THE SOCIAL NETWORK X AS A CHANNEL FOR PODCAST DISSEMINATION
An Analysis of the Leading Audio Distribution Platforms

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Audio Podcast Twitter Distribution Dissemination Audio Platforms	*The relevance of social networks as meeting spaces for podcast listeners is increasing: they create communities and encourage interactivity. The aim of this research is to find out how the main platforms for audio creation and distribution in Spain use the social network X. The methodological approach is quantitative and has a large sample (33,584 tweets). It is concluded that those platforms that optimize the technical possibilities of the network, and have a catalog linked to entertainment and conversational genres, are the ones that achieve greater engagement with their audience by greater participation and monitoring.*

1. State of Play

T he emergence of *podcasting*, initially associated with amateurism, has evolved and has now given rise to its own identity and a burgeoning industry within the current media landscapeThe entry of major platforms that have transformed professional practices, business models, and consumption dynamics confirms this. As María Jesús Espinosa de los Monteros commented in 2021, we can see 'the platformisation of audio and the audification of platforms'. Large multimedia companies such as Spotify are investing in the *podcasting* industry, not only for the creative possibilities it offers, but also for its potential to attract large and diverse audiences. As an example, audio companies are starting to offer a more complete audiovisual approach "where the voice has a face and a personality" (Raposo, 2022). All in all, greater proximity to the audience is being achieved.

According to the *Map of the Spanish Audio Industry* (Dosdoce.com, 2023), *podcasting* in Spanish will reach 19 million listeners in 2023, of which 3.3 million will be in Spain (IAB, 2023); the number of *podcast* listeners in Spanish is expected to reach 26.6 million in 2026 (PwC, 2023) and 4.2 million in Spain, despite the abundance of mainly visual media offerings. Audio content is gaining significant ground in media consumption, experience and use. This is due to the variety and expansion of network-connected devices, the emergence of smart speakers and voice assistants, audio *streaming* platforms (Martínez-Costa and Legorburu-Hortelano, 2021) or, among other things, the expansion of audio content on the Internet from 2020, coinciding with the COVID19 pandemic. All this, as anticipated by Rime *et al.* (2022), favours a new listening experience and the emergence of sound content with more immersive, direct and relational experiences with sound (Piñeiro-Otero and Pedrero-Esteban, 2022), associated with empowerment, participation or interaction, characteristic of digital space and social networks (García-Marín, 2020).

Social networks are taking on an increasingly prominent role as meeting points for online audio enthusiasts, who tend to form communities around specific *podcasts* where these groups are conceived, developed, and expanded. This mode of engagement with followers represents an endeavour for *podcast* creators and distributors to prolong their relevance (Pérez-Alaejos *et al.*, 2022, p. 9). This aspect holds significance because the size and cohesion of the community will impact listener loyalty and the extent of consumption of content provided by audio platforms. Consequently, the interactivity between creators and listeners influences the dissemination and impact of messages, a facet precisely leveraged by attention-capturing algorithms (Fuchs, 2017). Social networks serve as ideal spaces for audiences to mobilise, connect, or disconnect (Papacharissi, 2015) around the audio content they engage with.

According to the AIMC (2023), the use of social media in Spain reached 26 million people in 2023 and is projected to continue growing year after year (Bagrow *et al.*, 2019). Despite the changes in Twitter's management in recent years, which have led to a significant exodus of users (Binder, 2023), the Digital Report (2023) by *We Are Social* for Spain indicates that this platform remains the fourth most visited website in our country. It ranks behind only Google, YouTube, and Marca. Twitter's co-founder, Biz Stone, stated in 2021, "There's nothing like Twitter [...] you can watch TikTok videos, access news, and even view tweets" (Iglesias, 2021). Twitter continues to offer features that other social networks have not yet fully developed, despite their constant updates, as evidenced by the broad reach and appeal of Generation Z to this social network. In October 2022, TwitterEspana's blog shared research conducted with Bread Studio on Generation Z. It demonstrated the importance of this age group—between 16 and 24 years old—for the platform. Additionally, it included information about their behaviour and highlighted their strong desire to express themselves: "they are an active part of the conversation and come to Twitter to express themselves about what they are passionate about." While their total contribution to the number of tweets reaches 27%, —which is already substantial—in some specific topics, this percentage was even higher: "*digital creators (49%), video games (40%), music (40%), and beauty (35%)*" (TweetEspana, 2022). Social networks are providing a wealth of information about individuals' behaviour and thoughts, so it is relevant to analyse whether the main podcast production and distribution platforms make use of these tools for the dissemination of their content and how they manage to build relationships with their audience.

Previous research, such as that by Caballero-Escusol *et al.* (2021), showed that between 70 and 80% of the publications of the accounts they analysed (iVoox and Anchor) were related to the promotion of their online audio content, and they also observed that the social network most used for this purpose was Twitter (in the analysis of specific podcast profiles - not platforms - by Pedrero *et al.* (2023), they

observe that Instagram is the most used social network). In August 2022, Twitter (X, 2022) announced the integration of *podcasts* on its platform, which would allow *podcasts* to be listened to and discovered, thanks to the algorithm, while using the application.

2. Main Audio Platforms in Spain

The constantly evolving marketplace in which audio platforms develop their business models is generating rapid change. For this reason, it is useful to understand the current characteristics of each of these platforms in order to put them in context. At the time of writing, the panorama of the main audio platforms operating in Spain (Audible, iVoox, Podimo, Podium Podcast, Sonora and Spotify) is as follows.

In 2020, Audible was launched in Spain to occupy a hitherto unoccupied space, that of the production and distribution of audiobooks, a profile that would set it apart from the rest of the audio platforms from the outset. Audiobooks currently coexist naturally on the platform with *podcasts*, all of which can be accessed unlimitedly for a subscription fee (€9.99 per month). Audible released around 400 hours of audio production in 2022 (Pedrero *et al.*, 2023). Among the genres it deals with, narrative non-fiction stands out, where it reaches 13% and 10% in the use of conversational language. The most common themes were fiction, culture and health and well-being. Both the topics and genres offered in the catalogue and the monthly fee identify Audible with a middle-aged audience and professional profiles with economic autonomy.

On the other hand, iVoox is an online audio production and distribution platform that was founded in Spain in 2007 and currently has more than 1.3 million *podcasts*. The platform allows users to create, listen to and share podcasts through its website and mobile app. iVoox brings together a large number of amateur creators, as it did in the beginning and continues to do so, although it has now added a number of its own professionalised productions (118 hours in 2022 according to Pedrero *et al.*, 2023). In addition to the free option, it offers a premium subscription service, iVoox Plus, with features such as offline listening, the elimination of advertising or early access to certain content. According to the iVoox 2023 report (iVoox, 2023), its audience is mainly male (55.2%), university educated and professional (82.5%). In terms of subject matter, its users consume most Mysteries and Other Realities and History and Humanities, and in terms of genres, they consume almost equally conversational (52.5%) and narrative/documentary (49.3%).

Podimo is an audio content platform that provides access to podcasts and audiobooks through its mobile app and website, podimo.com. The platform requires a paid subscription (€4.99/month) to access original and exclusive ad-free audio content. The platform also enables "intelligent content curation, new content discovery features, in-app video and an intuitive design for all listeners of both free and exclusive content" (Podimo, 2024). It is the audio platform that produced the most hours of content in 2022 (429 hours) (Pedrero *et al.*, 2023) and the second (after Sonora) that introduced the most titles in its catalogue, especially with dialogue genres. In terms of subject matter, it stands out in the leisure and entertainment sector. It is also the platform that incorporates the most video in its *podcasts*, with 25% of its production already including this form of consumption. These characteristics of themes, access to video, dialogue genres, etc. make this platform particularly attractive to young audiences.

Pódium *Podcast* is the audio platform of the PRISA Group that produces and distributes *podcast* content. It is committed to professionalisation through experts in the different facets of audio production. Since its launch in 2016, it has offered quality content with a variety of genres and topics. Access to the content is free and it has become a reference among Spanish-speaking platforms, both in Spain and Latin America. In terms of content, Podium Podcast added 215 hours of audio to its catalogue in 2022. It stands out for its coverage of topics such as culture and society, leisure and entertainment, and health. Audio fiction has always been present in its catalogue and stands out for the originality of its productions and its sound quality. After Cuonda, it is the platform that has produced the most *branded podcasts* to monetise its content.

According to its website, Sonora is "an audio entertainment platform that offers original and exclusive content with surprising stories created by the best directors, writers and scriptwriters for people who know how to listen". It was created in 2022 and is part of the Atresmedia group. During this year, it has published more than 80 titles, distributed in 220 hours of audio. The topics it has developed

the most are, in order, culture, health, information and fiction, in fact it is the first platform with the highest number of fiction productions in 2022 (Pedrero *et al.*, 2023). It is a paid platform (€4.99 per month), although its offer is currently free for 60 days.

Spotify is an international audio distribution platform, and the most widely used platform for accessing audio content in Spain. In its beginnings, it was characterised by the distribution of music, although in 2019 it began to include *podcasts* among its titles. Since then, its offer has reached 5 million podcasts worldwide and more than 40% of its audience already consumes *podcasts* (Juste, 2022). Spotify offers the possibility of listening to its content free of charge or, through a monthly paid subscription, of accessing its titles without advertising or with the possibility of unlimited downloads, among other advantages. This variety of access and content appeals to a wide range of listeners. Spotify has developed a small number of self-produced contents (22) in Spain in 2022. Humour and fiction dominate.

As evidenced by the data presented above, audio platforms in Spain demonstrate robust growth and a broad diversification of content. Consequently, understanding the evolving combination of social network usage with audio consumption and the network strategies employed by platforms to expand or cultivate audience loyalty is invaluable.

3. Objectives and Hypotheses

Given that *podcasts* are primarily consumed by young audiences, who are also the most frequent users of social networks, one might expect audio creation and distribution platforms to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the connection between these two domains. However, there is still a scarcity of research on this topic, potentially resulting in a hesitancy to utilise and leverage social networks as a means of disseminating content, consequently missing out on opportunities to expand their listener base. Concurrently, Spain is witnessing a third wave of audio content consumption, spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. The distribution of *podcasts* is experiencing uneven growth, contingent upon the platform, its content, and its integration with social networks. Consequently, it is valuable to explore how audio platforms are utilising social media to establish their brand presence in the market.

Hence, the primary objective of this research is to examine the communication strategies employed by leading audio creation and broadcasting platforms in Spain to promote their content and engage with their audience on Twitter (OP1), as well as to assess their effectiveness in fostering audience engagement (OP2).

Further secondary objectives stemming from the primary aim include the following:

OS1. To ascertain the catalogue of audio content offered by the selected *podcasting* companies.

OS2. To quantify the frequency of content publications made by these companies on the social network.

OS3. To analyse the audience demographics and engagement levels with the messages they publish.

OS4. To evaluate the extent to which these companies are harnessing the platform's potential to reach their target audience.

OS5. To determine which of these companies have achieved the most successful positioning in building loyalty among their community.

In the light of the above objectives, the following research hypotheses will be tested or rejected:

H1. Audio platforms that effectively use the resources of X (Twitter) will generate higher levels of engagement within their network community.

H2. Audio platforms that offer a greater variety of entertainment content and conversational genres in their catalogue will generate higher levels of engagement within their community on the X social network.

3.1. Methodology

The analysis of the data collected follows a quantitative approach. In the first phase, an empirical analysis was carried out to assess user engagement and message penetration through several variables: acquisition of new followers, frequency of regular publications and audience participation (likes and retweets). In addition, the engagement rate of posts with the Twitter audience was measured. The concept of engagement, which originated in the Anglo-Saxon literature, has been extensively studied in marketing, focusing on the behavioural manifestations of customer commitment. Essentially, it involves

assessing the cognitive, emotional and behavioural activities that customers display through their interactions with a brand (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). In recent years, the rise of social networks has encouraged user participation, providing insight into their level of engagement with brands. Examples of participatory actions that encourage engagement with brands on social networks include sharing posts or commenting on content (Vale and Fernandes, 2018). Consequently, our aim was to measure the level of engagement with X among the audience interacting with the studied accounts, considering both the total number of interactions and the different types of interactions separately (likes and retweets), as they provide nuanced insights that enrich the analysis. Finally, the formal elements of the messages were examined to determine whether the resources of the platform were optimised. This involved analysing the use of emoticons, hashtags and the number of characters in the tweet text. The Twitter account data used in this study were provided in raw form by Tweetbinder, Twitter's official partner, in Excel format.

This quantitative analysis was carried out on a sample of N = 33,584 tweets. For this purpose, both descriptive and inferential data analyses were performed, drawing on established research methodologies from previous studies in social network analysis (Peña-Fernández *et al.*, 2022 or Díaz-Lucena *et al.*, 2022). The empirical analysis focused on several key aspects, including the acquisition of new users, the quantification of the number of original tweets distributed during the period, the quantification of audience engagement through retweets and likes of the original tweets, and the quantification of formal elements structuring the tweets (such as the number of characters, emoticons and hashtags). In a subsequent phase, the content offered by *podcasting* companies in the Spanish market was studied in order to identify differences or points of convergence between them.

The sample for this study consists of six audio platforms in Spain: iVoox, Spotify Spain, Podium Podcast, Podimo Spain, Audible and Sonora. The data collection period covers the period from the opening of each account on the social network Twitter until 31 December 2022.

3.2. Analysis and Results

Although iVoox set up its Twitter account in 2008, it wasn't until the following year that it started posting regularly. Its first two tweets, published on 26 March 2009, had the following messages 1) "We are launching Twitter on iVoox! Here we will inform you about the latest news and audio highlights" (iVoox, 2009a); and 2) "New: You can now upload videos to iVoox. We record the sound and publish it! (iVoox, 2009b). Noticeably absent from these announcements was the term "podcasting". Despite the emergence of the first Spanish podcast in 2004 (Izuzquiza, 2019), the term had not yet gained widespread social recognition, with an ongoing debate about its optimal Spanish translation due to pronunciation challenges. Over the course of fifteen years, iVoox has cultivated a community of 38,500 followers (Figure 1), demonstrating gradual growth. This study has tracked the expansion of these accounts, showing a 4.7% increase in the number of followers for iVoox over a ten-month observation period in 2023.

Figure 1. Twitter account information

Información	iVoox	Spotify España	Podium Podcast	Podimo Spain	Audible	Sonora
Name of the Twitter account	ivoox	SpotifySpain	PodiumPodcast	PodimoSpain	Audible_ES	SonoraOriginal
Date created	nov-08	dic-09	mar-16	jun-20	sept-19	may-22
First tweet published	mar-09	dic-09	jun-16	jun-20	sept-20	jul-22
Number of followers (January 2023)	36.757	99.365	34.612	7.047	6.910	3.605
Number of followers (May 2023)	37.268	100.937	34.990	7.521	7.080	3.995
Number of followers (October 2023)	38.500	105.100	35.600	8.951	7.328	5.002
% growth in 10 months	4,7	5,8	2,9	27,0	6,0	38,8

Source: own elaboration

Spotify is a Swedish company founded in 2006 by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon. Their venture in Spain (Spotify Spain) was established in 2008, marking their international expansion as they launched operations in eight European countries (Burkart and Leijonhufvud, 2019). The debut of their Spanish Twitter account took place on 7 December 2009. On that date, they inaugurated the Spotify Spain page (Spotify Spain, 2009a) and announced the exclusivity of Alicia Keys on their platform (Spotify Spain, 2009b). Notably, this account has a substantial following (Table 1), particularly for music content, surpassing the audience size of some of its direct competitors, such as iVoox and Podium Podcast. In

addition, the Swedish company continues to expand its Twitter community, which grew by 5.8% over the period.

Podium Podcast, owned by Grupo Prisa, was founded in 2016, coinciding with a shift in the perception of podcasting in Spain (Izuzquiza, 2019). Their vision was to offer high-quality audio content to fill an existing gap, identifying the quality of the scripts as their main differentiator from competitors (Martínez-Otón *et al.*, 2019). They announced their intention to rely on original podcasts to achieve this goal (Moreno-Cazalla, 2017). Their Twitter debut was on 3 June 2016, with the message to their audience: "Hello? Is anyone there? Is anyone listening?" (Podium Podcast, 2016). On this social network, they have built a community comparable to that of iVoox (Table 1). However, their growth rate over the first ten months of 2023 was the lowest of the six accounts studied, at 1.7%. This observation suggests that, given their current commercial and communication strategy, they may have reached the limit of their growth potential on Twitter.

Podimo was founded in Copenhagen in 2019 and expanded to Spain the following year. It is currently one of the leading providers of audio programming, offering a wide range of thematic content (Pérez-Alaejos; Terol-Bolinches and Barrios-Rubio, 2022). Their first tweets were published on 22 June 2020. In particular, their second message on this social network serves as a declaration of intent, emphasising their commitment to diversity: "Podimo is here! A free podcast platform categorised for your convenience to help you discover your favourite shows. Don't you have our app yet? Visit our website, download it and start enjoying our exclusive content" (Podimo Spain, 2020). Although their Twitter community is relatively small considering the time they have been up and running, their growth rate of 27% over ten months is remarkable (Table 1).

Audible, a US-based company and part of the Amazon group, entered the Spanish market in 2020, mirroring Podimo's arrival, offering a diverse range of audio content including recorded radio programmes, original podcasts and audiobooks (Martínez-Otón *et al.*, 2023). Their introductory tweet was posted on 16 September 2020, announcing their arrival with the message: "Hello Audible! Access thousands of original audiobooks and podcasts thanks to Audible. Subscribe at and enjoy your 30-day free trial" (Audible.ES, 2020). While Audible shares similarities with Podimo in terms of the products offered and the number of followers on this social network, the impact on the audience is significantly different, as will be discussed below.

Sonora was the newest entrant in 2022. Despite its well-received market strategy and high-quality product offering, it has struggled to sustain a subscription-based revenue model for access to its catalogue. As part of the Atresmedia group, Sonora's catalogue features podcasts of exceptional technical quality and originality, as highlighted by founder Toni Garrido in a 2022 interview with El Confidencial. Their Twitter debut took place on 16 July 2022, with a clear statement of intent: "Welcome to Sonora. Original and exclusive stories for those who love entertainment" (Sonora, 2022). Despite their relatively short presence on this social network, the size of their community is considerable (Table 1), with rapid growth observed in 2023, reaching a 38.8% increase in their Twitter audience.

Similarly, an analysis of the number of posts made by these companies on Twitter provides important insights into the Spanish market landscape. Figure 2 illustrates two distinct trends, particularly highlighting the efforts of iVoox and Spotify Spain in their early years. The first notable increase dates back to 2011, highlighting in particular the significant increase in the frequency of iVoox's posts. This represents a significant investment in the market, as they seek to increase their visibility by disseminating news on Twitter. The second surge is observed between 2015 and 2016 for both brands. This period coincides with the emergence and consolidation of podcasts in Spain, largely due to the introduction of Podium Podcast, a PRISA platform, in the audio creation and distribution scene. iVoox and Spotify Spain stand out as key players in the establishment of the Spanish audio market, with the former demonstrating an early commitment to audio and the latter showing international projection and expanding sound distribution in the Spanish landscape.

Figure 2. Evolution of Twitter posts over the years

Evolution of publications
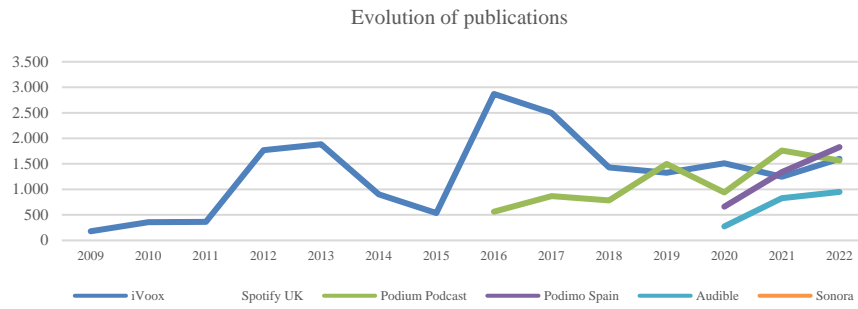
Source: own elaboration

It is also worth mentioning that between 2018 and 2019, content publications start to increase again and continue to grow, possibly beyond December 2022 (the last month of this study). If we take 2020 as a reference year in which all companies are active, with the exception of Sonora, which breaks through in 2022, we have the following data. In 2022, iVoox will publish an average of 4.4 tweets per day, an increase of 5.8% since 2020. Spotify Spain publishes an average of 3.6 tweets per day, a slight decrease (-2.7%) compared to 2020. Podium Podcast publishes 4.3 messages per day and has increased by 66.4% compared to 2020, also Podimo, with 5 daily impacts in 2022, has experienced an increase of 176.7%. Audible has reached an average of 2.6 tweets per day and, although it is low compared to the others, it shows the highest increase of all (246.7%). A figure that should be taken into account because it represents a strategic move by this company, as we will see in this study. And finally, Sonora. Its average number of messages in 2022 (the only year for which information is available) is 0.7 messages per day.

3.3. Audience interactions with published content: likes and retweets

In addition to the acquisition of new followers on Twitter, other indicators of the success of content published on this social network are audience interactions. These audience reactions are measured by calculating the number of retweets of the original tweets and the number of likes they generate. Although both are audience interactions, each shows a different behaviour. Retweeting a message to one's own network of friends indicates a higher level of participation or engagement with the content compared to liking, which shows a more automatic response from the audience (Sekimoto *et al.*, 2020). For this purpose, it was decided to determine the level of audience engagement with the published content by considering both metrics together (total interactions), but also separately (likes and retweets).

Figure 3. Followers, audience interactions and engagement on Twitter

2022	iVoox	Spotify Spain	Podium	Podimo Spain	Audible	Sonora
Followers	36.757	99.365	34.612	7.047	6.910	3.605
Retuits	3.753	16.953	3.862	3.195	570	913
Likes	11.987	204.537	20.418	16.191	3171	4.958
Engagement (total)	0,43	2,23	0,70	2,75	0,54	1,63
Engagement (*retweets*)	0,10	0,17	0,11	0,45	0,08	0,25
Engagement (*likes*)	0,33	2,06	0,59	2,30	0,46	1,38

Source: own elaboration

The engagement rate generated by iVoox in 2022 (Figure 3) is low compared to the others, both in terms of the number of interactions together and separately in terms of likes and retweets. As a result, their audience shows little engagement with the content they publish. Podium Podcast and Audible are also in this situation, with the latter having a very low retweet rate. Spotify Spain, on the other hand, shows that despite the time it has been in the market, its audience remains connected to the content it publishes. However, this brand stands out particularly in terms of likes. Sonora shows a good start in the market, gathering its audience and achieving important results in terms of attachment to content. Finally, Podimo Spain has achieved the best figures of the six accounts, both overall and specific. Its

audience shows that it is very attentive to its content, likes it and spreads it among its network of friends on Twitter.

3.4. Elements that shape and personalise tweets.

Tweets contain different elements depending on their purpose. These elements include message length (number of characters), hyperlinks, emoticons, mentions, hashtags and multimedia components such as photos and videos. In the following analysis, particular attention is paid to the number of characters, emoticons and hashtags included in the messages of these accounts.

3.5. The number of characters

The social media platform Twitter initially launched its microblogging project with tweets limited to a maximum of 140 characters. This restriction forced users to be extremely concise, but also encouraged greater creativity (Cleveland, Jackson & Dawson, 2016). In 2017, the American company doubled the character limit per tweet to 280. Initially, this change was met with scepticism by the audience, who were used to the 140-character limit (Rosen, 2017). However, over time, a noticeable increase in the text length of messages was observed, resulting in increased engagement and creativity (Gessler, 2020). This trend is reflected in the present analysis. Figure 4 shows the total number of characters across all published tweets divided by the total number of tweets per month, providing the average number of characters per tweet for each account.

Figure 4.

Characters	iVoox	Spotify Spain	Podium Podcast	Podimo Spain	Audible	Sonora
2020	195,37	116,45	196,75	197,84	146,57	
2021	206,51	90,33	160,39	214,69	144,19	
2022	208,01	99,67	132,93	230,32	142,45	204

Source: own elaboration

Spotify Spain, Podium Podcast and Audible are all reducing the average length of their texts, as can be seen in Figure 4. However, iVoox and Podimo Spain are opting for longer messages. Sonora has just arrived and cannot be compared with previous years, but it is clear that its average number of characters is high compared with the others.

3.6. The use of emojis in messages

In general, the use of emojis in messages increases the visual impact of the content, enhances the creativity of its readers (Choi *et al.*, 2023), but also generates trust in them (Haberstroh, 2010). However, it can be used in a variety of ways, as was seen in these accounts. It is a fact that all the accounts analysed increased their use dramatically from 2020 to 2022. Moreover, this increase is more pronounced for those that started on Twitter first, as in the case of iVoox and Spotify Spain in 2009. At the end of the first decade of this century, the use of emojis in corporate or institutional accounts was unusual. Gradually, the use of emojis has become more widespread and normalised (Lee, 2017).

Figure 4. The most used emojis and their level of use by the podcasting companies in this research.

	Emojis 2020	Emojis 2022	Use level	Use type
iVoox	☞ ✍	✒ ◈	Constant	Creative use. Reference sources, mentions or programmes. Emphasise ideas or phrases.
Spotify Spain	All types		Scarce	Random visual use
Podium Podcast	🎧📋 😍	🎧👇 ☑️🌀	Occasional	Referencing sources, mentions or programmes. Emphasising ideas or phrases with faces.
Podimo Spain	🎧☞ 📱	🎧📇 😉🌀	Constant	Creative visual use. They accompany the opening sentences of the text and reference sources or names.
Audible	All types		Occasional	Random visual use
Sonora	0	✍🕵️‍♂️ 😉	Scarce	Reference sources and emphasise ideas

Source: own elaboration

There are similarities in the use of emoticons by Spotify UK and Audible (Figure 5). Although Audible uses them more frequently, both use them randomly, looking for a purely visual effect. Sonora and Podium Podcast are in the same vein. The latter uses them occasionally and with the intention of referencing the content hosted on its website, as well as highlighting ideas or phrases with expressions. In Sonora, emoticons are rarely used, but when they are, their purpose is to indicate sources or programmes and to highlight ideas. iVoox hardly used emoticons in 2020, but by 2022 they were a constant feature. Thus, he has gone from being punctual in previous years to being daily in his tweets since 2020. They use at least two emoticons per message, especially at the beginning of a line. They also use them quite creatively, given their variety and the logic of their use. Apart from their choice at the beginning of a sentence, they usually seem to refer to fonts or programmes. Finally, Podimo Spain, which has also gone from being a mainstay resource in 2020 to a constant in 2022. They are creative in their use, as this element can appear at any time in the text, but above all it has the function of accompanying the name of the programmes in their catalogue or of opening a line of text.

3.7. Hashtags

Since the invention of the hashtag on Twitter on 23 August 2007 by Chris Messina (Greenhow and Gleason, 2012), these tagging tools have had many uses (Boellstorff *et al.*, 2012; Lupton, 2015; Burns, 2017), the most common being the ability to create lists that accumulate all the content catalogued by that idea or concept. In addition, hashtags have been found to allow users to communicate more effectively, partly due to the denotation implicit in the tag, which avoids ambiguity (Laucuka, 2018) and therefore also makes it easier to remember. They are widely used in marketing and advertising as a tool to sell brands and generate loyalty.

Table 5. The most repeated hashtags for each account on Twitter.

Hashtags											
iVoox		**Spotify Spain**		**Podium Podcast**		**Podimo Spain**		**Audible**		**Sonora**	
#podcast	2.340	#np	536	#podiumpodcast	290	#escúchaloenpodimo	1.581	#empiezaaescuchar	256	#soloensonora	52
#ivoox	2.163	#novedadesviernes	273	#playpodium	186	#podcast	164	#audible	209	#prestige	5
#ivooxmagazine	323	#spotify	230	#podcast	111	#podimo	130	#audiolibros	46	#sonoragentequeescucha	20
#historia	273	#spotifywrapped	144	#originalespodium	106	#felizmiercoles	79	#clubdelaudiolibro	35		
#cine	222	#eurovision	127	#agostodepodcast	95	#martes	71	#podcast	22		

Source: own elaboration

While all six companies include their brand names in their hashtags, there are notable differences in their use of hashtags. iVoox and Spotify Spain are the earliest adopters of Twitter, but there is a significant contrast in their use of hashtags. iVoox uses hashtags much more frequently than Spotify Spain, with a rate of 77%. The most common hashtag used by iVoox is #*podcast*, while Spotify Spain opts for #np (now playing). Neither of them prioritise their brand, which is an important detail to note; instead, they refer to their content with their most used tag. While iVoox puts its brand in second place, closely following its #*podcast* hashtag, Spotify Spain does not follow suit. The two companies that put their brand at the top of their hashtags are Podium Podcast and Podimo Spain. Both aim to promote their brand, but their use of hashtags is different. Podimo Spain, which entered the Spanish market four years later than Podium Podcast, shows an 81% difference in the repetition of its primary hashtag. This highlights the greater importance that Podimo Spain places on the use of hashtags and their preference for brand positioning through this tool compared to the others.

4. Conclusions

The main aim of this research was to identify the communication strategies used by audio platforms in Spain to promote their content and engage with their audiences via X (Twitter), and to determine their effectiveness in promoting audience engagement. The intention was to confirm whether these platforms are effectively using the resources offered by the social network to increase audience participation and interaction.

The presence of companies such as iVoox, Spotify Spain, Podium Podcast, Podimo, Audible and Sonora, known for their high-quality productions and large audiences, underlines the versatility of the *podcasting* medium and its growing consolidation in Spain. This diversity of content and narrative

structures, tailored to different genres, highlights the evolution of *podcasting* in the country. However, these circumstances also require *podcast* platforms to differentiate themselves in order to attract and retain a broad and loyal audience. Social networks serve as platforms for fostering dedicated communities around specific platforms or podcasts, helping to consolidate their business models, whether through paid subscriptions or free access.

In terms of Twitter usage, the focus of this study, companies are actively using the platform to engage with their audiences, promote content and increase brand visibility. The number of followers and activity levels on Twitter reflect their increasing commitment to formulating effective communication strategies on this social network. This is further evidenced by the increasing incorporation of visual elements such as emoticons and hashtags, indicating efforts to make their content more appealing and memorable to users, thus supporting hypothesis H1.

The analysis shows that iVoox and Spotify Spain show consistent and gradual growth on Twitter over time, while others such as Podimo or Sonora are experiencing rapid expansion on the platform. It is also clear that audio platforms that are adept at using the communication resources of Twitter, as well as offering a diverse range of content that includes both entertainment and conversational genres, tend to achieve the highest levels of engagement and audience participation. The most notable case is Podimo Spain, which, despite entering the Spanish market in 2020, is optimising the Twitter social network to achieve better results. Metrics show continued growth in community size and engagement. In addition, Podimo Spain's diverse programme catalogue, which includes podcasts across entertainment and conversational genres (according to H2), is effectively promoted via Twitter using a varied mix of emoticons and hashtags, enhancing brand visibility and content promotion.

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