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Doing radio, making friends, and having fun: Exploring the motivations of independent audio podcasters

Abstract

This paper presents an exploratory, empirical investigation of one under-studied type of user-generated content: independent audio podcasting. While other forms of user-generated content, particularly blogging, have received significant attention from scholars, research on podcasting, particularly on podcasters themselves, is still uncommon. I address this gap through the development of a preliminary profile of independent podcasters and their motivations for podcasting. Results from a web-based qualitative questionnaire indicate that podcasters fit the profile of Pro-Ams (older, educated, professional males) working primarily in the niche markets of the long tail. The study found six major categories of motivations for podcasting: technology/media, content, interpersonal, personal, process, and financial. Comparisons are also drawn between motivations of the podcasters reported in this study and previous research on the motivations of bloggers.

Keywords

podcasting, user-generated content, motivations, Web 2.0, produsage, convergence

Word count: 8510

The podcasting phenomenon began in 2004, but scholarly writing on podcasting is mostly dedicated to instructing neophytes or evangelizing the uninitiated. As the boundaries between producing and consuming content become increasingly blurred (Deuze, 2007), it is important to 'get inside the cultures of Web 2.0' to better understand the nuances of this movement (Beer and Burrows, 2007). This paper offers empirical observations of one group of content producers – independent audio podcasters.

The development of podcasting is attributed to former MTV host Adam Curry, who sought an easier way to add audio to his personal blog, and Dave Winer, creator of the blog syndication code Real Simple Syndication (RSS). They developed a way to attach files to the syndication feed, and Curry authored software facilitating subscriptions to these podcast[1] feeds. Syndication enables subscribers to automatically receive new episodes as they are produced. Thus, podcasting allows for time-shifting and space-shifting, qualities that may contribute to its growing popularity (Berry, 2006; Crofts et al., 2005).

Although many early podcasters were bloggers or amateur radio enthusiasts (Berry, 2006), podcasting has since been embraced by traditional broadcasters, educators, and other professional groups. The audience grew rapidly once podcasts were added to Apple's iTunes in June 2005, with over 1 million podcast subscriptions within the first two days (Apple Computer, 2005). In 2008, 19% of adult internet users downloaded a podcast, up from 12% in 2006 (Madden and Jones, 2008). In 2010, approximately 23% of Americans age 12 and up reported listening to a podcast at least once (Webster, 2010b). However, interest in tracking podcast listening has not carried over into research on podcast production. This gap is particularly noticeable given the attention paid to other forms of user-generated content (UGC), such as blogs (e.g. Bruns and Jacobs, 2006; Cenite et al., 2009; Schmidt, 2007; Stefanone and Jang, 2008;

Zhao and Rosson, 2009) and YouTube videos (e.g. Burgess and Green, 2009; Gillespie, 2010; Moor et al., 2010). Little is known about podcasters themselves, and there is no single world-wide directory of all podcasts. In 2007, Apple offered more than 125,000 podcasts in their iTunes store (Nesbitt, 2007), whereas the Podcast Pickle[2] directory (one of the oldest) listed only 9,565 in their directory in 2008. By 2011, Podcast Alley[3] directory listed more than 90,000 podcasts. These directories doubtlessly overlap, and many other podcasts are potentially unlisted. It is clear that podcasting is emerging as a powerful tool for creating and disseminating audio content by diverse individuals and organizations.

The goal of the current exploratory study was to develop a preliminary profile of podcasters who are creating content that is unaffiliated with pre-existing traditional media content (i.e., independent audio podcasters). This paper discusses the demographic characteristics of podcasters and examines their motivations for podcasting. These initial findings can be used to guide future research on podcasters and the podcasting movement, with particular interest in situating independent podcasters within the realm of UGC.

Podcasting as Participatory Culture

Podcasting has been adopted by a wide variety of traditional media outlets (Murray, 2009; O'Neill, 2006; Thurman and Lupton, 2008). However, with its roots in independent, and generally amateur production, podcasting can be understood as an exemplar of UGC, firmly grounded within convergence culture. Convergence culture happens where 'old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways' Jenkins (2006: 2). One of the defining features of convergence is participatory culture, where the boundaries between

producers and consumers are increasingly blurred, and consumers are active participants, rather than passive spectators. As Deuze (2007: 247) states:

> Participatory media production and individualized media consumption are two different yet co-constituent trends typifying an emerging media ecology—an environment where consuming media increasingly includes some kind of producing media, and where our media behavior always seems to involve some level of participation, co-creation and collaboration, depending on the degree of openness or closedness of the media involved.

Jenkins notes that these changes in the relationships between consumers and producers are part of the ongoing convergence process, a process with no fixed 'end point.' Convergence is not strictly technological, but key elements of convergence, particularly participatory culture, are facilitated by technologies that allow for easier and cheaper access to the means of producing and distributing content, especially the internet.

The internet is also a driving force for 'produsage' (Bruns, 2008), the emerging transformation of the traditional production-consumption system into an open feedback system where people, often amateurs, collaboratively produce, consume, and interact about and through content. Produsage communities such as Wikipedia serve as sites where the actions that contribute to participatory culture can be observed and analyzed. At the core of produsage communities we find the Pro-Am: a new breed of 'amateurs who work to professional standards' (Leadbeater and Miller, 2004: 12). They are knowledgeable and networked by new technology. Pro-Ams are transforming fields as diverse as astronomy and rap music, and Leadbeater and Miller estimate that around 58% of the British population is engaged in some form of Pro-Am activity. However, 'the true "hard-core" Pro-Am population is likely to be a subset of this' (Leadbeater and Miller, 2004: 30). Bruns (2008: 30) situates Pro-Ams as 'those committed, long-

term participants in produsage who…represent the community to itself and to the wider society around it.' By conceptualizing independent podcasters as Pro-Ams participating in a produsage community, they can then be placed within the wider convergence culture and be seen as an appropriate object of study, given the call for more descriptive studies of emergent digital phenomenon (Beer and Burrows, 2007).

The rise of digital technologies has not only contributed to changes in the culture of media producers and consumers, as described by convergence, but also to the economics of media production. Specifically, the reduction in the cost of producing and distributing content has led to the proliferation of niche markets, i.e., 'the long tail' (Anderson, 2006). In the long tail, a small number of hits may still make up a substantial proportion of sales, but the unlimited shelf-space of the internet accommodates a wide variety of specialty products, targeting tastes that are under- (or un-) represented in traditional marketplaces. For example, the US iTunes podcast listings show that while the hits are dominated by traditional media outlets (e.g., NPR), there is indeed a long tail of podcasts covering everything from video games to beer to Celtic music. Many early podcasters were enthusiasts, rather than professionals, who capitalized on the openness of the internet to produce content often underrepresented in traditional media, perhaps due to lack of commercial viability and/or potential violations of the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) indecency standards. Consequently, independent podcasters are not only Pro-Ams contributing to a produsage community, they are also contributing to the long tail of online media content.

Podcasting Research

Research on podcasting is still relatively rare. Nyre and Ala-Fossi (2008) addressed podcasting in their comparative analysis of digital radio platforms. They noted that podcasting

allows for more personalized consumption as well as opportunities for producing content. Berry (2006) compared podcasting to radio, arguing that while traditional broadcasters use podcasting to reach listeners in new ways, amateur podcasters demonstrate the disruptive potential of this new medium and pose significant challenges to mainstream broadcasting. Menduni (2007) made similar claims regarding the relationship between podcasting and terrestrial radio in Italy. Others have explored the use of podcasting by community radio stations in the United States (Cecil, 2007; O'Baoill, 2007), and by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (O'Neill, 2006). Podcasts have also been situated as a means for offering audiences different ways to experience dramatic and experimental audio programming (DeLys and Foley, 2006; Neumark, 2006), and as a new way for theater groups to interact with their audiences (Stroich, 2009).

Several studies have examined specific podcasts or podcast genres. Diffrient (2010) analyzed two fan podcasts of the TV show *Gilmore Girls*, showing how they encouraged the fans to become more active viewers and served as a catalyst for building the online fan community. Birch and Weitkamp (2010) examined how science podcasts could stimulate online discussions about science, while Ruddock et al. (2010) conducted a thematic analysis of a podcast associated with a UK football fans website. Swanson (2010) conducted a content analysis of 67 podcast episodes produced by several different Christian ministries. Finally, Jarrett (2009) used conversation analysis to examine several Pro-Am podcasters, finding a mix of everyday talk and expert speech styles. Additionally, many studies focus on podcasting in education (see, for example, De Souza-Hart, 2011; Dupagne et al., 2009; Eash, 2006).

A few scholars have begun to investigate podcast listening. Johnson (2007) surveyed listeners of the podcast version of the radio program, *This American Life*, and found that podcasting moved listening from a background activity to an engaged, active process and

increased the frequency of listening to the program. Koh et al. (2007) found that the podcast listening environment affected listeners' sense of social presence, attention and memory, valence, and arousal, and that mobile listening environments were more distracting and less engaging. Listeners perceived ads placed in the middle of podcasts to be more intrusive and more irritating than ads at the beginning or than sponsorships (Ritter and Cho, 2009).

Research on podcast producers is uncommon. Gay podcasters used the medium as a space for the performance of gay identity and to call attention to perceived marginalization (Fox, 2008). Educational podcasters came from a variety of disciplines, most commonly from mass communication, were motivated to use podcasting as an alternative teaching tool, and were more likely to be higher-income males who generally scored high on measures of innovativeness (Yang, 2009). Mocigemba and Riechmann (2007) found that podcasters (both individual and corporate) were typically college-educated males in their mid-30s and were motivated largely by the desire to share opinions or knowledge, but also as a means of self-expression and identity-building.

This paucity of research on podcast producers stands in direct contrast to the significant literature on blogging. In particular, several studies have examined the motivations of bloggers. Nardi et al. (2004) identified five major motivations for blogging. Blogs were used as a way of documenting the blogger’s life, as a forum for expressing opinions and providing commentary, and as a cathartic means for working out issues or letting off steam. They also found that some bloggers used their blogs as a muse for testing out ideas and ‘thinking through writing,’ or as a site for community formation on a given topic. A similar mix of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for blogging was identified by Liu et al. (2007), with ‘pouring out feelings’ and ‘connecting with people’ being the most significant rewards. Ekdale et al. (2010) also found that intrinsic rewards,

particularly about articulating ideas, were among the strongest motivations for political bloggers to start blogging, whereas over time extrinsic motivations increased in significance. Finally, Leung (2009) examined the uses and gratifications for a variety of UGC activities, including participation in Wikipedia, blogging, and uploading YouTube videos. While overall Leung found that recognition needs, cognitive needs, social needs and entertainment needs drove UGC creation, recognition needs were a strong predictor of both blogging and posting videos to YouTube. Since blogging and podcasting are related, podcasters might share similar motivations with bloggers. However, the difference in medium (writing vs. audio) also suggests that there might be interesting differences in the two groups of produsers (cf. the discussion of the differences between fan fiction authors and fan film producers in Brooker, 2002).

Therefore, the rise of podcasting, coupled with the lag in research relative to other forms of UGC, demonstrates the value of studying the demographics and motivations of independent audio producers. In particular, a focus on independent producers is important given the centrality of Pro-Ams to produsage communities, and therefore also to understanding podcasting as a part of convergence culture. Although podcasting refers to both downloadable video and audio productions, audio was the original format, and continues to be the dominant mode for podcasting (Webster, 2009, 2010a). To that end, this paper addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. Who are independent audio podcasters?

RQ2a. What motivates individuals to become podcasters?

RQ2b. What motivates individuals to continue podcasting?

RQ3. What elements of podcasting do podcasters enjoy and not enjoy?

Method

As with bloggers, there is no single directory of all known independent podcasters. To identify and recruit potential participants, this research used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Ten podcasting directories were identified and recruitment announcements were posted in appropriate discussion forums. Data were originally collected in June-July 2008, but a low initial response led to a second round of data collection in February-March 2009. The second round included posting announcements on 12 podcasting-related Facebook groups and sending email invitations to 75 podcasters identified from the iTunes, Zune, and Association of Music Podcasting directories, in an effort to increase participation by music podcasters. Because of the sampling procedure, it is impossible to determine an exact response rate, because the number of people who viewed the recruitment announcements is unknown.

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, and because podcasters are already online, a qualitative, web-based questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate data collection method (Kaye and Johnson, 1999). The survey instrument consisted of both open- and closed-ended questions designed to elicit information about podcasters' production activities, reasons for podcasting, other online activities, and demographic characteristics. An additional open-ended question about how participants developed the content for their podcasts is discussed elsewhere (Markman, 2010). Participants were directed to an introductory webpage hosted on the author's academic website and given the qualifying definitions of an audio podcast and an independent podcaster. For this research, a podcast was defined as a downloadable digital audio file distributed over the internet using RSS, designed to be played back on a computer or personal MP3 player. An independent audio podcaster was defined as someone who creates and distributes a regular podcast that does not have its origins in a pre-existing traditional media

program or outlet (such as an NPR program). Participants who met the requirements and wished to proceed were then directed to the survey instrument which was hosted on a third party website. The questionnaire was administered anonymously and no personally identifying data were collected. Participants were given the option of providing contact information and/or the name of their podcast to the researcher upon completion of the survey, but this information was stored separately from the survey responses. Overall, 147 usable responses were obtained. However, because respondents could skip questions, the response rate for individual items varied.

This paper gives a brief overview of the respondents' demographic data, followed by an in-depth qualitative content analysis (Altheide, 1996; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000) of the opened-ended questions concerning their motives for podcasting, where motives are understood to be rooted in the psychological perspective of 'the class of incentives that a person finds attractive' (Bargh et al., 2010: 269). Motives were assessed based on the responses to the following survey questions:

What made you decide to start podcasting?

What factors make you want to continue podcasting?

What do you enjoy about podcasting?

What do you not enjoy about podcasting?

The responses to each question were read and scrutinized multiple times and codes for specific motives were developed inductively from the text. These codes were revised through subsequent analysis, and then compared and grouped into categories. As Hsieh and Shannon note, this inductive method of code and category development is particularly appropriate when pursuing exploratory questions on emergent phenomena.

Results

Who Are the Podcasters?

The typical podcaster in this study was an older, educated, professional male. More than two-thirds of the respondents who gave their age (n=135) were 35 years old or older, and the most common age range was 35-44 (40%). None were over 65. The overwhelming majority of respondents were male--only 12.2% of those who indicated a sex (n=135) were female. These findings are consistent with other demographic studies. Yang (2009) reported a mean age of 48 for educational podcasters, and Mocigemba and Riechmann (2007) observed a median age of 34. Both studies reported much higher percentages of males as podcasters (69% and 86.2%, respectively).

Similarly, education (n=133) and occupation data (n=134) show that respondents were highly educated; over 35% possessed a Bachelor's degree, and 25.6% possessed a graduate or professional degree. Most had at least some post-secondary education, with only 6.7% reporting having achieved a high school diploma/GED, or less. Not surprisingly, the respondents clustered in professional fields where college or advanced degrees might be expected. The two most common fields were Arts/Design/Entertainment/Media (22.3%) and Computer/Information Technology (21.6%), followed by Education/Training/Library occupations (13.4%) and Advertising/Public Relations/Marketing (7.5%).

Finally, although the survey was international in scope, it was limited to English speakers. Thus, the majority of the respondents who indicated their location (n=135) were from North America (74%) with 14% from Europe, 7.4% from Australia/New Zealand, and the remainder from Asia or Mexico/Central America. Mocigemba and Riechmann's (2007) survey,

conducted in English and German, similarly found that more than half of the podcasters were located in the United States. This suggests that podcasting in English is still largely US-centric.

Participants were also asked to report engagement in other communication and content creation/consumption activities (see Table 1). The respondents were voracious users of social media, generally fitting into the 'omnivores' category of ICT user (Horrigan, 2007: iii), people who 'are highly engaged with video online and digital content.' Most had used text messaging, instant messaging, Twitter, social networking sites, and blogging regularly, and many engaged in these activities daily (in addition to email). Slightly less than half were blogging on a daily basis, compared to the 3% of the population of adult internet users who blog daily (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2008). And whereas Pew reports that only 11% of internet users use text messaging on a daily basis, 46.6% of these podcasters texted daily.

[Table 1 here]

In addition to being highly engaged in online communication, these podcasters consumed and produced online content much more than average adult internet users. A majority indicated that they had tried the activities listed in Table 1 at least once, and many of them continued to engage in these activities regularly. Content consumption activities ranked higher in daily usage than content creation activities, with 77.1% reading another person's blog and 59.5% following another person on Twitter. Over half downloaded music or video files daily, and approximately 40% listened to streaming audio or watched streaming video content every day. Although fewer respondents contributed Web content daily, they did so at higher rates than the average internet user. For example, 18.3% of the podcasters reported uploading photos to a photo-sharing site, compared to 5% of all internet users (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2008). All of these podcasters indicated that they had listened to a podcast produced by someone else at least once.

Close to one-third of respondents (n=133) reported that they were currently listening to more than 20 podcasts.

Respondents were also asked to describe their podcasting activities. The overwhelming majority (72%, n=147) produced some form of talk programming, compared to only 28% who produced music podcasts. Most (81.6%, n=147) had been podcasting for at least one year, and nearly 30% had been podcasting for more than three years. Given that podcasting dates only to late 2004, almost one-third of the sample were podcasting veterans at the time of the survey. Only 18.4% were relative newcomers, having one year or less of podcasting experience. Over half produced two or more different podcasts (51%, n=147), indicating a strongly engaged group of respondents (cf. Mocigemba and Riechmann, 2007). Perhaps basing their productivity on the television model, 53.7% produced one episode per week, whereas 18.4% produced more than one episode per week, and 27.9% produced fewer than one episode per week.

Finally, this study asked podcasters to indicate the feedback and communication opportunities that were made available via the podcast website. Previous research indicates that feedback is important to podcasters (Mocigemba and Riechmann, 2007), and those findings are echoed here. More than 75% of the respondents' podcast websites featured a podcast blog, and two-thirds featured listener email (see Table 2). Most accepted requests or submissions from listeners, and sometimes included guests or guest hosts from other podcasts. Podcasters also frequently included listener calls and contests in their podcasts. Fewer than 5% did not include any of the listed feedback features on their podcast website.

[Table 2 here]

Why Start Podcasting?

A primary goal of this study was to explore the motivations of independent audio podcasters. The results of the qualitative analysis indicated that respondents' motivations for podcasting and attitudes about the process could be grouped into six general categories: technology/media motives, interpersonal motives, personal motives, content motives, process motives, and financial motives. The responses to the question 'What made you decide to start podcasting?' indicated that the respondents were primarily motivated by technology/media, content, and personal motives (see Figure 1).

Although podcasting gives producers broad freedom with formats and structures, listening to podcasts makes it clear that many call on familiar tropes from commercial radio, particularly talk radio, in their production styles. Indeed, for these participants, a desire to 'do radio' was the most frequently cited reason for starting to podcast. Participants discussed having prior experience in radio or other media industries, or a long-held interest in being on the radio as a primary motivation. Many of those who mentioned an interest in radio or media also cited the convenience of the medium—that it was relatively low cost, flexible, and easy to enter—as important to their decisions. Moreover, participants noted that podcasting allowed them to do radio on their own terms--free from industry and/or legal constraints.

Many respondents were also inspired to podcast by being listeners of other podcasts, a clear indication of the produsage nature of podcasting. Being a podcast listener was the second most frequent reason given. Responses indicated how strongly these podcasters were influenced by their listening habits. Some mentioned specific podcasts as sources of inspiration, or noted that being a podcast listener opened their eyes to podcasting's potential. A related, but less frequent, technology/media motive was an interest in the technology itself—these participants cited a love of technology and experimentation as reasons for beginning.

Although technology/media motives for podcasting were the most common, another important driving factor was podcasters' love of the subject matter of their podcasts. This was particularly true for music podcasters in the study, many of whom claimed inspiration to podcast based on their love of music, or the desire to share and promote the music and musicians they featured to a wider audience. Other participants noted that their topics seemed to lend themselves to podcasting, or they simply enjoyed being able to discuss a subject that they were passionate about, be it *Twilight*, politics, or Apple computers.

Other related content motives included promoting other content or services, extending or enhancing content, and tapping into an unserved market. Podcasters who were interested in promotion often discussed how they saw podcasting as a new means for advertising a variety of messages, goods, and services. In addition, some respondents indicated that they began podcasting to enhance or extend content they were already producing (e.g., supplements to a blog or book) or to add value to face-to-face events. Many of the educational podcasters were motivated by the perceived ability to extend classroom content, particularly their lectures. Finally, a number of podcasters discussed filling a niche. For these respondents, part of their motivation to podcast was a feeling that there was an untapped or underserved audience 'out there,' waiting for the kind of content they could deliver. There seemed to be a recognition by these podcasters that podcasting is very much a long tail (Anderson, 2006) activity that capitalizes on a relatively cheap technology to reach a dispersed, yet passionate audience.

Interestingly, while personal motives are often cited as central to the decision to blog (see Ekdale et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2007; Nardi et al., 2004), on the whole they seemed less important to these participants as motivations for podcasting, although they were not entirely absent. Many respondents mentioned that podcasting was a fun and enjoyable activity. Other personal

motivations included a desire to demonstrate expertise or as a means of self-expression. Respondents sometimes reported a belief that they could do a good job with the subject matter, or that they liked having a venue to express their opinions. A few also cited an interest in performing, particularly on a microphone, as a motivation to start. Several valued podcasting as an opportunity to enhance particular skills, such as writing, or to be able to teach podcasting to others. Overall, personal reasons were important, but not always central to, respondents' decisions to start podcasting.

Finally, a handful of respondents indicated that other people, such as friends, were important to their decision to podcast. These interpersonal motives also included wanting to be part of the podcasting movement or being urged to start podcasting by someone else.

[Figure 1 here]

'I Got a Public': Why Podcasters Keep Going

These podcasters got started primarily because of technology/media, content, or personal motives. However, they remained involved overwhelmingly due to interpersonal and personal motives, with secondary motivations found among content and financial reasons (see Figure 1). All of the respondents indicated that they planned to continue podcasting for the foreseeable future. While this unanimity is likely a result of sampling bias, and therefore not representative of everyone who starts podcasting, it does offer insight into what might be considered the most enthusiastic group of podcasters.

Audience response and listener feedback were the most common reasons given for continuing to podcast. While podcasts might be viewed as highly unidirectional communication channels (i.e., they are pre-recorded and distributed in ways that encourage time-shifting), many of these podcasters took great pains to provide audiences with the means to talk back (see Table

2). Listener emails, submissions, discussion fora, and phone calls (via voicemail playback) were used regularly, and the feedback podcasters received from these channels helped sustain their interest. The knowledge that the respondents had an audience that appreciated their work, or the anticipation of growing an audience, were recurring motives in these data. Participants also mentioned the pressure that an audience can exert—knowing people were listening meant new content was expected.

Another key interpersonal motive in these responses related to the broader podcasting community. Participants mentioned the relationships they had formed, the networking opportunities they discovered, and very frequently, the sense that they were part of a community of listeners, guests, content providers, and other podcasters. Finally, respondents also saw their ability to have an impact on other people as a motivation to continue. Whether it was helping their students, their listeners, or the community at large, many derived motivation from a sense that they were making a difference.

For respondents, the potential for having fun was an important reason for getting started. Not surprisingly, enjoyment was the most important personal motive for continuing to podcast. However, it is likely that people who did not enjoy podcasting and ceased their involvement in this activity (called ‘podfading’) were not represented in this sample. Fame and recognition, and the potential for establishing a brand name, were less commonly cited as reasons to continue. Some also listed skill development as a reason to continue, such as enhancing production skills or their use of humor. Similarly, a few respondents derived continued motivation from the outlet for self-expression and creativity. Overall, the most important personal reason that kept these podcasters engaged was the sheer entertainment factor of podcasting.

In addition to primary interpersonal and personal motives for continuing to podcast, there were secondary motivations related to content and finances. As with the motivation to begin podcasting, a love of the subject matter was the most important content reason for continuing. Many of these podcasters started because of their passion for the subject matter, and this passion also sustained their motivation. The ability to enhance other content, extend the classroom, or promote ideas or causes were also occasionally mentioned as continuing motivations. Interestingly, whereas only one participant mentioned increased income as a reason to begin podcasting, financial motives were a stronger theme in respondents' motivations to continue. In particular, money, or at least the potential for monetization, was a recurrent secondary theme in these responses. Relatively few respondents reported earning much money from their podcasts, but many hoped to do so in the future, or hoped that podcasting would lead to increased sales of merchandise or services. Some also expressed a desire to make podcasting a full-time career. All in all, these podcasters seemed hopeful that there was a profitable future for podcasting down the road.

The Pros and Cons of Podcasting

The final two open-ended questions asked respondents what they enjoyed and did not enjoy about podcasting. In many respects, these responses mirrored the motivations for starting and continuing to podcast. Audience feedback stimulated podcasters' desire to continue and accounted for much of what is enjoyable about the undertaking. Similarly, other interpersonal motives had resonance here, including the community and relationships developed through podcasting, and the sense of having a positive impact. A passion for the subject matter was also a prominent theme. Most interestingly, however, was the emergence of a new category of motivations related to process. Specifically, many participants indicated that they really enjoyed

the production process itself, particularly the editing, recording, and writing activities. Many expressed that they loved everything about the podcasting process. Given the tech-savvy nature of the respondents and the prominence of prior media work as a motivation to start, it is unsurprising that the production process was a source of enjoyment. Respondents were drawn, in part, to podcasting because of their love of the technology, and the hands-on work contributed to their sense of podcasting as a fun and worthwhile activity. Finally, a few personal motives and technology/media motives emerged as secondary sources of enjoyment in podcasting. These included enhancing or sustaining skills, creativity and self-expression, gaining radio/media experience, or factors related to the convenience of or interest in the technology.

In many ways, the aspects of podcasting that the participants disliked mirrored those that they enjoyed. Although the production process could be fun, it could also cause frustration. The time and effort required to produce podcasts was overwhelmingly cited as the least enjoyable aspect of the process. Podcasts take time to research, write, and produce, often require working to tight deadlines, and can take time away from other activities. Time and effort were also linked with the editing process; participants talked about the tedious nature of editing mistakes, breaths, and hesitations, as well as the challenge of trimming material into a manageable size. Editing, frequently cited as a source of enjoyment for podcasters, was also a major source of displeasure. Technical issues, such as server glitches, bandwidth caps, and uploading issues were still an annoyance for these generally tech-savvy podcasters. A few also mentioned problems with finding or licensing content as problematic.

After process issues, the most frequent complaint from respondents was about people. Interpersonal issues fell into two main categories—a lack of awareness or feedback, and problematic audiences. Having a public and getting positive feedback was a source of joy and

motivation, and accordingly, a lack of feedback was disheartening. Participants frequently mentioned the problem of asking for feedback and receiving none. Similarly, sometimes people did respond—but with comments that were unwelcome. Respondents mentioned 'annoying,' 'critical,' and 'negative' feedback as part of what they did not enjoy about podcasting.

Finally, although financial hopes could be motivating, financial realities sometimes put a damper on the experience. Podcasting costs money—for hosting and bandwidth, for hardware and software, and sometimes for content. The cost of producing podcasts and the related lack of financial rewards were less frequent, but still prominent, sources of frustration. As shown earlier, many respondents had hopes of monetizing their work, but in the meantime it felt like a lot of work with little reward. Even given these frustrations, there were a number of podcasters who indicated that they liked everything about podcasting and had no complaints at all.

Podcasters: Dedicated Pro-Ams in an Emerging System of Produsage

This study found podcasters to be males over 35 from professional backgrounds with generally high levels of education. As such, they fit very well with the demographic characteristics of Pro-Ams, who also are more likely to be male, well-educated, and reasonably affluent (Leadbeater and Miller, 2004). This profile is also consistent with the demographics of podcast listeners (Webster, 2009). With one or two exceptions, respondents were not podcasting full-time, but were instead dedicated, skilled amateurs who used what revenue they might generate to pay for their associated costs. These podcasters were technology omnivores—they were consuming and creating content at rates that surpassed the general adult internet population.

This study found six major motivations for engaging in podcasting: technology/media, content, interpersonal, personal, process, and financial motives. The results indicate interesting points of similarity and difference between independent podcasters and other UGC producers

such as bloggers. Whereas self-expression has been found to be a significant motivation for personal blogging (Ekdale et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2007; Nardi et al., 2004), these podcasters were more motivated to start by factors related to the technology and the subject matter. In particular, many were drawn to podcasting as an opportunity to do radio on their own terms. This idea that podcasting could serve as an alternative to traditional broadcasting parallels Ekdale et al.'s (2010) finding that political bloggers' desire to serve as an alternative to mainstream media increased as they continued blogging. Similarly, for some of Nardi et al.'s (2004) respondents, the writing process itself was one of the attractions of blogging, and for these podcasters, the production process was a source of continued enjoyment. Thus while the format (writing vs. audio) differs, these results indicate a similarity between bloggers and podcasters in their focus on process.

For some participants, podcasting provided an opportunity for promotion, either of the self or of others. The fame and recognition developed through podcasting was also a motive for continuing to podcast. In this way, respondents were also similar to the producers in Leung's (2009: 1336) study, for whom recognition needs, defined as when 'users engage in content generation online to establish their personal identity, gain respect, build confidence and publicize their expertise' were a significant motivation for online content production. Similar external rewards were found to have developed over time for political bloggers (Ekdale et al., 2010). Taken together, this suggests that podcasting is similar to other forms of UCG in that while recognition may not always be an initial driver, fame accrued over time is likely a strong factor in a producer's desire to continue. This also suggests that a lack of recognition may contribute to a loss of interest in podcasting.

Although recognition was an important factor, respondents were motivated to continue, and found enjoyment in podcasting, primarily through their interactions with others, particularly their audience and the community of other podcasters. Thus it seems that social needs are also important to a variety of UGC producers (cf. Leung, 2009; Nardi et al., 2004). The numerous feedback mechanisms in podcasting are also particularly interesting from the standpoint of the produsage model (Bruns, 2008), which emphasizes feedback from peers and members' active engagement with and around the content as important parts of the development of produsage communities. Respondents were highly connected to the podcasting community through their listening habits, and offered multiple avenues for audience participation and feedback. Bruns notes that produsage is fundamentally inclusive, and these podcasters seemed to go out of their way to fulfill this requirement, particularly with their use of guests and guest hosts from other podcasts. Actively soliciting feedback from peers and audience members also contributes to the spirit of communal evaluation emblematic of produsage communities. It is thus also likely that those podcasters who are less engaged with the community, or who fail to receive feedback, may be more likely to discontinue podcasting.

Finally, this paper argues that podcasting is emblematic of participatory culture, and therefore also a contributor to the convergence process. One of the elements that is helping to reshape the relationships between producers and audiences, notes Jenkins (2006), is the long tail (Anderson, 2006). Niche content communities, Jenkins argues, can provide contexts where audiences can reshape and re-contextualize mass media content. One of the primary motivations for podcasters in this study was to do radio, and in particular, to produce the kinds of content not available in traditional media outlets. Many of the podcasters mentioned explicitly wanting to cater to a niche audience. In addition, these podcasters' desire to 'do radio' is also illustrative of

the difference between a medium and a delivery technology. Jenkins (2006: 13-14) offers that a medium can be defined not only as a specific tool that enables communication, but also as 'a set of associated "protocols" or social and cultural practices that have grown up around that technology.' In this way, the 'radio' being produced by podcasters often adheres to the traditional protocols associated with broadcasting (DJ banter, back announcing, talk show formatting, etc.) while at the same time being divorced from the *delivery technology* of terrestrial radio. This desire to 'do radio' without being *on the radio* is echoed in the sentiments of many of the podcasters in this study who desired to produce content that was not only niche, but also was free of the constraints, particularly from the FCC, of traditional broadcasting. By shifting the medium of radio away from the delivery technology of radio, then, these podcasters contribute to the ever-evolving convergence culture.

Limitations and Future Directions

This paper presented results from an exploratory study of independent audio podcasters. The findings of this study are limited primarily by the focus on English speakers, which resulted in a largely North American sample, and by the small sample size and non-random sampling technique. Thus, they are not generalizable to the overall podcaster population. Nevertheless, the basic demographic findings are consistent with other examinations of independent podcasters, lending them credibility. The results suggest many interesting directions for future research. The development of more comprehensive sampling frames using web crawlers may allow for more rigorous sampling methods, thus providing for a more representative picture of this emerging group. Additional research on podcasters could then confirm the demographic profile, and more fully explore their motivations and psychological characteristics. Quantitative research could also examine the relationships between the various types of motivations identified in this study.

In particular, it would be valuable to know if certain genres of content are associated with different motivations. Research could also map the linkages between podcasters, in order to flesh out how the podcasting community works as a system of produsage. In particular, a quantitative approach could expand our understanding of podcasters as Pro-Ams by more explicitly examining the relationships between podcasters' paid work and their podcasting activities, thereby addressing another limitation of this study. Future research might then consider the potential differences between podcasters who are seeking to be professionals and those who are content to remain hobbyists, and in particular if the content they produce is different, or if the manner in which they interact with the community differs. Does a podcaster's desire to become a professional influence how open he or she is to feedback and interaction with the wider podcasting community? Such research would also add to our understanding of how podcasting functions as participatory culture.

While this study has noted some similarities and differences between podcasters and bloggers, it might also be useful to consider more explicitly how podcasters differ from other internet-based produsers. This study found that podcasters also frequently kept a blog, but the survey questions were limited in that they did not specifically ask if participants kept blogs that were not related to their podcasts. Given that at least some podcasts were developed as offshoots of blogs or other content, another productive line of inquiry might ask about UGC producers' identities related to content production. When do producers consider themselves bloggers vs. podcasters, vs. some other type of producer? To that end, future research could also compare audio and video podcasters, in order to determine the differences between choice of form, particularly given the rise of importance of YouTube. What is the line between video blogging, video podcasting, and other types of video sharing? In all, this study has shown that podcasting is

an important example of the changing nature of media production and consumption practices that is worthy of further examination.

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Notes
1. The term 'podcasting' itself may date back to an article in *The Guardian* newspaper (Hammersley, 2004), and is generally said to be a portmanteau created from the Apple iPod™ personal MP3 player and broadcasting.
2. http://www.podcastpickle.com/
3. http://www.podcastalley.com

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Table 1. *Podcasters' Online Activities* (n=135)

Activity	Percentage who engage in this activity (rank)	
	Daily	Regularly[a]
Send or receive email	98.5% (1)	97.7% (1)
Read someone else's blog or online journal	77.1% (2)	82.4% (3)
Create/maintain one or more SNS profiles	63.4% (3)	80.9% (4)
Send or receive instant messages	59.5% (4)	76.3% (5)
Follow someone else on Twitter	59.5% (4)	64.1% (8)
Create/maintain a Twitter feed	58.8% (5)	61.1% (10)
Download music or video files	53.4% (6)	86.3% (2)
Create/maintain an online journal or blog	48.9% (7)	86.3% (2)
Send or receive SMS messages	46.6% (8)	61.8% (9)
Listen to streaming audio	40.5% (9)	74.0% (6)
Watch streaming video	39.7% (10)	70.2% (7)
Use a social bookmarking application	26.0% (11)	34.4% (13)
Upload photos to a photo sharing site	18.3% (12)	58.0% (11)
Upload video to a video sharing site	13.0% (13)	38.2% (12)

[a] Defined as ‘at least once per month.’

Table 2. *Podcast Website Features* (% Yes, n=143)

Podcast blog	76.2%
Listener email	67.1%
Listener requests/submissions	60.1%
Guests/guest hosts from other podcasts	58.7%
Listener calls	49.0%
Listener contests	46.2%
Listener discussion forum	36.4%
None of the above	4.9%

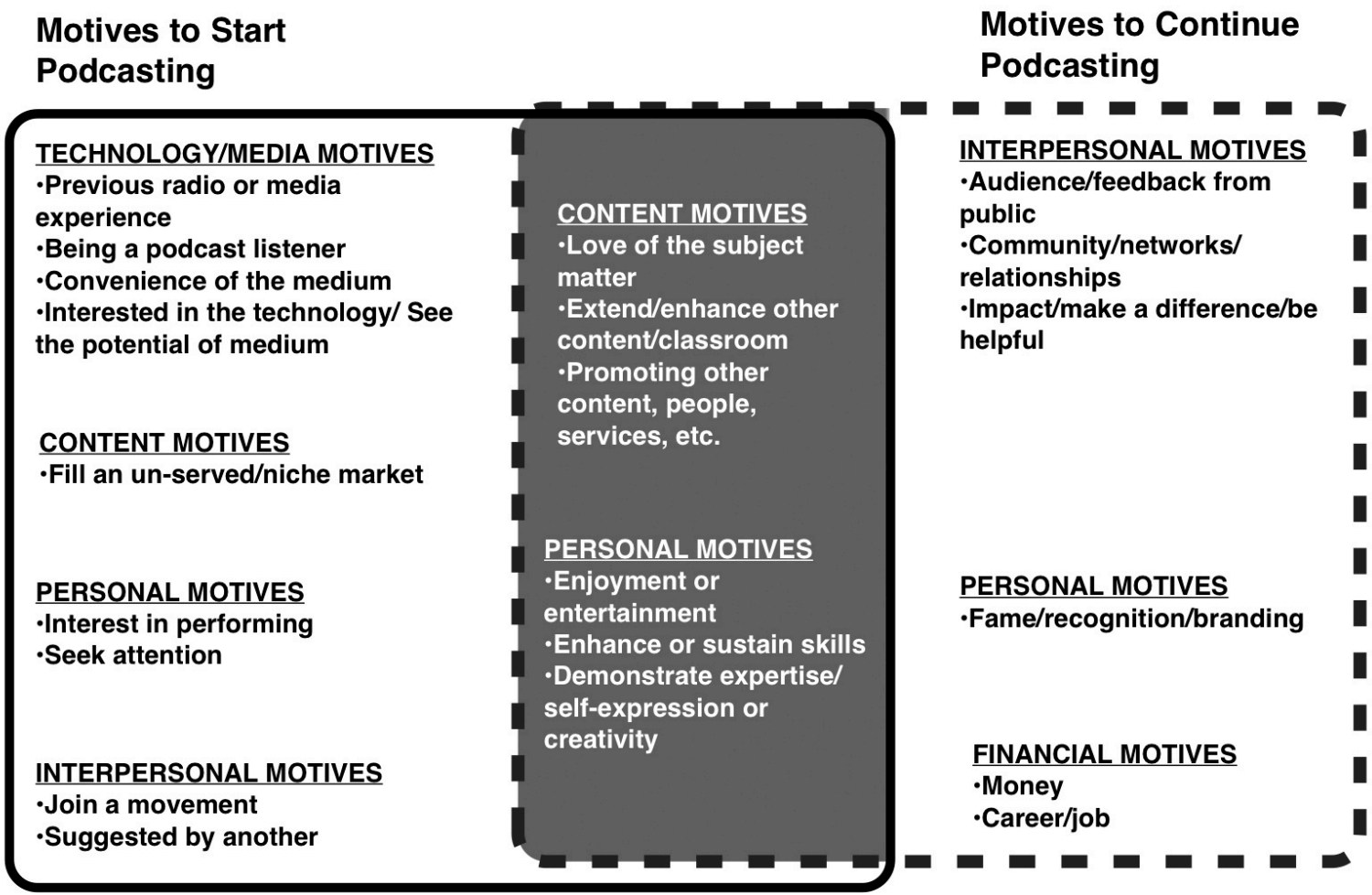

Figure 1. *Motives for starting and continuing to podcast*