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PODCASTING AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

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Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
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by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the practices of podcasters who are producing podcasts for English-speaking Africans and African diaspora audiences in the United States. The study focuses on the types of podcast content produced, the target audience, the distribution platforms used, and the motivations of the podcasters who are actively targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Studies about podcasting have emerged in recent years due to increased academic interest although they have mostly focused on the uses, growth and trends of podcasting. There is very limited research related to podcasting about Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. This paper endeavors to provide insights on the current research, interrogates the connection between podcasters in Africa and the African diaspora in the United States and also includes the researcher's personal observations, analyses and experiences as a podcaster targeting the same audience. This research applies the method of semi-structured interviews to gather information from participants actively involved in producing content for consumption by the African diaspora. According to the observations, I identified the following motivations for starting a podcast: passion, sense of cultural identity and belonging, filling a gap, social commentary, market trends, personal experiences and inspiration from African authors. These podcasters also target English speakers, young African millennials, public radio listeners, tech-savvy African countries, black women and homeschoolers. The content of the podcasts includes music, African culture, sexuality, politics, relationships, art, homeschooling tips, women empowerment and highlighting the work of African entrepreneurs.

DEDICATION

This thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated to the memory of my late mother, Emily Diana Odero Apiyo, who passed away in 2003 before fulfilling her radio broadcasting career dreams. I am deeply indebted to her for inspiring me to always work hard and to never give up, a guiding life principle that has driven my 10-year broadcasting career and studies. I'm pretty sure she's smiling from heaven as I struggle to find the right words of praise. I can only imagine what a terrific podcaster she would have been today. As country music band, Alabama, sings, "In the sweet by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore."

Lastly, I owe so much to God, my maternal grandmother, Clarice Dete Apiyo who took care of me since I was 2 years old, my sister, Alice Sheril Apiyo, and the rest of my family members for all of their constant sacrifice, love and undying support. I hope you're proud of me.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Overview of Podcasting
2. Motivation for Podcasting
3. Growth and Influence of Podcasting

Overview of Podcasting:

Podcast is an amalgamation of the words “pod,” derived from Apple’s portable media player, the iPod, and “broadcast.” In 2006, approximately 22 percent of the adult population in the United States had knowledge of the phrase “podcasting,” but the number rose to 64 percent by 2018 (Statista, n.d.). This percentage rise emphasizes the rise in popularity of podcasting in the North American country. The audio storytelling innovation has influenced journalism ever since its emergence in the early 2000s. Kidd (2012) describes podcasting as an audio recording relayed directly to consumers’ media devices, such as portable music players, computers, laptops, smart speakers and smartphone. Based on my own podcasting experience, avid listenership and interactions, podcasters produce content such as sports, politics, comedy, arts, fashion, pop culture, technology, science among other subjects. Podcast listeners tend to be loyal, engaged, create effective relationships with their hosts and make podcast listening a part of their daily routine (Kupferman, 2018).

Various podcasters also publish their podcasts on applications like Apple podcasts, Deezer, Pocket Casts, Overcast, Google Play Music, TuneIn, iHeartRadio, Spotify, RadioPublic and Stitcher (Addy, n.d.). Like most technological innovations, podcasting

still remains unpopular among individuals lacking computer technical knowledge and skills.

Motivations for Podcasting:

Podcast listeners come from all walks of life and it is projected that these audiences will continue growing around the world (Verna, 2008). The trend has led to a strategic change in the traditional radio industry since listeners have the luxury of downloading their preferred podcast episodes and tuning in whenever or whichever place they want (McClung & Johnson, 2010). Consequently, the innovation has also attracted the attention of marketers, by virtue of the fact that regular listeners tend to be better educated and have higher household income than the general population (Mitchell, 2015). Therefore, the opportunity for the innovation to attract funding or sponsorship has led to increased interest in podcasting. Although the income range differs depending on the popularity of each podcaster, Carter (2017) cites various reports alleging that one of the most popular American podcasters, Joe Rogan, takes home an average of \$100,000 per episode. Success stories such as Rogan's serves as inspiration to some people to start their own podcasts.

Other podcasters are inspired by listeners' needs for information, education and entertainment. Chung & Kim (2015) examined college students' psychological drives for using podcasts and established that voyeurism and social interaction, entertainment, education, information access, fashion satisfaction, pastime and convenience were prominent motivations. It's therefore not surprising that some producers of content are dedicated to stopping such cravings by taking advantage of the innovation while growing their fanbase at the same time.

As a podcaster, I never required any government license to start my own podcast platform, Discover America with Prince Nesta. I was introduced to podcasting as soon as I started my graduate studies at the University of Nevada, Reno by my supervisor who offered a podcasting class at the time. My fellow students were either discussing podcasts or planning to start one. I felt the need to share my cultural interactions in the United States with that of my own African culture. Moreover, podcasting also appealed to me because it offered a second chance to rekindle my passion in broadcasting and sharing my thoughts freely without any government authorization or supervision. According to Carter & Lunt (2006), podcasting offers a platform that allows virtually anyone to become a radio host without the need to acquire a license from a government regulatory agency such as the Federal Communications Commission. In my native country, major media outlets are mostly owned by politicians and their cronies thus limiting the ability to express one's thoughts and opinions freely. Although freedom of the press, expression and information is enshrined in the East African nation's constitution, there have been reported attacks against journalists. This fact is supported by the Reporters Without Borders (2018) world press freedom index ranking which found that Kenya fell one place from position 95 to 96 out of 180 countries due to television shutdowns by the government and the arrest of journalists. For me, podcasting was therefore like a breath of fresh air and a chance to express my freedom.

Podcasting is also easy to start compared to radio or TV, which requires expensive and sophisticated equipment to operate. Gray (2018) notes that the innovation requires simple equipment such as a microphone to record some audio, a computer and an editing

software that you can use to improve the quality of your audio, a podcast hosting account to deliver the content to the world and some very basic, home-made cover art. A quality microphone that can help deliver the message is as cheap as £30 (Gray, 2018). Therefore, affordability also drives people to venture into the podcasting world.

Growth and Influence of Podcasting:

Online platforms have significantly influenced the growth of podcasting. Veteran podcasters like Marc Maron, host of "WTF" podcast, have achieved star status after featuring popular musicians, actors, comedians and former U.S. President Barack Obama. Izadi (2015) notes that the then-White House Deputy Press Secretary, Eric Schultz, described President Obama as the first president of the United States of America to be interviewed in a garage, the site of Maron's podcast studio. Maron's interview with President Obama generated a buzz around the nation mostly due to the former president's prominence. In my observation and experience, inviting such well-known public figures helps the marketing and distribution needs of a podcast. Keeping up with social media marketing trends, day-to-day word-of-mouth marketing, and being hosted on other people's podcasts also helps promote your own podcast.

The process of identifying the right target audience and podcast content can be challenging. It requires wit, thorough deliberation and research. Even advertisers find it challenging to establish whether they are reaching the right audiences. Leclerc (2017) posits that social media analytics can help brands identify the demographics, interests, reactions and listening habits of podcast audiences to determine the right shows with which to advertise on. If podcasters can access social media analytics, these could to a large extent

simplify the identification of their target audience. If these strategies are utilized well, podcasters can grow their audience and as a result attract advertising.

Podcast advertising continues to grow. According to the IAB/PwC Podcast Advertising Revenue (2018) study, U.S. podcast advertising captured \$314 million in revenue in 2017, a rise of 86% over the \$169 million earned in 2016, with research predicting that podcast revenue will surge to \$659 million by 2020, a 110% increase from the 2017 numbers. The top four podcast content genres that generated more than half of the advertising revenue included Arts/Entertainment [17%], Technology [15%], News/Politics/Current Events [13%] and Business [11%] (IAB/PwC Podcast Advertising Revenue, 2018). The interest in podcasts among advertisers is such good news for podcasters and offers tremendous opportunity as a source of income as they pursue their passion. Podcasters are also incentivized to grow their audience listenership since numbers attract advertisers.

Pew Research Center (2018) found a significant increase in podcast listenership, with 44% of Americans aged 12 and above having tuned in to a podcast, while 26% noting that they tuned in to a podcast in the past month. There also exists a significant difference between people who are aware of the term podcasting and the actual listenership of adults in America, as evidenced by Edison Research's (2018) study which found that while 64% of Americans aged 18+ (180 million) were familiar with the term "podcasting," only 17% (48 million) had cared enough to listen to a podcast in the last week.

The situation is similar in Europe where studies show podcasting growing exponentially. For example, in Sweden, listenership has grown by 36% in the past two years and now amounts to 3.3 million monthly users (Stern, 2018). Slovenia also has a vibrant podcasting ecosystem that continues to grow due to the proliferation of smartphones, cheap data plans and the fact that you can also listen on demand (Smith, 2018). The British Broadcasting Corporation has been the perennial podcast trailblazer and dominant force in England to an extent of recently achieving 240 million podcast downloads across all of its shows in 2017 (Backyard media, 2018). Daily newspapers including *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and the *Daily Telegraph* produce political, cultural, comedy, and sports podcasts with 51% of U.K. listeners confessing that they tune in because they find podcasts interesting (Backyard media, 2018). This noticeable growth can be explored by comparing two distinguishable characteristics between English-Speaking Africans in the Diaspora, with emphasis of United States of America, and Podcasting in African Homeland.

English-Speaking African Diaspora in the United States

Scholars have debated the meaning of the word diaspora and as a result coming up with different definitions. The terminology “African Diaspora” was first coined in the 1965 International Conference of African historians in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, by George Shepperson and Joseph E. Harris, who described the phenomenon as the dispersal of Africans as a result of slave trade and influence (Ranger, 1968). Safran (1991) broadens the scope of diaspora's definition by detailing the constituent elements leading to the creation of a diasporan consciousness which include:

- The dispersal from their original homeland, often by violent forces;
- The making of a memory and a vision of that homeland;
- Marginalization in the new location;
- A commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland;
- and the desire for return and a continuing relationship and identity with the homeland that shapes the consciousness and solidarity of the group (p. 83-84)

Clifford (1997) observes that members of the African diaspora imagine the African continent as their future home, lack sovereign territories and an official language, identify themselves as oppressed and are often driven by a consistent effort to try and form a single culture. Patterson & Kelley (2000) provides a historical overview by defining diaspora as a Greek word meaning dispersal from the original homeland, with the word originally coined to refer to the scattering of Jews throughout the west. The author's note that African diaspora also played an integral part in the formation of the modern world and the transformation of western cultures with racial capitalism, imperialism and colonialism part of the processes that formed the community (Patterson & Kelley, 2000).

Butler (2001) argues that if a group calls itself a diaspora, it should have characteristics such as: the departing group must have two or more destinations, must have some relationship to the homeland whether or not it continues to exist after the diasporization, must have a collective common identity within the diaspora group and must also exist over two or more generations. Butler (2001) further provides a refined definition by distinguishing between emigration and diasporization. She notes that while the latter

involves the movement of whole groups of people to multiple destinations from a single homeland, the former focusses on a permanent relocation to a single locale usually as a result of intolerable economic conditions. The mass movement of people from their original homeland in the 1980s due to “geopolitical repartitioning, restructuring of the global economy, and patterns of warfare that created a large refugee and exile populations, fueled the widespread use of the word diaspora in effect altering its meaning” (Butler, 2001). However, she views migration as seasonal, meaning, individuals may come and go, but institutions and networks become established in the host lands, yielding a diasporan community with a unique level of continuity with the homeland (Butler, 2001). Therefore, according to Butler, F1 visa holders, like me, are perfect example of migrants, although if they wanted to lawfully settle in the United States as permanent immigrants, they could apply for U.S. citizenship.

However, Butler (2001) also notes that the methodological criteria applied in studying the African diaspora pose a great challenge because even if we only focused on the modern era, there would still be three major branches of the contemporary African diaspora with different socio-political identities: The Afro Atlantic (dispersed via the trans-Atlantic slave trade), the Afro-Asian (dispersed via the Indian Ocean slave trade), and the African national (immigrants from the continent to other parts of the world). The three groups have distinct cultures and their podcasting needs may not necessarily be satisfied similarly.

Manning (2003) further describes the African diaspora as an object of study that centers on populations descended from the African continent or African homeland, the

latter being the object of African studies. Clark (2008) observes that the 1980s witnessed sharp increases in African immigration to the United States, with the growing number of African immigrants being referred to as “the new African Diaspora,” the “new African Americans,” “the other African Americans,” “foreign-born African Americans,” “first generation African Americans of African descent” or “African Americans of recent African descent.” If the diasporic definitions and standards set forth by scholars including Safran, 1991; Clifford, 1997; Patterson & Kelly, 2000; Butler, 2001; are anything to go by, then indeed, Africans in the United States meet those requirements.

Anderson’s (2017) study which found that between 2000 and 2013, about three-in-ten sub-Saharan African immigrants arrived in the U.S. as refugees or asylees mostly from countries like Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Eritrea. These nations have gone through turbulent times as a result of civil wars, insecurity, political instability, diseases, persecution and racism. This study reinforces Safran’s (1991) notion of the constituent element towards the creation of a diasporan consciousness including the dispersion of people from their homeland, often by violent forces. The most notable refugees/asylum seekers from Africa include Somali-American congresswoman Ilhan Omar, Sudanese athlete and former NBA player, the late Manute Bol, Egyptian author and activist Nawal El Saadawi, Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Somali-born rapper K’naan.

Although African immigrants are often filled with hope in their pursuit of the American dream, Green (2018) notes that black African immigrants, especially those

arriving in Texas, are often faced with a series of racial, cultural and practical challenges which include, the language barrier among other factors. Smith (2017) observes that black immigrants face challenges like structural racism similar to those faced by African Americans who, for the most part, have been receptive to immigrants because they tend to be wary of supporting policies that would negatively affect immigrants from other groups of color. Such solidarity helps promote black consciousness, especially, through movements like Black Lives Matter that raises awareness on police brutality and the Movement for Black Lives that advocates for the rights of undocumented immigrants among other sets of issues (Smith, 2018). Therefore, it won't be surprising coming across podcast content that features topics such as police brutality, immigration, racism, navigating a language barrier and solidarity as part of the content produced by Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

There is also a continuous attempt by members of the African diaspora population to make memory of their motherland and create a vision for their homeland as suggested by Safran (1991). Movies that promote an African sense of pride, identity and solidarity, such as *Black Panther*, showcase the African cultural traditions and their spirit of innovativeness. The movie received reviews from both Africans and the African diaspora with fans saying they felt proud of being black just by watching the movie. Johnson (2018) noted that the movie was a perfect celebration of the African culture, presented the power and beauty of black women, and pointed towards a future where the African culture could play a significant role. The movie also serves as a constant reminder to Africans, especially those living in the diaspora, about maintaining their African roots and connections. The

movie further presents the African continent as a resettlement option for members of the African diaspora who are fed up with the Western culture. Podcasters were therefore handed a golden opportunity to further discuss and dissect the themes emanating of the movie in relations to the African continent. Some podcasts also play Hip Hop music in their shows. The music traces its roots back to Africa and some rappers often feature themes that promote African unity and solidarity. Moreover, African American musicians including Meek Mill, Rick Ross and Snoop Dogg have collaborated with their fellow African musicians thus helping to bridge the music cultural divide.

African nations are cognizant of the role of the diasporic community and its connection to their economic growth. Kibaara (2019) notes that in 2018, Kenyans in the diaspora sent home approximately \$2 billion, which represented a 33 percent increase since 2014. This indicates the critical role the Kenyan diasporic community plays in boosting the East African nation's economic growth. Kamau & Kimenyi (2013) posits that the African diaspora also acts as a bridge between their native countries and their host land while at the same time possessing the ability to put pressure on their host country to implement better policies towards Africa. Their numerous donations, investments, roles as cultural ambassadors and their ability to pressurize dictatorial governments back in their motherland to exercise democracy and human rights remains critical towards the continent's development and future.

The United States Census Bureau (2016) estimated that out of a total American population of 325.7 million, the number of blacks, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, stood at 45.7 million as of July 1, 2014, up 1.3 percent from July 1,

2013. The study also revealed that the black population in New York, highest among all states stood at 3.8 million with the District of Columbia having the highest percentage of blacks at 50.6%, followed by Mississippi at 38.2% (The United States Census Bureau, 2016). There were 4.2 million black immigrants living in the U.S. in 2016, up from 816,000 in 1980, with a majority coming from English-speaking nations (Anderson & Lopez, 2018). Another Pew Research study found that Nigerians make up the largest African diaspora population in the U.S. at 327,000, followed by Ethiopians at 222,000, Egyptians at 192,000, Ghanaians at 155,000 and Kenyans with 136,000 (Anderson, 2017). African immigrants' top destinations in the United States include Texas, New York, California, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Virginia, North Dakota, Vermont, Washington and Minnesota (Anderson, 2017).

Such a sizable proportion of the country's population would be a readily available audience for podcast listenership since statistics reveal steady listenership growth among members of the black community in the United States. Edison Research (2016) did a study of the ethnic composition of podcast listeners, which revealed that the percentage of African-American podcast listeners had grown from 14% in 2011 to 16% in 2016, due to the increasing diversity of content available. About 63% of podcast listeners were white, 12% Hispanics, 4% Asians and 5% others (Edison Research, 2016). InsideRadio (2017) research found that only 1% of African-Americans reported listening to a podcast daily because the majority of today's podcast listeners are predominantly white, urban and college-educated. About 76% of minority Americans listen to podcasts less than once a

week, with 60% not listening at all, according to research conducted by podcasting platform AudioBoom (InsideRadio, 2017).

Insideradio cites several reasons for such lower listenership. First, listeners weren't aware of where to find podcasts, especially those with diverse topics that might appeal to them. Thus, there was a need to create more diverse content, identify and nurture minority podcast talent, leverage technology in order to bring more niche shows to the top of the charts and make podcasts more convenient for on-the-go listeners. As traditional media face their own digital adaptation struggles, digital platforms such as podcasts are also facing intense audience competition from traditional media. The Nielsen Company (2017) reveals that although there is increasing influence of digital mediums, traditional radio is still the most preferred among black Americans since it reaches 93% of black consumers with an estimated 32.3 million African Americans tuning in on a weekly basis. As it turns out, it's not just the U.S. where radio is still the most dominant mass-medium. The same trend also manifests itself in the African media market.

Podcasting in the African Homeland

Radio has the widest geographical reach and the highest audiences in Africa compared with television, newspapers and other information and communication technologies (Myers, 2009). These findings also reflect Kenyans' listening habits since a majority still prefer traditional media content. About 93% of the Kenyan population listens to radio at least once in seven days, while the average time spent listening per day is 6 hours (Kenya Audience Research Foundation report, 2012). However, recent studies have

noted increased interest in podcasting especially in urban areas such as Kenya's capital, Nairobi.

Having lived in Africa, I would say the advent of podcasting is still in its early stages of development on the continent. However, podcasting would harbor even more potential if governments subsidize the cost of the internet which would lead to increased accessibility. The cost of recording equipment is also a major challenge since Africa is one of the poorest continents in the world. Increasing podcasting knowledge among the local populace would also increase the growth of podcasting. Elna Schutz, content producer at Wits Radio Academy in South Africa, Africa's second largest economy, reports that podcasting in the country is much bigger than most people realize, with the majority of podcasters doing it as a hobby, side gig or part of building their brands (Bratt, 2017).

Despite some of the structural barriers that affect the growth of podcasting across Africa, some studies have been conducted on podcasting within specific national contexts. According to South African Podcasting Research Data (2018), the current market for podcasting in South Africa is approximately 16 million people. Of those, only 55.3% of those polled said they were aware of podcasting, 62.3% of South Africans said they had never listened to a podcast, and 42.7% said they do not listen to podcasts because they do not know how to access them (South African Podcasting Research Data, 2018). Here's a list showing listeners preference for podcast content in South Africa according to the South African Podcasting Research Data (2018):

The most popular podcasts in South Africa are mainly entertainment based with 47.8% of the people polled saying that they preferred listening to comedy.

- About 42.7% prefer listening to music.
- About 26.7% prefer listening to news and politics.
- About 26.2% prefer listening to business content
- About 22.3% access health content.
- About 13% access sports content.
- About 12.9% prefer listening to arts
- About 12.2% access games content.
- About 7.8% prefer listening to government/organizational content.

The data suggests that majority of South Africans yearn for easier and fun ways of improving their knowledge base and prefer listening to lighter content for relaxation or stress relief. A 2017 survey conducted by the global communications marketing firm, Edelman, found that out of 28 countries surveyed, South Africa scored the lowest when it came to the people's trust in the government with only 15% of citizens affirming their trust in government (Seeth, 2017). Therefore, it's little surprise that the research finds a paltry 7.8% of people listen to government content.

In most African states, people in rural communities find challenges in accessing information and services mostly due to poor infrastructure and planning. Podcasting bridges such information gaps in Zimbabwe, since farmers are currently able to access podcasts through MP3 players and acquire a wealth of knowledge resources despite some rural locations being remote, semi-arid, inaccessible to electricity, having a poor radio signal and no reliable mobile phone network (Practical Action, n.d.).

In Nigeria, a Podcast Listening Habits poll found that listeners between 15-34 years old made up 78% of podcast enthusiasts (Doe, 2018). The study also revealed that 54.5% of podcast listeners in Nigeria were male, 42.4% said they listened to podcasts once a week, while 20.3% said they listened daily. Fridays [48%], Saturdays [40%] and Mondays [36%] were the most preferred days for podcast listening, and 66.1% of respondents said they listen to podcasts at home, while 94.9% said they listened to a podcast on their mobile devices (Doe, 2018). The study also found that nearly three quarters of respondents [74.6%] listened to pop culture podcasts, 37.3% said they listened to podcasts to get information, while 22.5% didn't mind the use of explicit language in podcasts.

Ukwueze & Okpulo's (2014) study focused on identification of constraints to the integration of educational podcasting in Nigeria and revealed that the awareness level of educational podcasting in Nigerian universities was the major constraint to the integration of educational podcasting, although infrastructure needed to integrate educational podcasting were available, adequate and accessible. The study also revealed that the integration of educational podcasting could be enhanced through workshops, conferences,

seminars, symposiums, in-service training, provision of funds and regular power supply (Ukwueze & Okpulo, 2014).

Creating podcast content

Creating podcast content involves doing extensive research about the subject, exceptional communication skills and fulfilling audience expectations. Identifying a self-explanatory podcast title is also crucial to the brand. Podcasters in African countries including Kenya, focus on content that is informative, entertaining or geared towards behavior change. According to Moturi (2017) some of the most notable Kenyan podcasts include: *The Spread Podcast*, hosted by actor Nini Wacera and musician Kaz Lucas, and creates conversations around sex education and women's sexuality; *Unverified Podcast*, which is an informative podcast that takes a look at the events of the week and; *Africanah* podcast, hosted by Agriculture consultant Nomusa June and Freelance writer Adedana Ashebir, which talks about lifestyle and culture, while focusing on the African diaspora experience. The *2 Girls & a Pod* podcast, which is hosted by writer Beverly Ochieng and multidisciplinary artist Nyambura Mutanyi, focuses on critiquing literature books; *The BenchWarmerz* podcast hosted by sports enthusiasts Lavin and Jazz and discusses sports, and *Queer Questions* hosted by Anthony Oluoch and Immah Reid and answers to any questions about the LGBT community (Moturi, 2017).

Mbugua's (2017) study revealed that the total number of podcast listeners for *The Spread*, *Otherwise? Africanah*, *The Benchwarmerz*, *2 Girls and a Pod* and *Kenyan Queer Questions* podcasts stood at 2,046 as of January 2017. *The Spread* was the most popular podcast, followed by *Otherwise* and the *Kenyan Queer Questions* (Mbugua, 2017).

Mbugua's study also found that most podcasters prepared and produced content themselves due to their access to relatively cheap equipment required for podcasting, including microphones, smart phones and editing software. All of the podcasts were also hosted on SoundCloud with the exception of *Otherwise*, which is hosted on Libsyn (Mbugua, 2017).

Some Nigerian podcasts are dedicated to busting myths about what it means to be African as well as paint contemporary portraits of the continent (Mnisi, 2017). These podcasts include: *Chicken & Jollof Rice Show*, whose four hosts create conversation around Nigerian lifestyle and identity; *Not Your African Cliche podcast*, also magnifies the Nigerian experience through the lens of entrepreneurship and fashion (Mnisi, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The previously mentioned podcasts in countries including Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria indicate that there is a certain level of podcasting awareness in the African continent. Previous studies also highlight the potential of podcasts reaching an even wider audience among Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Previously, western journalists have received intense criticism because of frequent coverage of Africa's outbreaks of disease, disaster and violence, while overlooking the region's many political and economic success stories leading to misinformation, stereotyping, validation of white privilege, excessive fear of immigrants and mishandled foreign policy interventions (Baker, 2015). Podcasters producing content for Africa and the African diaspora have a chance to tell their side of the story by making use of the platform to tell positive stories about their African homeland, life experiences in the diaspora, reconnecting their audiences with their native roots and correcting

misconceptions and stereotypes. With that in mind, this study explores the different types of content produced by podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States, the target audience, the distribution platforms used, and the motivations of the podcasters actively targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. It further assesses the impact of these podcasters, challenges they face and provides recommendations for future podcasters planning to produce content for the same audience. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the motivations of producers of podcasts for African and the African diaspora audiences in the United States? What are their target audiences?

RQ2: What type of content is being produced by these podcasters?

RQ3: How do these podcasters distribute, promote and market their podcasts to Africans and the African diaspora audiences in the United States?

This study is significant because it addresses a neglected subject area and helps establish a baseline for future research. It will help future researchers understand the role of podcasting for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States, thus adding to the growing literature on podcasting. Finally, the research will also help identify the key podcasters producing content for Africans and the African Diaspora in the United States.

METHODOLOGY

Teherani et al. (2015) define qualitative research as systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how

organizations function, and how interactions shape relationships (Teherani et al., 2015). Since this study seeks to provide an understanding of the behavior among individuals targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States, qualitative research methodology was selected. The study applies the use of semi-structured interviews aimed at gathering information from participants actively involved in producing content for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Lindlof & Taylor (2002) describe the qualitative interview as an event in which the interviewer encourages others to freely articulate their interests, experiences, and also has the ability to travel deeply and broadly into subjective realities. Some of the benefits of using this method include: Interview questions are prepared in advance such that the interviewer is able to internalize all that the interview entails, the interviews can be recorded and transcribed later, and the respondents can be offered the freedom to give their insights and views (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Most of the questions asked were open ended questions since Reja et al. (2003) cites that open-ended questions allow the respondent to express an opinion without being influenced by the researcher while close-ended questions limit the respondent to the set of alternatives being offered.

Berelson's content analysis definition (as cited in Matsuro, 2015) suggests that the research technique aims to describe substance characteristics of message content; describe form characteristics of message content; make inferences to producers of content and the target audience and predict the effects of content on audiences. Therefore, this study also applied content analysis in a limited way as a secondary research methodology to provide depth of understanding to what was learned from the interviews, understanding sources

interviewed on the shows, topic selection and the motivations behind the audience listening to the podcast. The investigator listened to several published episodes posted on the subject's distribution websites.

This study also involved 6 participants who are actively producing podcasts in the United States targeting English speaking Africans or the African diaspora audiences. The interviews were conducted over the telephone. Phone interviews can be as intimate and engrossing for the callers, and ultimately as productive, as those conducted in person, although critics also argue that they are impersonal and offer a poor alternative for face-to-face meetings (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The study gathered information from both women and men although majority of them were female podcasters. Male podcasters were difficult to reach. According to some of the women I interviewed, women easily agreed to be part of the interview because they tend to be "more expressive."

Recruitment letters to participants were sent out on January 2019, and data collection took place from January to mid-February 2019. Analysis and completion of the project took place by May 2019. The data were gathered on Friday, Saturday and Sunday because respondents were not as busy as during weekdays. The decision to do the interviews during the weekend resulted in a higher response rate. The interview data were qualitatively assessed.

Selection of Research Subjects

The subjects in the study were selected through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling method is best suited to studying social networks, subcultures, or dispersed groups of people sharing common practices (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Since these podcasters share common practices such as producing, sharing content and targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States, snowball sampling technique was best suited for this study. Biernacki & Waldorf (1981) notes that a snowball study sample yields a study sample through referrals made among individuals sharing or possessing some characteristics that are of research interest. Subjects that were already identified for this study also helped provide referrals to other potential podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

Another sampling method, purposive sampling, was also applied in selecting subjects. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method which occurs when subjects selected for the sample are chosen by the sound judgment of the researcher, saving time and money (Black, 2010). Research Methodology (2018) suggests that the purposive sampling method may prove to be effective when only limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of research design and aims and objectives. The sampling method turned out to be instrumental since the number of podcasters actively producing and distributing content targeting Africans or African diaspora in the United States were limited in number.

Through the guidelines set forth by both purposive and snowball sampling, the following podcasts were selected for inclusion in this study since they were actively

producing content for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States, actively distributed their content on the internet, and also willing to take part in the study: *Ckiza*, *Afrolit Podcast*, *Not Your African Cliche*, *Afropop Worldwide/Afropop Closeup*, *Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* and *Hip Hop African Podcast*.

Ckiza is a podcast hosted by Wangari Kimiri and Mwita Wambura who are both of Kenyan descent and based in New York. The podcast typically "features individuals who are from the African continent or who are drawn to the continent and the ways in which they're redefining the African narrative," according to host Wangari. *Ckiza* podcast episodes can be accessed on their website and across other platforms including Soundcloud, Apple and Stitcher.

Afrolit Podcast was founded in November of 2016 by New York based brand strategist Ekuu Mambaza who is of Kenyan descent, and South African, Bobbyday Matjila. Ekuu studied communications and marketing at the New School in New York. She says she started the podcast because during their conversations they noticed that "issues affecting African women such as dating, self-care tips or work habits were not being covered." Therefore, they decided to start a "girl chat"-type of podcast which highlights conversations and discusses the intersection of what it means to be an African woman living in the diaspora. The bi-weekly produced episodes take about 40 to 50 minutes.

Hip Hop African Podcast was started in 2016 by Howard University Assistant professor of African Studies, Dr. Msia Kibona Clark, in collaboration with African Studies students. Dr. Msia says her podcast "offers a platform for discussions about Hip Hop in

Africa and in the Diaspora and was started in 2016." The monthly produced episodes can be accessed on their website, Itunes, Stitcher among others.

Afropop Worldwide is a weekly radio program that has been on air for the past 30 years. According to the program's producer Banning Eyre, the program is dedicated to music from Africa and the African diaspora with the episodes distributed in more than 100 radio stations by Public Radio International. The shows are hosted by American broadcaster of Cameroonian descent Georges Collinet and produced by Banning Eyre who also claims to be a writer, guitar player and photographer. The program, also released as a podcast, also helps bridge the continent and cultures through the power of pop. Their sister podcast *Afropop Closeup*, which is a more intimate podcast features human life stories and its connection to music. According to Banning, the podcast episodes are hosted by a group of producers who tell these stories through the lens of music, politics, history and culture.

Not Your African Cliche Podcast was founded in 2015 and is hosted by four Nigerians: Business woman/scientist Onyeka, "Biology-nerd"- turned-tech-enthusiast Ifeoluwa, Nigerian consultant Amayo, and researcher/photographer Ifeyinwa, according to the podcast's website. According to Ifeyinwa, women wanted to tell their stories instead of letting "others" (in reference to western media television programs) to tell it for them. Their podcast also prides itself for representing African millennial voices.

Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry is a podcast founded in January 2018 and targets homeschooling moms, and some dads, who are part of the African diaspora,

according to host Angela Jordan Perry who resides in South Carolina. It seeks to encourage Africans and the African diaspora in the United States to homeschool their children.

RESULTS

The goal of the study was to investigate the practices of podcasters producing podcasts for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. The topics researched are motivation of podcasters, identifying and targeting the audiences, types of content produced, distribution of contents, promotion and marketing techniques utilized.

Table 1.1 Summary of the motivations, target audience, content, hosting and distribution on podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

Podcast Name	Motivations	Content	Target Audience	Hosting and Distribution	Marketing
Ckiza	-passion - Sense of African cultural identity and belonging -Inspiration from African authors	-Music -African tradition and culture -Sexuality, gender and domestic violence -Women and politics -Love and relationships -Stereotypes and biases	-English speakers	-Stitcher -iTunes -Soundcloud -Buzzsprout -Podchaser -iVoox	-Twitter -Facebook -Instagram
Not You African Cliché	-Sense of African cultural identity and belonging -Filling a gap -Market trends	Sexuality and gender -Politics and neocolonialism -Love and relationship -Feminism and women empowerment -Entrepreneurship	-English speakers -Young African millennials	-Soundcloud -Stitcher -iTunes - Player FM -Listen Notes -Pod paradise -Castbox -Chartable -Spreaker	-Twitter -Facebook -Instagram
Afrolit	-Personal experiences and conversations	-African tradition and culture -Love and relationships -Sexism, feminism and women empowerment -Stereotypes and biases	-English speakers -Black women	-Soundcloud -Itunes -iHeart radio -Stitcher -Podbean -TuneIn -Anchor -Chartable -Listen Notes -Castbox	-Twitter -Facebook -Instagram
Hip Hop African Podcast	-Social Commentary -Sense of African cultural identity	-Music -Musician's view on gender and sexuality -Political music -Art and fashion -Feminism	-English speakers -Tech Savvy countries -African music lovers	-iTunes -Stitcher -Player FM -Castbox -podtail	-Facebook -Host's personal twitter and Instagram page
Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry	-Filling a gap -Sense of African Cultural identity and belonging	-Homeschooling	-English speakers -Homeschoolers and prospective homeschoolers	-YouTube -Anchor - Spotify -iTunes -Castbox -Listen Notes -Radio Public	-Facebook -YouTube -Host's personal twitter page
Afropop Worldwide/Afropop Closeups	-passion -Market trends -Sense of African cultural identity	-Music -African music tradition and culture	-English speakers -Online internet users -Public radio listeners	-Soundcloud -Public Radio International -iTunes -Stitcher	Twitter Facebook Instagram

Motivations of Podcast Producers

Various podcasters often have different inspiration behind the formation of their productions depending on whatever they want to achieve. McHugh (2016) asserts that podcasters range from hobbyists who deliver a rambling monologue on their favorite topics to narrative storytellers who create well researched and carefully crafted programs that can also be used as podcasts and broadcast. McHugh's interpretation clearly shows that motivations, podcasting styles and content are closely intertwined. Veroeven (2018) notes that some of the motivations that guide individuals planning to start a podcast includes the desire to shape public perception/policy, interest in business development and reaching new audiences, deepening one's network and networking with listeners and industry leaders. Some of Veroeven's suggestions featured prominently in the results of the study as factors that influenced podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora audiences to start their own. These include: the desire to shape public discourse and to reach new audiences.

Passion for podcasting had a significant impact on some podcasts such as *Ckiza* and *Afropop Worldwide*. *Afropop Worldwide/Afropop Closeups* producer Banning Eyre followed his passion of African music, a virtue that has enabled him produce shows for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States close to three decades. The Middletown, Connecticut resident happened to be the only Caucasian American that we interviewed who is producing content for the African diaspora. However, Banning also finds himself at crossroads terming his passion as "ironic, strange, confusing and interesting to some people." His 'awkward' feelings are justified since some Africans have previously complained about their stories being misrepresented by the western media. Bork

et al. (2011) notes Africa has been misrepresented and mis-imagined in the western media leaving people to think that Africa is a place full of misery, darkness and despair; a monolithic land where evil resides. Banning says such thoughts definitely present a challenge and it's something that he has to be aware of all the time. "I don't want to be arrogant or presumptuous and I have to always realize that I'm coming at these things as an outsider." He cites his attitude as an outsider as being a strength since it also helps him look at African issues in a broader perspective. "When I'm in Africa, people are really honored by the fact that as an outsider, I'm passionate and care enough about their tradition and are really grateful to have their story told," Banning added.

The feeling of cultural identity and belonging inspired *Not your African Cliche* hosts, who are of Nigerian descent, to start telling stories about their own heritage. One of the hosts, Ife, said, "We just wanted to start a thing that talked about issues that concerned the continent, uplifted voices and the opportunity to become the custodians of telling our own story and having deeper conversations about certain topics instead of people telling them for us." *Ckiza* podcast was mainly motivated by the host's life connection to both Kenya and the United States. Both environments and experiences have influenced and shaped the hosts lifestyle, attitudes and beliefs as projected in most of their podcast conversations. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast*, *Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry*, *Afropop Worldwide* and *Afrolit* all feature discussions /music promoting cultural heritage in an African context.

Ckiza podcast host Wangari cites Nigerian poet Ijeoma Umebinyuo's poetry book, *Diaspora Blues*, as an inspiration for enabling her express her views on a wide range of

issues. Just like Ijeoma (born and raised in Nigeria but harbors emotions and feelings of displacement as an immigrant in the United States), Wangari had strong doubts about where she truly belonged since she had lived “half of her life in the global south and half her life in the west and both sides.” She therefore chose the podcast platform to produce content for the people who shared her mutual feelings and understanding.

Podcasts such as *Not your African cliché* podcast felt a need to fill the information gap that existed among producers of podcasts and Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Host Ife noted that the show targets “African millennial voices” and was started by four college mates who used to talk about podcasts before deciding to start their own thing. Ife also added that they decided to do the podcast because there was a “scarcity of podcasts that catered to African millennial voices at the time.” *Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* was also created to provide a platform for Africans and the African diaspora to share their homeschooling knowledge and information with one another.

Hip Hop Africa podcast was inspired by the need to provide social commentary with a focus on African Hip Hop. “It’s not just music but a whole culture that has always been about speaking reality, experiences, observation and presenting specific social commentary” explained host Dr. Msia Kibona who is of Tanzanian descent. She was also inspired by the need to provide space for non-commercialized African Hip Hop discussions while avoiding cliché topics like ‘beefs’ and relationship gossips, a strategy she hopes will showcase her guest’s careers at a more in-depth level. She says that she was also inspired by Harvard University’s Hip-Hop archive and provides access for researchers and students

interested in researching about Hip Hop in Africa to be able to have extensive discussions and broader audience access.

Pew Research Center (2018) findings of a significant increase in podcast listenership relates to the motivation behind the creation of *Not your African Cliché* podcast. The podcast's host cites the rapid advancement in communication technology as a motivating factor. "I used to listen to podcasts while commuting and it was always my other source of entertainment," said host Ife. The podcasting revolution also caught up with *Afropop Worldwide* radio program which decided to release some of their radio shows as podcasts. They also created their sister podcast *Afropop Closeups* to cater for their audience's "variety of stories" needs. "Everyone who does radio has to be thinking about podcasts now. If you listen to public radio you'll notice that every public radio show has its own podcasts now and even television shows have their spinoff podcasts same to business and even companies. Young people mostly under 30 don't even own a radio or listen to it. Podcasts are a whole new universe that's taking shape before our eyes so we're just scrambling to try to figure out how to make the best of it," explained *Afropop Worldwide* producer Banning Eyre.

Personal experiences were a motivating factor for Ekuia Musumba who together with her former co-host started *Afrolit* podcast after having "lots of interesting conversations based on biases and opinions on their life and professional experiences as black women." Their podcast acts as a hub for engaging and intimate personal conversations full of humor, enlightenment and wisdom.

Identifying and Targeting the Audiences

Targeting the right audience with the right message and understanding how to reach them is a key aspect of podcasting. The study found that these podcasters generally target English speaking Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Consequently, English also happens to be the dominant language used in their podcast, although there is limited use of their native African languages. The assumption is that Africans and the African diaspora in the United States are knowledgeable about English, which is the dominant language in the United States. Also, there are at least 26 African countries that currently utilize English as one of their official languages (Plonski, Teferra, & Brady, 2013). Collins (2018) notes there are some first and second-generation African immigrants who speak Amharic, Senegalese, Wolof, Swahili, Zulu, Igbo, Yoruba and lots of other languages indigenous to Africa. Therefore, while these podcasters target diverse English speakers among the African diaspora in the United States and Anglophone African countries, they are also keen to use the language of their roots in order to further connect with their listeners.

Podcasts such as *Not your African Cliche* targets Young African Millennials. Kaufer (2018) notes that there's a growing audience of millennials and Gen Xers who have a mobile-first mentality and adapt quickly to the latest technologies, such as smart speakers, over-the-top content (OTT) platforms, wearables and they also tend to gravitate towards streaming, on-demand programming and self-curated content. This helps explain why podcasts such as *Not Your African Cliche* target the younger African millennials since according to host Ife, "they tend to be the most comfortable with podcasting technology."

Afropop worldwide targets public radio listeners which justifies why they have by far the biggest audience compared with the other podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. According to the show's producer Banning Eyre, the show reaches a mostly well educated, non-diverse audiences across the United States." Studies conducted by the Nielsen Report (2016) revealing that African-Americans represent 13.3% of all radio listeners in the United States, helps explain why *Afropop Worldwide* has since started releasing their shows as podcasts so as to tap further into the African diaspora audiences that doesn't have access to American public radio. To achieve this, they are partnering with another African media company *Face to Face Africa*, which is based in New-York so they can better reach Africans and the African diaspora audiences. Banning also acknowledges that part of their show's weakness is taking advantage of social media tools to reach the African audience. "We certainly do hear from people who listen to us online in Africa as the Internet has become more available in Africa. If we had a real sort of social media genius, who's really dedicated to and had smart ideas about how to use the internet, social media and all the tools, we'd reach these audiences better."

Hip Hop Africa Podcast focuses on tech-savvy audiences in countries such as the U.S., South Africa, European Union, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania. According to its host Dr. Msia, "these countries are tech savvy and more progressive than others when it comes to online media." They also target these places because of the numbers of high downloads they get from those regions. They've previously struggled to get audiences in some African nations since Dr. Msia notes that "podcasts for a lot of folks in the continent is just not a thing and people listen to music from other platforms other than podcasts." She said that

she was considering joining Afro pods, an online site that creates a platform for African podcasters to reach more people in the continent, so as to boost their listenership growth.

Afrolit podcast specifically targets black African diaspora women and women from the African continent. Host Ekua Musumba notes that targeting such a demographic helps them to understand their own uniqueness and different nuances amongst themselves. She hopes that through the podcast, black women will feel like they're learning, gaining or accomplishing something more appealing.

Girlfriends chat with Angela Jordan Perry targets homeschoolers and prospective homeschoolers since the host seeks to encourage people to homeschool their children. Host Angela hopes potential homeschoolers will be able to listen to the voices of other families who are homeschooling their children and embrace the idea.

Podcasting Content

There still exists a significant untapped potential market among Africans in the United States. AudioBoom report (2017) reveals that just 1% of African Americans report listening to podcasts on a daily basis with today's podcast listeners being predominantly white, urban, college-educated persons that have a household income of \$100K or more. Therefore, podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora have taken note and are seizing such opportunities by strategically using podcasts as a platform to reach these audiences.

They produce entertaining, informative and educative content hoping to catch listener's attention. A closer look at some of the content produced by these podcasters

revealed some similarities and differences of the various production elements used by these podcasters. The elements included:

- Varied use of music by different podcasters depending on each theme of the day. Podcasts such as *Ckiza* use different genres of music in their episodes depending on the day's theme. *The Hip Hop African Podcast* and *Afropop Worldwide* features predominantly music content while *Not Your African Cliche*, and *Afrolit* maintain limited use of music by using them just for their intro. Podcasters featuring music also seek for permission from artists before using their music.
- Timely content that keeps people talking gets the most hits and downloads. According to *Ckiza* host Wangari, the popularity of their *Wakanda* episode caught them by surprise. She attributes its popularity to the fact that “a lot of Africans and African Americans were looking for ways in which they could really identify with the narrative that was being projected in the *Black Panther* movie, and therefore sought alternative platforms such as their podcast to gain more information.”
- Topic selection varies with different podcasters. *Ckiza*'s topics are influenced by trending hot topics and conversations that come up when the hosts are out hanging with friends “who are like them and share the same interests.” Each *Not Your African Cliche* podcast host select their own topics and they decide collectively on which ones to focus on. The audience and guests influence the topic selection on the *Hip Hop African Podcast*.

- There was mixed feedback as to whether podcasters listen to each other's productions, and its effects on their own content. *Hip Hop African Podcast* host acknowledged that Zimbabwean and South African podcast content and rap radio influences their content. Podcasts such as *Not Your African Cliche* and *Ckiza* aren't influenced by materials produced by other podcasters. *Ckiza* host Wangari reiterated that she didn't want to listen to other podcasters because she didn't want other people's voices to seep into her work. She also noted that as a writer, she didn't believe that her fellow writers should have mentors because "their work ends up being influenced by their mentors."
- Most podcasts feature guests mostly from the African diasporic community. *Ckiza* podcast host Wangari notes "I can't ask a white person to talk about African diaspora issues. I can't ask a Latino person either unless they grew up on the continent. Point is you have to have grown on the continent or you grew up in a family where your African heritage was emphasized and instilled in your everyday life." Host of *Hip-Hop African Podcast* dedicates their platform to African Hip Hop guests because there are limited platforms in the U.S. highlighting African Hip Hop music compared to African-American Hip Hop. *Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* also hosts African guests because the host wants her listeners to "see, hear and identify themselves with the interviewees hosted on her shows."
- Podcasters host guests who are "intriguing" or "knowledgeable," about the topic of the day so as to provide insightful information. *Afropop Closeups* producers often paraphrase words said by their guests who in their own judgement do not express

themselves particularly well or “sound that good on air.” Most podcasts interviewed have also adopted a talk a show program hosting style with an exception of *Afropop Closeups* which features documentary like or produced narrative packages.

- Some hosts merge different languages on their podcasts. *Ckiza* hosts are of Kenyan descent and sometimes use Swahili (Kenya’s national language) words in their conversation. *Not Your African Cliche Podcast* hosts sometimes use words from Pidgin, Yoruba and Igbo, all of which are spoken in their native country, Nigeria. Interviews featured on *Afropop Worldwide/Afropop Closeups* have also featured diverse African languages including Arabic, Swahili, Zulu, Shona and Mande languages. Translations are included to translate the native words to their English-speaking audiences. Most Podcasters have also embraced the use of technology in recording, hosting and distributing their podcast episodes.

The expertise applied by these podcasters is directly intertwined with the high-level content these podcasters produce. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast* focuses on music content by offering a platform for discussions about non-commercialized pop culture and music, primarily on African content. It also serves as a readily available research tool for Hip Hop scholars. The podcast, hosted by Dr. Msia Kibona Clark and partly produced by graduate assistants in the Department of African Studies at Howard University, features diverse African musicians as guests with many of the guest interviews done via Skype. When Dr. Msia travels to Africa she often sets up most of her interviews and that’s how she acquires her content. Their conversations revolve around the use of African languages to promote African music to the international audience, experiences of Hip-Hop women artists, the

influential role of Hip-hop rappers in the social, political, and economic realms of society, the use of political symbolisms in Liberian music and the use of the Hip Hop genre as a voice of the underrepresented in the society. According to Dr. Msia, their podcast has also discussed issues of domestic violence by featuring South African rapper Gigi Lamayne, whose songs and experiences were affected by the same issue. They have also featured Hip Hop and religion topics by interviewing artists from Senegal who provided information on the delicate balance between their conservative Muslim religion and their involvement in Hip Hop music. Dr. Msia has also interviewed queer artists from South Africa who helped address the issue of sexuality in Hip Hop.

Afropop Worldwide/Afropop Closeup also feature “old-school” and “new-school” African music together with musician interviews. Producer Banning says the shows have featured Congolese Lingala music, Malawian Banga, Zimbabwean Chimaranga music and Ghana’s Hiplife. They also feature music from other parts of the world that have been influenced by African music including Brazilian, Cuban, Caribbean, the Middle East and Spain’s *Flamenco* music. Georges Collinet exclusively hosts the *Afropop worldwide* music show which is produced by Banning Eyre while the *Afropop Closeups* are mostly hosted by individual content producers from various parts of the world, who voice and produce in their own documentary-like style. These producers investigate African music and its intersection with social change, politics, culture and history. *Ckiza* also features musician interviews including discussions with Kenyan Afropop singer "Blinky" Bill. The podcast has also featured topics touching on the heritage of African cultural music and the importance of passing it onto the next generation.

African tradition and culture are another example of content covered extensively by producers of podcast for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. *Afrolit* host Ekuia Musumba revealed that she examines her Kenyan-American cultural experiences on the "basis of being a multifaceted black woman." Most of her podcast conversations are often inspired by her own personal or professional cultural experiences. She tackles emotive cultural topics including questioning whether black people can be racist, the likelihood of white persons being African and Polygamy (practiced in the African culture) vs monogamy (practiced in the U.S. culture). Just like the *Ckiza* podcast, *Afrolit* has also featured other cultural discussions provoked by movies such as *Black Panther* and the debate it steers by highlighting distrusts between Africans and African Americans. Musumba who hosts and produces her podcast content in her own home studio, hopes black women will gain from her cultural conversations. "I think African American women are learning a lot about African women's culture in most of our episodes," Musumba added. Her podcast also questions whether culture and tradition benefit the African tradition or act as a hindrance to cultural norms and progression in various African societies.

Afropop worldwide also uses music to disseminate cultural knowledge and history. Producer Banning Eyre acknowledged that music has an interesting way of bringing about some kind of deep connection with the spirit of ancestors and that's why they feature music as a cultural tool in their podcast. *Ckiza* also explores foods from various African

communities including *injera* delicacies from Ethiopia. They also discuss their own personal health lifestyles, African diets and the global perception of African foods.

Issues of sexuality and gender are covered on podcasts such as *Ckiza* which features sexual violence discussions by highlighting the activities of movements against women harassment such as the #MeToo movement, #MenAreTrash (a South African movement shaming gender-based violence) and #MyMatatuStory (a Kenyan movement aimed at encouraging Kenyans to share their sexual violence experiences on passenger vehicles). *Not Your African Cliche* hosts have also discussed attitude changes towards sexual violence in Nigeria and the importance of sexual consent. *Afrolit* examines sexual topics while *Ckiza* also features topics related to attitudes towards gender and domestic violence within the African continent. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast* has also featured Ghanaian born US based musician Laura Lola who apart from talking about her music, confronts preconceived societal expectations of how Ghanaian women should dress or behave.

Politics features prominently on podcasts such as *Ckiza* who have discussed topics such as women's role in political movements citing the case of anti-apartheid activist Winnie Mandela, former South African president Nelson Mandela's ex-wife. *Not Your African Cliche* hosts feature discussions related to neocolonialism and its effects on the day to day life in Africa. The podcast has featured presidential elections in Africa and the historical feud between Francophone and Anglophone speaking-groups in Cameroon. *Hip Hop Africa podcast* also hosts musicians such as Malian hip hop artist Amkoullel who features political messages in his music. *Not your African Cliche* has featured guests such as Congolese-American Salem Soni who shared his struggles and experience as a

Congolese political refugee in America. Pan Africanism is also addressed in *Hip Hop African Podcast* which hosted Pan Africanist music champion Reggie Rockstone, who emphasizes on reaffirming African pride and breaking colonial mentalities.

Topics related to love and relationships are featured on *Ckiza* which covers topics such as impacts of the African culture on dating and whether Africans are really romantic. *Not Your African Cliche* also features lovey dovey topics with the hosts sharing their personal definitions of love, sexual/dating preferences and chiming in on topics such as “avoiding being friend zoned.” *Afrolit* podcast also features conversations about self-love, LGBT community, dating, casual relationships and hook up culture. The hosts also share their love life experiences. They also feature topics on interracial dating, navigating celibacy and being spiritual while dating in this “hook up” age.

These podcasters also embracing their roots by featuring African art and fashion in their episodes. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast* has featured topics such as the graffiti culture in Tanzania and its connections to Hip Hop Music. Time and time again, *Ckiza* also features fashion topics including the politics of wearing Afro hair. They have also hosted guests with incredible eye of fashion such as New York based fashion designer and lifestyle blogger of Kenyan descent Roshie Anne who shares her battles fighting stereotypes when she wears her natural hair. *Ckiza* have also hosted Zimbabwean-born art curator Kholi Dhliwayo, whose online exhibit *Afrourban art* highlights the artistic beauty of some African cities.

Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry is the only podcast we interviewed that features homeschooling tips for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Host Angela has been a professional homeschooling mum for the past 19 years with three of her eight children graduating from homeschool. Her podcast features topics that educates, brings awareness and encourage African parents to educate their own children. It also offers an opportunity for parents homeschooling their children to connect with each other. She says someone happened to listen to her podcast and while on a visit in Iowa managed to connect with one of her interviewees in a situation she says happens “over and over again.” In one of her latest episodes, *Dear homeschooling mama*, she reads a letter to her listeners about her personal struggle while homeschooling her eldest daughter. She has also featured topics about single and working mums who are homeschooling.

Not Your African Cliche podcast and *Hip Hop African* podcast offer stimulating conversations on feminism and women empowerment while at the same time offering advice on the role that the African boy child can play to promote women’s empowerment. *Afrolit* podcast has also featured discussions about sexism and what women empowerment really means.

Ckiza also exposes biases and stereotypes perpetuated by the media while touching on athletes of African descent. The hosts also analyze the roles sports fans play in spreading such stereotypical narratives. *Afrolit* podcast also exposes interracial dating bias views perpetuated by some Africans and some members the African diaspora in the United States.

Stories of high achievers specifically African entrepreneurs are highlighted in podcasts such as *Not Your African Cliche* which features interviews of Africans and the African diaspora entrepreneurs including Dumi Kaliati, the founder of MicroMek, a local Malawian startup producing low cost drones for the delivery of medicine to remote areas in Malawi. Kaliati shares with the audience the inspiration behind his innovation, challenges faced and its impact on the Malawian people.

Podcast hosting and distribution

Soundcloud and iTunes are some of the most popular distribution platforms among podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. In these cases, both are used as listening and hosting platforms. *Afrolit* podcast host Ekuia Musumba uses both Soundcloud and iTunes because “that’s where all podcasts are available.” Since not every user uses Apple product to listen to podcasts, Spotify, Google Play Music and Stitcher were also mentioned by the podcasters as some of the other platforms used to distribute content. *Afrolit* podcast was the only podcast that revealed that they use iHeart radio to distribute their content. Handling distribution channels is in most cases a shared responsibility between hosts of the podcast, although the responsibility falls in the hands of one individual when it comes to podcasts such as *Not Your African Cliche Podcast*. Most podcasts mostly incur expenses such as hosting the episodes on their sites. *Hip Hop African Podcast* host Dr. Msia mentioned that they have a site on wordpress.com which they use to upload their episodes and then it automatically updates their pages on iTunes, Stitcher and Spotify. She added that they get about 7,000-8,000 hits a month on their episodes but also admits “WordPress doesn't make it very easy to find out how many people are downloading their audio podcast.” *Not Your African Cliche* host Ife admitted that they

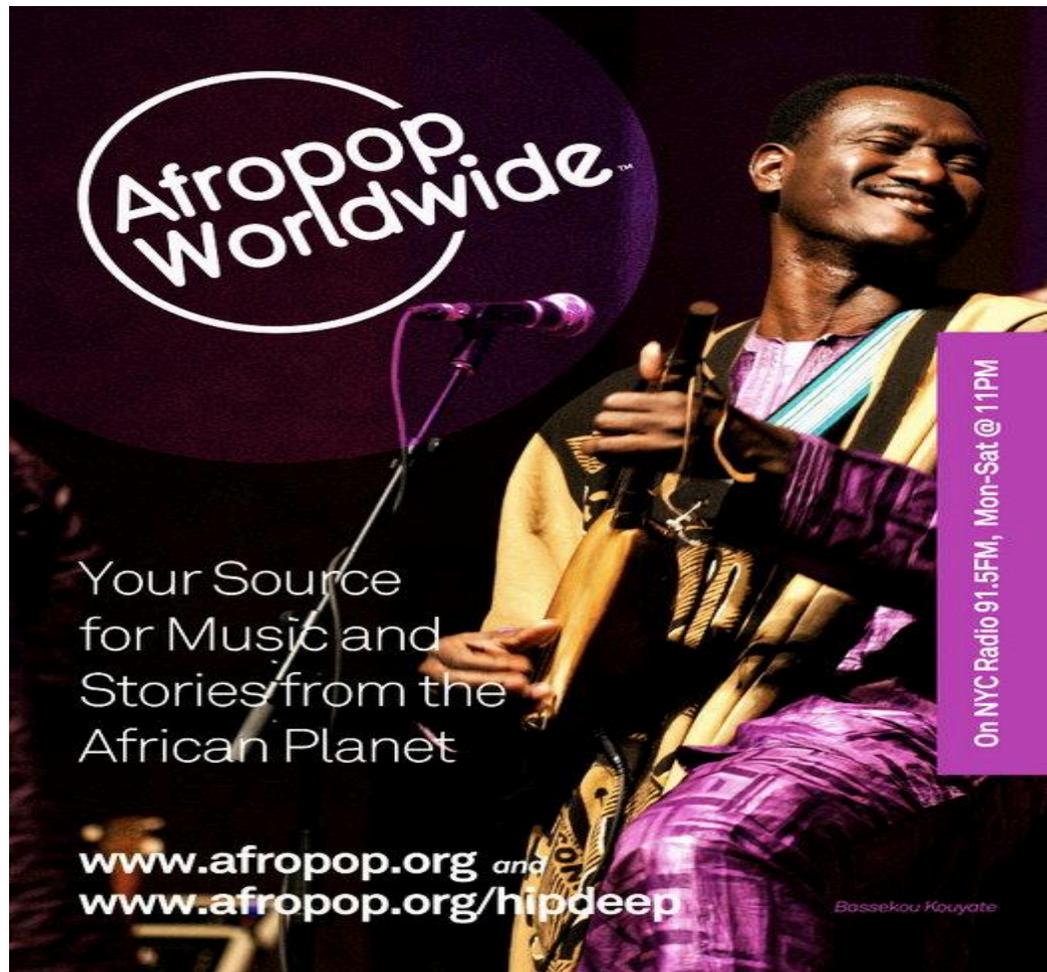
chose SoundCloud because “the podcasts they listened to when they first started were hosted on SoundCloud and it was like the common thing.” They also chose SoundCloud because it can be used as a listening and hosting platform, and the fact that it can distribute their content to other platforms through RSS feeds. *Ckiza* host Wangari said around 600-700 people often listen to each episode distributed.

Afropop Worldwide is distributed by Public Radio International, according to producer Banning Eyre who also reveals that roughly 60,000 people listen to their program per week while roughly 5,000 people download each episode. *Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* is recorded on a cellphone and then hosted and distributed on Anchor. Anchor then distributes it to other platforms including iTunes. Her episodes get approximately 2000 total plays per episode on Anchor.

Podcast Marketing

A good podcast marketing strategy boosts audience growth and maintains old listeners. Most podcasters apply the use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages to promote their content since according to *Ckiza* host Wangari Kimiri, that’s “where everybody lives.” *Afropop worldwide* has the most followers on Twitter (12,900 followers), Facebook (20,383 followers) and Instagram (2331 followers) among podcasters polled with the rest of the podcasters ranging from 26 followers to 1000 followers. *The Hip Hop African Podcast* and *Girlfriend’s Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* do not have Instagram presence. However, their episodes are promoted on the hosts personal pages. *Afrolit*, *Girlfriend’s Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* and *Afropop Worldwide* also have a YouTube presence.

The podcasters look forward to getting retweets, likes, shares and feedback from their followers which helps them drive more traffic to their respective contents. Podcasts such as *Afropop Worldwide*, *Not Your African Cliché*, *Ckiza*, use social media posters for easier shareability and promotion of their podcast.



An Afropop Worldwide social media poster revealing details about the podcast. The poster was posted on Afropop Worldwide's Facebook page.

Ckiza podcast host Wangari revealed that every week before posting on their Instagram account, they often do a teaser before posting their episodes online. They also make a social media announcement to increase engagement before uploading a new

episode. *Afropop Worldwide* promotes its sister podcast *Afropop Closeups* on their radio shows. They also encourage people listening to their shows to subscribe to their episodes on iTunes, TuneIn, Soundcloud and those who follow their shared social media pages. Producer Banning said, “Both the show and the podcast share one feed. So, if you subscribe, you get the shows and the *Close ups*. We thought about having them separate, but we thought that that might divide our audience too much, that we wanted to keep it consolidated but, in the future, if we become more robust with a bigger audience, then we might separate them and have different streams.”

Ckiza and *Not Your African Cliche Podcast* have shared their content on africanpodcasts.com. According to the website, they describe themselves as a site that prides itself for hosting a community of podcasters from the African continent and the African diaspora. Such platforms enable both podcasts to broaden their audiences, network and connect with other like-minded content producers.

Podcast Advertising

Most of the podcasters we interviewed are fully self-funded apart from *Afropop worldwide* which has received sponsorships before. It's worth noting that their sister podcast, *Afropop Closeup*, hasn't received any advertising yet. Producer Banning reveals that *Afropop Closeup* still depends on *Afropop Worldwide*'s “website advertising revenue, personal connections, goodwill, grants and underwritings, which hasn't been forthcoming.” Most podcasters acknowledge that the 50,000 per month downloads per month threshold set forth by some companies seeking to advertise on podcasts is a bar that has been set too high for them achieve right now. *Podcasts such as Girlfriends Chat with Angela Jordan Perry* haven't figured out how to monetize their product although they

remain open to any kind of advertising. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast* are connected to an academic institution and therefore cannot advertise on their podcast or blogs or accept promotional material. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast* host Dr. Msia refers to this decision as “ethical and helping them get out of trouble.” *Afrolit* host Ekuia said she was planning to write a portfolio in preparation for seeking sponsors for her podcast.

Afropop Worldwide producer Banning also highlighted the advantages of podcasters featuring popular topics that cater to the masses over niche-based audiences such as those targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Banning suggests that, “If you're doing a podcast about some hot thing, let's say about trump, a lot of people are going to listen to it because it cuts across different audiences compared to ours which targets a select audience.”

Afropop Closeup is also the only production that seeks to outsource content from various producers and pay for it. Although according to Producer Banning, sometimes they get “freebies” or pay their producers between "\$300 - \$500 for a 20-minute podcast." The payment varies because some producers transfer the burden of production to inhouse producers therefore receiving less pay compared to those who do full production.

Afropop Worldwide has a permanent production crew that was previously funded by the National Endowment for Humanities. When they acquire grants, they often hire eight or 10 working producers but currently they only have three since according to Producer Banning, “they were in a pretty bad financial state.” Funding from the NEH has

since disappeared and they are looking for new formulas and networks to help finance their content.

DISCUSSION

The study asserts that podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States strongly maintain a strong sense of African identity and culture as evidenced by the content they produce, attitudes, perception, accents, cultural experiences, beliefs and lifestyle. By producing content that helps them shape their diasporan consciousness and solidarity with their African homeland, these podcasters confirm Safran's (1991) constituent element of the creation of a diasporan consciousness highlighting a continuing relationship and identity with their African motherland. This study further confirms Cross, Strauss & Fhagen-Smith's (1999) observation that black people can interact with and immerse themselves into other racial-ethnic groups' experience without losing their own connection or a sense of blackness. Since most of these podcasters grew up in the United States, one would expect them to fully embrace the American cultural identity. That doesn't seem to be the case so far, since their actions prove that they are gravitating towards their own African traditions. The podcasters featured in this study either trace their ancestry back to Africa confirming Butler's (2001) assertion that for a group to call itself a diaspora, it must have some relationship to the homeland, a collective common identity and must also exist over two or more generations. Their continuous quest to tap into the hearts and minds of their listeners as they spread the African cultural tradition and identity is also evident in their use of indigenous African languages such as Swahili and Igbo. Demand and supply of podcast episodes have a strong relationship. Therefore, one can argue that even their target demographic, which represents a significant number of people

in the African and the African diaspora in the United States also yearn to learn and preserve their cultural identities and connections with their African roots.

These podcasters also continue to shape their African identities by their widespread use of catchy, descriptive podcast names with the keywords “Afro” and “African.” The usage of the keywords is strategic and is aimed at relationship building and easier identification of the podcast’s content by Africans and the African diaspora audiences in the United States. Konnikova's (2013) posits that names send signals about who we are and where we come from while Goudreau (2015) also suggests that a name can affect your success. In the African tradition and culture, names often have unique stories behind them with the names revealing a wealth of information about the bearer (Arthur, 2016). Martin (1991) also posits that names can be more than tags since they have the ability to convey powerful imagery. Examples of podcasts making use of the words “Afro” or “African” include *Afrolit*, *Afropop worldwide*, *Afro Closeups*, *Not your African Cliché* and *The Hip Hop African Podcast*. Podcasts that haven’t adopted such keywords in their brand names have incorporated a short description of what the podcast is about by using the word “Africa” as a keyword. *Ckiza*’s description is a “podcast focused on the idea of home for Africans living in the diaspora” while *Girlfriends chat with Angela Jordan Perry* is “connecting and building a village for the African homeschooling diaspora.” The adoption of such illustrative titles and descriptions also makes it easier for other audiences searching for African content online to find it boosting audience growth in return.

Findings also revealed that most female podcasters use the platform as champions of change. They use the platform to push for adoption of ideologies such as female

empowerment and gender equality. These efforts are aimed at ensuring behavior change among Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. This finding confirms Salami's (2013) view that women of the African diaspora carry the flags of their socially conscious foremothers thus playing a key role in social change and responsibility within their continents. Just like their counterparts in Africa, *Queer Questions* hosted by Anthony Oluoch and Immah Reid and the *Spread Podcast* hosted by actor Nini Wacera and musician Kaz Lucas, podcasts such as *Afrolit*, *Ckiza*, and *Not your African cliché* have tackled topics directed towards social change which to a large extent remains a divisive issue in the African cultural context. Patriarchy and conservatism are still firmly rooted in the dominant African cultural traditions. Salami (2013) attributes the changing dynamics and adaptation of gender sensitive policies in countries such as Rwanda where more than half of the parliamentarians are women, as part of the legacy of positive social change by championed for by African women both in and outside the diaspora. LGBT related topics which these podcasters discuss pits them against African cultural and religious fundamentalists who make up the majority of the African population. Moreover, such contentious topics are often viewed by some as a "western cultural phenomenon" or as an "attack on the African culture." According to Amnesty International, same-sex relations are illegal in 36 of Africa's 55 countries and punishable by death in some states (Smith, 2014). South Africa still remains the only African country that has legalized same sex marriages. Safran (1991) highlights the constituent element of the creation of a diasporan consciousness including making a memory, and a vision for that homeland by diasporan communities. Although there has been progress in Africa as far as women's rights are concerned, these podcasters have partly assumed the responsibility of making Africa a better place by promoting

ideologies such as women empowerment that will go a long way in creating a meaningful impact to future generations. In my view, they should adopt strategies such as the inclusion of more diverse African voices and divergent viewpoints in their podcasts and conduct interviews with more opinion leaders or stakeholders to attract more attention to their cause.

The study reveals that podcasters still haven't figured out a way to generate revenue even though an IAB/PwC Podcast Advertising Revenue (2018) study reports that podcast advertising continues to grow. They struggle to monetize their content because some advertisers insist on large numbers of downloads per month to offer sponsorships. Owens (2017) reports that he attended a podcast conference where certain companies refused to consider podcasts with fewer than 50,000-episode downloads, promising to raise that threshold to 100,000. Hoffman (2014) reports that even if podcasters reach the 50,000-download threshold, they will, still have to sell sponsorships or work with someone who does and will charge a sales commission. Listeners must also believe in a podcaster so much that they would purchase products the podcasters endorse. Only *Afropop Worldwide* has previously monetized its content through government grants or contributions from their listeners. It's also worth noting that its sister podcast, *Afropop Closeup*, hasn't been able to attract any sponsorship. There is also a likelihood that these podcasters have other jobs and only do podcasting on a part time basis thus freeing them from the pressures to monetize their podcasts. Africans and the African diaspora audiences should also invest monetarily to support these "voices of the African diaspora." UNESCO has supported and promoted community radios in some parts of Africa for more than 50 years as a tool to facilitate

socio-democratic processes and helping to reach people with little or no information (UNESCO website, n.d.). Africans and the African diaspora in the United States should be motivated by UNESCO's gesture and offer financial support to their own storytellers partly responsible for promoting and preserving their culture.

In all fairness, failure to monetize is a problem that cuts across different groups of podcasters is not necessarily an African or diasporic problem. This might be due to the connection between the innovation's continuous spread and growth that has led to intense competition among various podcasters around the world. However, there are different strategies that podcasters may adopt in order to be able to stand out. iTunes offers several categories that podcasters can choose from, including arts, education, health, technology, culture, fashion etc. Some of these categories may have much more podcasts compared to others. Therefore, these podcasters should select categories that have fewer submissions, so that their chances of being discovered, listened to or downloaded are much higher compared to other crowded fields.

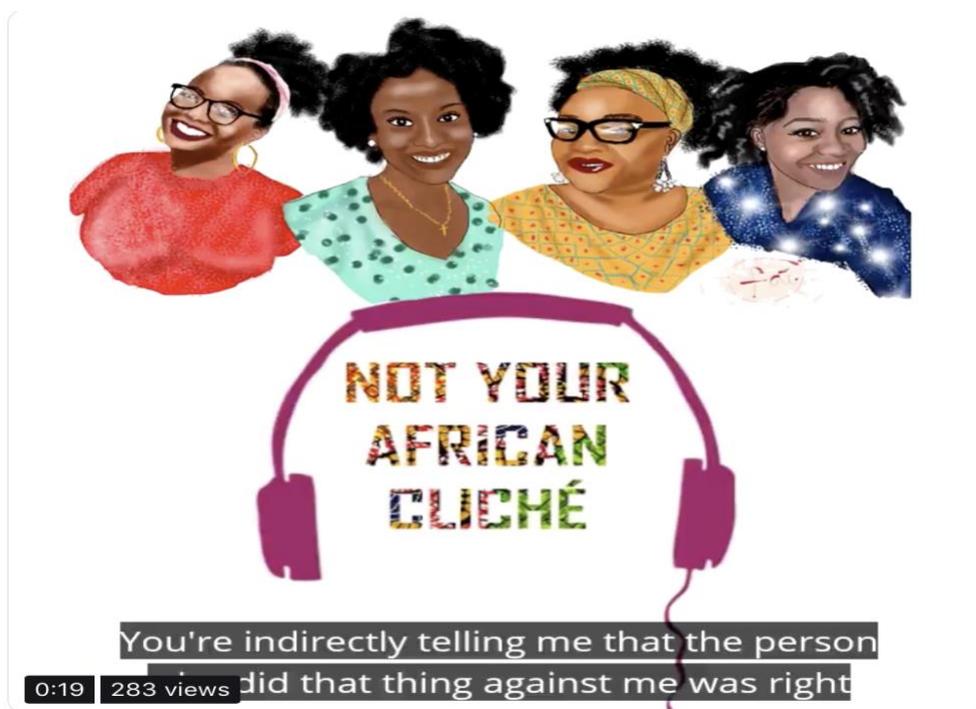
Producers of content targeting Africans and the African diaspora mostly feature guests from the African diasporic community since, according to some podcasters, they believe such persons are best suited to talk about the same issues they experience. Their selection might be influenced by the high value placed on believability and authenticity by their audiences. Opinions about Africa are best shared by people who've travelled or spent time in the continent compared with individuals who depend on views propagated by the media. However, my own podcast, *Discover America with Prince Nesta*, feature guests from western cultures for comparative purposes/perspectives depending on the topic. The

inclusion of Vox pops from the streets of Nairobi, Kenya and Reno, Nevada captures the diverse pulse of the people, making listening more appealing as well as breaking the host's monotony. Guests are often Caucasian, Native, Mexican or African Americans often knowledgeable about the subject matter that mostly feature the differences between the African and American cultures. *Discover America's* producers have also been predominantly Caucasian Americans, a trait shared with *Afropop Worldwide*. These practices are influenced by the belief that such values create a culture of inclusion of diverse cultures. The strategy attracts listeners from all sides and spreads knowledge on both the American and African cultures. Edison Research (2018) indicates that monthly podcast listeners are 59% white, 12 % African-Americans, 11% Hispanics and 7% Asians. Bearing this study in mind, it's my opinion that involving people from different backgrounds and culture in the podcasts targeting Africans and African diaspora may increase their popularity and effectiveness.

Findings also reveal that the continuous promotion and distribution of content is key to growing the audience and capturing their attention. This reinforces Weisinger's (2018) observation that "while content is king, distribution is queen and she wears pants." The statement captures the high value of placed on marketing and distributing since most of these podcasters are fiercely competing with each other for generally the same audience. Nevertheless, promoting audio on social media without visuals poses enormous challenges and that's why podcasts such as *Not Your African Cliché Podcast* use audiograms to promote their episodes by posting them on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp groups or other social networks. Falkow (2018) describes an audiogram as a short audio

file that have been converted into a video file, created by pairing together a section of audio with an image and often has amazing designs and very engaging moving audio waves that make it pop out when shared on social media.

Levy (2017) posits that while podcasting may be an audio-centric platform, visuals are key to promoting your show, social media, website design, and podcast cover visuals.



Not Your African Cliche's Podcast audiogram.

On the flipside, these podcasters might be struggling to gain more numbers on social media because as Opiyo (2016) contends, despite recent improvements in infrastructure and affordability, internet adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa isn't growing rapidly. This is due to factors such as poor telecommunication systems, limited content in

local languages, potential users' inability to find the internet relevant and internet. According to Internet World Stats (2019) research on internet penetration in Africa, there are currently 474,120,563 people out of around 1.3 billion, who have access to the internet in the African continent. The figure estimates indicate that over a third of the African population have internet access. Shapshak (2018) also reports that Facebook has 139 million users a month in Africa, with 98% connected via mobile. Since these studies indicate that quite a significant population of Africans has internet connectivity and also uses social media networks such as Facebook, one would be quick to conclude that podcasters targeting Africans and Africans in the United States are potentially poor at marketing themselves to audiences in the continent. This may not necessarily be true, as Myers (2008) found that radio has the widest geographical reach and the highest audiences in Africa compared to television (TV), newspapers and other information and communication technologies. Podcast adaptation is still in its infancy and this may be a factor attributed to the slow popularity growth of these podcasters in the African continent.

Podcasters struggle to attain consistency of publication even though this virtue is one of the keys to successful podcasting. This could be one of the factors affecting growth, monetization and motivation of podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Pilot (2017) notes that Google gives a ranking boost to those who publish consistently. Listener also find it quite disappointing when podcasters fail to practice consistency. The inconsistencies might be attributed to the fact that these podcasters are producing content as some sort of a "side gig," while still maintaining their normal jobs. However, this might change in the future if these podcasters start adopting helpful

strategies. Lewis (2015) suggests that taking a seasonal production approach gives you breaks from the stress of constant content-creation production, frees your time in a hiatus to work on making the upcoming season better, structures content for multiple miniseries or themes presentation and opens opportunities to focus on more than one thing.

This research found co-hosting challenges among podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. “Co-hosting is like twice the problem since you have to meet your partner halfway in terms of every decision making and that’s quite exhausting,” said one podcaster. “You know when you’re in business with someone, there’s some battles that you just will never win. So, you just pick your battles,” added another podcaster who also admitted to disliking the title of their podcast named by their co-host. There are suggestions that listening to different voices adds flavor to podcasts making the practice a key aspect in engaging audiences. Lewis (2017) lists some of its benefits by stating that a co-host offers different perspectives, energy, dialogue, instant feedback, entertainment, sharing responsibilities and consistency, although he also cautions that they can complicate things and distract. Having the right chemistry key to podcasting success but equally frustrating if one of the hosts is self-centered or both of their visions differ from each other.

Findings reveal that Podcasting requires up-to-date technological expertise. This reflects LaForme’s (2018) observation that recording technology has evolved at a faster pace to accommodate aspiring vloggers and podcasters with newer recording equipment and software lowering technological challenges in the podcasting industry. It’s also worth noting that while previous studies have mostly focused on the audience’s (especially the

younger generation's technological abilities) in respect to podcasting, there's very limited research focusing on levels of technological expertise required for podcasters. Technology is also rapidly changing and may not be the same in the future. Currently, location or distance is no longer a challenge in podcasting. *Not Your Africa Cliché* podcast is recorded on Google Hangout since its hosts live in different continents. Hanley (2014) notes that Google Hangouts are a progressive form of content marketing and enables a podcaster to conduct a live online interview with new elements such as people watching, commenting and asking questions in real time. Sometimes each host records their part of the conversation and, when editing the episode, they sync the tracks. *Hip Hop Africa Podcast* conducts music interviews with musicians via Skype using the audio software *hijack*, which makes it possible to also record Skype calls. But on the flipside, while mobile technology has spread significantly all over the world, the growth in mobile technology to date has not been equitable since 76% of the developed economies surveyed have smartphones compared with only 45% in emerging economies (Taylor & Silver, 2019). Such technological disparities between the haves and have nots may help explain why there is a low level of interest in podcasting in the African homeland compared to the United States.

iTunes seems to be the most popular provider of podcasts for Africans and the African diaspora audiences. This confirms Snell's (2019) view that Apple is the dominant player in the podcasting field largely due to its definitive directory and built-in IOS podcast app that's effective in driving podcast listening around the world. Apple currently hosts around 550,000 active shows, with 18.5 million individual episodes available and more

than 50 billion episodes streamed or downloaded since the inception of the platform in 2005 (Fingas, 2018). Libsyn's Rob Walch was reported saying that podcasters don't have an RSS feed and they're not in iTunes, then they're not a podcast (BE Media Production, 2017). However, competition is increasing with the arrival of Spotify in the podcasting world. The company has since invested heavily and seeks to play an even bigger role in the podcasting market. It'll be interesting to see the impact of such competition for dominance and its impact on the audience.

These podcasters also have a much freer space to express their views as compared to legacy media journalists. While legacy gatekeepers have the power to control what information is being disseminated to the audience, podcasters are free to produce and distribute content at will. However, these podcasters are not the only individuals taking advantage of such freedoms. Ethiopian radio broadcaster Abebe Belew aims to influence the Ethiopian diaspora community after establishing his U.S. based radio station with the help of some listeners, even though he claims his venture led to terrorism charges against him levelled by the Ethiopian government charged who also declared him *persona non grata* (Colombant, 2012, 0:25). The situation might have recently eased somewhat since the current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took over in 2018 and promised media reforms. Radio broadcasters such as Belew have the upper hand in their quest to compete for the same audiences with podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora, because according to the Nielsen Company's (2017) study, traditional radio is still the most preferred among black Americans.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to investigate the practices of podcasters who are producing content for African and African diaspora audiences in the United States by focusing on these aspects: types of podcast content produced, target audiences, the distribution platforms used, and the motivations of the podcasters. This research explored the inspiration behind the formation of podcasts targeting Africans and the African diaspora and found that key motivators included: passion, strong sense of cultural identity and belonging, inspiration from book authors, filling the information gap, social commentary, market trends and personal experiences. Since various research studies indicate that podcast growth is on the rise more-so among Africans and the African diaspora, this study provided important insights on how these podcasters are helping to shape the African narrative by providing knowledge-based content aimed towards the preservation of African traditions for future generations. Findings provide a clear picture of some of the topics covered, including music, African tradition and culture, gender and sexuality, politics, love and relationships, art and fashion, tips on homeschooling, feminism, women empowerment and entrepreneurship.

While most of these podcasters are of African descent, the findings also revealed that each podcast targets totally different demographics, including English speakers, black women, tech-savvy countries, young millennials, homeschoolers and public radio listeners.

If these podcasters continuously produce the right content, tapping into the hearts and minds of their audiences, they will increase their chances of attracting new listeners.

In a society that hasn't fully embraced podcasting, their efforts are truly remarkable and may have a lasting impact on today's and future generations. This makes me wonder what the future holds for the innovation. Does podcasting have a potential of bringing down the radio industry the way newspapers suffered in the hands of the internet? I may not have the answers to this question at the moment but one thing is for sure, podcasting is here to stay and radio stations have to adapt or risk shipping out.

It's also worth noting that as things stand out right now, a significant number of podcasters including those targeting Africans and the Africans diaspora still struggle to monetize their content even though studies indicate that podcast advertising continues to grow. This is the time for them to keep producing content because sometimes it only takes patience and one moment to strike it rich. However, many podcasters will most likely give up along the way.

On the bright side, there are signs that a new dawn has come in the African continent. Various studies indicate that podcasting is being applied in various fields such as behavior change programs and accessing rural communities. Further inputs, including Ukwueze & Okpulo's (2014) suggestion that educational podcasting could be enhanced through workshops, conferences, seminars, symposiums, in-service training, provision of funds and regular power supply are all but positive indicators showing people beginning to take notice. This interest is also felt when some podcasters targeting Africans and Africans in the diaspora meet with their listeners in person on their trips to Africa. Some also maintain constant communication with their listeners who give feedback by saying they appreciate the host's openness, vulnerability and connection with the audience.

Despite the study providing useful baseline information, it also has limitations. First, it's worth noting that choosing the "right" definition of the term "African diaspora" was challenging because different scholars have different interpretations of how it should be defined. Secondly, there is limited existing research in regard to podcasting for Africans and the African diaspora in the United States. Most available research focus on uses, growth and trends. Some key podcasters also declined to participate in this study. Their inclusion would have provided more useful information and easier generalizability. Future research should also involve a quantitative study on the type of content Africans and the African diaspora prefer the most, times/seasons spent by the audience accessing content, and listener demographics. Future studies should also focus on ways in which podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora influence their African motherland in regard to culture, politics or social change. This study also focused primarily on English speaking podcasters in the United States. Future studies should include French-speaking Africans and African podcasters in Europe and other parts of the world in order to present a more complete examination of podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora around the world.

Advice to future podcasters

Future podcasters should be aware that majority of Africans and the African diaspora audiences grew up listening to radio, which is still an influential source of information and culture. Achieving podcasting success will have to be a gradual process that will require "blood, sweat and tears" as well as strategic planning and marketing creativity if they will be interested in monetizing their content. The failures of the current

group of podcasters to secure sponsorships and build audiences should serve as a cautionary tale.

By choosing a target audience of Africans and the African diaspora in the United States, and catering to their needs with original content, future podcasters will surely be taking the innovation to the next stage. For instance, it is rare to find podcasts targeting children in Africa and the diaspora. However, it's not obvious that if you consider producing content that's already being done by others then it would not find an audience, provided the podcaster comes up with a compelling approach. Since some listeners in Africa are unable to access the content due to a language barrier, future podcasters should consider producing content in their local African languages. Africa still has one of the lowest education levels with a significant number of people unable to read, write or communicate in English. This strategy might help attract new audiences thus boosting the growth of podcasting especially in Africa and the African diaspora.

By learning best practices, such as exercising consistency and keeping track of what's happening with social media and media distribution trends, their podcasts will most likely grow and aspire to the success of American podcasts such as *Serial*, *the Joe Rogan Experience*, *Radiolab* and *This American Life*.

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APPENDIX A

Interview guide

1. What's your name?
2. What's your age?
3. What's your profession/training?
4. Where are you based?
5. What's the name of your podcast, when did you start and what's it about?
6. What's the inspiration behind your podcast?
7. What's the length of your podcast?
8. How often do you host your podcast? Is it a full time/part time job?
9. Where do you host your podcast?
10. Do you target the whole African diaspora community or a specific group?
11. What type of music/genre do you play in your podcast?
12. What type of contents do you produce?
13. What's the purpose of your podcast? For entertainment/education/information/edutainment?
14. What factors influence the choice of topics in your podcast? What about guest selection?
15. Do you listen to material produced by other podcasters targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the US? Which ones?
16. Does their content also inspire your topic selection?
17. What kind of guests do you host? Are they mostly from the African diasporic communities? Why is that?
18. How do you distribute your content?
19. What influences your choice of distribution?
20. What are some of the challenges you face while distributing your content?
21. Approximately how many people access your content?
22. What metrics do you use to establish the number of people who listen to your content?
23. What are some of the contents that get the most listenership? Least?
24. Is the content rewarding financially? Approximately how much do you make?
25. Do you use different languages in your podcast? English? African languages?
26. What sort of impact would you say that your podcast has made for the community?
27. Any advice for future podcasters planning to target the African diaspora community in the United States?
28. What methods do you use to engage your audience?

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

My name is Robert Apiyo, and I am a Master's student at the Reynolds School of Journalism at the University of Nevada, Reno. My area of interest revolves around the role of media innovation and its impact on communities. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research about Podcasting and the African Diaspora in the United States.

You are eligible to participate in this study because your podcast features content that targets African and the African diaspora in the U.S. If you agree to participate in this study, you agree to be interviewed about factors that influence your content production, distribution, or your perspectives about podcasting generally.

I would like to record audio of our interview. I plan to use this recording to accurately represent your perspective on the research topic. You will have the opportunity to indicate your preference on whether you are recorded or not prior to the interview.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at princenesta@gmail.com or 443-787-8651.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Robert Apiyo

APPENDIX C

Social Behavioral or Educational Research Consent Form

Title of Study: Podcasting and the African Diaspora in the United States.
Principle Dr. Benjamin Birkinbine
Investigator:
Co-Investigators / Robert Apiyo
Study Contact:
Study ID Number:
Sponsor: NONE

Introduction

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree to be in the study, read this form carefully. It explains why we are doing the study; and the procedures, risks, discomforts, benefits and precautions involved.

At any time, you may ask one of the researchers to explain anything about the study that you do not understand.

It's important you are completely truthful about your eligibility to be in this study. If you are not truthful, you may be harmed by being in the study.

You do not have to be in this study. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not agree to participate, there will be no perceived risks to you.

Take as much time as you need to decide. If you agree now but change your mind, you may quit the study at any time. Just let one of the researchers know you do not want to continue.

Why are we doing this study?

We are doing this study to find out the types of content produced and for whom it gets produced, the distribution platforms and the motivations of the podcasters actively producing a podcast targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

Benefits of research cannot be guaranteed but we hope to learn why podcasters produce content targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

Why are we asking you to be in this study?

We are asking you to be in this study because you are actively producing a podcast targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

How many people will be in this study?

We expect to enroll 5-10 participants in this study. All participants will be podcasters actively producing a podcast targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

What will you be asked to do if you agree to be in the study?

If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to provide information about why are you producing this podcast and for whom are you producing? What type of content are you producing? What platforms do you use to distribute your podcasts and why did you select those platforms?

How long will you be in the study?

The study will take about 30- 60 minutes of your time depending on the interview. Your participation may last for this period time, but you may also be contacted later for follow up questions.

What are your choices if you do not volunteer to be in this research study?

If you decide not to be in the study, your other choices may include:

- Getting no treatment.
- Getting standard treatment for your condition or standard education without being in a study.
- Getting a different experimental treatment/educational experience by taking part in another study.

What if you agree to be in the study now, but change your mind later?

You do not have to stay in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time by informing either the primary investigator or the co-investigator.

What if the study changes while you are in it?

If anything about the study changes or if we want to use your information in a different way, we will tell you and ask if you if you want to stay in the study. We will also tell you about any important new information that may affect your willingness to stay in the study.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?

If you participate in this study, there are no foreseeable or expected risks to you. This study

may include risks that are unknown at this time.

What happens if you become injured because of your participation in the study?

There are no foreseeable injuries or expected injuries to you.

Will being in this study help you in any way?

We cannot promise you will benefit from being in this study but by participating in this study, you are contributing to an understanding of why podcasters produce content targeting Africans and the African diaspora in the United States.

Who will pay for the costs of your participation in this research study?

No costs are associated with participation in this study.

Will you be paid for being in this study?

You will not receive any payment for being in this study.

Who will know that you are in in this study and who will have access to the information we collect about you?

The researchers, the University of Nevada, Reno Institutional Review Board, US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will have access to your study records.

How will we protect your private information and the information we collect about you?

We will treat your identity with professional standards of confidentiality and protect your private information to the extent allowed by law. We will do this by storing the data gathered from this study on an encrypted hard drive, and these records will be destroyed within one year of the study's completion.

We will not use your name or other information that could identify you in any reports or publications that result from this study unless you allow us to do so. You can indicate your preference at the end of the form.

Do the researchers have monetary interests tied to this study?

The researchers and/or their families do not have any monetary interests tied to this study.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study or want to report an injury?

At any time, if you have questions about this study or wish to report an injury that may be related to your participation in this study, contact Dr. Benjamin Birkinbine, Primary Investigator, 775-784-4155 or Robert Apiyo, Co-Investigator, 4437878651

Who can you contact if you want to discuss a problem or complaint about the research or ask about your rights as a research participant?

You may discuss a problem or complaint or ask about your rights as a research participant by calling the University of Nevada, Reno Research Integrity Office at (775) 327-2368. You may also use the online *Contact the Research Integrity Office* form available from the [Contact Us page](#) of the University's Research Integrity Office website.

Agreement to be in study

If you agree to participate in this study, you must sign this consent form. We will give you a copy of the form to keep.

Participant's Name Printed

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date