



PODCAST CULTURE IN LIBYA: AUDIENCE PRACTICES, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS, AND PLATFORM DEPENDENCE

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Abstract

This article reinterprets evidence from a previously completed mixed-method study of podcast culture in Libya. The original project combined an online survey of 244 respondents (collected in 2024–2025) with six semi-structured interviews with podcast producers. The analysis examines the relationship between audience discovery, perceptions of podcasting and the practical conditions of production. Reported survey findings suggest considerable recognition of the format but uneven patterns of consumption; YouTube and social platforms feature prominently in podcast access. Interview evidence identifies self-financing, infrastructure, access to guests, visibility and the dominance of video as recurrent challenges. Rather than treating adoption as a straightforward transition from radio to podcasting, the article conceptualises Libyan podcasting as a platform-dependent and resource-constrained emerging cultural practice. It offers implications for producer training, discoverability, funding and future research. The study is a transparent secondary interpretation of thesis-derived data, not a new field investigation.

Keywords: Libya; podcasting; digital audio; mixed methods; platformisation; media production

المخلص

،هدفت الدراسة إلى تحليل ثقافة البودكاست في ليبيا من خلال دراسة أنماط استهلاك المحتوى الرقمي، وتفضيلات الجمهور والتحديات المهنية والإنتاجية التي تواجه صنّاع البودكاست. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً يجمع بين التحليل الكمي لبيانات استبيان شمل 244 مشاركاً، والتحليل النوعي لمقابلات شبه منظمة أجريت مع ستة من منتجي البودكاست الليبيين. أظهرت النتائج تفاوتاً بين مستوى الوعي بالبودكاست وممارسات الاستماع الفعلية، مع اعتماد ملحوظ على يوتيوب ومنصات التواصل الاجتماعي في الوصول إلى المحتوى. كما كشفت المقابلات عن تحديات تتعلق بالتمويل، والإمكانات التقنية، واستمرارية الإنتاج، والوصول إلى الضيوف، فضلاً عن محدودية التمييز لدى بعض أفراد الجمهور بين البودكاست والإذاعة التقليدية، وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن تطور البودكاست في ليبيا يتطلب تعزيز القدرات الإنتاجية والمهنية، وتنويع استراتيجيات التوزيع وتطوير آليات تمويل مستدامة تدعم استمرارية المحتوى واستقلاليته. الكلمات المفتاحية: البودكاست، ليبيا، الإعلام الرقمي، سلوك الجمهور، إنتاج المحتوى، المنصات الرقمية.

Research data provenance

This study draws on empirical data originally collected for the author's master's thesis, A Study on Podcast Culture in Libya (Mersin University, 2025). The present article offers a focused analytical interpretation of the findings.

1. Introduction

Podcasting occupies an unusual position within contemporary media: it is technologically connected to radio, socially shaped by digital networks and increasingly encountered through video and social-media feeds. This convergence is particularly significant in environments where independent media production operates without stable institutional or commercial

PODCAST CULTURE IN LIBYA: AUDIENCE PRACTICES, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS, AND PLATFORM DEPENDENCE

support. In Libya, understanding podcasting therefore requires attention to both what audiences encounter and what creators are capable of sustaining.

The original research reported a developing local podcast ecology in which producers address social, cultural, political and educational subjects while negotiating limited resources and changing audience expectations (Abduljawad, 2025). This article does not attempt a comprehensive history of Libyan broadcasting. Instead, it asks how the conditions of discovery and the conditions of production jointly shape the emergence of podcast culture.

The distinction matters. A large number of internet users does not automatically establish a mature podcast market. Nor does familiarity with the word “podcast” establish frequent listening. Audience recognition, actual engagement, platform preference and producer sustainability represent analytically separate dimensions. Combining them avoids treating technical connectivity as evidence of cultural institutionalisation.

Podcast studies have long questioned the assumption that podcasting is merely radio distributed online (Berry, 2006; Bottomley, 2015). The Libyan case provides a useful setting in which to examine that distinction because content circulates through multiple platforms while local producers confront material and organisational constraints.

2. Research problem and contribution

The central problem is the mismatch between podcasting’s apparent accessibility as a digital format and the resources necessary to make a local production culture durable. Recording tools and online distribution may lower entry barriers, but they do not eliminate costs of sound production, editing, publicity, internet access, guest coordination or continuity.

Three questions guide the secondary analysis: (1) What do the reported survey findings reveal about recognition, use and platform preferences? (2) Which production constraints recur in creator interviews? (3) How do these audience and producer dimensions interact in shaping an emerging Libyan podcast ecosystem?

The article makes a specific conceptual distinction between three outcomes that are often conflated: awareness of the podcast label, engagement with podcast content, and the capacity of producers to publish consistently. Its claim is not that the original survey directly measured platform dependence as a causal variable. Rather, dependence is inferred cautiously from the conjunction of reported access routes and producers’ accounts of promotion and production. The contribution is integrative rather than evidentially novel: it brings audience-side and producer-side findings into one explanatory account of platform dependence and production precarity. This is different from presenting the thesis as a new data collection or reproducing its historical chapters. The unit of interpretation is the relationship between discovery practices and the sustainability of independent audio production.

Four boundaries are important. First, online non-probability recruitment cannot establish national prevalence. Second, reported attitudes toward influence cannot demonstrate measured behavioural effects. Third, six interviews illuminate experiences but cannot represent all producers. Fourth, the original thesis contains some internally inconsistent denominators and interview codes; these are identified as limitations rather than silently corrected.

3. Podcasting beyond radio: conceptual background

Berry (2006) positioned podcasting in relation to radio while identifying features associated with user control, distribution and content diversity. Bottomley (2015) traced the emergence of the medium within changes to web syndication and digital audio. Together, these perspectives suggest that podcasting should be studied as a set of practices rather than only as a file format. On-demand access gives listeners control over timing and sequence, yet control over listening does not mean independence from intermediaries. Search engines, social feeds, hosting services and video platforms can determine whether a programme is discovered at all. For a producer with limited marketing capacity, circulation is often inseparable from these intermediaries.

Spinelli and Dann (2019) emphasise the transformation of audio storytelling, community and creative production. Their approach helps distinguish the intimacy and flexibility of audio from the increasingly visual methods used to promote it. A show may be designed for attentive listening while its route to the audience depends on thumbnails, short clips and visual branding. This article consequently uses “podcast culture” to mean an interrelated configuration of production routines, content norms, listening or viewing practices, platform access and expectations about the medium. This definition is intentionally broader than a narrow technical distinction between downloadable audio and streamed video.

4. Platformisation and emerging media markets

Bonini (2015) describes podcasting’s movement toward professionalisation and commercial development as a second age of the medium. That account is useful as a comparative framework, but it should not be mechanically transferred to Libya. The timing and institutional conditions of professionalisation differ between media markets.

Where advertising infrastructure and audience measurement are limited, podcast projects may depend on personal expenditure or informal collaboration. Creators must make strategic choices between sound quality, visual production, frequency and promotion. These choices are not merely artistic: they influence whether an audience encounters the programme and whether production continues.

Platform dependence introduces a further tension. A social-media clip may increase reach, but it can also encourage audiences to interpret podcasting as ordinary video conversation. The same visibility strategy that makes a programme discoverable can blur its identity as a distinct medium. In this sense, visibility and format recognition do not necessarily grow together. The evidence in this article is interpreted through three connected dimensions: discoverability (how content is encountered), sustainability (how content is financed and maintained) and legitimacy (how producers and audiences understand the format). These dimensions offer a framework for reading the survey and interviews without imposing a deterministic technological narrative.

5. Libya as a media context

The thesis places contemporary podcasting within Libya’s changing broadcasting and digital-media environment (Abduljawad, 2025). Local radio remains historically important, while online production provides additional spaces for long-form discussion and specialised content. The relationship is best understood as coexistence and overlap rather than replacement. Language and cultural positioning are also important. Arabic-language production can connect programmes to broader regional audiences, while locally situated discussions may communicate experiences not fully represented in transnational media. The original thesis also describes emerging interest in local linguistic and cultural expression, though it does not provide a nationally representative measure of such production.

Digital adoption indicators describe the potential technical environment but must not be equated with podcast audience size. The 2023 DataReportal Libya report, cited in the thesis, provides contextual internet and social-media estimates (Kemp, 2023). These estimates describe platform access, not podcast-specific listening, and are not used here as outcome measures.

For analytical purposes, the Libyan case is characterised by three simultaneous processes: the widening availability of digital distribution; uneven audience understanding of podcast formats; and producers’ efforts to sustain publication amid financial and technical barriers. The study examines how these processes intersect.

6. Research design and data provenance

This article is a documentary secondary analysis of a completed mixed-method thesis. The original quantitative component used an online questionnaire distributed from 25 April 2024 to

PODCAST CULTURE IN LIBYA: AUDIENCE PRACTICES, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS, AND PLATFORM DEPENDENCE

12 February 2025. Following data cleaning, the thesis reports 244 usable survey participants. Its questionnaire included closed and open-ended items and was pretested with 35 people (Abduljawad, 2025).

The original survey was disseminated initially through contacts including communication students and academics and more widely through social-media groups. The thesis characterises recruitment in terms of snowball recruitment and online sharing. This is a non-probability design; results therefore describe the respondent group and should not be extrapolated to Libya's population.

The qualitative component comprised six semi-structured interviews with active podcast producers, five face to face and one online. The thesis reports interviews lasting approximately 25–40 minutes and describes transcription and thematic analysis. Its reported analysis covers awareness, technical infrastructure, financial support, guest access and competition with video content.

The secondary-analysis procedure involved extracting only the survey indicators and interview themes explicitly reported in the thesis, grouping them under recognition, distribution, perceived value, resources and format legitimacy, and then comparing where the two forms of evidence converged or diverged. No new participant-level dataset, transcripts, statistical tests or interview quotations were created for this article. The resulting categories are interpretive devices, not newly validated scales.

For this article, numerical values and themes are taken from the thesis as reported; no raw-data reanalysis has been conducted. Findings are reorganised by conceptual relevance. Where a published thesis table contains incompatible totals, the discrepancy is documented and no artificial recalculation is presented.

7. Sampling, measurement and analytical limits

The survey was designed to explore knowledge, perceptions and reported behaviour rather than estimate national market penetration. The thesis describes the use of descriptive statistics and chi-square tests alongside open-ended thematic coding. It also explains why a single internal-consistency coefficient was not appropriate for a questionnaire that did not constitute a unidimensional psychometric scale.

The sample contains 134 women (54.92%), 101 men (41.39%) and nine respondents who did not specify gender (3.69%), summing to 244. This is a reliable descriptive characteristic of the analysed sample as tabulated in the thesis. It does not demonstrate a gender distribution among Libyan podcast listeners as a whole.

Important inconsistencies appear elsewhere. For example, some platform-choice counts sum to fewer than 244, while their percentages appear to use a different base. Several tables contain missing responses or percentages that do not sum to 100. These problems restrict comparisons across variables and require access to the original dataset for definitive denominator verification. The qualitative material likewise requires caution: the thesis describes six producer interviews, while one summary table contains an additional code (K7). This manuscript reports six interviews only and does not interpret the extra code as evidence of another participant. The discrepancy remains unresolved without access to the original coding records.

8. Findings I: recognition and participation

The thesis reports that 61.6% of surveyed respondents recognised or knew the podcast concept, while 42.5% reported listening to or watching podcasts in Libya (Abduljawad, 2025). The measures concern different questions and should not be collapsed into a single adoption rate.

The gap between familiarity and participation is analytically important.

Recognition may arise through short clips, social-media references or conversations about popular programmes without corresponding regular consumption. Conversely, respondents may

PODCAST CULTURE IN LIBYA: AUDIENCE PRACTICES, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS, AND PLATFORM DEPENDENCE

engage with long-form conversations on video platforms without identifying them as podcasts. Thus, concept awareness and actual use are likely affected by how the medium is described. The original research also reports generally favourable expectations of the format. Such assessments should be interpreted as respondent perceptions rather than as verified evidence of an expanding national audience. Because recruitment took place online, people with digital-media interests may have been more likely to encounter and complete the questionnaire. An important implication is that audience development requires more than introducing the label “podcast”. Producers and media educators may need to demonstrate distinctive forms of listening, subscriptions, episodic continuity and ways to find full-length programmes. This is a practical inference from the combination of reported awareness and platform behaviour, not an experimentally established intervention effect.

9. Findings II: platforms and discovery

Among platform categories reported in the thesis, YouTube accounts for 38.10%, social-media platforms for 25.60% and dedicated podcast platforms for 22.02%. “Other” and non-response categories are also listed. The accompanying counts and percentages do not consistently imply the same denominator; these figures are therefore reproduced only as originally reported proportions, not converted into population estimates.

The figures are retained with two safeguards: the original wording of the relevant survey items must be consulted before treating them as measures of habitual listening, and missing or inconsistent response bases must not be reconstructed by assumption. In particular, a platform preference percentage should not be read as the share of all Libyan citizens who use that platform for podcasts.

The ordering nevertheless provides a useful descriptive insight: for the respondents represented in the relevant table, podcast access was not confined to specialist audio applications. Video and general-purpose social platforms featured prominently in reported engagement. This pattern aligns with interview accounts of producers distributing excerpts on Instagram and Facebook to direct audiences toward full episodes.

The finding has implications for format boundaries. A creator may distribute a long-form conversation as a podcast while audiences discover it through a short video. Classification then becomes a social process rather than a purely technical one. A programme’s identity is communicated through episode structure, consistency, branding and the way creators explain their work.

This article uses “platform-dependent discovery” to describe the situation in which podcasts rely on intermediaries whose primary logic may be video, recommendation feeds or social engagement. The term is an analytical interpretation of the thesis evidence, not a separately measured survey construct.

10. Findings III: perceived social value

The thesis reports that 65.38% of respondents considered podcasts positively influential in increasing young people’s knowledge and awareness. This is a perception-based response: it does not demonstrate an objectively measured improvement in knowledge. The distinction is especially important because the original questionnaire did not administer before-and-after knowledge tests.

Respondents also expressed interest in a range of social, cultural and religious subjects, and the thesis discusses the perceived opportunity for conversations that may receive less attention in traditional media. These perceptions help explain why podcasting can be valued as a participatory form even when distribution infrastructure remains underdeveloped.

The thesis reports an association between gender and perceptions of influence in a chi-square analysis. However, without reproducing the original contingency table and verifying the test assumptions, the present article does not treat the association as proof of causation or infer a stable gender difference in the wider population.

The broader interpretive point is that podcasts may be valued simultaneously for information, identification and conversational openness. These motivations can overlap: the same episode may be educational, culturally resonant and socially engaging. Future research should measure these dimensions separately and use validated scales where appropriate.

11. Findings IV: cultural and linguistic preferences

The thesis reports that Arabic-language podcasts were the largest single stated preference category (40.00%) in its cultural-identity question. A further category, selecting all offered options, is reported at 21.95%. Smaller categories include locally oriented and foreign podcasts. The table contains denominator inconsistencies, so these figures should be treated as descriptive reported responses.

This pattern indicates the relevance of language to audience choice, but it does not establish that Arabic is the exclusive or universally preferred language for podcasting in Libya. Preferences may also depend on topic, presenter, familiarity, educational background and the distinction between local and international production.

For producers, linguistic choice can shape both intimacy and reach. A local conversational register may support recognition and trust among particular audiences, while a more widely intelligible register can facilitate circulation beyond a single city or community. The original evidence does not directly test these trade-offs; they are proposed here as hypotheses for future research.

The cultural dimension also includes which topics are considered suitable for public conversation and who is invited to speak. Podcasting's flexibility can broaden the range of voices, but it does not automatically remove social constraints. Sustainable inclusion requires editorial judgement, audience sensitivity and responsible moderation.

12. Findings V: financial sustainability

Interviews with producers identify personal financing as a central obstacle. The thesis reports that several creators began with their own resources and that only one interviewee described partial external support. Financial limits affect equipment, recording environments, transport, editing time, promotional material and the capacity to publish consistently.

This finding challenges an overly optimistic account of podcasting as a nearly cost-free medium. Entry may be relatively accessible, yet recurring production entails cumulative expenditure. The burden is especially significant for independent creators who must combine editorial, technical and promotional tasks.

Financial insecurity may also influence content decisions. Without stable resources, creators may favour guests who are easier to reach, locations that cost less to record in and episode schedules compatible with other employment. These are plausible implications of the interview themes; the thesis does not provide a quantified cost model.

An appropriate response is not simply to recommend sponsorship. Commercial support can introduce editorial dependencies. More sustainable arrangements may include transparent sponsor policies, shared facilities, university partnerships, training networks and modest production grants. The viability of these options would need to be tested in Libya rather than assumed.

13. Findings VI: infrastructure and skills

Interview themes include unreliable internet access, the cost of production equipment and gaps in training. These constraints affect more than audio fidelity: they shape whether episodes can be

recorded, transferred, edited and published on time. Digital distribution depends on a chain of activities, and a weak link can interrupt the entire workflow.

The thesis records producer concerns about upload delays and access to suitable recording resources. Such accounts illustrate operational friction but do not quantify national connectivity quality. They should be read as experiences within the interview sample, not as infrastructure measurements for Libya.

Production skill is also multidimensional. Creators need interviewing, scripting, sound capture, editing, rights awareness, metadata preparation, accessibility practices and audience analytics. Visual production may add lighting, camera operation and short-form video editing. A training programme that addresses only microphone technique would therefore leave major gaps.

The practical priority is to strengthen repeatable workflows: preproduction planning, sound checks, backup recording, consistent naming, release schedules and simple measurement of episode performance. These steps may improve reliability even when budgets remain limited, although their effects have not been evaluated by the original study.

14. Findings VII: guests, legitimacy and visibility

Interviewees described difficulty contacting high-profile guests, delayed responses and requests for compensation. Guest access matters because conversational formats often depend on the availability of people with specialised knowledge, public recognition or distinctive experiences. The thesis also identifies a legitimacy challenge: some potential audience members interpret podcasting as an ordinary YouTube interview rather than as a distinct editorial format. This confusion is not necessarily a defect in the audience. Podcasting itself is a hybrid medium, and creators increasingly employ video-based forms.

The more consequential issue is whether creators can communicate what audiences should expect: a recognisable series, coherent topic, consistent presentation and clear editorial purpose. In a crowded digital environment, these markers can support identification without requiring a rigid distinction between audio and video.

Interview evidence indicates that producers promote full episodes using shorter social-media excerpts. This suggests a two-stage distribution strategy: initial discovery through brief platform-native material followed by longer engagement with the complete episode. Whether this strategy produces loyal listeners remains an open empirical question.

15. Integrating audience and producer evidence

The cross-source synthesis is deliberately asymmetric: the survey describes the responses of an online convenience sample, whereas interviews provide explanatory accounts from six creators. Agreement between them strengthens the plausibility of an interpretation but does not establish causation or population-wide prevalence.

The survey and interviews are most informative when read together. Survey results highlight the prominence of general-purpose platforms; interviews explain why creators devote attention to video and short excerpts. Survey responses express perceived educational and cultural value; interviews show the financial and organisational conditions under which such content must be produced.

The resulting account is neither technological optimism nor cultural pessimism. Libya's podcast environment offers opportunities for locally relevant discussion, but opportunity does not guarantee continuity. Producers need to convert sporadic visibility into recurring engagement while maintaining editorial quality under material constraints.

A useful example is the prominence of YouTube in the survey alongside interview accounts of promotion through video excerpts. These observations are compatible with a discovery pathway in which short-form visibility helps audiences find longer episodes. However, the research did not track click-through rates or repeat listening, so it cannot demonstrate that this pathway converts exposure into sustained engagement. Likewise, reported financial strain may help

explain irregular output, but the original study did not measure the magnitude of this relationship.

Three relationships stand out. First, discoverability is partly external to the podcast: algorithmic feeds and video platforms shape encounters. Second, sustainability depends on labour and resources that are not visible to the listener. Third, legitimacy is negotiated through expectations about what counts as a podcast and why it merits attention.

These relationships help explain why familiarity with podcasts can coexist with irregular consumption and why promising programmes may struggle to maintain publication. The explanation is interpretive and provisional; it should be tested through longitudinal audience data and producer-level economic information.

16. Discussion: an emerging ecosystem

Comparative podcast scholarship often emphasises expansion, professionalisation and new audio storytelling conventions (Bonini, 2015; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). The Libyan evidence complicates any assumption that such developments proceed in the same sequence across contexts. Recognition and experimentation may develop before a dependable commercial or institutional infrastructure.

The observed reliance on YouTube and social platforms should not be treated simply as a failure to adopt dedicated podcast applications. In an emerging ecosystem, creators reasonably distribute content where audiences already spend time. The trade-off is exposure to platform rules, unstable discovery and pressure to produce visual material.

The analytical framework extends existing podcast scholarship in a limited but meaningful way. Berry (2006, 2016) and Bottomley (2015) help clarify why podcasting should not be reduced to digital radio; Bonini (2015) describes commercial and professional development in a different market context; and Spinelli and Dann (2019) illuminate storytelling and audience relationships. The Libyan material draws attention to an additional practical conjunction: audience discovery may rely on general-purpose video platforms precisely when independent creators lack the resources to establish more autonomous distribution. This is a context-specific proposition for future testing, not a universal model of podcast development.

It is also useful to distinguish growth in the number of programmes from the development of a culture. A culture entails recurrent production, recognisable expectations, audience practices, shared skills and some mechanisms of support. The original thesis documents elements of this process but cannot establish its complete scale.

For communication research, the Libyan case therefore encourages a relational approach. The question is not only whether podcasts are popular but how technological affordances, cultural expectations and producer resources interact. Such an approach can guide future comparative studies of podcasting in under-researched media settings.

17. Practical implications

Recommendations below are derived from the identified constraints rather than tested interventions. They should be treated as feasible directions for practice and evaluation, not as evidence that any particular strategy will increase listening or revenue.

For creators, a workable distribution strategy should connect full episodes with concise promotional excerpts while maintaining a clear identity for the series. Consistent titles, episode descriptions, guest information and publishing routines can help audiences recognise and return to content across platforms.

For universities and training organisations, the findings suggest value in practice-based instruction that combines editorial development, interviewing, sound production, digital publishing, ethics and basic analytics. Training should include low-cost workflows and realistic production planning rather than presuming access to professional studios.

PODCAST CULTURE IN LIBYA: AUDIENCE PRACTICES, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS, AND PLATFORM DEPENDENCE

For media institutions and potential sponsors, support can be structured around shared facilities, small grants and transparent agreements protecting editorial autonomy. A programme that depends entirely on one person's resources is vulnerable to interruptions; diversified forms of support may reduce that vulnerability.

For researchers, priority should be given to representative audience sampling where feasible, verified question denominators, repeated measures of listening behaviour and structured comparison across cities and production genres. Interviews with women producers and a wider range of independent and institutional creators would improve the diversity of perspectives.

18. Limitations, ethics and future research

This analysis is limited by the quality and scope of the original thesis report. The online survey is not nationally representative. Reported percentages for some questions do not reconcile with listed frequencies or the total sample, and the interview-code inconsistency requires verification. The article does not conceal or numerically repair those discrepancies.

Because the article relies on the thesis rather than original response-level data, it cannot perform fresh statistical tests, reconstruct missing categories or verify qualitative saturation. Likewise, it cannot assess whether podcast engagement changed after the 2024–2025 fieldwork period.

Findings should be understood as a historically bounded snapshot.

Future research could distinguish regular audio listening, video podcast viewing, incidental exposure to clips and familiarity with the term “podcast”. It could also compare audience retention across platforms and examine producer costs, revenue, labour time and the effects of platform recommendation systems.

Ethically, the original research and its author must be acknowledged. The present manuscript is explicitly derived from previously collected thesis evidence. No additional interview consent or new fieldwork is asserted. Any journal submission should follow its policy for thesis-derived publications and confirm the relevant rights and research-ethics requirements.

19. Conclusion

The evidence supports a cautious account of Libyan podcasting as an emerging, culturally meaningful and materially constrained practice. Reported survey findings indicate recognition and perceived value, while interview accounts reveal financial, infrastructural and promotional pressures on creators. The combination explains why growing interest does not necessarily produce a stable publishing ecosystem.

The article's central argument is that podcast development must be assessed across audience discovery, producer sustainability and cultural legitimacy. In Libya these dimensions are closely linked: audiences frequently encounter content through video and social platforms; producers adapt their strategies accordingly; and both groups negotiate the meaning of podcasting within an evolving digital environment.

This interpretation offers a focused contribution to the study of digital audio beyond mature podcast markets. It also sets clear boundaries for what the evidence can establish. Neither national audience penetration nor causal social effects can be inferred from the available material.

Progress will require stronger empirical measurement and practical support for creators. The original dataset and coding records would allow future verification of denominators and interview identifiers. The present analysis acknowledges these unresolved reporting limits and transparently identifies its derivation from the 2025 thesis.

***PODCAST CULTURE IN LIBYA: AUDIENCE PRACTICES, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS,
AND PLATFORM DEPENDENCE***

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