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Democratising Bridge or Elite Medium

An investigation into political podcast adoption and the
relationship with cognitive social capital

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ABSTRACT

This research project investigates the pattern of political podcast adoption including the characteristics of the audience, their motivations, uses and gratifications. The research uses a theoretical framework adapted from uses and gratifications (U&G) theory combined with a social capital perspective. The primary research method is a quantitative survey of the political podcast audience (n=1,346) that explores audience socio-demographics, motivations, discovery, uses and gratifications; and the relationships between these variables.

The findings indicate that political podcasts, despite having potentially democratising characteristics, are primarily leveraged by advantaged social groups, motivated by a desire to further increase their cognitive social capital. The gratifications obtained meet the audience's expectations leading to continued and increased podcast listening. The findings indicate that political podcasts are primarily discovered through social connections which, combined with the demographics of the audience, may further increase inequalities in political information and knowledge. The results provide support to findings from previous studies suggesting wider online media choice is leveraged by those with cognitive advantages in higher social groups to maintain their social advantage. These findings will be of interest to policy makers involved in decisions about publicly funded podcasting services and those interested in social disparities of access to political information.

This research makes an empirical contribution to the understanding of podcasting audiences and their motivations. It also establishes a theoretical framework for further investigation into political podcasts using a modified version of the U&G expectancy-value model and a cognitive social capital index. The research raises questions about how political podcasts can reach a wider audience and reduce inequalities in information.

1 INTRODUCTION

The term podcasting was created as a combination of iPod and Broadcasting (Hammersley, 2004) to describe the way audio content could be distributed to mobile devices. Richard Berry (2006) argued this distribution represented an 'empowered' type of radio listening because it gave listeners control over audio content enabling them to listen to what they wanted, when and where they wanted. In the last two years there has been a marked increase in both podcast production and podcast listening (Edison, 2019). This recent growth in podcasting has coincided with a growing interest in politics, following the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Over 1,000 new political podcasts in the US were launched in the year following Donald Trump's election (Thompson, 2017).

The long form, focused and reflective nature of political podcasts, in contrast to the soundbite reductionism and immediacy of mainstream political reporting, has resonated with audiences. They have become one of the most popular types of podcast (Chan-Olmsted, 2019; Reuters Institute, 2019). The New York Times podcast *The Daily* receives nearly two million downloads a day (Evening Standard, 2019) and BBC Brexitcast podcast episodes were downloaded over six million times in April 2019 (Sofos, 2019). The partisan *Pod Save America* podcast gets over one million downloads per episode (Nazaryan, 2017). Smaller political podcasts are also building sizeable audiences, for example, the *Talking Politics* podcast in the UK is downloaded around 80,000 times each week (Talking Politics, 2019).

The growth in political podcasts raises questions about the pattern of adoption and whether the potential benefits, such as access to expert insights and knowledge, are shared equally across groups in society. Political podcasts have the potential to bridge knowledge and social boundaries (Swiatek, 2018) and to level up cognitive social capital. However, existing inequalities in social capital and different evaluations of the benefits of political podcasts may lead to them being leveraged primarily by advantaged groups thereby increasing inequalities in cognitive social capital. These contrasting perspectives are reflected in scholarly research examining the impact of the internet and media choice.

The internet has been viewed as a bridging medium with democratising potential that can level up and reduce information resource inequalities across social groups (Bozeman, 2004; Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Holt et al, 2013; Morris & Morris, 2013). Coleman and Blumler (2009) argue the internet has no deterministic propensities but does possess a 'vulnerable potential' to enrich democracy. They identify potentially democratising characteristics including low cost access, ease of access, active audiences that decide which content to consume, open participation, and more time for reflective debate and discussion (Coleman &

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Blumler, 2009: 12-13). As a consequence they argue 'the influence of social status on political involvement may be reduced' (Coleman & Blumler, 2009: 12).

Podcasts, as an internet based medium, can equally be seen as having democratising characteristics. Their affordances can give voice to minority groups (McHugh, 2017) and form a counter public sphere (Park, 2017). They are relatively inexpensive to produce, easy to distribute via sites such as iTunes and free to download providing access across social groups to expert insights from Nobel prize winners to University professors. Viewed in this way podcasts can be seen as a potentially democratising medium which can level up cognitive social capital by bridging social boundaries, building knowledge and providing social utility.

An alternative Bourdieuan view is that differences in social capital will perpetuate or even increase inequalities in the digital sphere. Despite the 'vulnerable potential' of the internet to level up inequalities, research studies find it is leveraged by those with cognitive and social capital (Prior, 2005) and primarily benefits those with the skills to locate and evaluate content (Hargittai, 2008). An individual's societal position influences their digital media use (Hargittai, 2008: 940) and it is educated individuals on high incomes that derive the greatest benefits from using the internet (Van Duersen & Helsper, 2015). When it comes to social networks it is those with motivation and ability that reap the social capital benefits (Papacharissi, 2011; Burke et al, 2010). For example, students who actively adopt social information-seeking behaviours on Facebook significantly increase their bridging social capital (Ellison et al, 2011). In summary, research finds that those who are cognitively advantaged are in a better position to benefit from the Internet (Freese et al, 2006) and internet literacy is 'a significant predictor of bridging social capital' (Rios et al, 2019: 99).

This debate raises the question: are political podcasts a democratising bridge that helps equalise cognitive social capital or a means of social reproduction that maintains or increases inequalities? To answer this question it is necessary to understand the pattern of adoption of political podcasts and the characteristics of the audience. Until recently there has been limited research into podcast audiences and patterns of adoption (Markman, 2015). The growth of podcasts in the last two years has prompted greater interest and the publication of a number of podcast audience studies (Samuel-Azran et al, 2019; Boling and Hull, 2018; Perks and Turner, 2019; RAJAR, 2018; Westwood One, 2018; Chan-Olmsted, 2019; Edison, 2019, Reuters Institute, 2019). However, there has been no research into the political podcast audience. Given political podcasts are one of the most popular genres of podcast (Chan-Olmsted, 2019) this represents a gap in the current literature. This research is designed to explore political podcast adoption through audience research including an examination of the audience socio-demographics, motivations, uses and gratifications; and the relationships between these variables.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The research draws on three distinct theoretical concepts, namely uses and gratifications, social capital and intimate bridging.

2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory looks at what people do with media rather than what media does to people. U&G theory assumes audiences are active, rational and aware of their needs (Ruggiero, 2000) rather than passive recipients. U&G theory assumes the audience is goal oriented and use media to achieve specific gratifications (McGuire, 1974: 167-196). This assumes people have expectations of the media they select and its ability to gratify their needs (Katz et al, 1974). McQuail, Blumler & Brown (1972) identified four broad categories of need:

- Surveillance, staying informed but with a purpose
- Personal identity, value reinforcement, reassurance
- Personal relationships, social utility
- Diversion, escape from daily life and problems

These needs were further refined by Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973). Surveillance was developed as a cognitive need, which included personal learning, information and knowledge. Personal identity was extended beyond value reinforcement to personal standing, status and credibility. In both cases these needs were seen as being driven by social utility the need 'to be connected' (Blumler & Katz, 1974: 23) and to operate within a social structure. Further gratifications were identified and refined over time, for example Blumler (1979) identified five core audience needs which could be satisfied by the media namely cognitive needs, affective needs, integrative needs, social needs and distraction.

The development of the internet created an abundance of choice and increased the importance of individual agency. Early internet scholars noted that users would have extensive control, could decide what to consume, at a time that was convenient for them (Williams et al., 1988: 13) and determine their own unique pattern of use based on their own initiative (Rubin, 1994). This led to a resurgence of interest in U&G theory (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996; and Ruggiero, 2000) and its value in analysing new motivations and gratifications (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Motivations initially identified in the 1970s and 1980s, have been developed and extended to reflect the nature of internet media and include motivations such as timeshifting and social utility (McClung and Johnson, 2010); cognitive information seeking

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and guidance (Kaye and Johnson, 2002); and multi-tasking and personalisation (Perks and Turner, 2019).

McQuail (2010) summarised five core media motivations developed by U&G scholars:

- to be informed or educated
- to identify with characters in the media environment
- to be entertained
- to enhance social interaction
- to distract and escape the stresses of daily life

U&G theory is particularly relevant to podcasts since podcasts are a media that requires conscious and active selection. Podcasts are not broadcast and you do not stumble across them. Even once you are aware of a podcast you still have to actively seek it out and download or stream the audio.

2.1.1 Criticisms of U&G Theory

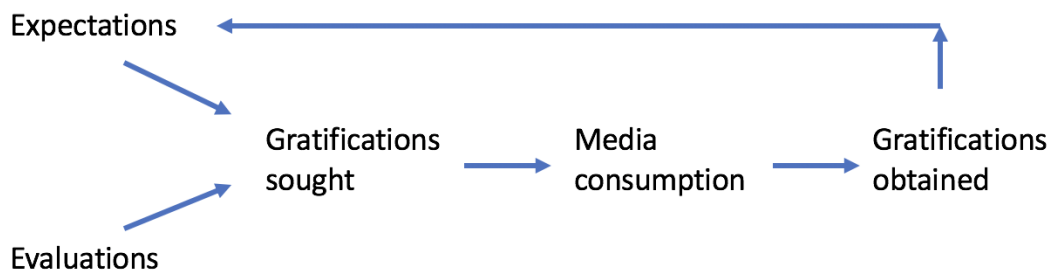
There have been many criticisms of U&G theory including a critique that it is too behaviourist and functionalist (McQuail, 2010) and offers poor predictive powers (McQuail, 1984), possibly because the user is not conscious themselves of underlying motivations. The reliance on self-reporting of motivations is a particular limitation of U&G theory. Media use may also be a product of multiple and complex factors related to the social and economic nature of audiences. As a consequence a U&G approach is generally used to describe and classify rather than predict audience behaviour (Mierzewska & Hollifield, 2006). However, U&G theory provides a useful framework for understanding media use motivation and impact (Lometti et al., 1977, Stafford et al., 2004) and conceptualising how podcast use may be shaped by these individual needs and motivations. McQuail (2010) also noted the U&G approach 'seems to work best in relation to specific types of content where motivation might be present' (McQuail, 2010: 425), such as political content and news (Blumler et al, 1968).

2.1.2 U&G Expectancy Value Model

Palmgreen and Rayburn (1985) developed an expectancy-value model of uses and gratifications. The model distinguishes between audience expectations and evaluations. Expectancy is the perception that engaging with a media object will have an anticipated outcome. Evaluation is the *value* an individual places on the importance of that outcome and

this is the product of an individual's needs, social background and value systems. The model can be summarised by the diagram below.

Figure 5: Expectancy-Value Model



Source: Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985

The model proposes that media use is determined by expectation, the perception of the benefits that the medium offers, and evaluation, the perceived value of those benefits to the individual audience member. When gratifications obtained meet or exceed the gratifications sought, the model predicts greater audience satisfaction and hence continued or increased use of the media object. This model was developed initially in regard to TV and was later extended to an analysis of radio listeners by Bekker & Groenewald (1991).

2.2 Social Capital

Social capital can be broadly defined as the value derived from resources embedded in social ties with others, for example from membership of networks (Bourdieu, 1986). 'The core idea of social capital is that social networks have a value' (Putnam, 2000, p18-19). Academics such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Lin (2001) focus on social capital at the individual level, while Putnam (2000) focuses on the collective value of social networks and social capital. There is broad agreement that social capital 'refers to resources residing in social networks' (Li, 2015: 2) and the social network is the causal mechanism behind social capital (Woolcook, 1998; Putnam, 2000, Ferlander, 2003). Lin (2008) developed a network based theory of social capital, demonstrating how people use both weak and strong ties to gain social capital.

To Bourdieu social capital is a key element of social reproduction as it allows the advantaged to maintain their advantage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu conceptualised that 'power and dominance derive not only from possession of material resources but also from

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possession of cultural and social resources' (Crossley, 2012: 88). These cultural and social resources can be converted into economic capital, for example, using their social connections to support their careers and their children's education. Thus social capital has social utility and facilitates the actions of individuals within a social structure (Coleman, 1988: 302).

Lin views social capital both as a concept and as a theory:

'As a concept, it represents investment in certain types of resources of value in a given society. As a theory it describes the process by which capital is captured and reproduced for returns' (Lin, 2008: 51).

For Lin social capital is an 'investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace' (Lin, 2001: 19). In this way social capital theory views capital in the classical theoretical sense as capital that arises from an investment that provides returns. For example, social capital returns might include enhanced social status or reputation from membership of a social network (Nahapiet & Sumantra Ghoshal, 1998: 243) and particularly from networks which are relatively restricted (Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 1992; D'Aveni & Kesner, 1993). Lin (2008) argues that social capital returns can take a number of forms including:

information (social ties can provide information not available elsewhere)

- **influence** (social ties may influence others, for example job recruiters)
- **social credentials** (social ties may be seen as a form of validation or status)
- **reinforcement** (social ties may reinforce an individual's identity)

Three distinct forms of social capital have been conceptualised and defined as bonding, bridging and linking capital. These concepts reflect the levels, formality and density of networks; the horizontal and vertical nature of networks; and the strength of social ties.

2.2.1 'Bonding' social capital

This refers to strong ties between people in homogeneous group, such as family, friends and close communities (Putnam, 2000, Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2008). Bonding social capital can provide strong emotional support and relationships tend to be reciprocal.

2.2.2 'Bridging' social capital

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Granovetter (1973) highlighted the benefits of weak ties even where contact was infrequent and did not provide emotional support. Granovetter stressed the importance of weak ties as bridges in networks to facilitate information and influence flows. This was developed further by Putnam (1995) in his conceptualisation of bridging social capital as a distinct form of social capital. Bridging capital is based on weak ties and loose connections, which can involve connections between people of different socio-economic status to bridge social cleavages (Putnam 1995: 665) and facilitate information or knowledge flows across social groups or geographical distances (Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2000). The internet and related online social networks facilitate bridging social capital by supporting weak social ties and enabling people to create and maintain networks which can be used to access resources (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Ellison et al., 2007; Resnick, 2001; Wellman et al, 2001).

2.2.3 'Linking' Social Capital

Linking social capital refers specifically to vertical connections across social groups. Whereas 'bridging' is primarily the horizontal dimension of social capital, 'linking' social capital provides vertical linkages to 'people in power, whether they are in politically, socially or financially influential positions' (Woolcock & Sweetser, 2002: 26). By using 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973) and 'friends of friends' (Boissevain, 1974), it is possible to gain privileged access to information and opportunities. Linking social capital across vertical social and power hierarchies is more likely to involve asymmetrical relationships (Woolcock, 2001; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) as cross-cutting, vertical ties have limited scope for reciprocity. (Rubin, 2016: 430). While bridging social capital develops horizontal trust among different social groups, linking social capital is more likely to take the form of a mentor/mentee relationship. Both linking and bridging ties enable people to access resources and information outside their own social network (Field, 2003). With both bridging and linking capital there has to be a willingness to share information and knowledge with the network. This is more likely to be reciprocal in the case of bridging capital and asymmetrical with linking capital.

2.2.4 Equality of Access to Social Capital

Social capital is unequally distributed and depends on the quality of resources provided by social networks. Poorer people may have significant bonding social capital, but little bridging and linking social capital, and less cross-cutting social capital (Woolcock, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Privileged groups tend to possess much higher levels cross-cutting social capital (Wuthnow, 2002). One of the strongest predictors of social capital is education with studies highlighting how well-educated people possess more social capital than those with less education (Field, 2003). These inequalities in social capital may reinforce existing inequalities, such as health (Baum & Ziersch, 2003). The unequal distribution of social capital has also been used to explain

differences in educational achievement (Coleman, 1988), democratic participation (Putnam, 1993) and levels of crime (Walberg et al,1998).

Lin argues that social capital has to be accessed and mobilised in purposive actions (Lin, 2008: 29) and points out that even when there is similar accessibility some individuals mobilise resources better than others. This might be due to better bridges to social capital or simply having a greater cognitive recognition of the advantages of investing in social capital which drives greater motivation and action. People must feel that their engagement in accessing resources and exchanging knowledge will allow them to achieve social capital gains (Moran and Ghoshal, 1996). In summary, availability, accessibility and expectancy are not enough there also needs to be motivation, those involved must feel that engagement 'will be worth their while' (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 249), and they must be 'action-oriented' (Lin et al, 2001: 12). This is relevant to the earlier discussion of the U&G expectancy-value model and an individual's evaluation of the benefits of particular media within their social context.

2.3 Podcasts as a Bridge to Social Capital

In scholarly discourse a 'bridging medium' typically refers to a medium that bridges cognitive and social elements. Thus a medium which supports education and learning through bridging knowledge boundaries, and which also supports social connections by bridging groups across spatial and social divides. Podcasts have been found to be an effective learning medium (Sandars, 2009) that provides an 'intimate bridge' to knowledge (Swiatek, 2018). Podcasts also bridge boundaries between people from different economic, social and cultural backgrounds and vertically across social hierarchies. Political podcasts can enhance a listener's social capital by increasing their knowledge and intellectual capital, which in turn increases their credibility, status and social standing partly through enhancing their confidence and ability to engage in discussion and form relationships. A study of The Making History podcast (Samuel-Azran et al, 2019) found podcast listeners feel like they become opinion leaders after gaining knowledge from podcasts and that appearing as knowledgeable was valued highly, particularly in higher social groups. This cognitive dimension of social capital is a form of intellectual capital with shared codes, representations, systems of meaning, shared language and shared narratives (Orr, 1990). This knowledge and learning or intellectual capital is embedded in a social context and in ongoing social relationships providing social utility. Thus political podcasts provide a bridge to both cognitive and social resources which we can define as cognitive social capital.

It is important to note the nature of podcasts as an 'intimate' bridging medium. Podcasts involve asymmetrical relationships and weak ties but provide an impression of closeness without physical proximity, that bridge the boundaries between the producer and listener. Podcasts create a 'deeply sonorous intimacy' where the listener can feel like they are sitting in

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on a private conversation (Llinares et al, 2018, Chapter 1, Kindle location 186) and which returns emotion, connection and community (Brabazon 2012: 148). This intimate listening develops loyal relationships (Platt & Truant, 2013) and a sense of informality and emotional authenticity. This leads podcasts, despite being based on asymmetrical and weak ties, to be perceived as a more genuine, trustworthy and reliable media form (Sheppard, 2016; Beckett & Deuze, 2017: 4).

2.3.1 Podcasts - A Democratising Medium?

Podcasting does not require a broadcast licence such as radio and is relatively free from regulations. The cost of creating and delivering podcast content is also very low (Menduni, 2007). Digital affordances allow citizens to develop new inexpensive public spheres and mass self-communication in opposition to the mass-media public sphere (Castells, 2007: 249). Podcasting can be seen as a form of citizen journalism and an alternative public sphere that challenges the dominant public sphere (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Kluge & Negt, 2016). The Naneun Ggomsuda podcast in South Korea became a counter public sphere (Park, 2017) gaining over two million downloads per episode. A survey undertaken by The Korea Times of 1,328 Twitter users found that 85.1 percent of Naneun Ggomsuda listeners downloaded the podcast because it was a counter sphere addressing issues not covered by the mainstream media (Los Angeles Times , 2011).

Podcasts are theoretically democratic as they can be developed by anyone and distributed free on platforms such as iTunes. In this freemium model revenues are generated by advertising. However, it takes time to develop an audience that will attract advertising and sustaining podcast production over long periods 'requires a degree of fiscal and emotional support that is available to only the most fortunate.' (Spinelli & Dann, 2019, Chapter 9, Kindle location 4763). This aligns with previous research findings that podcast producers 'have higher sociodemographic status than the broader internet-using populations they come from' (Brake, 2013: 592). Thus podcasting may not be the democratic medium it initially appears. Equally producing podcasts does not mean they will be discovered or listened to. Podcasts are difficult to discover. Nicholas Quah, podcast analyst, comments that 'discoverability is one of the most consistent grumbles I hear from the podcast community' (Quah, 2019, 4 June Newsletter, paragraph 7). There are over 550,000 different podcast shows on Apple iTunes and over 17,000 news and politics podcasts (Missener, 2018) which are listed alphabetically making it almost impossible to browse for a podcast. A search for 'politics' on iTunes only returns podcasts that have the word politics in the podcast title or the episode title thereby missing a great many political podcasts. Research has found that podcasts are primarily discovered via word of mouth and social media (WYNC, 2017; Westwood One, 2018; Samuel-Azran et al, 2019). Discovery can be enhanced through advertising and promotion. In practice it is rare for

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podcasts, not backed by celebrities or big media brands, to gain wide awareness and listeners. Furthermore, as podcasting has grown into a commercially viable media industry, it has become increasingly dominated by major media companies rather than amateur podcasters (Llinares et al, 2018).

The limited research into podcast audiences to date has found the audiences to be drawn from well educated and higher socio-economic groups, and to be disproportionately male (Edison, 2019; RAJAR, 2018; Westwood One, 2018; Chan-Olmsted, 2019). Michelle Dean, writing in The New Republic, argues podcast listening:

carries with it a faint aura of cultural snobbery, a notion that to cue up an episode is to do something highbrow and personally enriching, whether it's a history lecture broadcast from a university, or an amateur talk show recorded in someone's garage' (Dean, 2017, paragraph 4).

However, it is important to note that podcast audiences are likely to vary according to the show in the same way TV audiences vary, and it is difficult to talk of a general podcast audience.

2.4 Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

The research is situated in U&G theory and the concept of active audiences whereby they consciously select media in expectation of certain gratifications which they value. The research investigates the political podcast audience and explores the relationships between their characteristics and their motivations, uses and gratifications. By bringing a social capital perspective to the intimate bridging potential of podcasts (Swiatek, 2018) we can anticipate that political podcasts may be actively used by listeners to enhance their cognitive social capital by:

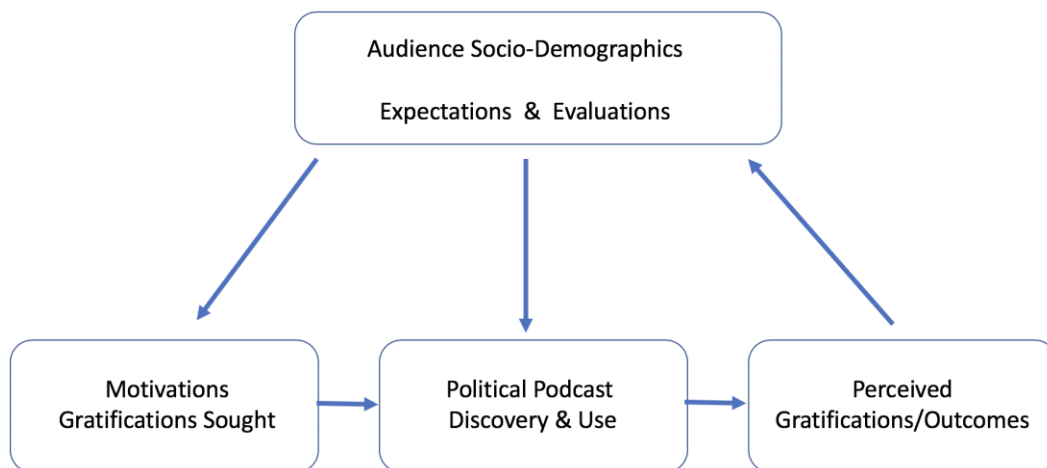
- Providing access to experts in different domains
- Increasing knowledge/intellectual capital, increasing credibility and status
- Providing social utility, enhancing confidence, engagement and relationships
- Reinforcing identity and values, through connecting and communing with like-minded people

Political podcasts may potentially provide a mix of bridging and linking capital that allows those with less social capital to bridge social groups and knowledge boundaries, for example by giving access to expert commentators. The literature suggests this will require positive

actions (Lin et al, 2001) by individuals who have evaluated the benefits of engagement (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985) and feel it will be worth the investment (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). We can anticipate that audience socio-demographics may shape these evaluations and motivations.

To explore these relationships the research is guided by a modified version of the U&G expectancy-value model developed by Palmgreen and Rayburn (1985) set out below.

Figure 2: Modified Expectancy-Value Model



In traditional U&G theory expectations and evaluations are influenced by social capital and these drive motivations and media use. For example, those with higher social capital may place a greater value on the expected gratifications generated by a media object leading to increased motivation. However, with podcasts social capital not only influences motivations but also discovery and use. Those with less social capital, and less cross-cutting social connections, may be less aware of political podcasts and find them difficult to discover. In the model this is reflected in the additional arrow from audience socio-demographics to political podcast discovery.

2.5 Research Questions

The research is guided by the following research questions and hypotheses, that flow from theoretical framework namely:

RQ1 What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the political podcast audience?

RQ2 How are podcasts discovered?

The theoretical model hypothesizes (H1) that there is a relationship between audience socio-demographics and podcast discovery.

RQ3 What are political podcast audience motivations?

The second hypothesis (H2) is that political podcast listeners are motivated by cognitive social capital.

RQ4 What is the relationship between audience socio-demographics and motivations?

The third hypothesis (H3) is that there is a relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and motivations for political podcast use.

RQ5 How are political podcasts used and what gratifications do they satisfy?

The fourth hypothesis (H4) is that the amount of time spent listening to political podcasts is influenced by the strength of cognitive social capital motivations.

This research makes an empirical contribution to the understanding of podcasting audiences, specifically socio-demographic characteristics, motivations and the relationships between these characteristics and motivations. The research brings a cognitive social capital perspective to motivations, uses and gratifications. It establishes a theoretical framework for further investigation into different types of political podcasts and raises questions for subsequent qualitative interviews and focus groups. Finally, the research lays the ground for a more detailed exploration of a larger, more normative question, namely whether political podcasts provide a democratising medium that levels up cognitive social capital or alternatively whether such podcasts primarily benefit those with existing high levels of cognitive social capital and actually increase inequalities. This question is of particular interest to policy makers making decisions about publicly funded podcasting services and to those interested in social inequalities in political information and knowledge.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Strategy and Rationale

As part of the background research qualitative interviews were undertaken with five political podcast producers to explore what information currently exists about the political podcast audience and their motivations. The topic guide and an example transcript are at appendices 1 and 2. These interviews revealed that producers have little knowledge or data about the socio-demographics of their audience, or their motivations, making it necessary to collect original audience data. A survey was considered the most appropriate methodology as surveys are particularly useful for 'describing a population, identifying characteristics of a group' and 'explaining how variables are related' (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009: 37). Surveys are more useful when exploring audience characteristics, motivations and associations than qualitative interviews and focus groups where it is difficult to draw inferences and generalise about a population (De Vaus, 2001). Finally, a survey can identify relationships and lay the groundwork for further research, as causality is better tested using experimental research methods.

A survey must balance accuracy and reliability against costs, convenience and time. Online surveys can reach a large target audience quickly and cost effectively. They also have other benefits such as automatic branching, answer validation, respondent convenience and less social-desirability bias than human interviews (Booth-Kewley et al, 2007; Heerwegh, 2009). The need for respondents to have internet access is not a weakness in this case as the audience requires the internet to access podcasts. A more serious weakness of self-selection online surveys is sample bias, not least towards people who want to give their views and who like to complete surveys (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2012). Sampling issues are addressed in the methodology section below.

In summary, an online survey was considered the most suitable method to address the research questions. However, a multi-method approach, with follow-up qualitative interviews, is likely to produce more context, deeper understanding and more reliable data on motivations (Yilmaz, 2013). Unfortunately time and costs did not permit this approach but information was collected on respondents willing to take part in future qualitative interviews.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

The ideal sampling strategy would be to randomly select participants from the target population, where everyone has an equal and known probability of selection (Yeager et al, 2011). Unfortunately this is not possible as the target population is unknown. This creates a sampling challenge namely how to reach the audience and give all listeners the same opportunity to participate.

One way podcast listeners can be found and recruited is via social media (Antoun et al, 2013). There are examples of podcast audience surveys being posted on fan websites and social media to reach the target audience (McClung et al, 2010; Boling & Hull, 2019). Researchers have also used targeted advertising to followers of social media accounts, asked podcasts to share surveys on their social pages and contacted followers directly (Wejnert & Heckathorn, 2008). However, these approaches give rise to a risk of non-coverage, which is 'one of the important challenges in web survey methodology' (Callegaro et al, 2015: 61). While social media may be a good way to find podcast listeners, only fifty percent of listeners also follow the podcast on social media (Chan-Olmsted, 2019) thereby excluding half of the podcast audience.

The only way to provide all podcast listeners with the same opportunity to participate is to promote the survey on the podcast itself. Producers of ten political podcasts were contacted and asked if they would promote the survey on their podcast via a 'read' where the host reads the promotion. Nine of the podcasts approached either did not reply or quoted commercial rates that were outside the project budget. Only the 'Talking Politics' podcast agreed to a 'read' without charging commercial rates. A simple url 'podcastsurvey.uk' was created and used by the podcast host who encouraged listeners to participate thereby giving all listeners the same opportunity to participate. The survey was also promoted on relevant social media forums, on the social media pages of political podcasts and promoted directly to social media followers of political podcasts.

While all survey samples are self-selected to some degree (Lavrakas, 2008) the self-selection introduces the potential for bias as certain groups may be more likely to self-select and hence the sample may not be representative of the target population. For example, men may be more likely to self-select than women. The use of a 'read' by the host may also introduce a degree of bias, for example those that are fans of the show may be more likely to respond. While it is possible to stratify and weight for observable characteristics such as age or sex, in this case the audience characteristics are unknown which means it is not possible to use stratification and quotas to improve the data from the sample.

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The appropriate sample size depends on the questions being addressed, sampling techniques, analysis proposed and the desired accuracy. With probability samples statistical inference techniques can be used to assess the accuracy of estimates about the target population based on sample size. However, there is no reliable sample size for non-probability sampling as the inclusion probabilities are unknown (Langer, 2013). In this case it was decided to recruit a sample of 1,200 respondents, using multiple recruitment methods to maximise randomisation, and enable statistical inference techniques to be used to provide indications rather than estimates about the target audience and highlight associations for further research.

3.3 Survey Design

The survey was designed to gather relevant data to explore the four research questions namely:

Control variables

The survey questions covered age, gender, ethnicity, education, location and household income.

Independent variables

The survey included 17 motivation statements covering motivations highlighted by previous research such as entertainment, social utility, distraction, multi-tasking and information seeking. Each statement was rated on a 5 point likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Dependent variables

The survey included questions on two dependent variables namely the time spent listening and number of podcasts listened to each week.

The research into cognitive social capital was operationalised by developing a 'cognitive social index' comprising six scale items. The validity and reliability of the index was a key concern and was assessed using factor analysis and Cronbach Alpha scores.

The survey was developed using Qualtrics survey software, which also generated an anonymous link for survey respondents. As engagement can be negatively affected by longer questionnaires (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, p292) questions were limited to keep the estimated completion time to seven minutes.

It is essential that surveys are piloted to identify and address issues prior to conducting the survey (Bradburn et al, 2004: 314). Cognitive interviews can probe measurement errors (Callegaro et al, 2015: 64) which includes checking validity, namely whether questions measure what they are designed to measure (Saris, 2012: 537) and reliability, the consistency of responses over time. Fifty-five people, recruited through social media and email, completed the draft survey. Cognitive interviews were conducted with five respondents aged from 22 to 58, including three men and two women, as a range of perspectives is more important when cognitive interviewing than representativeness (Beatty & Willis, 2007; Willis, 2005). The interviews were conducted a few days after completion and relied on respondents' recall which may not be as accurate as concurrent interviews (Ericsson & Herbert, 1993). The interviews explored how respondents arrived at their response (Pepper et al, 2018), checked their understanding, comprehension and retrieval from memory (Tourangeau et al, 2000), probed their truthful responses to sensitive questions, and checked if there was anything else they would like to cover (Peterson et al, 2017: 219). The interview guide and an example transcript are attached at appendices 4 and 5.

Two of the question statements in the original survey were found to be confusing:

1. 'I set aside quality time to listen to political podcasts.' This confused people as they frequently multi-task while listening to podcasts and hence, they were not sure if this was 'quality time' or if they were 'setting aside' time.
2. 'What proportion of all podcast episodes that you download do you actually get round to listening to?' The word 'download' confused some respondents as they stream rather than download podcasts.

As a consequence of this feedback the two questions were removed from the final survey.

The cognitive interviews also highlighted some sensitivity over questions about age and income which could lead to less than truthful answers if respondents were required to answer. The final survey (appendix 3) allowed these questions to be skipped, without highlighting or encouraging non-responses.

3.4 Ethics and Reflexivity

The research was undertaken in line with the LSE's code of research ethics, this included completing an ethics checklist for the dissertation supervisor prior to data collection (LSE, 2018). An ethical research approach has to weigh the potential benefits alongside the potential harm to participants or others (Roberts & Allen, 2015: 96) and ensure that ethical reflection is an ongoing process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

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Participants were required to read and agree to a consent form (appendix 6) before they could proceed to complete the survey. This form highlighted the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time. The survey was explained verbally to interviewees along with their right to withdraw and they were asked to sign a printed consent form (appendix 7). No financial incentives were proposed for participation in the survey. The direct approaches made to potential respondents via social media, were handled sensitively as such approaches can be considered intrusive (Cho & La Rose, 1999). Potentially sensitive questions were explored using the cognitive interviews prior to launching the survey.

Online surveys raise ethical issues around anonymity and confidentiality. The survey could be completed anonymously although Qualtrics recorded the IP address of respondents. Respondents could voluntarily provide their name and email address if they were happy to be contacted following the survey. This data was secured online in password protected areas only accessible to the researcher in accordance with a pre-approved data plan.

3.5 Analysis Strategy

The cognitive interviews were analysed using a thematic framework and grounded theory procedure (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Transcripts were reviewed, key points were noted, codes were developed and themes identified.

The following statistical techniques were proposed to analyse the survey data and address the research questions and hypotheses.

Statistical technique	Purpose
Descriptive statistics and frequency analysis	Analyse the socio-demographics of the audience, their motivations and uses of political podcasts.
Contingency table and cross-tabulations	Analyse the associations between categorical variables. Margins of error also to be checked where there are small sample sizes.
Correlations and categorical regression analysis	Explore the relationships between variables and review significant correlations and associations.

One-way ANOVA & post hoc Tukey multiple comparisons	Identify statistically significant differences between the mean scores of socio-demographic groups.
Factor analysis	Assess the cognitive social capital index and its ability to be measured by the proposed observed variables, namely the six scale variables. If the variables measure the same thing we would expect them to have relatively high Pearson correlations.
Cronbach’s alpha	Measure the internal reliability of the cognitive social capital index.

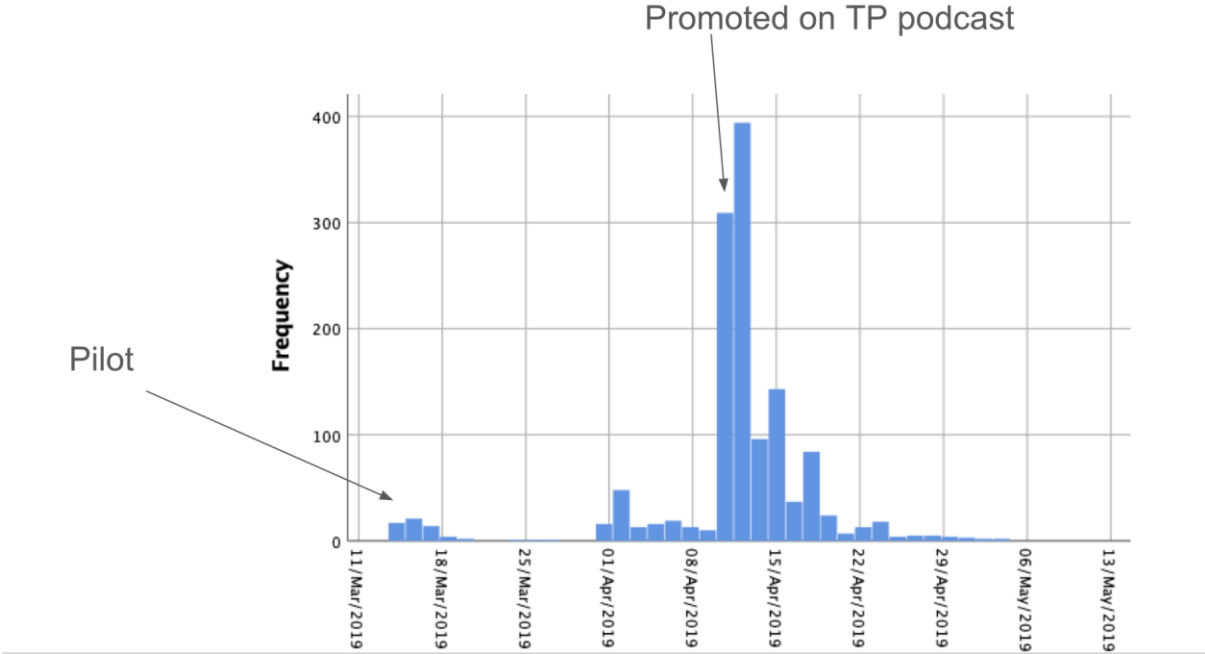
4 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Participants

1,360 people responded to the online survey. Fourteen had not listened to a political podcast in the last week and were removed from the analysis on the basis they were not regular listeners to political podcasts, leaving a sample of 1,346 responses for analysis. In this case the sample is used to provide indications for further research rather than estimates, however, for reference a proportion of 70% based on this size of random sample has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5% at a 95% confidence level. Detailed survey results are at appendix 8.

The majority of respondents were recruited from the Talking Politics (TP) podcast promotional ‘read’ as evidenced by a sharp spike in responses when the day the podcast was released and immediately after.

Figure 3: Respondents Timeline



Source: Qualtrics

1,105 of the 1,346 respondents reported listening to the Talking Politics podcast. Approximately one hundred of these listeners had completed the survey prior to the podcast promotion but it is estimated that at least 900 of the Talking Politics respondents came directly from the promotional ‘read’ on the podcast itself.

Table 1: Most listened to political podcasts

Podcast	Number of Respondents
Talking Politics	1,105
BBC Political Podcasts	498
Guardian Politics	429

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New Statesman	326
Remainiacs	286

Source: Survey results, n=1,346

The high number of Talking Politics listeners introduces a potential sample bias. Political podcasts vary from entertaining podcasts to partisan podcasts to more academic podcasts. The Talking Politics podcast is run by a Cambridge professor, David Runciman, and could be considered an academic, high-brow political podcast. The podcast was referred to in the Daily Telegraph as ‘Britain’s brainiest podcast’ (Lewis, 2018) and its listeners may not be representative of political podcast listeners as a whole. The analysis was cognizant of this and separated out Talking Politics listeners for separate analysis and comparison where appropriate.

The survey was promoted to listeners of UK political podcasts and 77.6% of respondents live in Europe. A further 13.5% live in North America and 7.6% in Asia/Pacific. This reflects the global nature of podcast audiences.

4.2 Cognitive Social Capital Index

The research operationalised ‘cognitive social capital’ by developing an index comprising six scale items. The validity and reliability of the index was assessed using factor analysis and Cronbach Alpha scores. An exploratory factor analysis was undertaken in SPSS using principal component analysis which highlighted groups of variables that were highly intercorrelated (appendix 9). Each component or group is an indication of an underlying explanatory factor. The primary component group identified included the six scale variables in the cognitive social capital index. This provides evidence for the validity of the index. The Cronbach Alpha score for the index was then calculated to test the internal consistency of the six scale variables. The Cronbach Alpha score was 0.762 which is an acceptable score confirming internal variable consistency.

The exploratory factor analysis identified further potential components or groups. One was around political partisanship and another was around distraction and entertainment. The Cronbach Alpha scores were tested for these components and they revealed poor internal consistency scores. They were therefore disregarded for the analysis.

4.3 Audience Socio-Demographics

The sample respondents were primarily white, highly educated men with a relatively high family income as set out in table 2 below.

Table 2: Audience Socio-Demographics

Characteristic		Occupation	
Average age	41	Full-time employee	55.4%
Male	71.2%	Part-time employee	8.6%
White	92.6%	Self-employed	14.1%
Post-graduate education	56%	Student	10.1%
Household income £80,000+	31.1%	Retired	7.4%
Live in Europe	77.6%	Unemployed	3.6%

Source: Survey Results

The results indicate that political podcast listeners compared to the UK population are more likely to be white, 92.6% compared to 87.2% (ONS, 2012), have above average household incomes (ONS, 2019) and have significantly higher levels of education, with over 90% having a first degree. 56% of respondents also had postgraduate education compared to 11% of the UK population (Lindley & Machin, 2013).

iven the disproportionate response from Talking Politics listeners a separate socio-demographic analysis was undertaken of the 1,105 Talking Politics listeners and the 241 respondents that did not listen to the podcast. The key differences between the two groups are highlighted below.

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Comparison of Talking Politics Listeners and non Talking Politics Listeners

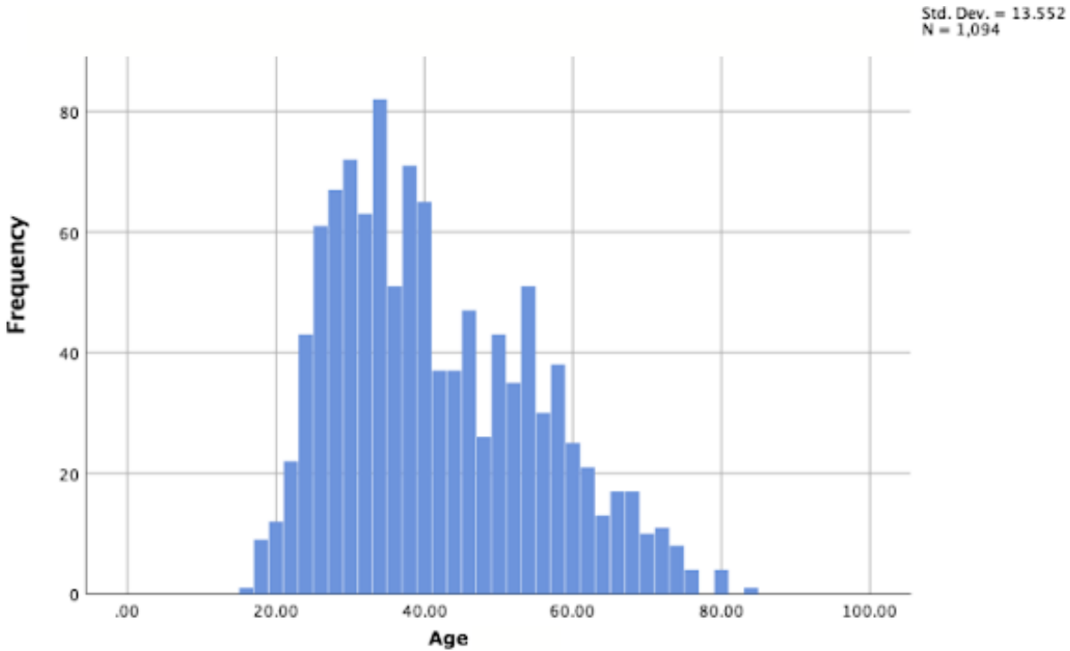
Characteristic	Talking Politics Audience (n=1,105)	Do Not Listen to Talking Politics (n=241)
Average age	41 (Standard deviation 13.55)	41.8 (Standard deviation 12.5)
Male	73.7%	59.3%
White	93.3%	89.5%
Post-graduate education	57.8%	50.9%
Household income £80,000+	31.9%	27.6%

Source: Survey Results

While both groups of podcast listeners have a very similar age profile the Talking Politics audience is less ethnically diverse, more likely to have household incomes in excess of £80,000 and more likely to be educated at a postgraduate level. However, over 50% of the non-Talking Politics audience are also educated at postgraduate level, which is still very high. The biggest difference is the gender profile. Based on the sample respondents the Talking Politics audience is 73.7% male, this is slightly higher than male proportion of their Twitter followers which is 69% male (analysis using social media analysis tool Brandwatch). By contrast the male proportion of sample respondents that do not listen to Talking Politics is 59.3%. We should note that the relatively small sample size (241) for this group increases the margin of error, in this case to plus or minus 6% at a 95% confidence level.

The results indicate that political podcast listeners, with an average age of 41, are older than podcast listeners as a whole. A 2019 University of Florida survey (n=2,000) found the average age of podcast listeners across all podcasts to be 26.9 (Chan-Olmsted, 2019).

Figure 4: Age Profile of Political Podcast Listeners



Source: Survey Results, n=1,094

Overall, despite the variations between the listeners of Talking Politics and other political podcasts, the results indicate that political podcast listeners are disproportionately white men, who are older than the podcast audience as a whole, with above average household incomes and significantly higher levels of education than the UK population average. The findings indicate that choosing to listen to a political podcast is related to social status and aligns with previous findings that choices of news and information sources are related to social status (Lindell, 2017).

4.4 Podcast Discovery

The survey results reveal that the most common ways people discover political podcasts is through their social connections, either via word of mouth (60%) or on social media (46%). The sharing of podcasts with friends via word of mouth or via social media is a feature of the podcast audience with 78% of podcast listeners saying they have recommended a podcast to a friend (WYNC, 2017).

Table 4: Discovery of political podcasts

How do you discover political podcasts?	Number	Percentage
Word of mouth	811	60
Social media	615	46
TV/Press	445	33
iTunes	309	23
Search engine	285	21
Spotify	56	4

Source: Survey Results, Overall n=1346 (respondents can give more than one answer)

4.5 Motivations

The results indicate there is a strong cognitive social capital motivation for listening to political podcasts. On a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) the score for the cognitive social capital index was 4.28.

The individual scores for scale variables within the index were as follows.

Table 5: Social Cognitive Capital Scale Item Scores

Scale	Social Cognitive Capital					
	I listen to political podcasts to improve	I feel more knowledgeable after listening to	I find political podcasts more	I feel more confident about expressing	I discuss political podcast content	Listening to political podcasts enables

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Items	my understanding of political issues	political podcasts	insightful than mainstream media political reporting	political views after listening to political podcasts	with friends	me to better engage in political discussions
Individual scores	4.71	4.5	4.38	3.92	3.91	4.22

Source: Survey Results

The analysis of the other eleven motivation statements reveals that the strongest motivations, outside of cognitive social capital, are related to the nature of the podcast medium namely convenience and productivity. The six highest scoring motivations are shown in the table below.

Table 6: Motivation Item Scores

Items	I can listen to the podcast when it fits my personal schedule	Podcasts enable me to listen while I do something else	I select podcasts where I respect the values of the presenter	I feel like I get to know the presenters of political podcasts	I listen to be entertained	I feel like I am sitting in on a private conversation
Individual scores	4.65	4.16	3.94	3.88	3.61	3.54

Source: Survey Results

All other motivations scored less than 3.5.

4.6 Associations between socio-demographics and motivations

An analysis of variance analysis (ANOVA) was undertaken to highlight statistically significant variations in political podcast motivations by socio-demographic factors. Cross-tabulations were then used to explore statistically significant variations. This analysis uncovered statistically significant variations in certain motivations based on age and gender.

The survey found that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be motivated by being part of a like-minded community. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents as determined by one-way ANOVA (F=17.82, P<0.001). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the average score for women was statistically significantly higher (3.29 ±0.11, P < 0.001) than the male score (2.89 ±0.07, P < 0.001).

By using a grouped cross-tabulation below we can see that 48.94% of women somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement compared to 33.5% of men.

Table 7: I listen to political podcasts to feel part of a like-minded community

	Strongly disagree or somewhat disagree	Neither	Strongly agree or somewhat agree	Totals
Men	354	270	315	939
	37.7%	28.8%	33.5%	100%
Women	98	95	185	378
	25.93%	25.13%	48.94%	100%

Source: Survey Results, n=1,320

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We should note when using smaller cross-tab samples that the margin of error for the proportion increases, in this case the margin of error for the 49% of women agreeing is plus or minus 6% at a 95% confidence level.

The survey found that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to avoid podcasts whose political views they disagree with. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F=18.94, P<0.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the average score for women was statistically significantly higher ($3.25 \pm 0.12, P < 0.001$) than the male score ($2.83 \pm 0.07, P < 0.001$). By using a grouped cross-tabulation below we can see that 49.6%% of women somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement compared to 35.4% of men. Women are 50% less likely than men to disagree with the statement.

Table 8: I don't listen to podcasts whose political views I disagree with

	Strongly disagree or somewhat disagree	Neither	Strongly agree or somewhat agree	Totals
Men	425	182	333	940
	45.2%	19.4%	35.4%	100%
Women	115	76	188	379
	30.3%	20.1%	49.6%	100%

Source: Survey Results, n=1,322

Given these two responses it is not surprising that the survey found women are also more likely to agree that podcasts confirm the validity of their political views than men. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F=9.7, P<0.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the average score for women was statistically significantly higher ($3.28 \pm 0.1, P < 0.001$) than the male score ($3.03 \pm 0.06, P < 0.001$). From the grouped cross-tabulation below we can see that 46.15% of women somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement compared to 33.2% of men.

Table 9: Podcasts confirm the political validity of my views

	Strongly disagree or somewhat disagree	Neither	Strongly agree or somewhat agree	Totals
Men	246	381	312	939
	26.2%	40.6%	33.2%	100%
Women	82	121	174	377
	21.75%	32.1%	46.15%	100%

Source: Survey Results, n=1,319

The survey also found women are more likely to discuss political podcast content with friends than men. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F=9.01, P<0.001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the average score for women was statistically significantly higher ($4.08 \pm 0.09, P < 0.001$) than the male score ($3.84 \pm 0.06, P < 0.001$). 85.5% of women reported discussing political content with friends versus 75.6% for men.

There were also some significant differences between age groups and motivations. The over 65s were significantly less likely to listen to podcasts for entertainment than all other age groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F=11.73, P<0.000$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the average score for the 65+ age group was statistically significantly lower ($2.91 \pm 0.26, P < 0.001$) than all other age groups for example, the average score for the 55-64 age group ($3.5 \pm 0.16, P < 0.001$) and the average score for the 16-24 age group ($3.82 \pm 0.18, P < 0.001$). The over 65s were also less likely to appreciate the multi-tasking capabilities of podcasts, which is possibly because they have less demands on their time. There was a statistically significant difference between respondents aged over 65 and all other age groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F=16.25, P<0.000$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the average score for the 65+ age group was statistically significantly lower ($3.27 \pm 0.31, P < 0.001$) than all other age groups for example, the 45-54 age group ($4.12 \pm 0.13, P < 0.001$) and the 16-24 age group (4.37

± 0.17 , $P < 0.001$). However, we should be cautious in drawing any conclusions as the over 65s sample was just 79, giving a margin of error for a 50% proportion of plus or minus 11% with a 95% confidence level.

The analysis found no statistically significant differences in motivations for groups with different levels of household income, education levels or different ethnic backgrounds.

In summary, the results show there is a statistically relationship between gender and motivations such as social utility. There are also indications of an association between the over 65s and motivations such as using podcasts for entertainment and distraction.

4.7 Podcast Use and Gratifications

The majority of sample respondents (79.6%) report listening to the whole episode when they listen to a political podcast. This data is skewed by the fact the Talking Politics promotion was at the end of the podcast meaning only those that listened to the end of the podcast heard the promotion. However, a separate analysis excluding Talking Politics listeners still found that 67.3% listen to the whole episode and 28.8% to most of it. These findings are similar to the findings of the RAJAR podcast survey in 2018 which found 67% listen to the whole episode and 22% to most of it (RAJAR, 2018).

The results reveal a large core of committed political podcast listeners. 22% report listening for over 5 hours a week with a further 57% listening for over 2 hours a week. 32% report listening to five or more political podcasts a week with a further 66% listening to 3 or more podcasts each week. It would appear that many listeners appreciate the podcast form and the gratifications it delivers. Over 87% of respondents had increased their podcast listening over the last two years and 47.6% had increased their podcast listening significantly over the last two years.

The survey was designed to test the hypothesis (H3) that the time spent listening each week was influenced by the strength of the cognitive social capital motivation. A correlation analysis found no significant correlation (Pearson correlation 0.11) between the dependent variable, time spent listening, and the independent variable cognitive social motivation. While correlation does not equal causation, there has to be correlation to be causation. Therefore the analysis did not advance to a regression model as we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between cognitive social capital motivation and the amount of time spent listening to political podcasts each week. Further correlation analysis was conducted examining the relationship between socio-demographic factors and all other motivations with the time spent listening to political podcasts. No significant correlations were found.

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In summary, the political podcast audience do appear to be a committed audience, for example listening to the whole episode, listening to more than one podcast and discussing podcast content with friends. The responses to the survey statements also indicate that podcasts gratify the cognitive and social utility needs of listeners. For example, the average score on a scale of 1-5 for the statement 'I feel more knowledgeable after listening to political podcasts' was 4.5 and for the statement 'Listening to political podcasts enables me to better engage in political discussions' was 4.22.

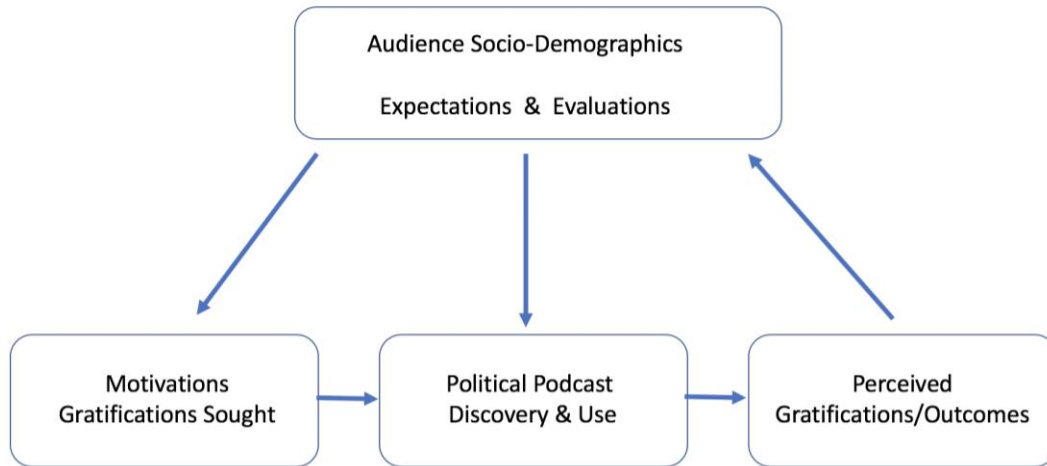
5 DISCUSSION

The survey involved a self-selected, random sample of listeners to UK political podcasts, with the majority of responses (900+) recruited from a promotional 'read' on the Talking Politics podcast. The survey results, based on the size and nature of the sample, are sufficient to provide indications about the nature of the political podcast audience, their motivations, uses and gratifications.

The response from the promotional read on the Talking Politics podcast was very high given the listeners would have to have noted down the survey url, accessed this url on the internet and then completed the survey. The response rate would appear to confirm previous research that host-endorsed podcast advertising is an effective method of getting podcast listeners to take an action (Kaufer, 2018). Research by Acast (2018) found that 76% of podcast listeners say they have acted on a podcast advert or sponsorship message. This would indicate that promotional reads on podcasts themselves could be an effective way for future podcast researchers to reach specific podcast listeners.

The research was designed to explore the relationships between political podcast motivations, uses and gratifications using a modified version of the expectancy-value model (Palmgreen & Rayburn 1985).

Figure 4: Modified Expectancy-Value Model



The first question that the research was designed to answer (RQ1) was: *What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the political podcast audience?* The results highlight variations in the socio-demographic profile of the audiences of different political podcasts. However, overall the results provide strong indications that the political podcast audience is disproportionately white, well educated men with a relatively high household income. While political podcasts may have the potential to level up cognitive social capital the results appear to confirm U&G theory and social capital theory predictions that the benefits of social capital resources are better mobilised by those in higher social groups as they have greater cognitive recognition of the advantages of investing in such resources. By contrast evaluations by individuals in lower social groups may conclude that political knowledge does not provide status or utility in their social network and hence they not invest in purposive actions to access these resources (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985; Moran and Ghoshal, 1996; Lin, 2008: 29). The results are also in line with previous research that suggests wider online media choice will primarily be utilised by, and benefit, those with higher social status and cognitive advantages (Hargittai, 2008; Lindell, 2018; Papacharissi, 2011; Burke et al, 2010; Freese et al, 2006; van Duersen & Helsper 2015).

The use of podcasts as a medium may further increase information inequality in respect to political knowledge as there is very little incidental exposure when using podcasts. With mediums such as TV or radio individuals may be incidentally exposed to news and politics (Prior, 2005, Epstein, 1973). They may be watching or listening primarily for entertainment but carry on watching or listening when a news programme comes on. With social media people can also be subject to incidental exposure to political issues through newsfeed posts (Kim et al, 2013; Vaccari et al, 2016) and this can potentially increase their political knowledge

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(Dimitrova et al, 2014). By contrast there is very little incidental exposure with podcasts because episodes are accessed individually. For example, a comedy podcast is not automatically followed by a political podcast in the way a comedy TV or radio programme might be followed by political news or discussion. The control that podcasts provide individuals over media choice results in less incidental exposure to political content. The same is true of other high control media such as Netflix and where political knowledge is unlikely to be gained through incidental exposure. A particular concern to policy makers will be whether podcasts and high control media reinforce or further increase social inequalities in political information.

The results align with findings of male bias in podcast audiences (Edison, 2019, RAJAR, 2018, Chan-Olmsted, 2019). The RAJAR survey found that 63% of the podcast audience was male. They also align with findings of greater male interest in politics relative to women (Fraile, 2014). Fraile also found the gender gap in political knowledge increased with age and with educational levels of achievement (Fraile, 2014, p261). Therefore it is not a surprise that the combination of political content with the podcast medium gives rise to a majority male audience. This male bias appears to vary by type of political podcast, for example Making History (90%) (Samuel-Azran, 2019), Talking Politics (73.7%) and the non-Talking Politics political podcast audience (59.3%). This variation is something to be explored in future research, including how the subject matter or gender of podcast host(s) may impact on the evaluations and the gender profile of listeners. For example, the 44,000 Twitter followers of political podcast Gaslit Nation, which is hosted by women and provides a female perspective on politics, are 58% female (analysis undertaken using Brandwatch).

The survey results indicate that listeners to political podcasts are older than podcast listeners as a whole. However, it is important to note that while political podcast listeners may be older than podcast listeners in general, they are much younger than the audiences for BBC TV and BBC radio. For example, the average age of the political podcast audience is 41 compared to 56 for BBC Radio 4 (BBC, 2017a), 53 for BBC Radio 5 Live (BBC, 2017b), 61 for BBC One and 62 for BBC Two (BBC Trust, 2017). Thus podcasts may be an effective way for organisations such as the BBC to engage a younger audience with political news and information.

The socio-demographics of the political podcast audience are related to the second research question (RQ2) namely: *How are political podcasts discovered?* It was hypothesised in the theoretical framework that there is a relationship between socio-demographics and podcast discovery. This hypothesis was informed by the difficulties of discovering podcasts, by previous research findings that the primary drivers of new podcast discovery to be social connections, namely word of mouth and social media (WYNC, 2017; Westwood One, 2018; Samuel-Azran et al, 2019), and by research demonstrating inequalities in online news

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discovery and access across social groups (Kalogeropoulos & Nielsen, 2018). The results highlight that the political podcast audience typically find podcasts through social connections, namely word of mouth (60%) and social media (46%). This highlights the importance of an individual's social group and connections in discovering and selecting political podcasts.

The third question that the research was designed to address (RQ3) was: *What are political podcast audience motivations and gratifications, specifically in relation to cognitive social capital?* The hypothesis (H2) was that increasing cognitive social capital was a primary motivating factor in choosing to listen to political podcasts. The results, based on the cognitive social capital index constructed, strongly support this hypothesis and demonstrate that cognitive social capital is a major motivation for those listening to political podcasts. Taken together with the previous findings these results indicate that the political podcast listeners not only have relatively high levels of cognitive social capital but are also motivated by a desire to increase this further. This may be based on a recognition and understanding of the benefits, value and social utility of such capital. The results also indicate that the nature of the medium, particularly convenience and productivity, are also strong motivations for listening to political podcasts.

The fourth question that the research was designed to explore (RQ4) was: *What is the relationship between audience demographics and motivations, uses and gratifications?* The research hypothesised (H3) that there was an association between socio-demographics and motivations for listening to political podcasts. The results found statistically significant associations between age and gender, and certain podcast motivations. In particular the results found that women had higher social utility motivations and aligns with previous research findings that adult women are more likely to use technology for social engagement activities (Tsetsi, 2016). The associations also highlight the particular need for further research into female motivations and strategies to increase political podcast adoption by women. The results indicate that people over 65 are less likely to be motivated by the productivity and multi-tasking capabilities of podcasts, and less likely to use political podcasts for entertainment and distraction. Based on the sample there were no statistically significant differences in motivations for groups with different levels of household income, education levels or different ethnic backgrounds. The nature of these relationships and the motivations of different socio-demographic groups is an area for future research. If policy makers want to improve the equality of access to political information via podcasts it is necessary to understand the motivations of different groups. For example, podcasts that combine political discussion with an entertaining approach may be more likely to attract younger people, and different groups may be motivated by particular topics or formats, or by hosts that are more representative of their own social group.

The fifth question the research addressed (RQ5) was: *How are political podcasts used and what gratifications do they satisfy?* The results indicate that political podcasts build committed audiences with around 80% reporting that they listen to the whole of a podcast episode, 57% listening to political podcasts for over 2 hours a week, 32% listening to five or more political podcasts each week and 50% of listeners reporting that they trust the content of political podcasts more than TV or newspapers. This trust may reflect the intimate nature of podcasts which returns emotion, connection and community (Brabazon, 2012: 147) and which result in podcasting being perceived as a more genuine and reliable media form (Sheppard, 2016). Listening to podcasts via earbuds or headphones the audience can come to feel like they know the hosts and bond with them (Platt and Truant, 2013) which builds loyal relationships (Meyerson, 2010).

The survey results indicate that political podcasts are effective in satisfying or gratifying the needs and motivations of podcast listeners. That many listeners appreciate the podcast form and adopt the medium for wider listening. The ability of political podcasts to gratify cognitive social needs in particular can be seen from the survey data with 96% agreeing they feel more knowledgeable after listening to political podcasts and 87.5% reporting they are better able to engage in political discussions after listening. Full details in appendix 8. This ability to gratify cognitive social needs leads to a virtuous motivation, use and gratification cycle and 87% of respondents report increasing their political podcast listening over the last two years, including 47.6% that have increased their listening significantly.

The results found no evidence to support the hypothesis (H4) that the amount of time spent listening to political podcasts is influenced by the strength of cognitive social capital motivations.

In summary, the results align with social capital and internet research findings that freely accessible resources do not necessarily mean equal access, use or benefits. The results indicate that those in higher social groups may find it easier to discover political podcasts and be more likely to recognise the cognitive social capital gains that can be achieved from purposefully mobilising such resources. The findings also align with the U&G expectancy-value model predictions, namely that media choice is influenced by an evaluation of benefits within a social context and where satisfied gratifications lead to consistent or increased media use.

5.1 Limitations and Future Research

It is important to note the limitations of research based on a single sample of 1,346 respondents. The survey was a self-selected, random sample of listeners to UK political podcasts, with the majority of responses recruited from a promotional 'read' on the Talking Politics podcast. The audience for this specific podcast, and hence the sample, may not be representative of all

political podcasts. Further research is required into the audiences of different forms of political podcasts to examine how far audiences vary and to establish common characteristics and motivations. The detailed documentation attached enables the survey to be replicated for other podcast audiences. Larger sample sizes are also required for specific segments, for example the over 65s, to explore differences by age.

The response to the promotional read reinforces previous research that host-endorsed podcast advertising is an effective method of getting podcast listeners to take action (Kaufer, 2018; Acast, 2018). This indicates that promotional reads on podcasts could be an effective way for future researchers to reach podcast listeners.

The results are limited by being based on a single quantitative survey and follow-up qualitative interviews would provide more context and richer information into motivations and gratifications. Over 900 respondents to the survey indicated they would be happy to take part in follow up interviews.

One of the survey's biggest weaknesses is that it does not address those who do not listen to political podcasts. The findings raise questions about inequalities in accessing political information and about the relationship between an individual's social group and characteristics (for example, age, ethnicity and gender) and their likelihood of accessing political podcasts. Policy proposals designed to broaden the audience for political podcasts and reduce inequalities in political information need to be based on research with this group.

6 CONCLUSION

Podcasting is becoming increasingly important as a medium through which political news and information is delivered, with millions of people now regularly listening to political podcasts. Podcasts are also an intimate medium that creates trust and loyalty, and can reinforce or shape political views and discussion. For these reasons the pattern of adoption, including the socio-demographics of the audience, their motivations and uses is of interest to society, academics and policy makers.

Political podcasts have democratising characteristics that provide the potential to act as a bridging mechanism to level up social capital. However, the results indicate that political podcasts are primarily discovered through social connections and leveraged by those with cognitive and social advantages, most notably white, well educated men with relatively high household incomes. A major motivation for listening is increasing cognitive social capital and the results indicate this motivation is gratified by political podcasts and motivates future listening. The findings align with previous research suggesting greater online media choice

primarily benefits higher social status groups with cognitive advantages (Hargittai, 2008; Lindell, 2017; Papacharissi, 2011; Burke et al, 2010; Freese et al, 2006) and accessibility of resources does not lead to equal access (Lin, 2008). The findings also support theories social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and the validity of U&G expectancy-value models (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985) to explain media choice.

These findings have implications for policy makers and raise a number of areas and questions for further research, particularly how to widen and equalise adoption patterns across gender, ethnic and social groups. Why do individuals in lower social groups not invest in accessing political podcasts? Is it due to discovery difficulties, an aversion to the medium or evaluations that the knowledge gained will not provide utility in their social group (Moran and Ghoshal, 1996; Lin, 2008: 29). For ethnic groups and women how far does the content focus or podcast hosts affect evaluations and motivations? Finally, to what extent is high choice media, such as podcasts, reducing incidental exposure to political content further increasing information inequality?

The results do indicate that podcasts may be an effective way to reach younger audiences with political content. As while the average age of political podcast listeners at 41 is higher than the podcast audience in general, it is twenty years lower than say the BBC One audience and over ten years lower than BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 5 Live audiences.

This research makes an empirical contribution to the understanding of podcasting audiences, their motivations and the relationships between socio-demographic characteristics and motivations. It raises questions about wider audience adoption of political podcasts and inequalities in political information that require further research. Finally, the project provides a theoretical framework for further investigation based on a modified version of the U&G expectancy-value model utilising a cognitive social capital index and a new approach to sample recruitment of podcast audiences.

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9 APPENDIX 1: TOPIC GUIDE: PRODUCER INTERVIEWS

Research goals of the interviews

Insights into the podcast audience and community

Understand the motivations of political podcasters

The affordances and benefits of the podcast medium

Motivations

Can you give me some background to the podcast and how it came about?

Possible prompts

Attract a wider or younger audience

Different form of political journalism

Closer to conversation, more civil discourse

More reflective and forward looking, form of slow news

Commercial motivation

Possible motivation prompts for independent podcasts, previous research (Markman, 2012) has identified some major motivations for engaging in podcasting:

Love of the subject matter (often initial motivator)

Desire to share expertise, inform and help people learn

Personal control, creativity and self-expression

A form for critical reflection and gaining insight

Filling an unmet need

A form of sub-culture and community

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Steve Rayson

Part of my identity, do you identify as a podcaster?

Interest in broadcasting and the media

Interest in new form of media made possible by internet

Enhancing my skills and helping me grow personally

Something for my own enjoyment

Financial and commercial goals

Audience feedback and community (ongoing motivator)

Have your goals and approach changed over time?

What benefits have you gained from podcasting?

The audience and community

Who is the target audience?

If a publisher, do you reach a different audience with podcasts?

What do you know about your audience? Characteristics/motivations

What data do you get on the audience eg downloads, listening data?

Do you know when they consume the content?

Do you get feedback from the audience? In what form? What do they say?

The Podcast Medium

There has been significant growth in political podcasts in recent years, why do you think that is?

Why set up a podcast (as opposed to a blog, video or series of articles)?

How does podcasting differ from other forms of political journalism?

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Steve Rayson

What benefits do you think the podcast brings as a medium?

Intimacy, personal, audio

Productive, convenient, timeshifting

What formats do you think work best as podcasts? (Interviews, group discussions)

What are the downsides to a podcast? What works less well?

What have you learnt from podcasting?

Is there anything important we haven't discussed?

Conclusion

Interview will be used anonymously, however, if it is felt useful to mention your name your consent will be sought. You have the right to withdraw at any time.

The next stage of the research is to conduct a large online survey, would you be willing to promote it, if so I am happy to give you the research findings and raw anonymised data.

10 APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF PRODUCER INTERVIEW

I: Interviewer

R: Respondent

I: I'll just record on two devices just to be extra safe.

R: Yes, that's good broadcasting.

I: I was petrified if we only do one. So, as I say, in terms of the background, it's really looking at two elements; I'm looking at the motivations of podcast producers and then the audience, and that might be more interesting to you because I'm intending to do a large-scale on-line survey for people who listen to what you podcast to find out their demographics, their motivation.

R: That is interesting. Yes.

I: I mean I'm aiming to get at least 1,200 people to complete it. I'm very happy to give you the data as it will be anonymised.

I am really interested in the motivations, why people listen. Are there differences in terms of why do younger people listen as opposed to why do older people listen, different social groups etc?

Steve Rayson

R: And do you want me to stay focused on Gary's podcasts, because obviously I run Krishnan's as well, not always tuned to just one.

I: Perhaps both will be fine, because I define podcasts quite broadly. It's basically any podcasts that talk about politics and current affairs really, so economic, social issues, feminism podcasts, all of those. So, you can talk about both really.

So, I mean just by way of introduction I suppose, I'm just interested in the background, so podcasts, why did you set them up in the first place?

R: Okay, yes, well, I think we sort of thought we were quite late to the party, Channel 4 News, because obviously we can't actually compete in radio terms with the BBC, but you could see that there's a long formed audience, engaged audience who want to listen at length and actually share the content and essentially Channel 4 News became the kind of market leader in British Broadcasting for Wick, Facebook videos, for a while. That was our strategy for ages.

I sort of came into two years ago when Facebook video had sort of boomed and then had it's time and you find when you're doing a lot of Facebook video that people are watching, we get millions and millions and millions of shares, but actually average watch time would be three seconds. Because people are scrolling through their feeds.

I: Yes, it's very short form.

R: Very short form. So, the strategy has since changed to longer form and podcasts just were a part of that. And we've got brilliant broadcasters which we know can sustain a long interview and obviously times are mental politically essentially and people I think are craving a sort of, an audience is definitely craving a long form format that they can engage with, especially when it comes to Brexit because no-one knows what's going to happen.

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Steve Rayson

I: Yes. There are at least, I think I've counted twenty-six different podcasts just about Brexit, if you really want to listen to twenty-six.

R: Yes, and I think we even knew that when we were launching our politics one thinking this is a crowded market, how do we make it any different, we know we can do one, but will we just be one of the same?

I: And so, just to summarise, part of it was target a long form audience, an audience that want longer contact?

R: Yes.

I: Were you trying to reach a different audience to what you reach with your other medium?

R: Our intended audience is 16-35 for our on-line content. For a long time, Channel 4 News on-line's strategy has been making the most out of the programme content, but I think that we've found that in order to be successful on-line you have to give people self-contained content. You don't want to give them a teaser of the show in order to lead them to the show, you want to give them a clip that they will watch for two minutes and will share in and of itself. And that's how you build an audience that way.

So, I think we already had an audience there, we knew that younger people are listening to the podcasts so we wanted to tackle that.

I: And you're already a longer form news programme, Channel 4 News is longer form.

R: It's essentially what Channel 4 News already does which is the long form interview, just extended by another half an hour or so.

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Steve Rayson

I: Okay. So, you weren't particularly trying to reach new audiences as such, it was reinforcing the 16-35?

R: No, I think making the most out of our current audience, because I think, I know with like Beyond Today, they're clearly going for that late teen demographic. I'm not sure how many are listening to podcasts at that age. I mean their statistics might surprise me, I don't know, but I, from my sort of sense it's the early twenties, mid-twenties to late-thirties really tapping into this.

I: Did you have particular goals in mind as to how many people you should reach or those sorts of things?

R: As a newsroom, it's quite nice and refreshing that we don't try and think in statistics. I think, I remember having my appraisal last year and my line manager saying to me, oh it would be great if we could reach half a million downloads with the Ways to Change the World one, which has been running much longer than the politics one. We've surpassed that.

I: That's great.

R: And actually, I think what we're doing slightly differently to anyone else is filming them.

I: Yes, I've noticed on yours because you do both in the way, because you put them on YouTube and thing, because I listened to the one with Peter Mandelson recently, and then I watched it. It was interesting and I watched This World to see if I would get more out of it.

R: Also, hugely different audiences as well; people who are watching it as opposed to listening to it.

Steve Rayson

I: In what way do the audiences vary?

R: So, our YouTube audience is predominantly male, like 90%, which is quite astounding actually and we're trying to shift it actually, we're trying to shift it so we can bring more women in. Obviously, that's quite difficult with politics because it's very male-dominated and we're finding out how much the audiences differ.

I: So, there's the 90% male YouTube one, what about the podcasts?

R: Well, you can't get statistics that are broken down as.

I: I was going to ask you about this.

R: Yes, as well as YouTube statistics do. But just from the sense of the reviews, I suppose, it's more of a 50/50 split, especially on the Ways to Change the World one which does deal with more feminism, social issues as well as current affairs and foreign affairs.

But I just find that an audio only audience is a lot more relaxed but the YouTube audience, it doesn't get much vile in the conference, for instance.

I: I was going to ask because when I spoke to Gary, he was saying that he felt that podcasts were a more civil form of political discourse, so I'll just get your take on that.

R: Yes, I think he's right there. Because people will, I mean we've got a couple of earlier reviews saying this is dull, but actually since we've got better at doing them and we've found an audience, people are saying this is measured sanity in mad times.

I think what I like about ours is that it is so impartial and balanced, because I find that as a journalist, I find it quite difficult now to listen to Brainiacs or anything like that.

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Steve Rayson

I: Because they are so campaigning.

R: Yes, it's campaigning.

I: And one of the things I'll be asking the audience as well as when I do the surveys, do a list of stuff they agree with, stuff they disagree with and I think there are distinct audiences, so it will be interesting to see.

R: There are. And I think when we were having meetings before we launched the Ways to Change the World one, which was our sort of big launch, we thought a bit more about that than the politics one to be honest. We spoke to people and they said well, you know, lots of people are quite polarised when they're listening to the podcasts, they want a liberal, lefty one or they want a John Peterson one, and you're not going to attract both if you're in-between. And we thought we're Ofcom regulated, we have to be safe.

I: Do the rules apply the same way to podcasts, because I thought there were differences in the way the rules apply?

R: No. When it comes to actual regulation, but yes in terms of the ITMs ethos which is we will be Ofcom on-line as well as on air.

I: Yes. Because I think the Beyond Today with the BBC are starting to try to do some more slightly interested things. I think that they're, well that message is on radio.

R: Yes, you can push it for sure, but I'm sure it would probably put you quite under pressure.

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Steve Rayson

I: Yes, I understand that. But I think you maybe right in that I listen to things like Talking Politics, which is, I don't know if you listen to that podcasts, but that's very neutral. It's comes from Cambridge University so it's slightly more academic, but it's very neutral. I think a lot of people generally want to understand the world better; what the hell is going on? And I think a lot of people want to understand that.

R: Exactly. And I think we're obviously in a time where it is polarised audiences on-line and actually if you can break the mould and do something in the middle and get people listening, that's quite an achievement really.

I: So, what's different about podcasting from you've done on Channel 4 News etc? What would you say is different about podcasting?

R: I suppose more evergreen, that's what we're, I'm consistently battling actually with, I mean I love them both to bits but Krishnan and Gary, in that obviously they are news heads, I am as well to a certain extent, but we've seen on YouTube and on-line generally that if you can hit fermatic topics, they can be topical but you don't want to be too news of the day because otherwise you're going to lose an audience a week ahead, especially if it comes to a no Brexit.

The politics, the Politics, Where Next? one has become slightly more newsier because it's just had to. There's no way you can try and keep Brexit evergreen.

But with the Ways to Change the World one, for instance, we had Chuka Irma on a couple of weeks ago and I was kind of saying to Krishnan a lot we can't ask him too many specific Tuesday the something of February questions, we had to try and keep it a bit more about him and his life and his upbringing and how it's formed through years.

I: Do you think that's one of the things that attracts people to podcasts because they are longer form, but they are also, they are not Theresa May got into a car today, she got out of a car today, that sort of news reporting?

Steve Rayson

R: Yes, I think so. And you can go and listen to the radio and have a news bulletin if you want that, and there's definitely that news still exists, but I think generally we wanted to get away from the main news show of the day to day because you switch off from it, especially when it's Brexit.

I: Yes, it's Groundhog Day! Yes, are the Remainers keeping it up, it will be interesting to see them tomorrow really.

And as you've been, you've obviously been doing the Krishnan one, the Ways to Change the World longer, has anything changed in the way you've done podcasts? What have you learnt over that time?

R: Oh gosh, so much. Because I just came in as a multimedia producer, I'd not produced podcasts before and was sort of thrown on it, just launched in the deep end basically. What have we learnt? I think sometimes the ones that you least expect do well on-line and will go viral. We did Lord Heseltine on Ways to Change the World and I think essentially just because he'd done a viral speech the week before, our podcasts then then well. And you sort of become in-tuned to what you think will play well on-line.

So, I've got, for instance, much better at, I'm there sat in a forty-five to an hour long recording with Krishnan but I can now pick out my, we call them sots, my clips, I can put sound on tape, I can just pick them out like that, I write a time code, that's my clip, that's how I'm selling my full podcast to the internet. And how best to lead people to them as well, I think.

I: Yes, because podcasts are not easy to find, so how do you do that? How do people discover your podcasts?

R: Well, that I think what's helped us so much with the filming, that's kind of the sheer reason why we've managed to grow Ways to Change the World to kind of this huge thing

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Steve Rayson

now, because we've got the film clip and that's what people will share, that's what people will put on Instagram.

I

: So, are people more likely to share the video than the podcast?

R: Yes.

I: Yes, okay.

R: People will share a two-minute clip and then if that gets, I mean we did one with Jameela Jamil talking about the Kardashians and feminism and celebrity and social media and it had 20 million views, that one video. Actually, two clips across Facebook and Twitter got 20 million views and that meant, that podcast got 60,000 downloads because I'm linking it underneath. The YouTube got 250,000 views and then you look deeper into the analytics and someone watching that YouTube video for like fifteen minutes on average, rather than three seconds.

I: Yes, do you get any feedback length?

All the independent surveys, there's a new survey coming out tomorrow, there's a big US podcast that comes out every year, it comes out tomorrow actually, they look at how long people listen for on an episode and they've found that something like 80% of people listen to the whole podcast. So, they really aren't being short bites, they are listening to the whole thing.

R: Yes, and I think that's just so encouraging when you're making something because it's not very, I mean people will put Channel 4 News on in the background while they are making dinner. They'll maybe watch five minutes/ten minutes of a YouTube video, but someone probably will listen to a podcast for that length of time. So, it's really lovely to be honest, to make something that people want to listen to.

Steve Rayson

I: Yes, it's incredible. I was surprised with the statistics that over 80% listen to the end. That's huge.

R: Yes, that's definitely in-line with the kind of actual data that we look at.

I: I mean one of the big problems with podcasts is getting reporting data is hard?

R: No. And I've asked them, I've had meetings with them and asked them why they're not rolling it out and they say it would just be so huge for the industry, so we want to get it right. I don't know whether they will.

I: Do things cross-over, Spotify now major in big podcasts?

R: I was reading that pod news briefly today and saying that Spotify is overtaking Apple in Central and South America and it's a huge market in India. Interesting, I've not seen that here and Apple is by far the biggest.

I: Yes, get my podcasts through them. But I've been hearing more and more about Spotify and they're clearly, they're buying a few companies, they're targeting the market.

R: Yes. They're pushing it, I think. But in terms of ratios, I think it's like, I mean so many more people are downloading my podcasts.

I: What about the podcast medium, in what other ways might it differ from other forms of political journalism as a medium really, in terms of podcasting specifically?

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Steve Rayson

R: It's definitely more, I mean it is sort of in-line with what Channel 4 News does anyway, but it's just more considered and reflective than kind of your on the day political report.

I: What about the interviewees, are they more relaxed because it's a podcast, although you video them as well?

R: Yes, they are. I think, in Gary's one especially, probably because it hasn't sort of gone quite as viral yet. Krishnan's, sometimes people do come on and they've got a team of four or five people around them prompting them and they are quite nervous because they do it in the studio here and there's big TV cameras.

But actually, I mean it was interesting Rachel Riley, the antisemitism one, she came to me and said I want to do this interview, to have a space to talk about all of these things that I've, all this abuse I've come across on-line. I've tried to educate myself about all of this, I want forty-five minutes to talk about it, and it's largely unedited isn't it? They always ask that. It's quite unedited isn't it? People are so scared of being caught out now.

I: And just the small sound bites. I listened to the Angela Rayner one and I heard her talk about the podcast that she did, because it was longer form, they didn't feel they were just going to get chopped up into a few sound bites.

R: And I think that's definitely a big step for us as well and I'm always sort of cautious in that. We might get a sound bite that I want to put out on-line straightaway and am I then breaking my trust with my guest if I capture it in that way, potentially?

I: Yes, because I think they want it to be in context, so I can see the attention.

R: I mean more often than not.

Steve Rayson

I: Well, because you need to promote it also. They understand that I suppose, but if it's good for the podcast.

R: Rachel Riley was an interesting one because she was so nervous. I've not had a guest that nervous before and I knew probably because it's as well the Palestine conflict that we were talking about for forty-five minutes, we probably will come unstuck at some point. It's interesting how people react. Some people will say I want the space to not be cut up in sound bites, other people will say I've got forty-five minutes to be tripped up. I don't know.

I: So, do you cover different things on the podcasts, is the nature of the content quite different to the topics you cover from podcasts to other forms of medium?

R: I suppose if I compare it to other interviews we have on the news, it's just so much broader and it's not, I'm not feeding questions to Krish or Gary that we have to hit because it's the news of the day. It's a small, I think, more biographical especially in Krishnan's it's more biographical perhaps than in Gary's.

I: I think that more biographical is interesting because I found a lot of them to be more biographical, maybe because they get more time to talk and where they are coming from in the news.

R: And also, I think if you are listening to a person at length talk about, maybe they're talking about something dry like tariffs, you probably want to know why they are so informed and happy to have a bit of a background, so you care about what they are talking about.

I: What about the feedback to your audience, do you get much feedback from your audience about the podcast side, do you think?

Steve Rayson

R: I, as a producer, constantly read the reviews on Apple podcast which probably is not a good thing, but it's so interesting because the review section on Apple podcast is predominantly positive and then the comments section on YouTube is predominantly acerbic.

I don't know. I keep engaged with what the audience are saying to a certain extent. I only really know when ones done well rather than when ones done poorly.

I: Do you do any your own surveys of the audience to understand them? No. So, you've just got your Apple data?

R: Yes, and we sort of already knew what was playing well on Facebook and Twitter. I think we already had a knowledge of what Channel 4 News remit is, what young people were sharing that we'd already done. We know that we want to cover minority issues, LGBTQ a lot on-line, that we're not kind of hitting that inner politics podcast, which I want to change a little bit. I mean I just keep saying to Gary we need to get a woman on basically, but I'm very keen to represent an audience in these podcasts.

I: And in terms of that form, what do you think works best? Is it individual interviews or group interviews, because they work quite differently don't, they? Talking Politics - they work with three or four people having a discussion, sometimes they are more one-to-one interviews?

R: Yes. We started off with Gary who was doing one-on-one and then decided we needed two people to talk to people to make it a bit more engaging. Obviously, the pretence to Krishnan's is that it's one-on-one interview, that's what it is and that works really well. With Gary's, it's better if we have two people with him having a discussion, but if it's a high-profile guest and we have them on their own and make the most of them.

I: Yes, you have them for a long period of time.

R: It's what Minot Timothy had last week.

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Steve Rayson

I: So, going back to the data you get, does Apple give you the data on how much, they give you download data, but you do get any data about how much people listen to and don't listen to, whether they play it?

R: There is a ratio, I mean this shows how much I look at it because I find it a bit useless. Subscriber, that's what we get, we get subscriber rate. I can send you a screenshot, that might be easier.

I: Yes, if you wouldn't mind that would be great.

R: Yes. We get subscriber rate and I think it's like 66% subscribed and then you get downloads, but obviously downloads doesn't actually correspond to listens.

I: No, that's what I was saying. Downloads are one thing, although there is data about a lot of people do listen to things they download.

R: Yes. And then I think you do get the sort of consumption rate, you get the consumption rate. My bosses are quite, their focus is it's great if we do well download-wise, but it's interesting their focus is YouTube and that's because we're monetising then.

I: Okay, yes. So, there's good points. Going back, most podcasts aren't monetised, a few have adverts, but you don't monetise yours in any way?

R: No. Again, I've sort of raised about and thought about it, but.

I: Is it because the audience is too small or it just doesn't fit the medium?

Steve Rayson

R: No, I don't think we're too small, we're just slightly concerned about advertising. I know they have one advert on the news, but we're just slightly concerned that if we had a big sponsor and then we had to do a story on them, we just want to maintain independence, I think, and they care more about that than making money from it.

I: It's an interesting thing that lots of podcasts aren't monetised really, so it's quite interesting as to why people do it if they're not monetised really. Perhaps they want to reach a difference audience.

What benefits would you say you've had from doing the podcasts?

R: From my personal or career?

I: I think yes, both personal and from the point of view of Channel 4 really.

R: I mean I love it. I've found it really rewarding. I think mainly because I came in as quite a junior person in the newsroom and just out of a broadcast journalism course and it's become sort of a niche thing. It's under-resourced, I'm the only person doing it which is a big job, but it's sort of, yes, it's just taken off, and because we were able to play it well on-line.

As a newsroom, I think, again, people are just excited that people are consuming it for a long time. I think everyone cares about engagement rate more so than they care about views and it's all about minutes watched, minutes listened, and yes, people just find that exciting.

It's actually probably as well been our kind of most successful Twitter and Facebook content for a while. They've launched a couple of other things on Facebook now, but Facebook views were dropping off because the algorithms changed.

Steve Rayson

I: Yes, I used to do a lot of analysis of Facebook algorithms, that's what I did in my previous life.

R: Yes. So, I think people are just excited that it's raised the profile of the show in new and different ways.

I: That's great. Okay, that covers most of what I wanted to ask. Is there anything else I haven't discussed which you think is important for me to know about your podcasts?

R: I'm trying to think. I don't know how much you're talking to people about being live on that as well, because we've been asked about that a couple of times?

I: I've only done it in the concepts of sort of fandom really, in the sense that quite a lot of podcasts have taken their show on the road and then they record them live, which is a slightly different podcast format to the traditional podcast format. So, Remainiacs take theirs on the road, for example, and others have taken theirs on the road: Talking Politics were on the road.

Were you at the Festival of Politics Podcasts on the 7th April, I think it's 7th April, there's a whole day of political podcasts in Euston? It's a Festival of, I forget exactly what it's called, it's something like Festival of Political Podcasts. The Times is there, Talking Politics, Remainiacs, quite a lot of them.

So, I haven't really discussed the live thing, other than there is a big fandom. I don't know my sense, it would be interesting from your view, is that I think because of the intimacy of the listening medium that people feel they get to know them and the I think it's a fandom thing. I mean podcasts in America take their show on their road or the Guilty Feminist, all these podcasts.

R: I was going to say I think that's the podcast that got me into podcasts, Guilty Feminist.

Steve Rayson

I: Fantastic. I love Guilty Feminist. My daughter got me into it.

R: Yes. I'm a big fan of that. I have slightly stopped listening though, but yes, we've been asked about the live format a couple of times. We were going to do one and then it sort of fell apart, because everyone is like oh why don't you do a live podcast and I'm saying that's radio. People keep thinking we are reinventing the wheel and actually we're just making downloadable radio.

I: It's a different form of radio but it is interesting the relationship with radio.

R: Yes, but I think maybe Krishnan's view is a bit like oh, oh, he doesn't know how good a podcast one-on-one you get when you've got an audience there, especially in our sort of more journalistic challenging sort of area.

I: Because a lot of them, I've noticed Pods Over America, Guilty Feminist, they engage the audience, so it's not just them talking, you get the laughter and the engagement etc. So, it is a different type of broadcasting. But equally, Krishnan will have his fans and that is interesting, that fandom aspect of podcasts.

R: Well, I think the London Podcast Festival were interested in us doing a slot there, which we might do this year. So, I think there would be an audience there to go and listen to interesting people. But, yes, it is a lot of the time interesting thinking where it's going to do, I don't know.

I: Yes, I'm just interested because the growth has been spectacular because podcasts as a medium, I think it's the slowest growing communication medium ever, it's grown at like 1.6% a year since 2006 because of audience reach, so it's been really slow. Political podcasts, I think since Brexit and Trump, in my sense, is it's just exploded. It's exploded.

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Steve Rayson

I've tracked over a thousand new political podcasts since that time and the audience has grown as well, so it's not just grown without the audience. So, there's clearly something happening.

R: Yes. I think we are just desperate to be informed and people have also, in turn, become more informed and then want to listen to a more interesting conversation about it than they might have done beforehand.

I mean I wrote some stats down. So, we've had 2.2 million minutes viewed of our Where Next, of our politics one on YouTube. 11 minutes on average people are watching for. And the best one of those was how the world sees Brexit Britain which was obviously kind of tapping into a more American audience, maybe, but that got 136,000 views. I mean our audio downloads, in comparison, are minute, so 44,000 audio downloads as a whole.

I: Right, because that's quite low, I thought you said you had 50,000 for one?

R: That's in the Ways to Change the World.

I: The Ways to Change the World. Alright, just for the politics ones. Yes.

R: The Ways to Change the World audio downloads is about 860,000, but obviously that's become much more known and it's slightly, I think the politics Where Next is more niche audience.

I: Yes, I wonder if it's an elite form for political journalism, I have this concept that it's maybe an elite form of political journalism.

R: Yes, I think it is. Whereas, Ways to Change the World is a much more general broad audience. Someone might listen to Jameela Jamil and they would have no clue as to what others might care.

Steve Rayson

So, I don't guest book for Gary's but I do for Krishnan's, so for Krishnan's I'm trying to find diverse guests. Gary's very much got his guest book, his contact book and it's the inside track.

I: Yes. And I think it's what a lot of people want. But I listen to Gary's because I want the inside track, so it's interesting to listen to him chat to Peter Mandelson about the groups and those sorts of things. And it is just like I feel like I'm sitting in on a pub conversation between Gary and Peter, it's just more about the feel.

R: Yes, which is definitely more niche.

I: Definitely more niche, so there will be less people like me. Okay. So, to remind me what I'll do is I'll get the transcript, I'll write it up. If it's useful to mention your name in my report, I don't think I need to necessarily because I'm trying to keep it anonymous, but if I do, I will get your consent to do that.

R: Yes, sure.

I: You can withdraw if you don't want it to be used. As I say, the next stage is it will probably be the end of April, I'm just preparing, I've got the question structure there, I've got to go through it with supervisors at LSE, got to do this large on-line survey and I would like to ask a favour if possible, I don't know whether you could promote it as well.

R: Yes, yes.

I: Because I'm very happy in exchange to, well I'm happy to add a tick box, I'm asking people what ones do you listen to, so I can add both of yours if you want and then, but I can give you all of the data both for yours and others. I think it's just interesting to know more about the podcast audience. If I can get 1,200 or so, it won't be representative because it will

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Steve Rayson

be disputed on-line, but on the other hand it will be useful in terms of understanding a bit more about the audience.

R: Yes, because as you say with the Apple data especially you are playing a guessing game most of the time. So, it would be really useful.

I: Yes. So, that will be great. So, if I can send you that in due course, though it probably will be towards the end of April, takes a while to get these things approved, as you know.

But that was fantastic.

R: Just let me know if you want more in-depth stats.

I: I will do, yes. I may need to follow-up on some bits but that's been really, really helpful. So, thank you.

R: Brilliant. No worries.

I: Thank you.

11 APPENDIX 3: POLITICAL PODCAST SURVEY

Consent Form

The purpose of this study is to explore the motivations, uses and gratifications of people that listen to political podcasts. For the purpose of this study a political podcast is any podcast that discusses political, social and economic issues. You will be asked to provide your general demographic details, asked about your use of political podcasts and asked to respond to a series of statements.

We believe there are no known risks or harms associated with this study. All data will be anonymised in any reports so that individual responses cannot be traced to you. Your data will be kept completely confidential and stored in password protected folders that are only accessible by the lead researcher. Finally, if you participate in this study and have any further queries please feel free to contact the lead researcher xxxxxx at xxxxxx@lse.ac.uk following completion of the survey.

By clicking 'I consent' below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understood this consent form, and agree to participate in this study.

- I consent**
- I do not consent**

About You

What is your sex?

- Male**
- Female**
- Other**

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What is your age?

What is your ethnic group?

- Asian/Asian British**
- Black/Black British**
- Mixed**
- White**
- Other ethnic group**

What is your level of education?

- Post-Graduate**
- Degree**
- A Level or equivalent**
- GCSEs or equivalent**
- No qualification**

What is your employment status?

- Full-time employee**
- Part-time employee**
- Self-employed**
- Unemployed**
- Student**
- Retired**

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Steve Rayson

What is your annual household income?

- £0-£20,000**
- £20,000-£40,000**
- £40,000-£60,000**
- £60,000-£80,000**
- £80,000+**

Where do you live?

- Europe**
- North America**
- Latin America**
- Middle East**
- Africa**
- Asia/Pacific**

Podcast use

How do you discover political podcasts? Tick all that apply.

- Word of mouth**
- iTunes**
- Spotify**
- Social Media**

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- Search Engine**
- TV/Press/Radio**
- Other**

Which of these podcasts do you listen to?

- Talking Politics**
- Politics:Where Next?**
- Remainiacs**
- BBC Political Podcasts**
- FT Politics**
- Times Red Box**
- Pod Save America**
- Guardian Politics**
- Spectator Coffee House Shots**
- New Statesman**
- Polarised**
- Unherd Podcasts**
- Economist Podcasts**
- Social Media & Politics**
- The Daily (NYT)**

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List any other political podcasts you listen to.

How many different political podcasts have you listened to in the last week?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7+

How much time do you spend listening to political podcasts in a typical week?

- Up to 30 mins
- 30 mins to 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 5 hours+

Over the past two years has your political podcast use?

- Increased significantly
- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Decreased significantly

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Steve Rayson

When you listen to a podcast episode, what proportion of it do you normally listen to?

- The whole episode**
- Most of it**
- About half**
- Less than half**

Where do you listen to podcasts? Tick more than one as necessary

- Commuting**
- At home**
- Exercising**
- In the Car**
- Walking**
- Other**

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Steve Rayson

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I listen to political podcasts to be entertained	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen to political podcasts as a distraction from everyday life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I listen to political podcasts to improve my understanding of political issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more knowledgeable after listening to political podcasts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find political podcasts more insightful than mainstream media political reporting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

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	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel more confident about expressing political views after listening to political podcasts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I discuss political podcast content with friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening to political podcasts enables me to better engage in political discussions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I listen to political podcasts to feel part of a like-minded community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't listen to podcasts whose political views I disagree with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I select podcasts where I respect the values of the presenter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Steve Rayson

Political podcasts confirm the validity of my political views

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Podcasts enable me to listen while I do something else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can listen to the podcast when it fits my personal schedule	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Podcasts make me feel like I am sitting in on a private conversation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I get to know the presenters of political podcasts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust the content of political podcasts more than TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Steve Rayson

**or
newspapers**

Would you like a summary of the final report?

Yes

No

Would you be willing to be contacted to discuss your responses?

Yes

No

If you answered yes to either of the above two questions please provide your email address:

12 APPENDIX 4: COGNITIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Understanding

Overall, did you find the survey clear and easy to understand?

How do you feel about the length of the survey? Did it take you long to complete?

Did you have any issues with the consent form?

The consent form defined political podcasts as podcasts that discuss political, social and economic issues, was that clear to you?

Did you have any problems reading, understanding the directions or navigating the site?

Question level understanding and sensitivity

I will ask you about each question, as we go through:

Think about how comfortable you felt answering each question?

Think about whether you understood the question and whether there was anything you would like clarified?

Did you understand this question? What do you think it meant?

Was it easy to answer? How did you arrive at your answer and did you find it difficult?

Was there anything confusing about this question?

What does this word mean to you as it is used in the question? Examples, quality time, downloads.

Was there an answer you wanted to give that was not available in the response options?

Improvement

Anything that you wanted to say about the topic that was not in the questionnaire?
Any ways you think it can be improved?

13 APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLE COGNITIVE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

I: Interviewer

R: Respondent

I: In terms of filling out the survey, just a couple of overall questions. Overall, did you find the survey clear, easy to understand?

R: Yes, very. Very easy to understand.

I: Okay, great. And how did you feel about the length of the survey?

R: I thought it was fine. I think it had a progression, if I remember, as I went through, I kind of had a sense of how long it was going to take, but yes, it was pretty straightforward, pretty easy. I don't think it took me more than ten/twelve minutes maybe to complete.

I: Brilliant. Okay, that's great. And the survey started with a consent form. Did you have any issues with the consent form?

R: No. It was okay, yes, completely clear, no problem at all.

I: The consent form defines political podcasts as podcasts that discuss political, social and economic issues. Was that clear enough to you?

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Steve Rayson

R: Yes, it was, yes. I think when I was going through it, I might have suggested some other podcasts that I listened to, that maybe aren't entirely political. But the definition was clear from the consent form.

I: Okay. And just another general question, before we go through the questions. Did you have any problems reading or understanding the directions, or any problems navigating the website?

R: No, it was all completely clear in there, and straightforward.

I: Right, okay. So, what I'm going to do now is just take you through question by question. So, the first block of questions were really ... well before I do that, I was going to say, when I take you through the questions, just think about how comfortable you felt answering the question, whether you understood the question, whether there was anything you'd like clarified. So, as I go through the questions, just think about those points, and bring them up, if you had any issues around them as well. So, the first block of questions were really personal information. So, they were questions about what is your sex, what is your age, what is your ethnic group? So, were there any issues around those questions?

R: No, I never have any problems with those. I know some people like to have a 'prefer not to say' or 'not disclose' option. It doesn't personally ... it wasn't an issue for me at all to complete those.

I: Okay. And what about your level of education? I only gave five options. Post grad, degree, A level, GCSEs, equivalent, or no qualification? Were those sufficient for you?

R: Yes, absolutely fine. Because I'm Irish, the A level, GCSE, no qualification, didn't really apply, but I was able to ... I completed the bit, I was post grad, so that was fine. Just maybe if you're going for an international audience, the British qualifications might slightly confuse people, that would be the only thing I would say about it. But if you're focused on the UK, then that's fine.

Steve Rayson

I: I am focusing generally on UK. I'm trying to recruit UK participants. I have asked for country, as you see, just so that I can see, but it's predominantly focused on UK, and hence I've used UK podcasts. So, the other couple of questions about you was your employment status which was full time, part time, self employed etc. Was that straightforward?

R: Yes, that was all totally clear, no, no (inaudible 00:03:37).

I: And then your annual household income, were there any sensitivities about that?

R: Not for you. No, none at all, no, no, I think that's a perfectly reasonable question to ask.

I: Yes? Okay. And it was household, not individual?

R: Yes.

I: And it was about where do you live, as we've said? So, none of those questions ... you didn't feel particularly uncomfortable, and you understood those?

R: No issue at all with them, no.

I: Okay. Then the next batch of questions were really about podcast use. So, the next question was, how do you discover podcasts? And there was word of mouth, iTunes, Spotify, social media, search engine, TV, press, radio and other. Was that straightforward? Were there any other options you'd have wanted?

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Steve Rayson

R: I don't think so. And if I'm remembering, you could tick more than one, couldn't you, for that?

I: Yes, you could, yes.

R: Yes. So, yes, that was all fine. I used multiple methods for finding them, so that seemed pretty complete to me.

I: Okay. And then there was a set of podcasts. I asked which podcasts do you listen to? And it's not critical for my survey. I would say that it's there primarily because it's a way of helping the podcasts producers promote the survey. So, include a text box, and I share the data with them, if they promote it. But they're partly focused on ... there were a couple of big US ones, but mainly UK ones. But I don't know if there's anything else you felt I should have included there?

R: No, I think you hit all the main ones, certainly from a UK perspective. There are some Irish ones that I listened to that weren't listed there, but I wouldn't have expected to see them on the list anyway. And I think there was a 'list any other podcasts' option underneath that anyway. So, yes, that was helpful for me, and it was a good way of reminding myself of what I do, or don't listen to.

I: Okay. And then the next question was really about how many different political podcasts you have listened to, with options ranging from nought to seven plus. Did that give you ... did you understand it, was it difficult to recall how many you had listened to, in the last week?

R: No. I think because you time bound it to the last week, it was pretty easy to just cast my mind back, and cover that, so I think that was very straightforward.

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Steve Rayson

I: Okay. (Inaudible 00:05:37). And then the next question was, how much time you spend listening to political podcasts in a typical week. And there were a range of five options again, up to 30 minutes, 30 minutes to an hour, one to two hours, two to four hours, five plus hours. Again, any problems in answering that question?

R: No. All very straightforward, it was all completely clear. And you just think about how many podcasts you listen to, and how long they typically are, and it made it easy to answer.

I: Okay. So, there was nothing you needed clarifying? You understood what that was after?

R: Yes.

I: Okay. And then the next question, again fairly straightforward in some ways, but over the past two years, has your political podcast use ... and then five options from increased significantly to decreased significantly, that was straightforward as well was it?

R: That was very clear, yes.

I: Okay, yes. I think that's alright. Now this maybe slightly more more difficult questions potentially. But the next question said 'What proportion of all podcast episodes that you download, do you actually get around to listening to? All of them, to less than half of them?' Were there any issues around that question?

R: Yes. The only thing that I paused on there was sometimes I will listen to one, and then pause it, and then kind of forget about it, and come back, a while later. So, in my answer, I was including ones that I had partially listened to, and then completed at a later stage. I assume that's what you were looking for there? So, I may not listen to them end to end, but if I considered that I completed all of them, then I would have ticked the whole episode.

Steve Rayson

I: All of them? Okay. Okay, so there's maybe some more clarification of the question possibly, really? Okay. And the term 'download' didn't give you any cause for thought, or confusion?

R: Well I do sometimes stream podcasts, if I'm using Spotify. I try to download them when I can, just to save on data, but I will sometimes stream them, or I might stream them at the computer, or in the house, over Wi-Fi. I had assumed in the answer to that question, you were interested in listening habits, rather than download habits. So, I didn't take the word 'download' too literally, in that sense, which may be me misreading what you're looking for in the question.

I: No, that's fine. Some people have got confused by the word 'downloads' some other respondents. So, it's a question I have to reflect on, I think. And I'm not sure it's critical to what I'm getting at. The next question was about when you actually listen to an episode, what proportion of it do you normally listen to, from the whole episode, through to less than half of it? Any issues around that question again?

R: No. I think that was all pretty clear. As I say, sometimes I will listen to a part of it, and then come back to it, at another stage. But I will normally make it through the whole episode. So, for those ones, I might listen to partially one day, and then finish the next day. I would have ticked 'whole episode' for that one, even though I've spread it maybe over a day, or two days, when I do that.

I: Okay, okay, I understand, okay. And then the final one in terms of uses of podcasts if just to ask you where you listen to podcasts? And you could tick more than one. So, the options were commuting, at home, exercising, in the car, walking, and other. Firstly, did you understand the question okay?

R: Yes, that was all completely clear.

Steve Rayson

I: And were the options useful to you? Did you feel you wanted other options to answer the question?

R: No. They kind of covered my complete use cases there. It's hard to think of what other options people might have had. I don't know if it's important for you to include a text box, if someone wants to put in something else, in that field, that I didn't. Because all of my options were covered in there.

I: Yes. Okay, no, that's fine. It's not critical again. The one area I'm interested, probably, is commuting, just because there is some theory about podcasts are used by more urban people who commute, so that was more interesting for me, but, yet again, not critical to this survey really. Okay. So, the next set of questions and probably the more critical one of the survey, because they are really motivation statements, that you are asked to rate on a five point scale from strongly disagree, to strongly agree. And so, I'll take you through those. The first two were just 'I listen to be entertained' and 'I listen as a distraction from everyday life.' Do you have any issues with those two statements?

R: No. I thought they both made sense. Sometimes I think maybe entertainment as a distraction can be similar, in nature. I suppose distraction is maybe a slightly subjective word. The only thing I'd say about that, if I listen to them when I'm running, it's a distraction from when I'm running, but it's also entertaining me at the same time. So, I think ... I can't remember exactly what I ticked, but I think I kind of agreed on both of those, because I think they're fairly closely related as questions.

I: Okay. No, that's helpful to understand how you think about it. Okay. And then the next batch of ones were really around political knowledge. So, I listen to improve my understanding of political issues, I feel more knowledgeable after listening to them, I find podcasts more insightful than mainstream political reporting. Were there any issues or concerns around those three statements?

R: No. I thought they were all very clear, and I inferred for mainstream as in TV, radio and press, from those. So, yes, I thought they were all really clear.

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Steve Rayson

I: So, your understanding of mainstream was TV, radio, press?

R: Yes. And for the web, yes, main websites as well.

I: Okay. I don't think there's anything else there. So, that was clear, no problems on that (inaudible 00:11:08) comfortable doing it. Okay. The next three statements were really about the social aspects of how people use podcasts, or the social utility that they give you. So, they were 'I feel more confident about expressing political views' and 'After listening to them I discuss political podcast content with friends'. And 'Listening to political podcasts enables me to better engage in political discussions.' Any issues around those three statements?

R: No. I thought they were all really clear, again, I think, probably closely related to each other. But they were all completely clear to me. So, yes, no issues with those at all.

I: Okay, so that's okay. So, no problems with that? I'm just thinking, there was nothing confusing, that was clear for you there?

R: Yes, nothing (inaudible 00:11:57), it was all okay.

I: Okay. The next three statements were really about the efficiency of podcasts, I suppose. And they were around podcasts enabling me to listen while I do something else. I can listen when it fits my schedule. I set aside quality time to listen to political podcasts. So, on those three, are there any particular issues that emerge from those three?

R: No. They all made sense to me. I think mainly my consumption of podcasts, is multitasking, and I am usually doing something else while I'm doing them, and rarely do I just sit and listen to them. So, yes, that made complete sense to me.

Steve Rayson

I: What did you understand? I used the phrase there 'quality time'. What did you understand by 'quality time'?

R: Yes. I suppose I interpret that as do I actually sit down and say, right I'm going to listen to a podcast, without trying to do something else while I'm doing it. I suppose ... yes, I think that's how I interpreted it, and I think I hardly ever do that, you know? I'm always doing a podcast while I'm doing something else, I think that's one of the big advantages of them, that you can engage in some other physical, or mindless activity, while you're doing them. So, does that mean I'm not using quality time? I suppose any time I'm listening to podcasts, I think it's time well spent. So, that phrase, I suppose, could be a little bit subjective.

I: Yes. I think I've probably confused people there. Because, as you say, I've also got a question about, I listen while I do something else. People have answered 'Yes I do that.' And then I set aside quality time. I'm not sure whether it's quality time, or even the phrase 'I set aside.' Because people do it, or they do something else.

R: Yes. I wonder if ... I often just listen to a podcast, and I'm not doing anything else while I'm doing it, is that what you're maybe getting at with that, with that question?

I: Yes. To be honest, the more I go through it, the more I'm not sure what I was getting at. So, I think that may be one that I need to review. Because yes, it doesn't really fit with the other two. I thought initially it fitted with the other two, but I think from interviews, and talking to you, I think it's less clear. So, thanks for that. The next set of statements were about partisanship. So, there were four, so I'll take them two at a time. The first two were, I listen to podcasts to feel part of a like minded community, and I don't listen to podcasts whose political views I disagree with. Any issues around those?

R: No, I think that makes sense. I suppose they're opposing statements in one way. And I think, if I remember, it actually made me think about, should I be listening to more podcasts, that I don't disagree with, which is maybe not the intent of the survey. But I thought the statements were very clear, and it was very clear to understand and identify where I was, on the basis of both of them.

Steve Rayson

I: Okay. And what did you understand by like minded community?

R: I suppose political views that I would generally agree with, (s.l. tonally 00:15:10) or a balanced set of views. And I think a like minded community doesn't have to just be about a partisan political view, but just an open, diverse, set of opinions, I think, is like minded as well.

I: Okay, okay thanks. And then the next two were also related. One 'I select podcasts where I respect the values of the presenter' and 'Political podcasts confirm the validity of my political views.' Any issues with those two questions?

R: Not really, no. I suppose the word 'values', most of the podcasts I listen to are not necessarily overly partisan, the values are more about lack of bias, or more of an inquisitive viewpoint. So, that's what I understood by values there is that I value a balanced podcast, a non partisan podcast. So, that made sense to me as a question.

I: Okay. So, that's how you interpreted values?

R: Yes.

I: And podcasts confirming the validity of my political views? That could be seen, I suppose, as sensitive. Any sensitivity in answering that?

R: No. And I think that's one of the ... taking your first and fourth statements, I think they both connected for me in that podcasts do confirm political views, even if that is to remain open minded about things. So, yes, that statement made sense to me. It did, it made me think, they are quite tribal, I think, in their natures. And so, yes, that statement was very clear.

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Steve Rayson

I: Okay. And then the final batch of statements were really about the intimacy of the podcast listening experience really. And so, I'll just remind you of the three. So, podcasts make me feel like I'm sitting in on a private conversation. I feel like I get to know the presenters of political podcasts. I trust the content of political podcasts, more than TV or newspapers. Any issues with those three statements?

R: No. I strongly identified with all three of them, I think, if I remember, I answered. But all very clearly written. And it's interesting that you called out specifically in that one TV or newspapers, rather than mainstream, mainstream media, which allowed me to really think about podcasts versus those two other media. So, yes, I thought it was all completely clear.

I: Okay. Somebody said 'Maybe you should have split it into TV and newspaper, or newspaper, put it into two question statements. One TV, and one newspapers.' Although it was really I was after the more mainstream.

R: Yes. Maybe it could have just been more mainstream media, which would be consistent with your earlier question, perhaps?

I: Okay. But otherwise no real issues about those questions?

R: No.

I: Okay. Well they're all the statements. And just finally, is there anything you wanted to say about the topic of political podcasts that wasn't included in the questionnaire?

R: Yes. I think one of the things I think about when I'm listening to political podcasts is, I suppose am I open to having my mind changed? So, I'm particularly interested in listening to podcasts, that tackle a particular subject, and that might give me a deeper education, or willingness, to enhance my opinion about those, which I suppose comes out in your questions

Steve Rayson

about they enhance my political views. I don't necessarily always listen to them to affirm my political views.

I: Yes. That's why partly I had the section in there about partisanship, like, do you listen to ones that you disagree with, for example? I was trying to tease that out there, but that's interesting. Any other things that you'd have liked to have seen in the questionnaire?

R: The only other question, maybe it was in there was, how long are the typical episodes of podcasts that you listen to? So, I'm far more likely to listen to a 30 minute, or less, podcast, if I know that it's going to be an hour, or more. And I know there are ones out there that are 45 minutes plus. I'm less likely to engage with it, just from a time management perspective. Because often for me, it will cohere to a run, or doing some other activity. So, I like to pick a podcast that will fit in the kind of time space that I've allocated to it, and finish it. I don't always manage to do that, but length of podcast is another ... it's probably a very trite way to determine them, but I do look at how long they are, before I commit to them.

I: Yes, that's interesting. Because that fits with the commuting question that I asked really which was about people fitting it into a commute. So, a lot of people like half an hour, or 40 minute ones, they fit, if that fits with their commute time. So, that's something I can think about as well. It's not critical to things I'm trying to analyse, but it's interesting the impact the length has on listening habits.

R: Yes. If they're overly short, I often find that quite off putting, because I assume well you're not going to really get into much depth, if this is only ten or fifteen minutes or so. So, yes, I think that 30 to 45 minutes is kind of the sweet spot really.

I: Okay, no that's great. Okay, that's great. And then finally just to remind you, it's on the consent form as well, but you have the right to withdraw at any stage, so if you're not happy with the answers, do let me know, and we can go back over them, or I can remove them. But any of the data is only ever going to be shared on an anonymous basis anyway, your name won't be revealed to anybody. And only myself, and the supervisors, have access. So, okay, that's great. Thank you very much.

Steve Rayson

R: And I had one other question for you, maybe it's not relevant here, (inaudible 00:20:40) if I remember correctly, going through the survey, it was possible to skip, none of the questions were mandatory, am I remembering that right, or did I have to complete them?

I: No, you're right. I didn't force people to complete questions. And there have been a few questions where people skip. Now it has raised an interesting point, because I don't know whether they skipped because they deliberately didn't want to answer, which would be fine, or whether they skipped because they just missed it.

R: Yes, yes.

I: So, I think that's an interesting thing on the design, whether I should force people to answer questions, or allow people not to answer. So, some people, for example, did not answer age, not many, but a couple of people didn't answer age. And I suspect that's because of sensitivity around it. So, I didn't want to force it. It may have been a better approach to force people to answer the questions, but have 'I would rather not say' option, that might have been a better bet, I think on the design of the questionnaire, and I'll reflect on that.

R: Yes, possibly. I think it's difficult, survey design, because you don't want to make people feel like they're locked into a long list of questions, and they can't get out. But, yes.

I: Yes. I think there is a balance. I think, as you say, some people may not want to answer a question. It gets more complicated on the Likert five point scales, if there's an option to have an option saying 'I'd rather not say'. So, I do allow people to skip. Okay, that's great. Thanks very much for your time, thanks.

R: No worries.

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Steve Rayson

14 APPENDIX 6: ONLINE SURVEY CONSENT FORM

Survey Consent Form

The purpose of this study is to explore the motivations, uses and gratifications of people that listen to political podcasts. For the purpose of this study a political podcast is any podcast that discusses political, social and economic issues. You will be asked to provide your general demographic details, asked about your use of political podcasts and asked to respond to a series of statements.

We believe there are no known risks or harms associated with this study. All data will be anonymised in any reports so that individual responses cannot be traced to you. Your data will be kept completely confidential and stored in password protected folders that are only accessible by the lead researcher. Finally, if you participate in this study and have any further queries please feel free to contact the lead researcher xxxxxx at xxxxxxxx@lse.ac.uk following completion of the survey.

By clicking 'I consent' below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understood this consent form, and agree to participate in this study.

- I consent (1)**
- I do not consent (2)**

15 APPENDIX 7: COGNITIVE INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



Research Study Consent Form

‘The Motivations, Uses and Gratifications of the Political Podcast Audience’

Researcher: xxxxxxxxxx, London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Media and Communications

xxxxxxx@lse.ac.uk

I agree to participate in this interview about the political podcast survey.

I have been informed about the nature and details of this study, and I agree to share my views. I am aware that what I share in this interview will be transcribed, and I consent to the use of voice recording.

Only the researcher, xxxxxxxxxx and his supervisors will have the access to these transcripts and my personal data will be protected. Any quotations and information used will only be used on an anonymised basis.

I acknowledge I am free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and to the use of recording devices.

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Steve Rayson

Name: xxxxxxxxxxx

Signature: 

Date: 03 / 04 / 2019

16 APPENDIX 8: SURVEY RESULTS

Location of Respondent

	Number	Percent
Europe	1038	77.6
North America	181	13.5
Latin America	11	0.8
Middle East	3	0.2
Africa	6	0.4
Asia/Pacific	99	7.4

n=1,338

Sex

	Number	Percent
Male	954	71.2
Female	383	28.6
Other	3	0.2

n=1340

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Age Group

	Number	Percent
16-24	105	7.9
25-34	401	30.2
35-44	323	24.3
45-54	262	19.7
55-64	160	12
65+	79	5.9

n=1330

Ethnicity

	Number	Percent
Asian/Asian British	22	1.6
Black/Black British	11	0.8
Mixed	29	2.2
White	1242	92.6
Other ethnic group	37	2.8

n=1341

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Employment status

	Number	Percent
Full-time employee	746	55.4
Part-time employee	116	8.6
Self-employed	190	14.1
Unemployed	48	3.6
Student	136	10.1
Retired	100	7.4

n=1336

Education

	Number	Percent
Postgraduate	57.8	56.1
Degree	34.7	34.1
A level or equivalent	5.8	6.8
GCSEs or equivalent	1.5	1.8
No qualification	0.3	0.4

n=1335

Annual Household Income

	Number	Percent
£0-20,000	166	12.5
£20,000-£40,000	277	20.9
£40,000-£60,000	260	19.6
£60,000-£80,000	209	15.8
£80,000+	412	31.1

n=1324

How many different political podcasts have you listened to in the last week?	Percentage
1-2	33.7
3-4	34.0
5-6	15.8
7+	16.6

Overall n=1328

How much time do you spend listening to political podcasts in a typical week?	Percentage
Up to 30 mins	2
30 mins to 1 hour	13.6
1-2 hours	27
2-4 hours	34.8
5+ hours	22.6

Overall n=1330

When you listen to a podcast episode, what proportion of it do you normally listen to?	Percentage
The whole episode	79.6
Most of it	18.7
About half of it	1.6
Less than half	0.2

Overall n=1328

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statement	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I listen to political podcasts to improve my understanding of political issues	2.6%	0.4%	0.4%	16.7%	80%
I feel more knowledgeable after listening to political podcasts	1.1%	0.9%	1.9%	39.4%	56.6%
Listening to political podcasts enables me to better engage in political discussions	0.5%	2.6%	9.1%	49%	38.5%
I feel more confident about expressing political views after listening to political podcasts	0.7%	4.5%	19.5%	51.3%	22.6%
I listen to political podcasts to be entertained	3.8%	13.5%	15.3%	52.8%	14.6%
I listen to political podcasts as a distraction from everyday life	28.4%	35.9%	14.3%	18.2%	3.2%
I find political podcasts more insightful than	1.9%	1.6%	9.5%	31%	56%

mainstream media political reporting					
I discuss political podcast content with friends	2%	9.3%	10.2%	52.9%	25.6%
I listen to political podcasts to feel part of a like-minded community	10.1%	24.3%	27.6%	31%	7%
I don't listen to political podcasts I disagree with	10.6%	30.3%	19.6%	32.6%	6.9%
I select podcasts where I respect the values of the presenter	0.9%	6.7%	17.5%	47.7%	27.2%
Political podcasts confirm the validity of my political views	2.9%	7.6%	6.8%	36.2%	46.6%
I can listen to the podcast when it fits my personal schedule	0.5%	0.8%	2.2%	25.9%	70.6%
Podcasts make me feel like I am sitting in on a private conversation	4.1%	15%	18.6%	46.5%	15.5%
I feel like I get to know the presenters of political podcasts	1.8%	7.2%	14.1%	54.9%	22%
I trust the content of political podcasts more than TV or newspapers	2.5%	13.1%	35%	33.2%	16.2%
Podcasts enable me to listen while I do something else	2.9%	7.6%	6.8%	36.2%	46.6%

17 APPENDIX 9: EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

SPSS Principal component analysis

Component Matrix ^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
I feel more confident about expressing political views after listening to political podcasts	.664				
I feel more knowledgeable after listening to political podcasts	.659	-.340			
Listening to political podcasts enables me to better engage in political discussions	.629	-.332			
I find political podcasts more insightful than mainstream media political reporting	.583				
I listen to political podcasts to improve my understanding of political issues	.532	-.389			
I discuss political podcast content with friends	.506				
I feel like I get to know the presenters of political podcasts	.501			-.497	
Political podcasts confirm the validity of my political views	.336	.619			
I don't listen to podcasts whose political views I disagree with		.574	-.349	.302	
I listen to political podcasts to feel part of a like-minded community	.438	.510			
I select podcasts where I respect the values of the presenter	.361	.453	-.340		
Podcasts enable me to listen while I do something else			.590	.359	.300
I listen to political podcasts to be entertained	.353		.537		
I listen to political podcasts as a distraction from everyday life			.518		-.361
Podcasts make me feel like I am sitting in on a private conversation	.409			-.584	
I trust the content of political podcasts more than TV or newspapers	.424			-.536	
I can listen to the podcast when it fits my personal schedule			.302		.661

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis .^a
a. 6 components extracted.

Top 5 components shown

