Users: Consumption Motives and Behaviors" by Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) and the digital news report of the Routers Institute "Podcasts: Who, Why, What, and Where?" (Newman, Fletcher et al., 2019). The study by Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) was the first comprehensive examination of podcast users' motivations and usage perspectives in the United States, and used a national online survey technique to collect data. The results revealed the top motivating factors for podcast consumption. The findings showed that podcasting is a unique environment with particular characteristics. The Routers Digital News Report (Newman, Fletcher et al., 2019) conducted a comprehensive analysis using in-depth survey techniques to investigate the news consumption habits of young people in approximately 40 countries and six continents.

Given that the survey was related to podcast consumption, individuals who reported not having heard of podcasts were filtered out to ensure that responses outside the survey did not negatively affect data quality. Online surveys may not adequately represent the consumption habits of individuals who are not online

(generally older, less affluent, and have limited formal education). In this sense, it would be more beneficial to consider the results to be representative of the online population. The universe of the research includes podcast listeners in Serbia and Turkey. Purposive sampling was used, which is commonly used in research to identify and select information-rich cases. However, this involves identifying and selecting knowledgeable individuals or groups (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). According to reliability statistics, this survey's Cronbach's alpha level was 0.907, which is a highly reliable scale (Terzi, 2019).

Results

While podcasts offer listeners a different experience than other media, they have changed both the listening habits and participation and consumption of listeners and have been shaped by them. Interactivity, visibility, ease of use, cost-free production and consumption are the most critical advantages of the new media environment for podcasts. In addition, changing production and consumption methods have created a new producer-consumer group compared to other media tools. Therefore, understanding podcasting requires not only the study of podcast producers but also of podcast listeners.

In this study, a 21-question survey was created through Google to survey podcast listeners in Serbia and Turkey. The survey was open for two months. As a result, 508 people in Serbia and 415 people in Turkey completed the survey. The content of the survey consists of questions about demographics, social media usage, podcast listening habits and motivations, and the average time to complete the survey was 7 minutes. The survey was opened with the same questions and options in Serbian and Turkish to get accurate data from both countries.

1.3.   Podcast Listeners in Serbia

The survey "Podcast Listening Motivations and Habits" was completed by 508 people in Serbia. 49% of the participants were male, 50.6% were female, and 0.4% identified as other. The age range was from 15 to 65. The age groups were formed based on the responses received to analyze the age of the listeners in more detail (15-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-65), and about 1/3 of the participants were in the 21-30 age group. Then, participants in the 31-40 age group comprise 1/3 of the total. In other words, on average, most podcast listeners in Serbia are between the ages of 21-40.

Regarding educational attainment, 44.1% of participants have a bachelor's degree, 22.2% have a high school diploma, 21.7% have a master's degree, 11.8% have an associate's degree, and only 0.2% have a middle school diploma. 65.8% of podcast listeners are university graduates. The next question is about the professions of the participants. Although the answers to this question show diversity, most participants have high education and high-income occupations. This fact can be seen by analyzing the answers to the question about monthly income. 51.1% of the participants have an income above 73,000 dinars (10,000 Turkish liras), 15.2% have an income between 51,000 and 73,000 dinars (7,000-10,000 Turkish liras), 10.2% have an income between 32,000 and 50,000 dinars (4,000-7,000 Turkish liras), and 19.5% have an income below 32,000 dinars (4,000 Turkish liras).

Social media platforms have great importance in the new media and internet environment. The podcast also benefits from the opportunities and advantages offered by social media platforms as a part of the new media. Podcast listeners are different from traditional media listeners. According to the data in the survey, 97.6% of podcast listeners use social media platforms. The answers to the question of which social media platforms are used with what frequency are included in the following graph.
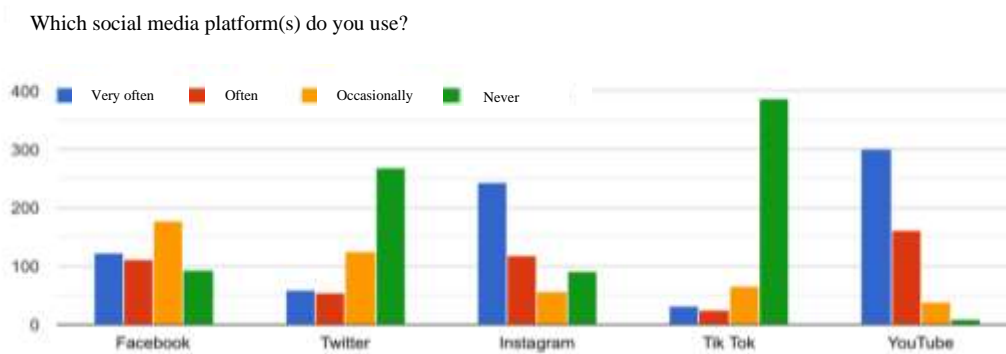

Graph 1. Which social media platform(s) do you use?

In Serbia, podcast listeners frequently use YouTube (59.2%), while the number of those who never use Tik Tok (76.1%) is the highest. After YouTube, the most frequently used social media platform is Instagram (47.8%).

Most participants first heard the name of the podcast between 2014 and 2019 (52.8%) and after 2019 (27.6%). 56.7% of the participants started listening to podcasts mainly through YouTube (49.6%) and Spotify (7.5%) after 2019. Apple Podcasts, Anchor, and Twitter Spaces were used much less or not used at all. In

addition, 57.4% of podcast listeners who wanted to listen always preferred smartphones, while 2.5% never preferred them. Podcasts were listened to the least on smartwatches, smart speakers, and tablets.

One of the main advantages of podcasts is that they can be listened to wherever and whenever. In Serbia, podcasts are most often listened to at home (63.5%) and least often while exercising. The frequency of listening in other environments is shown in the following graph.
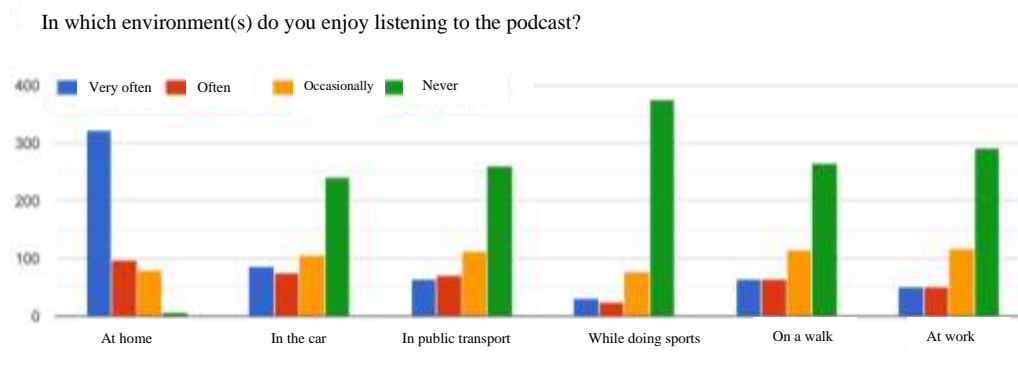

Graph 2. In which environment(s) do you enjoy listening to the podcast?

In Serbia, 32.7% of listeners listen to podcasts 1-3 days a week, while only 87 out of 508 participants (17.1%) listen less than one day a week. Especially during the pandemic, 66.1% of participants increased their podcast listening. Furthermore, when choosing podcasts, Serbian listeners most often consider the recommendations of their friends (43.5%), followed by the social media platform Instagram (41.3%), which is most often used to find podcast programs to listen to. In addition, new podcast recommendations come from podcast platforms (35%), other social media platforms (27.6%), Facebook (26%), and recommendations from popular personalities (22.4%), Google (19.5%), and Twitter (11.6%).

71.7% of participants stated the podcasts they listen to are over an hour long. At the same time, 42.9% of listeners listen to a podcast for 31-60 minutes at a time, while 31.7% listen for over an hour. Additionally, when asked how many podcasts they actively listen to, 28.5% of participants answered 3 and 25.3% answered 2.

The most listened to podcast genres in Serbia are, in order: culture (58%), science and technology (50%), personal development (48.8%), storytelling (46.3%), music (34.1%), art (33.3%), comedy/entertainment (31.3%), documentary (30.9%), history (25.6%), economics (19.5%), politics (19.3%), and lifestyle (16.5), current events and news (10.2%), and sports (3.7%).

The motivations of podcast listeners have been researched. A motivation list was created to carry out this research. The results are as follows:
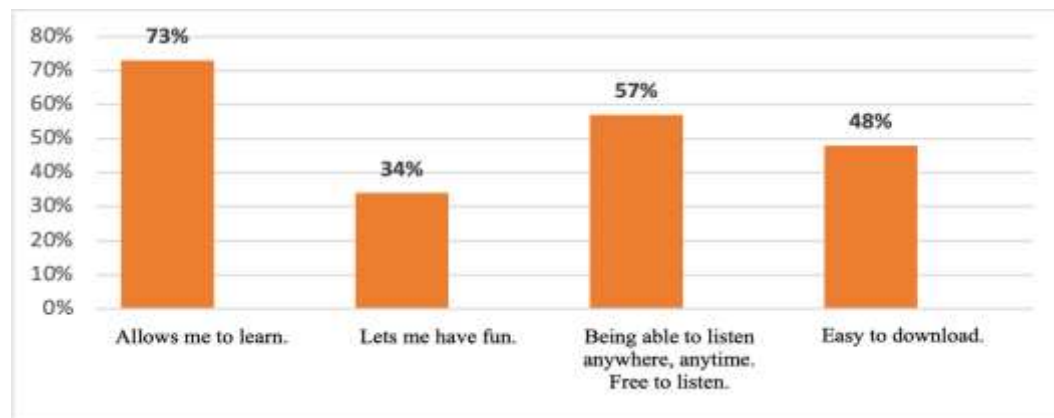
Graph 3. The motivations of podcast listening (Serbia).

As it turns out, the top motivations for listening to podcasts are learning (73%), being able to listen to a podcast anytime, anywhere (57%), easy download (48%), and free listening (57%). In addition, the motivations with the most "I agree" responses are having fun (52.5%) and sharing information with people in their social circle (42.9%). On the other hand, only some listeners find podcasts more trustworthy than other media. In addition, listeners do not prefer podcasts to combat loneliness and communicate with others.

In summary, the average podcast listener in Serbia is between the ages of 21-40, has a bachelor's degree, is white-collar, and has a monthly income above 73,000 dinars. Additionally, they use social media, with YouTube and Instagram being the most used. They first heard the name of podcasts between 2014-2019 and started listening to podcasts via YouTube and Spotify after 2019. They prefer to choose a podcast program based on the recommendations of their friends and listen to it on their smartphones while at home. Additionally, the rate of podcast listening increased during the pandemic, and they listen to 1-3 different podcast programs, each longer than an hour, actively for 30-60 minutes at least once a week. They prefer podcasts with cultural, science and technology themes and personal development. Participants showed that they enjoy listening to podcasts because they learn new things, have no time and place limitations, can easily download and share with friends, is free, and contains less censorship compared to other media tools.

1.3.1. What does podcast mean to podcast audiences?

The following are statements from participants describing how they define the podcast:

"Podcasts offer more flexibility and variety than old TV programs found in archives. They allow listeners to access content at their convenience and provide a relaxed format for discussing diverse topics without censorship. Additionally, they fill a conversation gap for individuals without similar interests in their social circle. Certain podcasts can also serve as a means of spreading culture and quality content, particularly in a society with declining values and violent advertising." (15-year-old female student)

"The advantage of podcasts is that I can listen to them while cleaning, preparing and being idle. Another advantage is that I can listen at double speed, so a 2-hour episode seems short. Podcasts satisfy my curiosity; I feel like I have attended a personal university. It is great to work for myself and keep up with some trends." (37-year-old non-working female)

"Podcasts usually motivate me to do some tasks that I otherwise find boring and do not require total concentration, like cleaning. It is more fun for me to listen to something interesting while I work, and I find it easier to force myself to finish some tasks. It also helps me fall asleep faster; I fall asleep faster with one- or two-people's voices. I listen to podcasts that are very interesting to me with great attention and concentration, and there are many interesting things to be heard and learned in this type of media format. I have heard interesting people and life stories through podcasts." (18-year-old student)

"Podcasts allow me to hear interesting stories that I would otherwise miss. I would not say I like watching TV or listening to the radio. I use Facebook and YouTube often, so podcasts help me rest my eyes and hear something other than music. I am interested in professional development and time management topics. I am also interested in museums, chemistry, and science in general. When I listen to podcasts, I feel like I am in a classroom, learning something new, even though I am not in a formal education setting. Podcasts provide me with an enjoyable time." (No information about the person's gender or age)

"Time spent at work and during monotonous tasks goes by much faster with a podcast, whether it is local or foreign. As they say, half of the brain is working while

the other half is listening. You can gain a lot of exciting information and life experiences." (Male, 30 years old, political scientist)

"Listening to podcasts allows me to gain different perspectives on topics that interest me and helps me feel less alone with some problems. Some podcasts I listen to are just for leisure and relaxation." (Male, 30 years old, graduate student)

"Finding yourself and people who are like you in today's chaos. General education and possible communication with people at different levels. Definitely amazing to meet people of quality and value through podcasts." (Female, 30 years old, web developer)

"I really enjoy listening to podcasts. It is an ideal form for travelling, walking, waiting, and falling asleep. I am no longer tense during these processes. When I am going somewhere, it does not matter if I have arrived because I have something to listen to." (Male, 33 years old, digital marketer)

"Podcasts provide both entertainment and a sense of community. You hear people experiencing the same problems as you and immediately feel better mentally." (Female, 25 years old, economics student)

"A source of knowledge, personality, and experience that I cannot find anywhere else." (Male, 45 years old, entrepreneur)

"The opportunity to expand the narrow viewpoint imposed on us by the public media!" (Male, 25 years old, graduate student)

"Time spent in the car seems less wasted and more productive." (Male, 31 years old, marketer)

Podcast listeners in Serbia have integrated podcasts into their daily lives because of their convenience. They use podcasts to learn something new, have fun, and connect with others through voice, especially during digital downtime (exercising, cooking, cleaning, driving, etc.).

1.4.   Podcast listeners in Turkey

This study aimed to gather information about podcast listeners in Turkey and was filled out by 415 people. 72.3% of the participants were female, 27% were male, and 0.7% identified as other. The age range of the listeners was between 14 and 55 years old. The age range groups were created based on the responses received to analyze the age of the listeners in more detail (14-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-55), and approximately half of the participants (52%) were in the 21-30 age

range group. In addition, 26.5% of the participants were in the 14-20 age group, and the majority of podcast listeners in Turkey are in the 14-30 age group.

Looking at the participants' education level, 41% were undergraduates, and 11.8% were postgraduates. In other words, 52.8% of podcast listeners are highly educated. In addition, 29.9% were high school graduates, and 12.3% were associate degree graduates. The high number of high school graduates may be because the demographic of podcast listeners is relatively young. In addition, 27.9% were students, with the remainder representing a variety of occupations. The professions are shown in the graph below by specific groups.
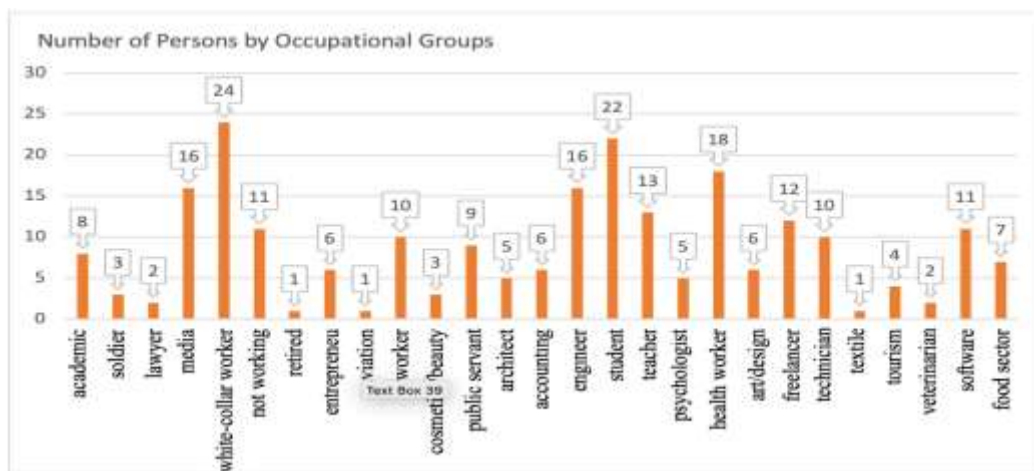
Graph 4. Number of Persons by Occupational Groups.

In addition, while most participants have a monthly income of less than 4,000 TL (41.9%), 25.1% have an income between 4-7,000 TL. 15.4% of participants have a monthly income of 7-10,000 TL, while 17.6% have an income of over 10,000 TL.

In Turkey, almost all podcast listeners (99.5%) use social media platforms, the most used being Instagram (69.1%), followed by YouTube (42.8%) and Twitter (23.6%). On the other hand, Facebook and Tik Tok are rarely used. The proportions of those who never use these two social media platforms are 68.1% and 76.1%, respectively.

51.8% of participants first heard about podcasting after 2019, while 73.7% started listening after 2019. In addition, 37.6% heard about it between 2014 and 2019, and 21.2% started listening during this period. Furthermore, only a small proportion (4.3%) first encountered podcasting between 2004-2010 and 6.3% between 2010-2014.

While there are several platforms available for podcasts, 72.2% of listeners in Turkey prefer Spotify. The second most preferred platform (11.3%) is YouTube. On the other hand, Apple Podcasts, Anchor and Twitter Spaces are almost not preferred. Nevertheless, 88.1% of listeners listen to podcasts on their mobile phones and 11.8% on their computers. Tablets, smartwatches and smart speakers are not the preferred devices for listening to podcasts.

Podcast listeners also prefer to listen at home (59.5%). Also, 58% of participants do not prefer to listen to podcasts while exercising. Other preferences for listening to podcasts in different environments are as follows:

In which environment(s) do you enjoy listening to the podcast?
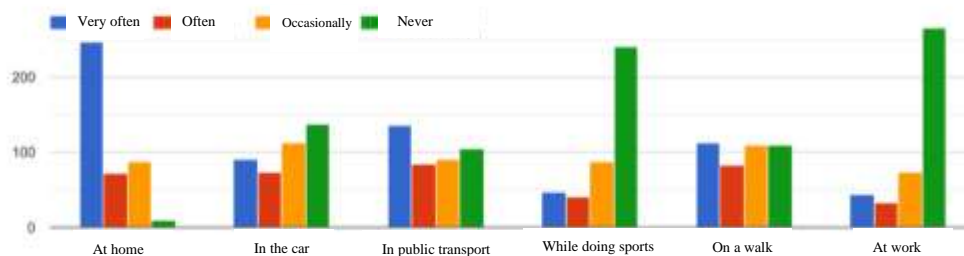
Graph 5. In which environment(s) do you enjoy listening to the podcast?

"How often do you listen to podcasts? The answers to this question are varied, with 16.1% of respondents listening to podcasts less than once a week, while others listen to podcasts several times a week. 72% of the podcasts they listen to are found on Instagram. Since Instagram is the most used social media platform, it is expected that podcasts are most encountered in this environment. They also discover podcasts through the podcast platforms' storefronts (37.6%), recommendations from their friends (31.8%), recommendations from celebrities (24.6%), Twitter (20.7%) and other social media platforms.

How long is the duration of the podcast you listen to?

How long do you listen to the podcast in one go?

- ● less than 10 min
- ● between 10-30 min
- ● between 31-60 min
- ● more than 1 hour
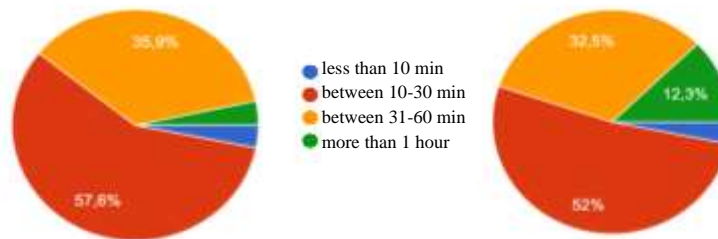
Graph 6. How long is the duration of the podcast you listen to? How long do you listen to the podcast in one go?

The graph above shows the duration of podcasts listened to and the duration of a single listening session by listeners. As seen, the length of podcast episodes and the length of listening sessions by participants are almost identical.

The most listened to podcast genres in Turkey are, in order: culture (63.1%), personal development (60.2%), comedy/entertainment (51.3%), storytelling (50.1%), history (33%), art (33%) and science and technology (29.9%).

Additionally, 14.5% of the participants actively listen to 1 podcast, 20.2% listen to 2, 21.9% listen to 3, 17.6% listen to 4, and 13% listen to 5 podcasts actively. 77.3% of the participants reported that their podcast listening time has increased during the pandemic.

The motivations for listening to podcasts in Turkey were also explored. According to the results, listeners listen to podcasts mainly to learn something new (74%). Secondly, they prefer to listen to podcasts for entertainment (57%). The advantage that attracts listeners to podcasts is that they can be listened to anywhere, anytime and for free (60% on average). The ability to easily share with friends and share knowledge with people in their social environment and friends, the ease of downloading, and the reliability compared to other media tools have strongly motivated listeners.
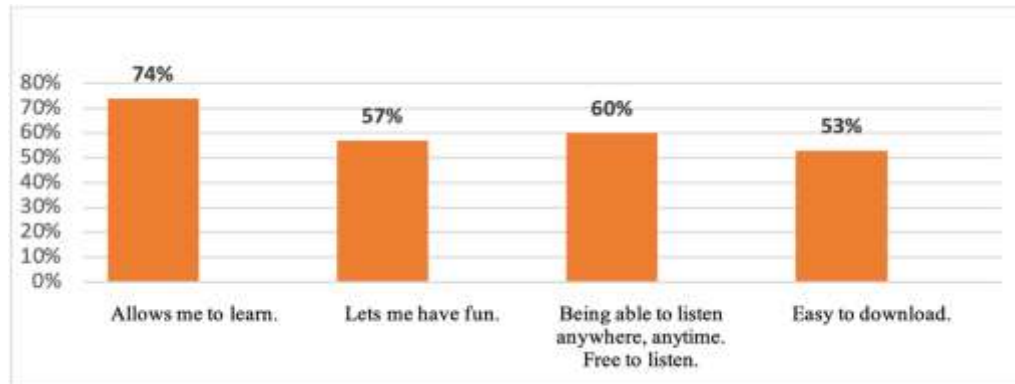
Graph 8. The motivations of podcast listening (Turkey).

In summary, podcast listeners in Turkey are typically aged 15 to 30, have higher education and have a monthly income below 4,000 TL. They actively use social media and spend the most time on Instagram and YouTube. They first heard about podcasts and started listening after 2019. They discovered 10–30 minute culture, personal development, and comedy-entertainment podcasts on Instagram, which they listen to on Spotify 1-3 days a week for 10-30 minutes at a time. During the pandemic, they increased their listening time. They prefer listening to podcasts on their smartphones at home or on public transportation and actively listening to at least three different podcast programs. The fact that podcasts can be listened to anytime and anywhere for free, and the ability to learn something new while listening, are the factors that motivate them the most to listen to podcasts.

1.4.1. What does podcast mean to podcast audiences?

The following are statements from participants describing how they define the podcast:

"The most important part for me is that they help me sleep. Alternatively, they satisfy my need for "just a sound, " especially when doing housework." Besides these, I also see many benefits of listening to podcasts, such as broadening my horizons through the knowledge I gain and sharing this information with my social circle to create a casual atmosphere." (Female/19 years old/student)

"For me, podcasts are 'me time.' My friends do not use them much, so I listen based entirely on my interests. I am both informed and combat feelings of loneliness (not physically, but in the sense of feeling like I am the only one experiencing something). So, the people I listen to become good friends, like my uncles and

aunts, with many more people. (Note: I listened to 9,000 hours of podcasts on Spotify last year).” (Female/28 years old/architect)

“It provides me with the opportunity to learn, to listen to ideas without censorship, and to spend my free time productively. Unlike other media tools, it is an environment with diverse ideas and knowledge, not one-sided. The existence of freedom of expression, and the ability of ideas to connect directly with listeners, give hope, both from the perspective of those who produce and consume knowledge.” (Female/29 years old/psychological counsellor)

“I have become so used to communicating through writing that listening to a podcast feels like having a conversation with the narrator; it feels like I have finally found a whole conversation I have missed for years. It has also increased my general knowledge, and I have developed a habit of reading books. I did not know that there were still people out there who were developing themselves. Oh, social media, what have you numbed us for all these years?” (Female/31 years old/doctor)

“I see it as a radio listening experience. There is a nostalgic side to it. A well-written podcast can teach you more than 45-minute lessons. Even content where the topic is mostly humor can shed light on a feeling you are trying to define but cannot put a name to and can relax you.” (Woman, 29 years old, sociologist)

“I know I am not alone. My feelings and the voices echoing in my mind are in other people and me. Knowing how others solve these things reinforces my belief that I can solve them too. I learn different pieces of information from each podcast. I have fun sharing with my friends.” (Man, 26 years old, purchasing specialist)

“I am also a podcaster. This means that the podcast experience is two-sided for me. I especially like listening to podcasts about books and movies. It feels like I am talking to friends. Moreover, of course, it is also a source of inspiration for my own podcast.” (Woman, 23 years old, journalist)

“I feel more in touch with society. By saying I have experienced, heard, and seen, and others have seen it, too, I feel part of a crowd and remember that I am not alone. It contributes to me being a more aware listener, or at least an observing one.” (Woman, 20 years old, student)

“In the past, there were a few quality programs on the radio with good conversation and good information, making you laugh and entertaining, and at the same time, in life, I feel it while listening. The fact that it is accessible at anytime and anywhere is very beneficial.” (Woman, 24 years old, boutique pastry chef)

"Taking a break from the chaos of daily life and being immersed in the shining world of mythology and fascinating events, especially with the calming voice of my dear Pandora." (Woman, 24 years old, student)

"Listening to podcasts is when I can talk about the things I cannot talk about and get away from everything criticized because of social pressures. I can think and talk freely without any restrictions." (Woman, 18 years old, student)

"Listening to the radio is like, actually, but it feels more intimate and heartfelt than just listening to the radio. The person speaking felt like a friend, as if they were telling me something while we were having coffee." (Male/28 years old/Mechanical Engineer)

"Professionally, it allows me to refresh the information I have left behind and gain new information that can be shared and discussed in a friend-like atmosphere." (Woman/24 years old/Psychological consultant)

For listeners in Turkey, podcasts are an important tool for overcoming loneliness, accessing uncensored content, learning new things, and improving oneself. Additionally, listening to podcasts gives the participants a sense of familiarity. They feel like they are chatting with a beloved friend.

1.5. Comparative Results on Podcast Listeners in Serbia and Turkey

Podcasting has reached different levels in different countries, changing economic, political, social, and technological conditions. The survey results conducted with podcast listeners to see the development of podcasts in Serbia and Turkey and understand how podcasting changed under different conditions are considered comparatively.

Looking at demographic characteristics, there is a gender difference between podcast listeners in Serbia and Turkey. In other words, while the gender distribution of Serbian listeners is almost equal, the majority of podcast listeners in Turkey are women (72.3%). Age is also similar, although Turkey has a younger podcast audience. Most podcast listeners in Serbia are in the average age range of 21-40, while most in Turkey are 14-30. Regarding education, 65.8% of podcast listeners in Serbia and 52.8% in Turkey are highly educated.

In terms of occupation and monthly income, 51.1% of podcast listeners in Serbia have an income above 73,000 dinars (10,000 TL), while 17.6% of podcast listeners in Turkey have an income above 10,000 TL. The differences between the two countries regarding monthly income and education may be related to the

average age of podcast listeners in each country. In other words, Serbian listeners are older than their Turkish counterparts, but their education and income levels will change accordingly. Nevertheless, most podcast listeners in both countries are educated and have jobs that require different skills.

In terms of social media usage, nearly all listeners of podcasts in both countries use social media platforms. The most used social media platforms in both countries are Instagram and YouTube. In addition, Tik Tok is the least-used platform in these countries. In Serbia, Facebook is in third place in terms of usage, while Twitter is preferred in Turkey.

In Serbia, 52.8% of people first heard about podcasts between 2014 and 2019; in Turkey, 51.8% of participants encountered podcasts after 2019. However, in both countries, most began listening to podcasts after 2019. In Turkey, the Spotify platform is preferred for listening to podcasts, while in Serbia, YouTube is preferred. Nevertheless, in both countries, podcasts are listened to mostly on smartphones, in a home environment, and once or twice a week.

With the emergence of podcasts in different environments, in Turkey, listeners encounter podcast programs on Instagram, while in Serbia, podcasts are found based on recommendations from friends. This distinction may be due to social differences between the countries. In other words, interpersonal relationships are more substantial in Serbia since it is a smaller country than Turkey.

A clear difference between the two countries emerges in the duration of podcast programs. In Serbia, the most listened-to podcast programs are longer than one hour, while in Turkey, they are between 10 and 30 minutes. As a result, the listening time in one session is also shaped accordingly in both countries. Nevertheless, when asked about their favorite program types, cultural programs, science and technology, and personal development-themed podcasts are the most listened to in Serbia. In Turkey, cultural programs are at the top, followed by personal development and comedy-entertainment podcasts. Also, in both countries, the average active podcast listener listens to about three podcasts, and podcast listening time has increased during the pandemic.

Finally, when considering the motivations for listening to podcasts, listeners in Serbia and Turkey focused mainly on these motivations, in addition to others:

- Podcasts can be used to learn new things and listened to without time and space constraints.
- They are easy to download and share with friends.

- They are accesible and entertaining, allowing flexible listening options.
- They contain less censorship compared to other media tools and allow information exchange with people in their social environment.
- They offer a wide range of programs and provide a change from other media tools.

Discussion and Evaluation

The podcast listeners in this study are between 14 and 40 years old, highly educated and in high-income occupations. The same conclusion has been reached in other studies (Zickuhr, 2013; McClung & Johnson, 2010; Webster, 2009). Like producers, listeners are active social media users and have been actively following several different podcasts since they started listening to podcasts in 2019. However, the claim made by Sellas (2012) in his study is the same as the findings of this study. That is, podcast listeners are individuals who are open to developing themselves and learning new things and technological innovations. The fact that podcasts are unrestricted by time, place and means, can be listened to freely in the environment and device of choice, offer more diverse, natural and censorship-free content, and can be easily recorded and shared with friends, motivates listeners to listen to podcasts. In addition, podcasts provide listeners with opportunities to learn, have fun, use their free time, avoid loneliness, escape from everyday problems and connect with others. The results of this study are almost identical to the motivations for listening to podcasts of the participants in McClung and Johnson's (2010) study.

Research conducted in 2014 on the podcast Serial showed that the move to mobile devices was essential to the success of podcasts (Berry, 2015). On the other hand, data from 2009 showed that podcasts were mainly listened to on computers (Webster, 2009), while research by McClung and Johnson (2010) showed that podcasts were mainly listened to on portable MP3 players. According to the data collected in this study, podcast listeners in both countries mostly listen to podcasts on smartphones. At the same time, according to research conducted by Edison Research in 2012, the majority of social media users have smart devices (Edison Research, 2012b). Of course, the pandemic also played a significant role in the popularisation of podcasts. People confined to their homes turned to the internet and new technologies to work, have fun and develop themselves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of podcast listeners, content, advertiser interest and investment increased dramatically (PwC, 2021). In this study, most listeners in both

countries heard about podcasts and started listening after 2019. In addition, most listeners increased their listening time during the pandemic period.

Listeners compared podcasts to the radio. Significantly, the idea that podcasts have taken over the role that radio used to play (educating, informing and disseminating culture) is supported by the types of podcasts listened to in both countries. In other words, the fact that podcasts on topics such as culture, personal development, science and technology, storytelling and the arts are the most popular podcasts in both countries may indicate that the access to information that society needs is now being met by podcasts, as traditional media such as radio fail to fulfil their responsibilities.

While most podcasts in Serbia are supported by visual content and broadcast on YouTube, the majority of podcasts in Turkey are audio-only. This may be due to the cultural habits of societies and individuals. In other words, while visual culture has been dominant in Serbian society throughout history, Turkish society has attached more importance to oral culture. Furthermore, when comparing listeners' responses to the question of what podcasts mean, it is clear that Turkish listeners use the word 'voice' more often, emphasising the importance of the voice and the emotions it evokes in people.

Overall, the research results would partially resemble each other due to the presence of some cultural similarities and some similarities in the economic and political structures of Turkey and Serbia in the current century. However, although there are similarities between the two countries, differences also need to be explored. In particular, as podcasting is still developing in both countries, repeating the same research 5-10 years later might yield different results. On the other hand, most current academic studies focus on podcasting in developed countries and overlook developing countries. Therefore, this study could be a valuable start and source for future research.

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