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Kateřina Vrzalíková & Jaroslav Světlík

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FROM NICHE TO MAINSTREAM: A MAPPING REVIEW OF THE GROWTH IN PODCASTING RESEARCH

KATEŘINA VRZALÍKOVÁ & JAROSLAV SVĚTLÍK

Metropolitan University Prague & Paneuropean University Prague

ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of podcasting research over the past two decades (2004 - January 2024) based on data retrieved from the Web of Science database. Through a mapping review, it documents how academic interest in podcasts has grown from a niche topic into a significant area of media and communication studies. The study identifies thematic shifts, influential publications, and methodological approaches that have shaped this field. It also highlights the interdisciplinary expansion of podcast research into areas such as education, health communication, and cultural production. The outcomes of this analysis both provide a foundation for future studies and open discussion on the role of podcasts in contemporary media and academic discourse.

KEYWORDS

podcasting • mapping review • media studies • digital audio media • research trends • bibliometric analysis • content analysis • new media • podcast research

INTRODUCTION

Podcast. A term that some audiences may already feel overexposed to, while others remain unfamiliar with. There are many definitions, yet the concept itself remains marked by ambiguity and debate. Dario Llinares, Neil Fox, and Richard Berry describe podcasting as a new sound medium that opens up new possibilities for creating engaging conversations that listeners find valuable. It is a hybrid, combining ideas, sound and text (Llinares et al., 2018). Such conceptual uncertainty is not unusual in the study of emerging media: as Couldry and Hepp (2017, 7–8) argue, the way a medium is defined strongly shapes the analytical approaches applied to it. In the case of podcasting, this lack of consensus has influenced both its perception by audiences and the diversity of research perspectives.

The first contribution indexed in Web of Science that placed podcasting at the center of academic interest was written by Nadiro A. Hira and was titled *Podcasting - From TV to MP3*. It was published in 2005 as editorial material in the American magazine *FORTUNE* (Hira, 2005). Since then, the interest of the scientific community has been gradually increasing. From only 13 contributions in 2005, the number rose to 234 in 2023, with the peak so far in 2022 (312). In January 2024 podcasts marked the 20th anniversary of their rise, which changed the way content is consumed and stories are shared. On this occasion, a systematic overview of academic activity in this field is appropriate. It may serve as a basis for a more comprehensive summary once research results from 2025 become available, representing two full decades of podcast scholarship. Scientists have examined podcasts in connection with entrepreneurship, education, religion, philosophy, politics, culture, and healthcare. This mapping review provides an overview of the annual number of publications, examined topics, influential authors, and major research trends in podcast scholarship. The aim of the study is twofold: first, to document the development of podcast research across the past two decades, and second, to identify emerging trends that may guide and inspire future studies.

New media formats such as podcasting often result in the creation of new communication patterns and cultural practices. As Manovich (2002, p. 19) argues, the development of media technologies fundamentally reshaped production, distribution, and communication, much like the invention of the printing press transformed cultural paradigms. This new revolution, characterized by the digitalization and democratization of media production and consumption, underscores the need to situate such transformations within the broader field of media studies (Lister et al., 2009, p. 307). McLuhan (2000, p. 352) similarly stresses that cultural and communicative changes caused by media innovations cannot be fully understood

without considering their impact on social structures and human thought. Within this framework, podcasting can be seen not only as a reflection of cultural transformation but also as an active force shaping contemporary communication and meaning-making. Moreover, Krippendorff (2019, p. 361) emphasizes that rigorous content analysis is necessary to validate such changes, as research must accurately reflect the world it seeks to describe. Podcasts are still developing and therefore research methods and approaches for their study must also continue to evolve. The findings presented in this mapping review not only map the development of podcast scholarship but also provide a foundation for further studies and guidance within the rapidly changing landscape of new media.

1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The goal of this mapping review is to identify research trends in the analysis of podcasting and the most influential works within the field. The data were collected from the Web of Science database on January 25th, 2024. Web of Science was chosen because it represents one of the most widely used and publicly available multidisciplinary citation indexes, which ensures comparability, verifiability, and transparency of results. However, this reliance also introduces limitations, as relevant studies indexed in other databases (such as Scopus or regional citation indexes) may not have been included, particularly those published in languages with less widespread circulation. The search keywords were: “podcast”, “podcasts”, “podcasting” (thus allintitle: podcasting OR podcast OR podcasts), applied to the search field for article titles with at least one of these terms and a publication date within 2004 - January 2024. Initially, a total of 2150 documents were obtained, covering a wide range of publication types. Within the framework of preliminary data processing, a series of filters was implemented to remove unwanted records with the goal of making the research sample more relevant and efficient. Specifically, records of conference contributions, books, film reviews, newspaper articles, letters, conference abstracts, book reviews, editorial materials, and series of conference proceedings were excluded from the analysis. This step allowed us to focus exclusively on original research journal articles, in line with the study’s aim of analysing the development and contemporary trends within the field. Moreover, all contributions that did not present authors’ names were eliminated from the dataset, to ensure verifiability and the scholarly reliability of the included data. After the application of these criteria, the final sample consisted of 957 materials. There were 842 articles in English, 55 in Spanish, 31 in Portuguese, 9 in German, 7 in Russian, 5 in French, 2 in Italian, 2 in Turkish, and one each in Bulgarian, Chinese, Polish, and Ukrainian. The

average number of pages was 13. Consequently, the publications were sorted according to year of publication, and an arithmetic mean of the number of citations was calculated.

These articles were exported in the form of “Export Records to Tab Delimited File - Full Record and Cited References”, gradually according to year of publication, and subsequently uploaded to the VOSviewer software for data visualization. For the analysis, the options “Create a map based on bibliographic data” and “Read data from bibliographic database files: Web of Science” were selected, with citation used as the type of analysis and documents as the counting method. A total of 917 documents complied with the set limits. Subsequently, the visualization of the citation network was carried out in VOSviewer. This analysis revealed the structure and dynamics of the scientific community within this field, while also identifying key publications and authors with the strongest influence on the development of the field. The visualization further enabled the division of research articles into several thematic clusters corresponding to the main research directions. A detailed thematic analysis of these clusters was then conducted. The main areas of interest identified included: the development of podcasting as a medium, analyses of podcasting platforms, and the use of podcasts in education and communication. For each cluster, central publications with a high citation rate were identified and analysed in terms of their influence on the research field. The final phase of the analysis consisted of a temporal analysis of trends, which tracked the dynamics of publications and citations from 2004 up to January 2024. This step enabled the identification of periods of significant increase or decrease in research interest and provided insights into the long-term development of this field.

2. RESULTS

On the basis of the data analysis concerning the distribution of scientific publications focused on podcasting by year of publication (Table 1), several key trends can be identified. The data clearly demonstrate a growing academic interest in this topic. While no articles were published in 2004, the year of the creation of podcast technology, the first two publications appeared in 2005 with an average of 1.5 citations per article. From that year onward, a steady increase is evident both in the number of publications and in average citations, underscoring the growing relevance of research in this field. For example, in 2007, 22 articles were published with an average of 33.64 citations and a total of 740 citations. This upward trajectory continued until 2010, when 46 articles were published, with an average of 28.78 citations and a total of 1,324 citations. This peak suggests that particularly influential works were published during this period, shaping subse-

quent research. Between 2011 and 2014, the data indicate fluctuations in both the number of publications and the average number of citations. For instance, in 2011, 37 articles were published with an average of 18,89 citations and a total of 699 citations. The decline in average citations per article during this period may indicate shifts in research focus or the nature of the published works. From 2015 to 2019, the number of publications gradually increased—for example, in 2019, 53 articles were published with an average of 12,83 citations and a total of 680 citations. This steady growth confirms that podcast research had become an established academic field. The years 2020 to 2024 brought a sharp increase in the number of publications, accompanied, however, by a decrease in average citations per article. In 2021, for instance, 95 articles were published, but the average citations dropped to 3.69. The trend continued in 2023, when 161 articles were published with an average of only 0,72 citations per article. This decline may be attributed to several factors, including possible saturation of the research field, changes in quality or focus, and above all the short time window available for newer publications to accumulate citations. The data for 2024 show particularly low values, which is explained by the fact that the dataset covers only January 2024. No conclusive statements about this year can therefore be made. In addition to average citation counts, the data also show a wide dispersion: for instance, in 2007, the most cited article reached 229 citations while the least cited had none, with a median of 7 citations. This suggests that a small number of highly influential papers strongly shaped the overall averages.

Table 1: Yearly number of publications on podcasting and descriptive citation statistics (2005 - 2024). Source: Authors' processing

Publication Year	count	mean	median	max
2005	2,00	1,50	1,50	3,00
2006	8,00	5,50	2,50	20,00
2007	23,00	25,35	8,00	229,00
2008	21,00	23,38	9,00	121,00
2009	46,00	27,54	12,50	146,00
2010	47,00	22,60	8,00	143,00
2011	38,00	13,84	8,00	74,00
2012	32,00	23,94	14,50	134,00
2013	31,00	11,03	8,00	48,00
2014	27,00	18,07	9,00	195,00
2015	39,00	18,10	10,00	96,00
2016	42,00	9,74	6,50	48,00
2017	41,00	11,05	5,00	56,00

Publication Year	count	mean	median	max
2018	33,00	9,58	7,00	48,00
2019	54,00	10,98	4,50	96,00
2020	67,00	6,08	3,00	52,00
2021	96,00	3,26	2,00	18,00
2022	145,00	2,44	1,00	41,00
2023	162,00	0,69	0,00	14,00
2024	2,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

From the outputs of the analysis of the geographic distribution of publications on podcast topics, it is apparent that there are significant differences in the number of published articles among particular cities. Abingdon shows the highest number of publications - 184 in total. This dominance is not due to Abingdon itself as a research hub, but rather to the presence of Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis Ltd, which publishes a large share of articles in this field. In second place is New York with 74 publications. This result is closely linked to the publishing activity of SAGE Publications Inc, one of the leading academic publishers headquartered in the city. London follows with 68 publications. Its high position is largely explained by the strong publishing activity of Wiley, which contributes significantly to podcast-related research dissemination. The cities of Hoboken and Thousand Oaks took fourth and fifth place with 46 and 44 publications. These outputs correspond mainly to the presence of Springer in Hoboken and Elsevier Science Inc. in Thousand Oaks, illustrating that bibliometric patterns often reflect the location of major publishing houses rather than local research activity itself.

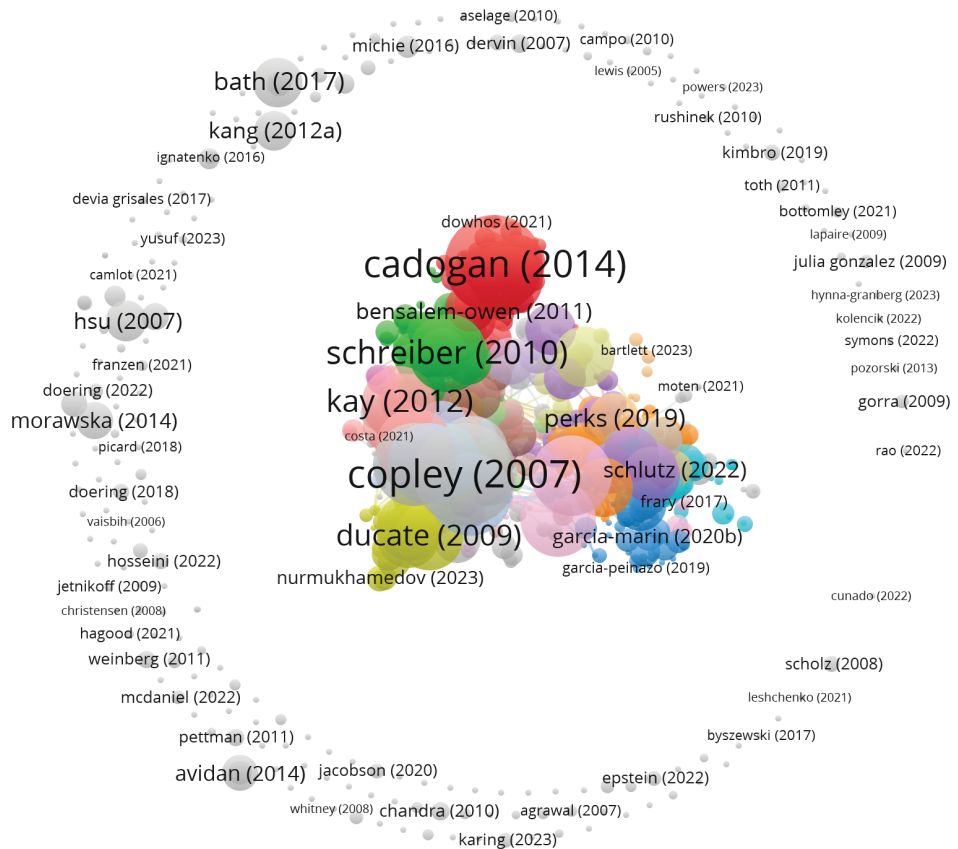
When analysing the information on the top publishers of scientific journals, which published articles focused on the podcasting issues during the examined period, it is apparent that there is a considerable concentration of publications at several key players on the publishing market. The most important publisher is Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis Ltd, which accounts for 169 published articles. This dominance is partly linked to journals such as *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* and *Communication Education*, which regularly publish podcast-related research. The second place is shared by SAGE Publications Inc. and Wiley, each with 44 publications. These publishers disseminate research on podcasts mainly through journals such as *Journalism (SAGE)* and *International Journal of Communication (Wiley)*. Their position reflects the broad disciplinary coverage of their journal portfolios. Springer and Elsevier follow with 31 publications each. Their contribution is somewhat smaller, yet significant, particularly in journals addressing education, technology, and ap-

plied communication research. This suggests that podcast-related scholarship is also expanding beyond traditional communication and media journals into interdisciplinary outlets. Overall, publications on podcasts are strongly concentrated among a small number of large international publishers. This concentration reflects not only their specialization and editorial policies but also the central role of their journals in shaping the scholarly discourse on digital audio media.

The trendy topic in the last concluded year (2023) was particularly the importance of the podcast as a tool in education, both in formal education (for example, university courses and professional training) and in informal contexts. Articles such as *Student-Produced Podcasts as a Teaching and Learning Tool* and *Pod Save IR: Podcasts as Effective Assignments in the International Relations Classroom* demonstrate how podcasts can serve as an effective didactic instrument supporting active learning and increasing involvement of students. These articles were among the most cited papers in 2023, reflecting the strong impact of educational research on the overall bibliometric profile of that year. Several studies published in 2023 deal with the use of podcasts as a means for increasing awareness and communication on health and social topics. Examples include *GeroCast: Using Podcasting to Deliver Living Cases in Gerontology Education* and *A New Podcast for Reducing Stigma against People Living with Complex Mental Health Issues: Co-design Study*. Both were published in journals with strong citation activity in 2023, underlining the role of podcasting as a public health communication tool. This direction of research implies the increasing importance of podcasts as a tool for public health and social justice. Other publications focus on the analysis of specific genres of podcasts, such as true crime, and their influence on listeners. Studies such as *True Crime Podcasts in Australia: Examining Listening Patterns and Listener Perceptions* and *My Favourite Genre is Missing People: Exploring How Listeners Experience True Crime Podcasts in Australia* illustrate the social impact of popular podcast genres. These works, though less cited than educational and health-related papers, contribute to debates about ethics, media consumption, and empathy. Podcasts are also used in the area of scientific communication and the popularization of science. Articles such as *The Use of Podcasts for Science Dissemination in Science Teaching* and *Podcasting as a Tool for Crisis Communications: The Story of Health on Call* demonstrate how podcasts can serve as an efficient tool for the dissemination of scientific knowledge to the general public. This trend is particularly relevant within the context of the growing need to increase scientific literacy and to provide the public with trustworthy information in critical situations such as the COVID-19 pan-

dem. Last but not least, some studies focus on technical and methodological aspects of podcasts, such as Artificial Intelligence Trend Analysis on Healthcare Podcasts Using Topic Modelling and Sentiment Analysis: A Data-Driven Approach. This study illustrates how advanced computational techniques, namely artificial intelligence, are increasingly applied to podcast content. Its interdisciplinary nature connects media studies with data science and health research, signalling new directions for podcast scholarship.

Figure 1: Overall network visualization of citation type of analysis and documents counting method (917 items). Source: Authors' processing, access to the interactive display <https://tinyurl.com/2c22ft8x>



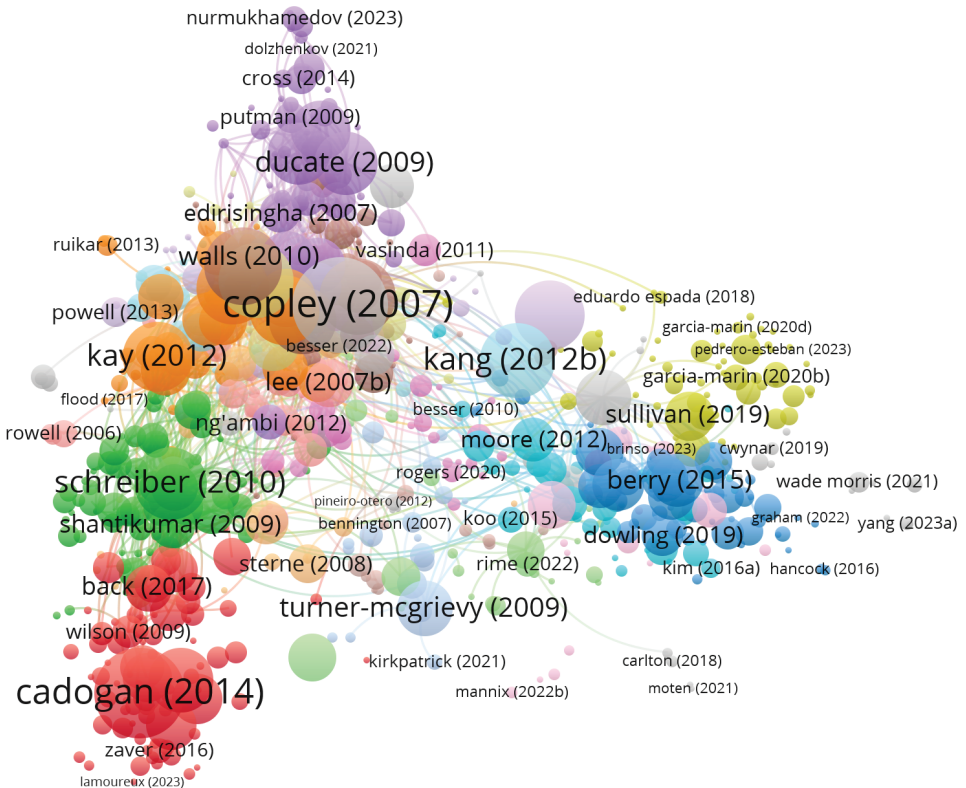
The chart presented above introduces the complex network of citation rate among scientific publications that reveals the structure and dynamics of the scientific community in the area. The main cluster in the middle of the

picture includes key publications such as Cadogan (2014) in the category Emergency Medicine with 195 citations, Copley (2007) in the category Education & Educational Research with 229 citations, Schreiber (2010) in the categories Education & Educational Research; Linguistics with 123 citations, and Kay (2012) in the categories Computer Science, Interdisciplinary Applications; Education & Educational Research with 115 citations which belong among the most highly cited articles in the dataset. Their central position in the network demonstrates how podcast research has been shaped not only by media and communication studies but also by adjacent fields such as medicine, linguistics, and computer science. This interdisciplinarity is one of the defining features of podcast scholarship. The colourful clusters represent distinct thematic areas: for example, education-oriented studies cluster together, health communication forms another group, and technology-focused works (such as Kay 2012) create a separate branch. The density of points around the central nodes indicates that these works are repeatedly cited across clusters, functioning as bridges between disciplines. By contrast, isolated points on the map represent more specialized or niche studies. While these articles may not be highly cited, they broaden the thematic scope of the field and may serve as starting points for future, more focused research directions.

The specification of the years of issuing publications enables us to follow the development of the research in time and to identify emerging trends within the framework of this scientific field. The concentration of newer years in certain clusters may indicate current or emerging trends within the field, while older publications, which are still central and strongly cited, indicate a long-term influence of these works. Cadogan's publication (2014) is placed in the centre of a big cluster, with 195 citations. This indicates that since its publishing in 2014 it has been playing a crucial role within the area of Emergency Medicine. This article apparently initiated or influenced subsequent research, which proves its permanent influence. Copley (2007) with 229 citations, and Ducate and Lomicka (2009) with 99 citations, also occupy an important place in their categories (Education & Educational Research and Linguistics). This indicates a long-term impact of these publications on their fields. Their permanent presence in the network indicates that the research and discussion they initiated have remained relevant many years after their publication. Around the publications such as Kay (2012) with 115 citations, and Schreiber (2010) with 123 citations, we can observe a concentration of other points in the following years after their publication. This may indicate that these works opened new research directions or reinforced existing trends within areas such as Computer Science and Education. Kay (2012) is important in the categories Computer

Science, Interdisciplinary Applications and Education & Educational Research, which indicates the growing importance of an interdisciplinary approach in these fields, particularly in the applications of informatics in education. We can observe that some areas, such as Emergency Medicine, gained more attention after 2014, probably due to important publications such as Cadogan (2014).

Figure 2: Network visualization of citation type of analysis and documents counting method of the largest set of connected items (692 items). Source: Authors' processing, access to the interactive display <https://tinyurl.com/24zmnmq>



A closer visualisation of the main cluster and the relations among scientific publications shows that the work depicted in red titled Free Open Access Meducation (FOAM): the rise of emergency medicine and critical care blogs and podcasts (2002-2013) by Mile Cadogan etc. (2014) that was - within the category Emergency Medicine in the Web of Science - cited 199

times in all databases has a crucial influence, which is apparent from its central position and the size of the node. This article is probably a key contribution that initiated or significantly influenced the following research within the area of urgent medicine, as indicated by the dense clustering of related publications around it. The presence of other authors and works in the vicinity of the work Mike Cadogan et al. (2014) shows a strong network of scientists who either collaborated on this topic or further developed its ideas. This work is not only a milestone within the area but it also points at its interdisciplinary reach, which proves its importance for contemporary scientific discourse in urgent medicine. This study has inspired a number of other publications that focused on the development and application of FOAM in practice. The connection such as the one between Riddell (2020) and Thom (2015) indicates that the FOAM concept evolved and spread into other areas of urgent medicine and critical care. These follow-up studies not only spread the original ideas but also contributed to the further improvement of methodologies and practices in health professional education and thus they consolidated the importance of FOAM as one of the major trends in modern medical care. The interconnection with newer publications shows that the work by Cadogan et al. (2014) has been still influencing contemporary research and that it inspires new directions in education and communication in medicine. For example, the publications by Chin (2017) and Riddell (2020) show that FOAM not only continues in its development but it also adapts and expands into other contexts and disciplines. This continuing influence shows the increasing importance and permanent relevance of FOAM within the framework of education and practice in urgent medicine, which makes the work by Cadogan et al. (2014) an indispensable part of the discourse in this area.

In the orange part of the visualisation, where the articles *Podcasting in higher education: What are the implications for teaching and learning?* by Lonn (2009) (85 citations, Internet and Higher Education) and *Podcasting: A new technological tool to facilitate good practise in higher education* by Fernandez et al. (2009) (130 citations, Computers & Education) dominate. Their influence on the area of university education, with a strong emphasis on the integration of technologies - particularly in the category Computer Science - is fundamental. Both articles occupy central positions in the visualisation, which confirms their importance and high citation rate in academic literature. They serve as key reference points for following research in the area of digital learning tools. These works inspired further research focused on the efficiency of podcasts in various learning tools, which is apparent from their interconnection with a number of other important publications such as Heilesen (2010) (138 citations, Computers &

Education) and Copley (2007) (229 citations, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*). Such interconnection points at widespread acceptance of podcasting as an effective tool for the support of education goals and its adaptability across disciplines. The link with publications such as Merhi (2015) (62 citations, *Computers & Education*) and Swan (2011) (11 citations, *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*) demonstrates that the conclusions of these studies were also implemented in other education contexts, which strengthened the importance of podcasting as a key tool for innovation in education.

The violet part of the visualisation, where the articles *Creative use of podcasting in higher education and its effects on competitive agency* by Lazzari (2009) (79 citations, *Computers & Education*) and *Using podcasts to replace lecture: Effects on student achievement* by O'Bannon et al. (2011) (74 citations, *Computers & Education*) dominate. These represent key nodes within the framework of categories *Computer Science and Education & Educational Research*. These studies play an essential role in the discourse on the use of podcasting within university education, particularly relating to its influence on learning results and the competitiveness of students. Lazzari (2009) focuses on the creative use of podcasts and their impact on the competitiveness of students, while O'Bannon (2011) deals with replacing traditional lectures with podcasts and their influence on reaching students. These studies laid the foundations for a wider examination of podcast efficiency in education, particularly in technical and pedagogical disciplines. The interconnection of these works with other studies such as Ducate (2009) (99 citations, *Language Learning & Technology*) and Rosell-Aguilar (2013a) (28 citations, *Language Learning & Technology*) indicates that their conclusions were widely accepted and developed further within various educational contexts. In addition, Rosell-Aguilar (2013b) (8 citations, *Computers & Education*) illustrates how podcast research expanded into broader discussions of language learning technologies. From the visualization is apparent that the works by Lazzari (2009) and O'Bannon (2011) stimulated new trends in digital learning, focused on increasing the competitiveness of students and improving educational results. The emerging cluster around these studies reveals an increasing interest in the use of podcasts as not only a supplement to traditional education methods but also as a main tool for learning. These trends show the increasing importance of digital technologies in the academic environment and their potential to transform traditional teaching methods.

In the grey part of the visualisation, where the articles *Audio and video podcasts of lectures for campus-based students: production and evaluation of student use* by Copley (2007) (229 citations, *Innovations in Education*

and Teaching International) and Examining the Motives of Podcast Users by McClung (2010) (72 citations, *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*) dominate, we can observe their essential influence in the category Communication. These studies focus on the use of podcasts in university education and on motives that guide users to use these digital tools and therefore they contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of podcasting in modern communication and learning. The interdisciplinary interconnection of these works with other studies shows that their influence goes beyond the area of education and communication. The interconnection with publications such as Sullivan (2019) (53 citations, *Social Media + Society*) and Garcia-Marin (2022) (3 citations, *Social Sciences-Basel*) shows that podcasting was widely accepted and adapted in various disciplines, which supports its increasing importance as a tool for communication and learning.

In the khaki part of the visualisation, where the article *The Platforms of Podcasting: Past and Present* by Sullivan (2019) (53 citations, *Social Media + Society*) in the category Communication dominates, we can observe how this article made a significant contribution to understanding the evolution and contemporary status of podcast platforms. Sullivan's work occupies a central position in this part of the visualisation, which indicates its high rate of citation and the influence in academic discourse on podcasting as a media and communication tool. The article by Sullivan (2019) is located in the centre of a density interconnected cluster, which indicates that it had become a key reference point for further research in the area of podcast platforms. This article maps the history of podcasting, analyses the development of platforms and examines how these platforms have developed from a tool for alternative distribution of media to an important communication means with a wide reach. Sullivan's work is often cited and is strongly connected with other studies, which proves its fundamental influence on understanding the dynamics and importance of podcast platforms in modern communication. The interconnection with other publications within the khaki area of the visualisation such as Garcia-Marin (2020d) (3 citations, *Profesional de la Información*) and Terol (2021) (16 citations, *Historia y Comunicación Social*) shows that Sullivan's work has inspired a wide range of research focused on various aspects of communication technologies and their impact on society.

In the dark-blue part of the visualisation, where articles related to podcasting as a medium and its development dominate, are the key nodes represented by publications that focus on an in-depth analysis of podcasting within the framework of the category Communication. Specifically, they are the articles *Why Pod? Further Explorations of the Motivations for Independent Podcasting* by Markman (2014) (41 citations, *Journal of Radio*

& Audio Media), *Everything Old is New Again: Podcasting as Radio's Revival* by Markman (2015) (36 citations, *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*), *A Golden Age of Podcasting? Evaluating Serial in the Context of Podcast Histories* by Berry (2015) (217 citations, *Radio Journal*), *Podcasting: A Decade in the Life of a 'New' Audio Medium: Introduction* by Bottomley (2015a) (126 citations, *Radio Journal*), *Part of the Establishment: Reflecting on 10 Years of Podcasting as an Audio Medium* by Berry (2016) (163 citations, *Convergence*) and *Immersive Audio Storytelling: Podcasting and Serial Documentary in the Digital Publishing Industry* by Dowling (2019) (39 citations, *Radio Journal*). These studies represent crucial points of the discourse on podcasting as an established media of important cultural and communication impact. Berry's articles from 2015 and 2016, together with Bottomley's publication in 2015, play a central role in this part of the visualisation, whereas they reflect the importance of podcasting as a newly established audio medium that achieved widespread recognition and acceptance. Berry's (2015) study focuses on the evaluation of the phenomenon of the podcast *Serial* within the historical context of podcasting. This enables a better understanding of the development and popularity of this medium. His following publication from 2016 extends this analysis by reflecting on ten years of podcasting as an important audio medium that had gradually become a part of a wider media sphere. Bottomley's work of 2015 examines the decade of podcasting, while it focuses on its transformation from a novelty into an established medium. Markman's studies of 2014 and 2015 focus more profoundly on the motivations for independent podcasting and on podcasting as a renewal of the radio in the digital age. In this way, these studies provide a complex analysis of how podcasting influences current media practice and how it serves as a tool for personal expression and cultural production. The interdisciplinary connection of these studies with other research indicates that the influence of podcasting impacts various areas, from media studies to cultural analysis and digital technologies. For example, Dowling's work of 2019 focuses on immersive audio storytelling and its role in digital publishing and thus it expands the discussion of podcasting as a tool for digital narratives and documentary works. This interconnection shows how podcasting not only serves as a medium for the dissemination of information but also as a platform for innovative and experimental forms of storytelling. The clusters of connected studies indicate an increasing interest in the analysis of podcasting not only as a medium but also as a cultural phenomenon that reflects wider social changes and technological innovations. Their research not only expanded our understanding of podcasting as an audio medium but it also contributed to a wider debate on its role in contemporary culture and digital technologies.

It is also important to highlight the point of pale blue, where the article by Kang (2012b), *Effects of podcast tours on tourist experiences in a national park* (26 citations, Tourism Management), in categories Environmental Sciences & Ecology; Social Sciences - Other Topics; Business & Economics is the most crucial. Furthermore, the biggest pink point is in place of the article by Garcia-Marin (2022), *New Media, New Practices? A Study of the First Spanish Podcast Community and Its Pioneers* (13 citations, International Journal of Communication) in the category Social Sciences - Other Topics. Eventually, the biggest brown point is a representation of the article by Hew (2009), *Use of audio podcast in K-12 and higher education: a review of research topics and methodologies* (622 citations, Educational Research Review) in the category Education & Educational Research.

These trends indicate that podcasts will continue to play a key role in shaping the media landscape and in the development of new methods of communication and education in the digital age. Overall, the results of the analysis highlight several important trends within podcast research. First, the dominance of English-language publications (842 articles) clearly demonstrates the prevalence of anglophone academic production, while only a limited number of studies were published in other languages (e.g., 55 in Spanish, 31 in Portuguese). This linguistic imbalance suggests that research on podcasting is strongly shaped by Western perspectives, leaving other regional and cultural contexts underrepresented. At the same time, the dominance of English can also be explained by its role as the *lingua franca* of science and by the fact that the majority of journals indexed in the Web of Science are published in English, which reinforces its prevalence in international research outputs. Second, the concentration of publications within a few key publishers (Routledge, Sage, Wiley, Springer, Elsevier) and journals reflects the specialization of these institutions in communication, media, and education, which strengthens their role as gatekeepers of academic discourse on podcasts. Third, the thematic trends identified in recent years – particularly the use of podcasts in education, healthcare communication, true crime genres, and the integration of artificial intelligence in analysis – indicate that podcasting has become a firmly established interdisciplinary research field. Finally, the observed geographic and institutional concentration raises questions about inclusivity and diversity of perspectives, while at the same time providing a clear map of leading centres and directions in podcast scholarship.

DISCUSSION

The findings about the geographical concentration of scientific publications in several selected cities, particularly in Abingdon (USA), raise

questions about the underlying factors contributing to this dominance. One possible explanation is the presence of major academic institutions with a strong focus on digital media research; another is the geographic proximity of influential publishing houses specialized in media and communication studies. Importantly, this concentration also highlights the imbalance between global centres of knowledge production and under-represented regions, which may shape the overall direction of podcast scholarship in ways that privilege Western academic contexts. Further research should therefore investigate the interplay between institutional infrastructures, funding ecosystems, and the location of publishing houses, and whether similar patterns appear across other fields of media and communication research.

The dominance of several main publishers, particularly Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis Ltd, demonstrates that podcast research is strongly shaped by a relatively small group of gatekeeping institutions. While this dominance can reflect specialization and expertise in media and communication studies, it also raises concerns about the diversity and plurality of scientific discourse. The concentration of output in a handful of publishers may restrict opportunities for alternative voices, regional perspectives, or interdisciplinary approaches that do not align with the editorial priorities of these dominant outlets. Further analysis could examine whether this structure limits innovation and inclusivity, and how open access or emerging regional journals might provide alternative pathways for disseminating knowledge. The time analysis of publications revealed not only an increasing number of articles but a decreasing average number of citations per article in the last years. This pattern may indicate phenomena such as market saturation, fragmentation of citation practices, or shifting research quality and focus. With the growing volume of publications, citations are likely dispersed across a wider pool of works, reducing the average impact per article. Such developments should be closely monitored, as they may signal a shift in the dynamics of academic influence: the field may be broadening but simultaneously losing its concentrated impact. Understanding whether this points to diversification or dilution of research is crucial both for authors seeking visibility and for publishers curating quality scholarship.

Within the framework of bibliographical analysis carried out by the software VOSviewer, the key network of citations among scientific publications was identified. The network analysis reveals not only structural dynamics of the research community but also interdisciplinary overlaps, showing how podcast research connects education, communication, computer science, and medicine. The clustering of publications into the-

matic groups suggests that podcasts function as a boundary object that fosters collaboration across traditionally separate disciplines. The main cluster includes influential publications such as Cadogan (2014), Copley (2007) and Shreiber (2010), which underline the centrality of emergency medicine, education, and linguistics in shaping podcast research. The colourful clustering in the visualisation not only points at thematic variety but also shows the intensity of cross-referencing practices, while isolated nodes highlight more specialized or marginal approaches. This balance between central clusters and isolated studies illustrates both the coherence and fragmentation of the field. The main limitations of this study stem from geographic and linguistic biases in the analysed publications. The overwhelming dominance of English-language works (842 out of 1000+) highlights the prevalence of anglophone academic discourse, while non-English studies (e.g., Spanish or Portuguese) remain marginal. This imbalance may obscure regional perspectives on podcasting, particularly in contexts where the medium has played significant roles in cultural or political communication. Another important limitation is the reliance on a single database (Web of Science). While it provides a rigorous and standardized dataset, it excludes many regionally published or non-indexed works, which could lead to an incomplete picture of podcast research globally.

Future research should therefore integrate multiple databases (e.g., Scopus, Google Scholar) and actively incorporate non-English-language studies to achieve more inclusive results. Additionally, deeper analysis is needed to understand the institutional and structural factors shaping scientific production, the implications of publisher dominance for diversity, and the long-term trajectories of podcast research across disciplines. Addressing these issues can not only enrich current knowledge in media studies but also provide a broader understanding of digital media's role in shaping modern societies worldwide.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the geographic distribution of publications showed that podcast research is unevenly distributed across global academic centres, with a striking concentration in Abingdon (UK, the location of Routledge/Taylor & Francis) compared to cities such as New York or London. This points less to “natural” centres of expertise and more to the decisive influence of publishing houses and institutional infrastructures in shaping where knowledge is produced and disseminated. Such concentration suggests a structural imbalance that privileges Western academic contexts while underrepresenting perspectives from other regions. The

analysis of publishers then showed that a handful of dominant publishers (Routledge/Taylor & Francis, Sage, Wiley, Springer, Elsevier) serve as the main gatekeepers of podcast scholarship. While their expertise in media and communication explains this dominance, it also raises concerns about inclusivity and the diversity of scholarly voices. This concentration highlights both the benefits of specialization and the risks of limiting innovation and regional perspectives. The time analysis revealed a significant increase in the number of published articles over the years, since 2005 (one year after the emergence of podcasts), showing how podcasts have become an established subject of academic inquiry. However, the decreasing average number of citations per article in recent years points to field fragmentation and possible saturation. This suggests that while the breadth of research is expanding, its concentrated academic impact is becoming more diffuse. The analysis of the scientific articles published in 2023 confirms that podcasts are increasingly used in applied contexts such as education, healthcare communication, and science popularization. This reflects not only the growing interdisciplinary character of podcast research but also its societal relevance: podcasts function as tools for learning, destigmatization, and public communication, with potential to influence both media practice and social change.

The bibliometric analysis carried out with the help of the VOSviewer tool revealed several key trends that shape the development of podcast scholarship. The visualisation of the citation network showed that the field is structured around a small number of highly influential publications (e.g., Cadogan 2014; Copley 2007), particularly in medicine and education, which continue to shape academic discourse. The analysis of clusters in the VOSviewer highlighted the main thematic clusters – education, healthcare, communication/cultural studies – showing how podcast research is simultaneously interdisciplinary and fragmented. The temporal analysis revealed that older, foundational works continue to exert influence, while the rise of newer clusters suggests emerging trends that may redefine the field in the coming years. Taken together, these findings underline both the achievements and limitations of current podcast research: the field is vibrant, interdisciplinary, and increasingly socially relevant, but at the same time unevenly distributed, linguistically biased, and structurally concentrated. Addressing these imbalances – through greater linguistic inclusivity, diversification of publication venues, and engagement with non-Western perspectives – should be a key task for future research. In the rapidly evolving digital media environment, continuous monitoring and critical reflection will be essential for ensuring that podcast scholarship remains both innovative and inclusive.

Kateřina Vrzalíková is a PhD candidate in Media Studies specializing in podcast narrative and the role of sound in storytelling. Her research examines narratological approaches to podcasts, the role of sound in shaping meaning, cross-genre narrative structures, and the representation of political events in audio media, as well as the use of artificial intelligence in podcast production and the broader question of whether podcasts constitute a new media form or a reinterpretation of traditional formats.

Metropolitan University Prague
Faculty of Media Studies
Učňovská 100/1
190 00 Prague 9
CZECH REPUBLIC
ORCID 0000-0002-9734-9297
E-mail: vrzak2ax@student.mup.cz

Jaroslav Světlík is a Professor of Marketing at Paneuropean University in Prague, specializing in marketing communication, intercultural communication, and strategic marketing. He has authored numerous academic publications and books focused on communication strategies, consumer behavior, and the marketing performance of enterprises. As a member of the university's Scientific Council, he contributes to the institution's academic development and research agenda. His recent work includes studies on sustainable marketing communication and the strategic behavior of small and medium-sized enterprises. Professor Světlík is also an experienced lecturer, teaching across various marketing and communication disciplines.

Paneuropean University Prague
Spálená 14
110 00 Praha 1
CZECH REPUBLIC
ORCID 0000-0001-9879-538X
E-mail: jaroslav.svetlik@peuni.cz

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