

The day of the podcast

By [Mark Botha](#), issued by [Mediamark](#)

28 Sep 2023

As we approach International Podcast Day on 30 September, I have been reflecting on the medium, which, despite its significant international growth over the years is really only now starting to gain traction in South Africa.

One can draw parallels to the mobile medium's evolution, and while I am sure I am giving away my age now, there was a stage where everyone was proclaiming, 'This is the year of mobile' and it never really seemed to come. However, if one looks at the remarkable surge of mobile as a platform for internet access in recent years, with up to 85% of traffic on many publishers' platforms originating from mobile devices, it's clear that mobile has not only arrived but has exceeded our wildest expectations. It is safe to assume that podcasts will follow a similar upward trajectory, and there's a lot of good reasons why podcasts are on the rise:

It's accessible

South Africans undoubtedly love their mobile phones, in fact the latest report released by Datareportal indicated that we have nearly double the number of cellular mobile connections in South Africa than we have people, clocking in at 112,7 million in early 2023. The surge in the use of mobile devices to access digital platforms is certainly driving the use of these devices for listening to podcasts. We certainly see this across our own platforms with over 80% of podcast sessions happening on the mobile phone. That said, you can also listen to podcasts on smart speakers, desktop or ones connected TV, highlighting the convenience and accessibility of this medium.



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There is something for everyone

The beauty of digital is that it is a global medium, and everyone has access. With an abundance of podcast content, spanning both local and international sources, listeners are spoilt for choice. What makes this even better is that you have the freedom to listen to precisely the content that interests you, as unlike traditional linear media consumption, you can immerse yourself in the content of your choosing without delay.

Tune in at your preferred time and in your preferred manner

As mentioned earlier, mobile is the device of choice when it comes to listening to podcasts. A lot of people stream it, but there is no reason one cannot download it while you have access to the boss's Wi-Fi and then listen to it when you aren't connected. The last point is really important, because that is just what people do, and because it's on your mobile device, you can listen while you're having a run, lying next to the pool, or enduring two and a half hours of load shedding – it's always at your fingertips no matter where you are or what you're doing.

Podcasts are here to help

Like anything, you do get your bad apples, but podcasts add value to people's lives – they inform, they educate, they make you laugh, or they stimulate debate. Podcasts are here to enrich lives and to entertain. What is great to see is an increase in podcasts being published in different vernaculars, again underlining the fact that they really are for everybody.

Advertising to engaged audiences

The great thing about advertising in podcasts is that the content is focused, can be matched up very well with your brand, and above all, you have the listeners' undivided attention. While there are some advertising formulas which seem to be doing a decent job, we see podcast producers consistently experimenting with novel advertising approaches.

Podcasts offer a highly personal experience, so implementing traditional advertising formats can be disruptive, and potentially affect both the listening experience as well as the audience's perception of your brand. It's important, therefore, that these are given careful consideration when advertising in, or sponsoring a podcast. Given the typically specialised nature of podcast content, not every brand is a suitable fit for every podcast. On-demand podcasts tend to attract broader advertising, while bespoke podcasts cater to a more specific audience, and brands choose to advertise on them when their products align closely with the content.

The pre, mid and post roll formats are broadly accepted, but don't necessarily need to be delivered as dynamic inserts of traditional ads, and in many cases, particularly on bespoke podcasts, we encourage clients to work closely with the content producers to create these ads. In fact, getting the podcast hosts to deliver the messaging themselves, weaving it into the content, gives the ads an organic feel that doesn't leave listeners feeling like they are having ads shoved down their ear cavities. Fortunately, most hosts are very keen to collaborate with advertisers to get the right balance of advertising messaging and exposure, in fact they have a personal stake in doing so because getting it wrong can turn audiences away.

In a world of advertising clutter, podcasts offer a safe refuge for brands to connect with audiences on a higher level. If it's not already evident, we are genuinely excited about the future of podcasts, not only for the benefits it can offer to advertisers but also for the value it brings to individuals and communities. If you haven't explored this opportunity yet, now is an excellent time to get involved, and grab the chance to be part of this next evolution in audio.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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