
The Increase Of Podcast Interest Among Gen Z: The Development Of Social Reality Through Podcasts

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the increasing interest of Generation Z in Indonesia in podcasts, and how audiovisual elements - especially on the YouTube platform - shape social reality. The problem raised stems from the increasing consumption of digital media by Gen Z and the shifting function of podcasts which are now not only as entertainment, but also as a means of identity formation and social awareness. The main objective of this research is to analyze the influence of visual elements in podcast content on audience engagement and social perception. The research uses a qualitative approach with a desk study method, with secondary data collected from academic journals, digital reports, and media publications in the last five years. The data was analyzed thematically to identify Gen Z's podcast consumption behavior patterns. The results show that Generation Z prefers podcast content that integrates audio and visual elements, such as those presented on YouTube. Visualizations such as facial expressions, animations, and real-time reactions enhance comprehension while creating deeper emotional engagement. Unlike audio-only platforms, YouTube allows for participatory interaction and community building around podcast content. These features contribute to shaping social narratives and strengthening digital literacy among young audiences. The implications of this research point to the need for content creators and the media industry to prioritize interactive and visually rich podcast formats. In addition, educational institutions and policy makers can utilize podcasts as a medium for digital education, identity formation, and strengthening citizen participation in the digital era.

Keywords: Podcast, Indonesia, Generation Z, Audio-Visual, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of podcasts in Indonesia is increasing among Generation Z with such rapid growth. According to the latest report from Databoks (2021), the number of podcast users in the first half of 2021 reached 356 million people, which increased by 24% compared to the same period in the previous year, namely 286 million users. Meanwhile, data from Kata Data (2024) shows that Indonesia is ranked second as the country with the largest number of podcast listeners in the world. This phenomenon reflects the impact of technological and information developments on changes in the behavior of the younger generation in accessing information, one of which is through online radio broadcasts (We Are Social, 2023).

Generation Z, the majority of whom are between the ages of 20 and 25, are recognized for their technological excellence, multitasking skills and critical views on social issues that

are unique to them. According to research by DailySocial (2018), these teenagers are the leaders among podcast listeners in Indonesia. They see podcasts not only as entertainment but also as a way to learn and expand their knowledge. Podcasts are highly sought after by Generation Z due to the flexibility of the format which allows them to access a wide range of topics including relevant social issues (We Are Social, 2023).

YouTube, as a platform with a huge number of users, has become one of the main mediums for many podcasters. The presence of visual elements such as thumbnails, animations, and data visualizations on YouTube has the potential to increase audience engagement while reinforcing the message. This research aims to explore how these visual elements align with Generation Z's aesthetic preferences and influence the way they perceive podcast content. Through an examination of existing podcast content on YouTube and the behavior of its users, this research seeks to identify the factors that make this platform so attractive to the younger generation (DailySocial, 2018).

Podcasts have also evolved into a means of creating social identities and building communities. Therefore, this research will examine the role of visual elements in podcasts on YouTube in shaping the perceptions and social identity of generation Z. By exploring the interaction between visual elements and audio content, this research is expected to provide deeper insights into how platforms like YouTube create more engaging and memorable listening experiences.

Given the rapid growth of podcast channels on YouTube and the platform's high popularity as an audio-visual medium, this research will focus on how YouTube influences the younger generation in constructing social realities through podcasts. Based on the We Are Social (2023) report, Indonesia has over 139 million YouTube users as of October 2023, placing it as the country with the fourth largest number of YouTube users in the world. This data indicates a huge opportunity for YouTube to reach podcast audiences, particularly generation Z. This research aims to analyze the impact of YouTube's visual elements on the podcast listening experience of generation Z in Indonesia, while comparing their preferences to other platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

Several previous studies have examined the role of podcasts in the formation of knowledge and expression of identity of younger generations. Swiatek (2018) showed that podcasts serve as a medium to build digital communities based on common interests. Purnama and Rahmawati (2021) emphasized the influence of podcasts on increasing digital literacy among Gen Z in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Nielsen (2021) notes that podcasts are increasingly being looked at by industry players as a strategic medium to reach young listeners. However, most of these studies still focus on content or general perceptions of podcasts, and have not specifically explored how visual elements in platforms such as YouTube influence the formation of Gen Z's social reality qualitatively.

This research fills that gap by examining the interaction between visual elements and the experience of listening to podcasts on YouTube, and how it shapes Generation Z's worldview and social identity. The novelty of this research lies in the focus on the audio-visual dimension in podcasts, which has not been widely discussed in previous literature.

The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich the literature on digital media and social construction in the context of Gen Z. Practically, the results can be used by content creators, educators, and the media industry in strategizing audio-visual-based content that is more effective, relevant, and inclusive of the preferences and media consumption patterns of the younger generation.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method to analyze the phenomenon of increasing interest in podcasts among Generation Z and its role in shaping their social reality. The data used is secondary data obtained from various sources, such as journals, reports, articles, books, and other references, which will be critically analyzed to provide in-depth understanding (Cresswell, 2018).

Data collection techniques are carried out through literature studies by accessing digital databases, research reports such as We Are Social, DataReportal, as well as scientific articles and survey reports from trusted institutions such as Nielsen and Pew Research Center.

The data analysis techniques used were thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis, to identify patterns of Generation Z's media consumption preferences, as well as the influence of visual elements on the podcast listening experience. The analysis process was conducted inductively and interpretively to explore the relationship between visual elements, social perceptions, and youth identity formation.

The research method includes a qualitative analysis of relevant literature, especially regarding podcast content on YouTube and reports of Generation Z audience behavior on the platform. Data collection was conducted through a literature study, selecting credible and relevant sources, prioritizing literature published within the last five years and using verified methodologies.

A qualitative approach was chosen as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of this social phenomenon, focusing on descriptive and interpretive analysis. Thematic analysis or content analysis is used to identify patterns of Generation Z's interest in podcasts and the impact of visual elements in the listening experience. The data will be analyzed with a critical approach to understand how podcasts shape Generation Z's social outlook and identity.

The main objective of this research is to understand how podcast consumption contributes to shaping Generation Z's social reality, as well as the impact of audio-visual platforms on their social perception and identity. This research is expected to provide insights for the media industry, content creators, and policy makers to design more relevant and engaging content for young audiences.

The references used in this research come from credible sources and have been systematically verified to support the analysis and relevant theories regarding the role of podcasts in social change in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Media Consumption Theory

Media consumption theory focuses on how individuals choose and access media based on their needs, preferences and social background. In the case of Generation Z, who spend more time on digital media, this theory can help explain the factors that influence their choice of platforms such as podcasts (Rubin, 2009).

Blumler and Katz (1974), in the Uses and Gratifications theory, suggest that people consume media not solely because of external influences, but also because of certain needs that they want to fulfill (Blumler, 1974). For Gen Z, some of these needs include:

- a. The need for quick and relevant information: Podcasts are a top choice because of their flexibility in providing up-to-date information or topics of interest without the distractions of traditional media, such as TV.
- b. The need for entertainment: Podcasts offer a wide array of entertainment options tailored to individual preferences, making media consumption more personalized.
- c. The need for social identity: Gen Z often seeks platforms that allow them to express themselves or interact with communities that share similar interests, and podcasts provide a space for this.

Mass Communication Theory

Mass communication theory explains how the media influences society on a broad scale and how messages delivered through mass media can influence audience attitudes, opinions and behaviors. However, with the advent of digital media used by Gen Z, the role of mass media has changed, involving more participation from the audience, which is reflected in the phenomenon of social media and platforms such as podcasts.

McLuhan (1964), in his famous theory, *The Medium is the Message*, argued that media is not just a channel to convey information, but also shapes the way we think and interact. In the context of digital media, especially podcasts, Gen Z is not only a passive recipient of information, but also plays an active role in selecting, consuming and even influencing the content available on the platform. This creates a more personalized and interactive media experience (McLuhan, 1964).

The Spiral of Silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) is also relevant in describing how Gen Z feels more comfortable consuming certain content, such as podcasts, because they feel that it reflects their views or experiences. They may be reluctant to speak out in public if their views do not align with the majority opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Linkage of Theory and Data

The connection between theory and data is evident in Gen Z's media consumption behavior. Based on Media Consumption Theory, Gen Z tends to choose podcasts because they fulfill their needs for information, entertainment and social identity, as reflected in the data showing the popularity of podcasts as a platform that provides highly relevant and specific topics to the audience (Prensky, 2001).

On the other hand, Mass Communication Theory highlights how platforms such as podcasts have changed the way information is delivered and received, creating a more personal and interactive experience, which Gen Z values highly. The data showing Gen Z's preference for platforms that allow interaction and freedom in choosing content also supports McLuhan's view of how media influences social interaction (Smith, 2018).

Discussion

Growth of Podcasts in Indonesia

Podcasts have experienced significant growth in Indonesia in recent years. According to Data Reportal, in October 2024, Indonesia became the country with the highest proportion of weekly podcast listeners in the world, reaching 40.6% of total internet users (Muhamad, 2024). In addition, a report from We Are Social (2024) shows that 38.2% of internet users in Indonesia listen to podcasts at least once a week, placing Indonesia in second place after Brazil (Annur, 2024). This increase reflects a shift in media consumption patterns among Indonesians, especially the younger generation who increasingly rely on digital platforms to access audio content.

Generation Z's Preference for Podcasts

Generation Z, a group born and raised in the digital age, is known to be highly skilled in utilizing technology. They tend to seek media that is relevant, personalized, and easily accessible as needed. Podcasts are one of their favorite choices because of their flexibility, allowing listeners to enjoy a variety of interesting topics anytime and anywhere.

According to Agustiar (2022), in Indonesia, podcasts are not only available in audio format, but also come in video form. This allows platforms such as YouTube to become the main medium in reaching a wider audience compared to other streaming audio platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcast, and Google Podcast. Generation Z's preference for content that can be accessed through multiple formats and platforms shows how important variety in media presentation is to them.

Furthermore, Generation Z has an interest in media that is flexible, authentic and relevant to their daily lives. Podcasts successfully fulfill this need by presenting narratives that can be tailored to listeners' interests. Research by Edison Research (2021) revealed that more than 40% of global podcast listeners are within the age range of 18-24 years old, most of whom are Generation Z.

Platforms like YouTube and Spotify play a significant role in the spread of podcasts among this generation. With YouTube's ability to present audio-visual content, the listener experience becomes richer and more engaging. Studies also show that Generation Z tends to be more responsive to interactive and dynamic content, making visual elements one of the important factors in enhancing the appeal of podcasts to them.

YouTube as the Primary Platform for Podcasts

YouTube has become the dominant platform for podcast consumption in Indonesia, especially among Generation Z. YouTube's ability to combine audio and visual elements provides a richer experience for listeners. According to reports, YouTube is the platform of choice for enjoying podcasts in video format, while Spotify is the choice for audio-based

podcasts (Hanin, 2024). In addition, data from Statistics shows that in the third quarter of 2023, internet users in Indonesia spent an average of about 54 minutes per day listening to podcasts (Wolff, 2024). This confirms the important role YouTube plays in the podcast ecosystem in Indonesia, offering easy access and engaging visual interactions for listeners.

The Influence of Visual Elements on the Listening Experience.

Visual elements in podcasts presented through YouTube can enrich listeners' listening experience. Visualizations, such as facial expressions, body language, and the use of graphics, provide additional context that enriches the audio content. Generation Z, which has a tendency to prefer dynamic and interactive content, tends to be more interested in podcasts that offer a multimedia experience. According to an article by , the short video format is one of the main factors influencing Generation Z's preference in accessing entertainment information (Krisan Putri et al., 2024). The integration of visual elements in podcasts can fulfill Generation Z's aesthetic expectations and information needs, ultimately increasing their satisfaction and loyalty to the content presented.

Comparison with Other Platforms.

While platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts offer quality audio streaming services, YouTube has an edge when it comes to providing audio-visual content. The ability to display visual elements adds significant value, especially for Generation Z who value visual interaction in their media consumption. In addition, interactive features such as comments and live streaming on YouTube allow listeners to actively participate, creating a community around the podcast content. According to an article, in Indonesia, some podcasts are not only available in audio format, but also video, allowing publication via YouTube which helps them gain more audience than other audio streaming platforms (Hasya, 2023). This suggests that YouTube serves not only as a distribution platform, but also as a space for social interaction that enriches the podcast listening experience.

Implications for the Media Industry and Content Creators

The growth of podcasts in Indonesia and Generation Z's preference for platforms like YouTube have significant implications for the media industry and content creators. To stay relevant and competitive, traditional media will need to adapt to these digital trends, perhaps by producing their own podcast content or collaborating with popular podcasters. Meanwhile, content creators should consider integrating visual and interactive elements in their podcasts to meet the expectations of young audiences.

According to an article, podcast production is promising, with a report from We Are Social 2024 showing that the number of global internet users who listen to podcasts is 20.6 percent, and Indonesia ranks second with 38.2 percent (Program, 2024). By understanding Generation Z's media consumption preferences and behaviors, the industry can develop effective strategies to attract and retain this audience (Social, 2023).

Podcasts as Social Reality Building Media

Podcasts have become a medium to build social reality among Generation Z through relevant and inspiring narratives. Narratives in podcasts often reflect life experiences, values and social perspectives that are relevant to their audiences (Swiatek, 2018). According to

Berger and Luckmann (1966), social reality is built through a process of social interaction that allows individuals to internalize collective experiences. In the context of podcasts, this interaction is present through narratives and discussions delivered by the creators to the audience. Generation Z, as a group that is adaptive to technology, responds to this narrative by internalizing it into their worldview (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Podcasts that raise social issues, such as gender equality, sustainability, or mental health, not only build individual awareness but also influence social norms and values in society. This confirms that podcasts are not just an entertainment medium, but also a tool to drive social change.

Community Building Through Podcasts

Podcasts not only create an audience but also build a community. Podcasts that address specific topics, such as financial literacy, mental health, or environmental issues, often attract audiences with similar interests. This community serves not only as passive listeners but also as active participants in discussions that take place on other platforms, such as social media. These interactions create solidarity and support the construction of a shared social reality (Swiatek, 2018).

For example, podcasts with a sustainability theme often inspire listeners to take concrete steps to support the environment, such as reducing plastic use or supporting green products. In this case, podcasts catalyze social change at the individual and community level (Podsava, 2021).

The Role of Podcasts in Media Literacy

Media literacy is one of the important aspects that can be improved through podcasts. Generation Z, although tech-savvy, often faces challenges in sorting out credible information (Nielsen, 2021). Podcasts hosted by experts or trusted sources can be a source of information that is both educative and interesting (Purnama & Rahmawati, 2021). For example, technology and innovation-themed podcasts often provide insight into the latest trends, while equipping listeners with knowledge that can be applied in everyday life (Nielsen, 2022).

Podcast Monetization Challenges and Opportunities

While the growth of podcasts in Indonesia is promising, there are challenges in monetizing them. One of the main challenges is the level of audience awareness of monetization models, such as donations or premium subscriptions (Audi, 2016). On the other hand, monetization opportunities through advertising, sponsorship, and collaboration with big brands continue to grow. A report from Nielsen (2021) shows that 60% of podcast listeners in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, are likely to buy products promoted through podcasts (Nielsen, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The growth of podcasts in Indonesia, especially among Generation Z, shows a positive trend. Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of podcast listeners, reflecting a shift in media consumption that is more dominated by the younger generation. Podcasts were chosen for their flexibility in presenting relevant content that can be accessed anytime, in both audio and video formats. YouTube is the main platform for podcasts in Indonesia, as

it combines audio and visuals that enrich the listening experience. Generation Z prefers podcasts with visual elements such as facial expressions, graphics, and animations, which increase audience engagement, facilitate comprehension, and strengthen emotional bonds. While Spotify and Apple Podcasts offer quality audio, YouTube excels with visual elements and interactive features that allow audiences to actively participate, form communities, and increase listener loyalty. This research shows that visuals in YouTube podcasts are highly influential to Generation Z's experience, helping them understand complex information and deepening impressions from the content. Therefore, content creators and the media industry need to prioritize visual elements and interactivity to meet the expectations of young audiences and stay relevant in the digital age.

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