



TRANSFORMING ORALITY: PODCASTS AS TOOLS FOR PRESERVING ECUADORIAN TRADITIONS AND LEGENDS

Preserving Cultural Heritage through Audio Narratives

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the podcast format transforms Ecuadorian oral tradition into an effective tool for preserving intangible cultural heritage. Focusing on the provinces of Loja and Cotopaxi, ten stories were selected through simple random sampling, adapted into radio scripts and produced as podcast episodes. The process encompassed the stages of pre-production, production, post-production and dissemination via platforms such as Spotify and Wix. The results indicate that podcasts contribute to the recovery of traditions, strengthen cultural identity and expand audience engagement. Challenges were also identified, including the fragmentation of narratives and the integration of emerging technologies.

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1. The Importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) constitutes a fundamental element of the collective identity of societies, encompassing traditions, expressions, knowledge and practices transmitted from generation to generation. According to UNESCO (2003), ICH includes 'oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, social practices and knowledge related to nature'. Its significance lies in its capacity to reflect the values, beliefs and worldviews of a community, providing a sense of belonging and continuity in a rapidly changing context. This study examines how adapting these traditions to digital formats can support the conservation and revitalisation of Ecuadorian ICH.

In Ecuador, cultural diversity is expressed with particular richness in oral narratives, which are considered fundamental for transmitting historical memory and cultural values. Hormaza-Muñoz and Torres-Rodríguez (2022) highlight that 'oral traditions not only reflect past experiences, but also offer an ethical and symbolic framework for present and future generations' (p. 386). However, these expressions face significant challenges, such as the effects of globalisation and changes in social dynamics, which can fragment or even lead to the loss of these narratives.

The preservation of ICH not only safeguards cultural heritage but also promotes intercultural dialogue and strengthens social cohesion. Guerrero-Salazar et al. (2021) point out that 'collective memory, contained in legends, stories and traditions, becomes a bridge connecting generations, allowing communities to face the threats of cultural homogenisation' (p. 339). This perspective underscores the need to protect these expressions from contemporary challenges, including migration, economic changes and the influence of globalised cultural patterns that often displace local traditions.

In a world dominated by digital media, oral tradition, as a dynamic form of transmitting ICH, faces particular risks. Loyola (2024) argues that 'oral tradition has allowed the collective memories of Andean peoples to be perpetuated; however, the lack of systematic documentation and the growing disinterest of new generations jeopardises its continuity.' Against this backdrop, technological tools such as podcasts emerge as a promising alternative for adapting these traditions to new formats, ensuring their relevance and accessibility in the digital age.

The preservation of ICH not only represents an act of cultural resistance but also serves as a strategy to promote sustainable development. As UNESCO (2003) emphasises, ICH 'is an essential factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of increasing globalisation, providing communities with the resources necessary to face social, economic and environmental challenges.' In Ecuador, this entails integrating traditional narratives into innovative projects that connect the ancestral with the contemporary, thereby fostering both cultural conservation and the participation of new generations.

1.1. *Orality and the Construction of Identities*

Orality constitutes a fundamental form of communication and cultural transmission, playing a crucial role in the construction of both collective and individual identities. Fernández (2020) highlights that 'orality allows the knowledge, values and traditions of a community to be transmitted through time, ensuring the continuity of its cultural structures' (p. 29). In indigenous and rural communities, this practice remains essential, as it directly connects younger generations to their history and reinforces their sense of belonging.

In Ecuador, oral tradition has historically served as the primary means of preserving cultural narratives, particularly in rural and indigenous contexts. Hormaza-Muñoz and Torres-Rodríguez (2022) emphasise that 'Ecuadorian cultural identity has been built on the basis of stories, myths and legends transmitted orally, reflecting the country's ethnic diversity and historical influences' (p. 386). This phenomenon is especially evident where younger generations have less contact with the oral narratives of their ancestors. Rural-urban migration and the influence of mass media have contributed to this distancing, as noted by Guamán (2019), who argues that 'the disconnect between younger generations and oral traditions is a problem that threatens the continuity of Ecuadorian cultural heritage' (p. 78).

Oral tradition faces serious challenges in the modern era, including the lack of systematic documentation and the effects of cultural globalisation. Guerrero-Salazar et al. (2021) warn that 'orality, as a cultural expression, is at risk of disappearing if innovative strategies for its preservation are not incorporated, especially in contexts where oral narratives have been displaced by audiovisual media' (p. 340). Given this scenario, it is imperative to explore tools that facilitate the revitalisation of orality and its adaptation to contemporary contexts. Havelock (1996) proposes that 'technology should not be

seen as an enemy of orality, but as an ally that can enhance its reach and relevance' (p. 102). This perspective is fundamental for understanding how podcasting can become an effective tool for cultural preservation. By combining the richness of oral narrative with the advantages of digital media, it is possible to create a bridge between the past and the present.

Furthermore, orality is not only a means of transmission but also a space for cultural resistance. As Zaruma Pilamunga et al. (2023) observes, 'Orality is the main source of history and knowledge of the past, and is fundamental for the reconstruction of history and projection into the future' (p. 214). This perspective emphasises the importance of preserving oral tradition not only as historical heritage but also as an act of identity vindication.

It is important to recognise that orality is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic and constantly evolving one. Loyola (2024) argues that 'oral narratives not only transmit stories, but also shape the way individuals perceive their place within the community and the world' (p. 14). This process is particularly significant in contexts of migration or displacement, where oral narratives help communities reaffirm their sense of belonging and resist processes of cultural assimilation.

The study of orality and its impact on identity construction highlights the importance of adopting interdisciplinary approaches that integrate cultural research, technology and education. Moreno-López et al. (2020) note that 'oral tradition, when incorporated into contemporary formats such as podcasts, not only strengthens local identities, but also creates a space for intercultural dialogue and the participation of new generations' (p. 50). In this way, orality is consolidating itself as a dynamic and adaptable resource in response to the cultural challenges of the digital age.

1.2. Podcasts as a Tool for Cultural Preservation

Podcasts have established themselves as an innovative platform for the creation, dissemination and preservation of cultural content, offering an accessible and engaging format. Benítez Jerez et al. (2023) notes that 'podcasts facilitate the understanding of content by heterogeneous groups, particularly students with special educational needs, who require learning methods and strategies that differ from traditional ones' (p. 7). Thanks to their versatility, podcasts allow for the integration of audio elements such as narration, music and effects, enriching the listener's experience and revitalising cultural narratives that are at risk of disappearing. Unlike other formats, podcasts enable intimate and personalised storytelling, which fosters an emotional connection with the audience.

In Ecuador, podcasts have emerged as an effective tool for preserving intangible cultural heritage, adapting to the preferences of digital generations. Loyola (2024) emphasises that 'the use of digital platforms such as Spotify and Wix has allowed local traditions and legends, often limited to the oral sphere, to reach wider and more diverse audiences' (p. 38). This global reach overcomes the geographical barriers that often constrain traditional oral transmission and creates new opportunities for transmitting local stories in both nationally and internationally.

In the field of education, podcasts have proven to be an effective medium for knowledge transmission. Fernández (2020) observes that 'the use of podcasts in university teaching not only improves information retention, but also encourages creativity and critical thinking' (p. 45). These qualities can be leveraged to transmit traditions and legends, as podcasts allow for dynamic and accessible storytelling capable of reaching young and diverse audiences. Furthermore, Chasi and Díaz (2023) note that 'podcasts are an audio tool distributed via a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) file, making them an ideal format for sharing on the web' (p. 60).

In addition to their wide reach, podcasts offer flexibility for the production of educational and cultural content. As James (DW Akademie, 2 September 2024) observes,

podcasts are tools for documenting experiences that often go unnoticed by the majority group. They provide a means of recording the stories that do not appear in official histories, including the struggles, triumphs and daily lives of marginalised groups, thereby ensuring that these experiences are not lost over time. (paragraph. 7)

This feature is particularly valuable for the dissemination of Ecuadorian legends, as it combines traditional and modern elements to capture the interest of young audiences without compromising the cultural essence of the stories.

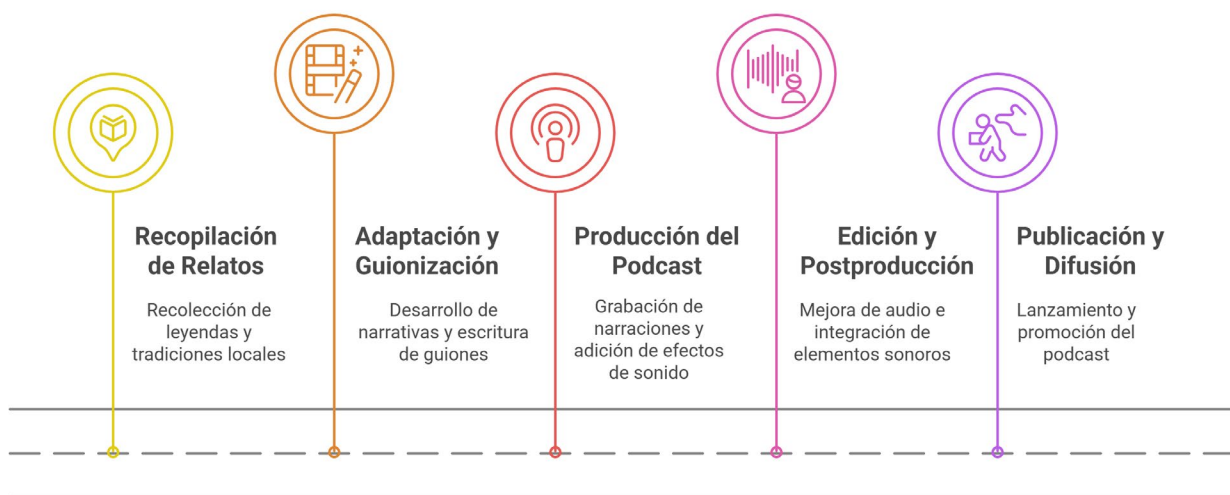
Despite its advantages, the use of podcasts as a tool for cultural preservation faces challenges, particularly in terms of technological and human resources. Almachi (2024, p. 50) warns that podcast

production requires detailed planning, from script creation to editing and publication on digital platforms, which involves the training and collaboration of interdisciplinary teams. However, the positive impact on the preservation of oral traditions outweighs these challenges, ensuring the continuity of cultural narratives in an increasingly digitalised world.

As Berry (2016, p. 34) observes, podcasting allows experimentation with new forms of audio storytelling, combining traditional elements with modern techniques. This capacity for innovation is essential for keeping traditions and legends relevant in an ever-changing world. By adapting these narratives to the podcast format, it is possible to create content that resonates with new generations, thereby ensuring their continuity over time.

Podcasts not only contribute to cultural preservation but also serve as a tool for empowerment. Leite (2022, p. 2) emphasises that podcasts are becoming increasingly relevant in facilitating adolescents' access to information on sexual and reproductive health, free from interpersonal restrictions and promoting self-care. In this sense, podcasts constitute a sustainable resource that connects tradition with technology, ensuring that cultural heritage is not only preserved but also reinterpreted and adapted for future generations.

Figure1 . Podcast creation process



Source: Authors work, 2025.

1.3. Ecuadorian Traditions and Legends: Endangered Cultural Heritage

Ecuador is distinguished by its vast cultural wealth, reflected in the diversity of its regions and provinces, each with unique expressions of intangible cultural heritage. This study focuses on the provinces of Loja and Cotopaxi, known for their deeply rooted traditions that combine indigenous, mestizo and Spanish elements. Hormaza-Muñoz and Torres-Rodríguez (2022, p. 386) point out that these regions stand out for the preservation of ancestral cultural practices, which are manifested in festivities, rituals and oral narratives. Through these traditions, communities have transmitted values, stories and worldviews that reinforce their cultural identity.

Loja, recognised as the *musical and cultural capital of Ecuador*, is a prime example of how oral tradition has preserved historical and legendary accounts. Loja legends, such as *Los misterios de las huacas enterradas* (*The Mysteries of the Buried Huacas*) and *El legado de Matilde Hidalgo* (*The Legacy of Matilde Hidalgo*), combine historical facts with mystical elements, offering a unique perspective on local history (Loyola, 2024). These narratives, passed down from generation to generation, reflect the influence of the Andean worldview and Spanish colonisation. In addition, Loja has an active cultural ecosystem that has facilitated the adaptation of these stories to contemporary media, such as podcasts.

Cotopaxi, located in the central highlands, stands out for its strong connection to the natural environment and its rich indigenous heritage. Stories such as *El tren negro del Yambo* (*The Black Train of Yambo*) and *El origen de la Mama Negra* (*The Origin of Mama Negra*) illustrate how local legends articulate the interaction between communities and their environment, blending historical elements with myths. Almachi (2024, p. 45) emphasises that these legends not only represent a way of preserving historical memory but also serve to strengthen community ties and transmit knowledge about the territory and its resources. This narrative richness is complemented by emblematic festivities such as

the *Mama Negra*, which integrates indigenous, Afro-descendant and Catholic traditions, highlighting the cultural syncretism of the region.

Despite their cultural richness, both provinces face significant challenges in preserving their intangible heritage. Globalisation, the disinterest of younger generations and the lack of systematic documentation have endangered these traditions (Guerrero-Salazar et al., 2021). In this context, digitisation, particularly through the use of podcasts, presents an innovative solution for preserving and transmitting these narratives. Loyola (2024, p. 38) notes that the transformation of oral narratives into digital products not only broadens their reach but also ensures their relevance in a world dominated by technology.

The selection of Loja and Cotopaxi for this study is based not only on the richness of their cultural heritage but also on the diversity of their narratives and the potential to explore how technology can be integrated into local contexts to promote cultural preservation. This approach allows for the identification of similarities and differences in conservation and dissemination strategies across two contexts with distinct cultural and social characteristics, generating valuable lessons applicable to other regions of Ecuador and beyond.

2. Methodology

The methodological design of this study was based on a qualitative approach, suitable for exploring cultural richness and processes related to the preservation of intangible heritage through the use of podcasts. This approach enabled the analysis of oral narratives from an interpretive perspective, delving into their cultural significance and the social dynamics associated with their transmission and adaptation to contemporary formats. The aim was to understand how podcasts, as a digital tool, can transform oral tradition into a sustainable resource for cultural conservation.

The design adopted was non-experimental and descriptive, focusing on the observation and analysis of phenomena in their natural context. According to Hormaza-Muñoz and Torres-Rodríguez (2022), this type of design is essential for capturing and understanding complex cultural phenomena, such as oral narratives, in both their original and adapted forms. The descriptive structure made it possible to record the stages of collection, adaptation and production of the narratives, as well as to evaluate the impact of the digital format on their dissemination.

The population under study comprised traditional oral narratives from the provinces of Loja and Cotopaxi, selected for their outstanding cultural diversity and the richness of their relationships, which combine historical, mythological and symbolic elements. To ensure representativeness, simple random sampling was used, selecting ten notable stories (five from each province). The selection criteria included cultural relevance, adaptability to the audio format, and potential to generate interest in contemporary audiences. Among the selected stories are *El tren negro del Yambo* (*The Black Train of Yambo*) and *El origen de la Mama Negra* (*The Origin of Mama Negra*) from Cotopaxi, as well as *El legado de Matilde Hidalgo* (*The Legacy of Matilde Hidalgo*) and *Los misterios de las huacas enterradas* (*The Mysteries of the Buried Huacas*) from Loja (Almachi, 2024; Loyola, 2024).

Two primary instruments were employed to collect information. First, narrative adaptation sheets were designed to document key aspects of the selected stories, including title, characters, main events, cultural context, and observations relevant to their adaptation to the audio format. This instrument was essential for ensuring the cultural fidelity of the narratives and for structuring them as radio scripts. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two professors and writers, who provided valuable insights into the characteristics and meanings of the stories. These interviews helped to validate the authenticity of the narratives and enriched their interpretation from local perspectives.

Table 1. Identification of interviewees

Name of interviewee	Institution	Academic position/occupation	Country
Mgtr. Susana Álvarez Galarza	Retired	Writer and teacher	Ecuador
Ph. D Galo Guerrero Jiménez	UTPL	Writer and university lecturer	Ecuador

Source: Own elaboration, 2025

The podcast production process comprised four main stages. During pre-production, information from the selected stories was compiled and analysed, adapting them into radio scripts. This phase involved identifying the key elements to be retained in the audio format, designing characters, and incorporating strategies to enrich the scripts with music and sound effects. During production,

recordings were made with local narrators, who brought authenticity and credibility to the stories, using professional recording equipment to ensure high audio quality.

In post-production, the episodes were edited using specialised digital tools such as *Adobe Audition*. This process included audio cleaning, integration of music and sound effects, and optimisation of sound levels to provide an engaging listening experience. Finally, in the distribution stage, the finished episodes were published on digital platforms such as Spotify and Wix, selected for their capacity to reach diverse audiences and facilitate global access to the narratives.

The information was analysed using thematic analysis, which identified key patterns and categories in the narratives and their adaptation to the podcast. This approach facilitated the systematic structuring of the data, highlighting recurring elements and distinctive features of the stories. It also helped to evaluate the impact of the podcast on the audience's perception and appreciation of the narratives. Fernández (2020) notes that this technique is particularly useful in cultural studies, as it allows for the exploration of the deeper meanings of cultural expressions and their relevance in contemporary contexts.

The methodology adopted not only enabled the achievement of the proposed objectives but also demonstrated the potential of podcasts as an innovative tool for cultural preservation. By combining traditional elements with digital technologies, this approach offers a replicable model for similar initiatives in other cultural contexts. Furthermore, the inclusion of local perspectives in the adaptation and production process ensures the authenticity and relevance of the narratives, positioning the podcast as an effective means of connecting oral tradition with the needs and expectations of contemporary audiences.

3. Results

3.1 Comparative Analysis of Loja and Cotopaxi

The provinces of Loja and Cotopaxi possess complementary cultural characteristics, allowing for an enriching analysis of how podcasts contribute to the preservation of intangible heritage. Loja, recognised as a cultural and artistic centre, is distinguished by its complex narratives, which intertwine historical, religious and mythical elements. A clear example is the legend of *Los misterios de las huacas enterradas* (*The Mysteries of the Buried Huacas*), notable for its detailed structure and symbolic significance (Loyola, 2024). In contrast, the legends of Cotopaxi, such as *El origen de la Mama Negra* (*The Origin of Mama Negra*), are more closely linked to nature and community spirit, reflecting the indigenous worldview and its connection to the land (Almachi, 2024).

Table1 . Ecuadorian legends turned into podcasts

City	Legend	Author	Wix	Spotify
Cotopaxi	Origin of Mama Negra	Eduardo Paredes Ortega	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/8ntpee
Cotopaxi	The Black Train of Yambo	Mario Conde	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/cnmoay
Cotopaxi	The Legend of the Child of Isinche	Isabel Clemencia Chiguano	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/j0zdp
Cotopaxi	The Lord of Sinchaguasín	Mercedes Janeth Núñez	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/ww7rw0
Cotopaxi	The Trees of Chasqui	Anonymous	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/in4aga
Loja	The Legacy of Matilde Hidalgo	María Mónica Loyola	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/efkdw
Loja	The Bandit of Cangonamá, Naún Briones	Eliécer Cárdenas	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/th92n
Loja	The Living Tradition of the Virgin of Cisne	Anonymous	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/342s7
Loja	The Legend of the Lovers Hanged in Loja	Anonymous	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/pkh1ht
Loja	The Mysteries of the Buried Huacas	Anonymous	https://n9.cl/myq2j	https://n9.cl/2e0fc

Authors work, 2025.

From a production perspective, the narratives from Loja were easier to adapt to the podcast format due to their rich plots and the fact that they were already well documented in both written texts and

oral tradition. In Cotopaxi, however, the process was more complex, as many of the narratives were fragmented, requiring reconstruction based on interviews with community leaders and local storytellers. This difference arises from the fact that Loja's cultural heritage has been more systematised over time, supported by established educational and cultural projects (Hormaza-Muñoz & Torres-Rodríguez, 2022).

Despite these differences, both provinces face similar challenges, such as the limited interest of younger generations in oral traditions and the need to adapt these stories for contemporary audiences. The inclusion of sound elements and dramatisation in the podcasts has been crucial in overcoming these barriers, revitalising interest in the stories and reinforcing the sense of cultural identity in both Loja and Cotopaxi.

3.2 The Role of Podcasts in Cultural Preservation

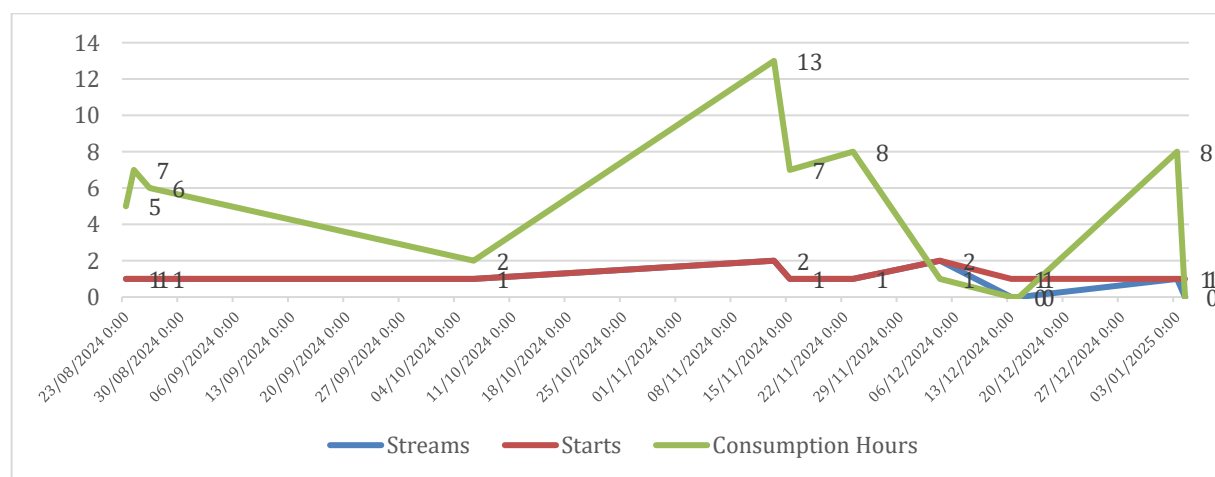
Podcasts have established themselves as an effective tool for cultural preservation, excelling in several areas. First, their digital format has made it possible to reach a diverse audience, overcoming the geographical barriers that previously limited the transmission of oral narratives. Platforms such as Spotify and Wix, used in this study, have facilitated global access to these stories, expanding their reach and relevance (Loyola, 2024).

In addition, the podcasts enriched the narrative experience through the use of music, sound effects, and the voices of local storytellers. These elements not only helped to preserve the cultural authenticity of the stories but also captured the interest of young audiences accustomed to consuming digital content. As Benítez Jerez et al. (2023, p. 7) notes, podcasts facilitate the understanding of academic content and are widely accepted by students, enabling asynchronous study.

Another key aspect was their educational impact. In Cotopaxi, for example, the episodes were incorporated into educational activities, promoting intergenerational dialogue and reflection on local cultural heritage (Almachi, 2024). This model has the potential to be replicated in other regions of the country, positioning podcasts as a versatile and sustainable medium for cultural dissemination.

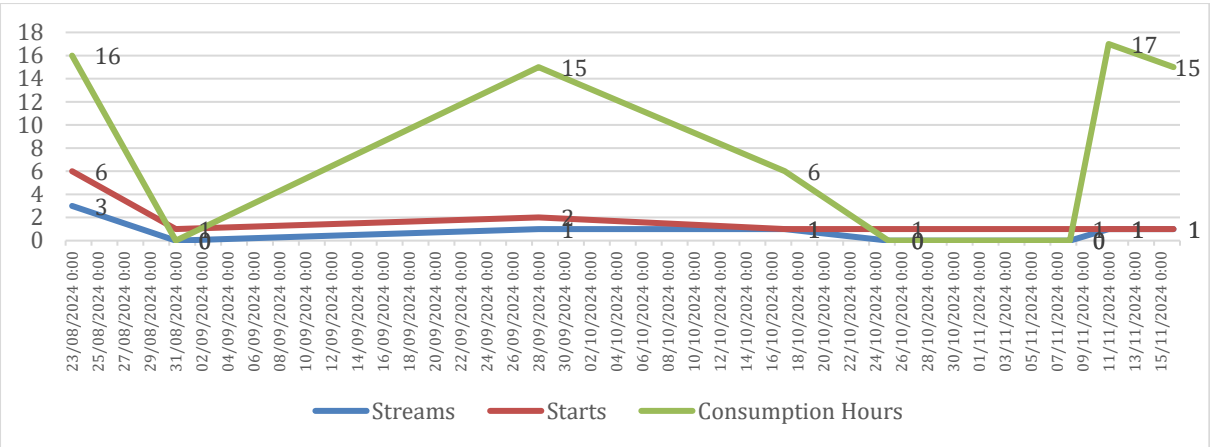
The figures below illustrate the reach achieved by some of the legends adapted into podcasts since their publication.

Figure2 . Playback level on Spotify for *The Legend of the Hanged Lovers of Loja*



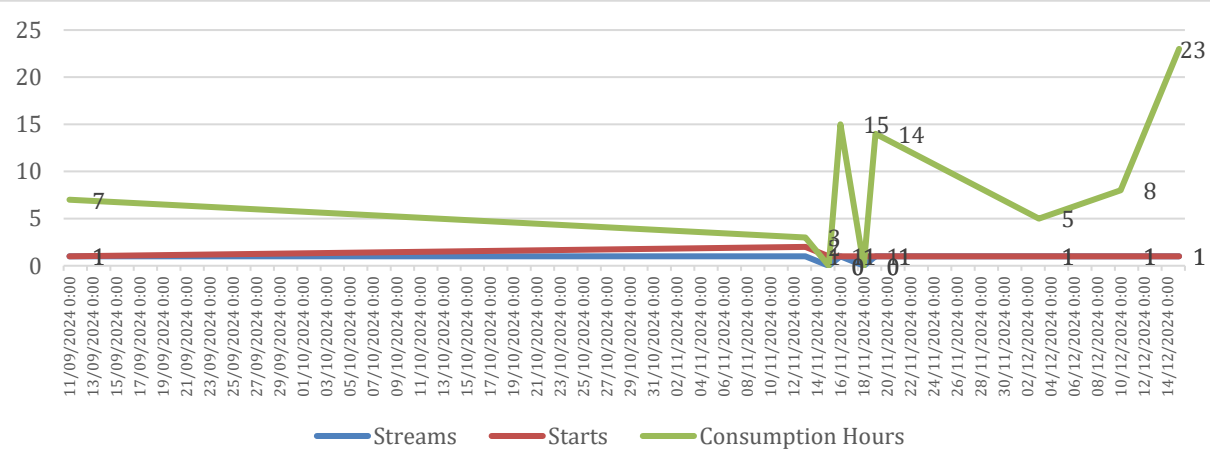
Source: Creators.spotify/RadioUTPL

Figure3 . Playback level on Spotify for *The Origin of Mama Negra*



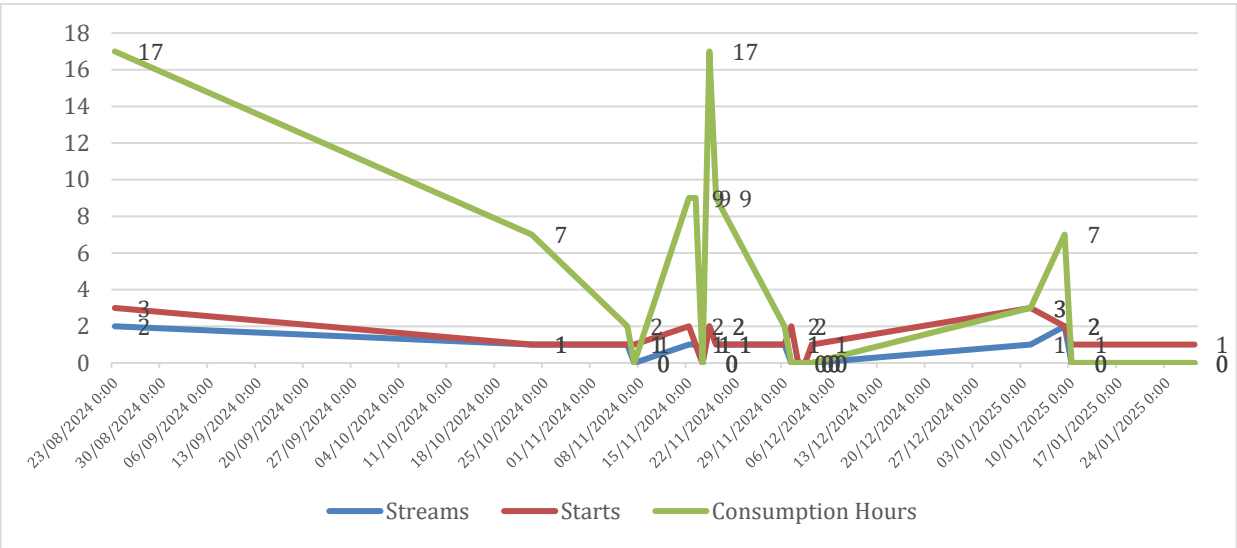
Source: Creators.spotify/RadioUTPL

Figure4 . Playback level on Spotify for *The Black Train of Yambo*



Source: Creators.spotify/RadioUTPL

Figure5 . Playback level on Spotify for *The Legacy of Matilde Hidalgo*



Source: Creators.spotify/RadioUTPL

Analysis of data obtained from Spotify shows fluctuating patterns in episode consumption, characterised by significant peaks in playback hours, while starts and complete listens remain relatively

low. This phenomenon suggests that, although the audience is limited, those who access the content demonstrate a high degree of engagement during certain periods. The variability in interaction with the episodes indicates the influence of external factors on the dissemination and reception of the podcasts, including promotion on social media, seasonality in the search for cultural content, and visibility within the platform.

The episode *El tren negro del Yambo* (*The Black Train of Yambo*) recorded the highest peak in consumption, accumulating 23 hours of playback in a single period, highlighting the relevance of this legend in the cultural imagination of the audience. The connection between the story and the geographical environment where it originates appears to be a determining factor in its appeal, as stories linked to specific physical spaces tend to generate greater interest among those with a direct relationship to those territories. Almachi (2024) notes that narratives rooted in historical and natural sites acquire symbolic meaning that transcends the anecdotal, becoming markers of identity for the communities that have transmitted them over time.

A similar trend is observed in *El origen de la Mama Negra* (*The Origin of Mama Negra*), whose consumption peaks at different times, suggesting that interest in this festival is not sporadic but rather linked to factors such as the proximity of the celebration or its incorporation into educational activities. Hormaza-Muñoz and Torres-Rodríguez (2022) emphasise that traditional festivities play a key role in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, serving as settings for the reaffirmation of collective values and beliefs.

In the case of *The Legend of the Hanged Lovers of Loja*, the relationship between reproductions and listening time indicates that, although the number of listeners is not high, those who access the episode tend to listen to it in its entirety or repeatedly. This trend underscores the relevance of the narrative within the local context, where mystical and tragic stories have endured over time. Loyola (2024) argues that Loja's oral literature is distinguished by the complexity of its stories and its ability to interweave historical and legendary elements in the same discourse. This feature helps explain the persistence of the legend in the memory of the people of Loja and its capacity to engage listeners who value this type of narrative.

The Legacy of Matilde Hidalgo exhibits greater variability in playback times, suggesting a less stable audience compared to the other episodes. The progressive increase in the number of times the story is started indicates growing interest in the figure of Matilde Hidalgo, possibly related to her historical significance and her inclusion in educational programmes. Guerrero-Salazar et al. (2021) note that the biographies of emblematic figures are valuable educational tools for teaching history and promoting civic values. The trend observed in this episode reinforces the notion that podcasts can function as a complementary resource in educational contexts, facilitating access to cultural content through formats that are both accessible and engaging for new generations.

The visibility of podcasts on digital platforms is influenced by multiple factors, including the frequency of updates, audience interaction, and inclusion in distribution networks. Chasi (2023) emphasises that the success of digital content depends not only on production quality but also on its integration into distribution circuits that amplify reach. This analysis of the episodes reveals that narratives linked to specific festivities and physical spaces generate greater consumption time, whereas those focused on historical figures demonstrate gradual growth in public interest.

The pattern of consumption, with peaks at specific times, suggests that audience engagement with content is not continuous but responds to external stimuli. Fernández (2020) argues that the consumption of cultural products in the digital age is determined by supply and demand dynamics, which depend on factors such as contextual relevance and the accessibility of content at key moments. This phenomenon indicates that podcast dissemination could benefit from strategies that capitalise on commemorative dates, cultural events, or academic initiatives to enhance their impact on the audience.

4. Discussion

The results obtained from the creation of podcasts as a tool for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage highlight the importance of orality in the transmission of collective values and knowledge. Hormaza-Muñoz and Torres-Rodríguez (2022, p. 386) emphasise that oral narratives are an essential mechanism for the continuity of traditions, as they reflect the beliefs, values and cultural identity of communities. This assertion is supported by the interviews conducted, in which Álvarez emphasizes

that “legends do not disappear over time, but rather transform and acquire new meanings depending on the social context in which they are transmitted” (personal communication, 2024). However, the reproduction patterns recorded on Spotify demonstrate that the visibility of these stories remains limited, suggesting the need for more structured dissemination strategies to ensure their access and appropriation by new generations.

The impact of oral narratives on the construction of cultural identities is evident in the way communities reinterpret these stories over time. Fernández (2020, p. 31) argues that the consumption of cultural content in digital environments depends largely on its ability to connect with the experiences and values of the audience. This perspective is corroborated by Spotify data, where episodes such as *El tren negro del Yambo* (*The Black Train of Yambo*) and *El origen de la Mama Negra* (*The Origin of Mama Negra*) exhibit significant peaks in consumption hours, indicating intermittent but sustained interest in these stories. According to Guerrero Salazar (2021, p. 45), the impact of legends and traditions is not limited to entertainment but also influences the axiological education and linguistic awareness of listeners. Incorporating these stories into educational and cultural contexts could strengthen their role in shaping identities and promoting a sense of community belonging.

The use of podcasts as a means of cultural preservation has proven to be an effective strategy for revitalising interest in traditional narratives. However, the challenges identified in the collection and adaptation of stories show that the transition from oral tradition to digital format is not without difficulties. Loyola (2024) points out that ‘the fragmentation of certain stories and the lack of systematic documentation represent an obstacle to narrative fidelity in the digitisation process’ (p. 38). This problem became evident in the interviews, where it was mentioned that some stories have undergone modifications over time, making it difficult to reconstruct their original versions. The validation of the stories through interviews with narrators and experts was essential to ensure their authenticity and avoid distortions in their adaptation to the podcast.

The relationship between tradition and technology raises questions about the sustainability of these projects over time. UNESCO (2003, p. 12) emphasises that the preservation of cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage requires transmission mechanisms that adapt to contemporary contexts without losing the essence of traditions. In this regard, podcast production must be accompanied by dissemination strategies that allow for its effective integration into the digital ecosystem. Guerrero-Salazar et al. (2021, p. 340) argue that projects to digitise intangible heritage must consider not only the production of content but also its positioning and appropriation by the audience. The low number of plays for some episodes suggests that the content is not reaching its target audience, reinforcing the need for promotional campaigns on social media, in educational institutions, and within local communities.

The findings confirm that the digitisation of oral narratives through podcasts is a viable strategy for the preservation of intangible heritage, although its success depends on multiple factors. The combination of traditional narrative elements with digital tools allows for the revitalisation of interest in these stories and the expansion of their reach, but their permanence in the collective memory requires deliberate effort in the planning and dissemination of these projects. Almachi (2024, p. 55) notes that the key to the sustainability of these efforts lies in the interaction between production, dissemination and community participation. The integration of podcasts into educational and cultural environments can strengthen their impact and ensure that these narratives continue to serve as pillars of collective identity.

5. Conclusions

Podcasts have proven to be an effective tool for preserving intangible cultural heritage, enabling oral narratives to be adapted into digital formats accessible to contemporary audiences. Their versatility allows for the incorporation of sound elements that enrich the listening experience while preserving the authenticity of the stories.

The provinces of Loja and Cotopaxi differ in the structure and documentation of their oral narratives, which influenced their adaptation to the podcast format. In Loja, the narratives were better documented and exhibited a consolidated structure, whereas in Cotopaxi greater effort was required to reconstruct the stories based on interviews and fragmented accounts.

The digitisation of these narratives through podcasts not only expands their reach but also fosters intergenerational dialogue by connecting new generations with traditional stories that might otherwise

be lost. Dissemination via platforms such as Spotify and Wix enabled these stories to reach diverse audiences, both locally and internationally.

In the field of education, podcasts have proven to be an innovative teaching strategy, promoting interactive learning and student engagement in exploring cultural heritage. In Cotopaxi, for example, episodes were incorporated into school activities, generating a positive impact on the appreciation of local traditions.

Among their main advantages, podcasts are notable for their low production cost, flexibility in adapting content, and ability to convey emotions through sound, which facilitates the listener's connection with the stories. These factors make podcasts an accessible option for cultural conservation projects in communities with limited resources.

However, the study also identified significant challenges, such as the fragmentation of certain oral narratives and the lack of prior documentation in Cotopaxi, which necessitated additional efforts to collect and validate information. Collaboration with local storytellers and cultural experts was crucial in overcoming these barriers and ensuring the accuracy of the adapted stories.

The results of this project highlight the importance of developing sustainable strategies for the preservation of intangible heritage, promoting digitisation and training initiatives in audio media that enable communities to take ownership of their narratives and disseminate them in accessible formats.

The combination of oral tradition and technology strengthens the cultural identity and sense of belonging of communities, providing a platform where their stories can be heard, valued, and shared globally.

The study's conclusions also support the notion that the media, in fulfilling their classic functions of informing, educating and entertaining, can contribute to the audiovisual literacy of their communities. The ability to interpret images and to compose messages through them is essential in the digital age, where photographs and audiovisual content predominate (Suing, 2018).

History shows that petroglyphs, icons and paintings were the earliest means of graphic expression, later complemented by writing to record human experiences across the ages. Today, with the proliferation of telecommunications and the Internet, graphic language plays an increasingly dominant role in everyday communication.

Digital social networks, advertising, television broadcasts and numerous other media present hundreds of images per minute that must be decoded to understand their meaning and intended messages. It is therefore necessary to develop the ability to contextualise audiovisuals and to express opinions using the same codes in which they are conveyed.

The twentieth century, through photography, film and television, represents an audiovisual period par excellence, initiating a stage of democratisation of the image. Electronic inventions for producing moving images allowed many cultures to create content based on their own experiences and realities. Although this content may not have been part of the American star system, it enabled the creation of knowledge archives rooted in local contexts.

Culture, understood as the way of life and artistic expression of a given era, gains new significance in the audiovisual realm, encompassing the expressions of different communities recorded in sound and visual media. More importantly, it defines the relationships between people facilitated by media. Audiovisual archives become historical documents that, over time, form part of humanity's heritage, so much so that UNESCO classifies them as Memory of the World.

Critical reading of images, the ability to create messages, respect for individual rights, and free access to digital platforms to participate in audiovisual narratives are all components of a culture fostered in classrooms that prepares young people for the new millennium. Equally, it is essential for individuals to know and utilise tools that support the construction of personal and collective identity.

Given the above, it is crucial to maintain and strengthen audiovisual literacy initiatives. Whereas educational authorities once encouraged newspapers to include books in their pages, there is now a need for websites and digital platforms that teach storytelling through images.

The findings of this study provide a foundation for future research on the digitisation of cultural heritage in diverse contexts, offering opportunities to explore new methodologies and formats for preserving collective memory in the digital age.

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