

A hype or here to stay? How and why companies use podcasting as a
Content Marketing tool
An exploratory study on the use of corporate podcasts

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A HYPE OR HERE TO STAY? HOW AND WHY COMPANIES USE PODCASTING AS A CONTENT MARKETING TOOL

ABSTRACT

With the rapid growth of podcasts over the past few years, the medium has not only gained attention from the public, but also from marketers. An increasing number of companies are including podcasts in their content marketing strategies, whether as a medium to advertise in, to sponsor or to produce themselves. Although more and more companies are releasing their own corporate podcasts, little research has been done into the use of this medium and what drives marketers in the creation of this audio content. The purpose of this study is to gain more insight into this phenomenon and to map out how and why corporate podcasts are currently used in light of the six elements for effective Content Marketing identified by Du Plessis (2015).

In so doing, this study attempts to contribute to the field of knowledge surrounding corporate podcasts and to provide more insight for professionals in the field in the creation of their podcast content. The research question that will be answered in this study is: How and why are corporate podcasts used as a Content Marketing tool?

Through a qualitative mixed-methods approach using two types of data, both in-depth interviews with experts in the field and their corporate podcasts, a thematic content analysis was carried out in this study. From the data, 13 parameters with corresponding key questions were formed that marketers need to answer when they want to implement corporate podcasting as a tool within their Content Marketing plan. Furthermore, the results of the research showed that marketers have mainly used corporate podcasting in recent years as an experiment, driven by personal interest and changing media consumption of the audience. This experimental nature and lack of expectation sometimes resulted in little strategy behind the podcast in terms of implementation with other content from their calendar and the customer journey for listeners. In general, marketers are convinced that a minimum brand exposure in this medium is sufficient to achieve a positive effect on brand image, although the data showed that this depends on the choice of format. Although conversational podcasts currently account for most of the market, the future of corporate podcasting may call for more creative development of content towards storytelling and other formats.

KEYWORDS: *Content Marketing, corporate podcasting, podcast marketing, mixed-methods, in-depth interviews, thematic content analysis*

Table of contents

Abstract	2
Preface	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Theoretical framework	9
2.1 Podcasting	9
2.1.1 Why, where & when do people listen to podcasts?	10
2.1.2 Hosts and brand relationships	11
2.1.3 Advertisement	12
2.2 Content Marketing	13
2.2.1 Six elements of Content Marketing	14
3. Methodology	17
3.1 Research method	17
3.1.1 In-depth interviews	18
3.1.2 Corporate podcasts	19
3.2 Data collection and sampling	19
3.2.1 Sampling criteria	19
3.2.2 Data collection	20
3.3 Operationalization	22
3.3.1 Coding framework	23
3.4 Data analysis	25
3.5 Limitations and credibility	26
4. Results	28
4.1 Medium element	29
4.2 Strategic element	31
4.3 Formation element	35
4.4 Intrinsic element	39
4.5 Communication element	44
4.6 Corollary element	46
5. Conclusion	50
5.1 Why are podcasts used as CM tool?	50
5.2 How are podcasts used as CM tool?	51
5.3 Implications for the future	52

References	55
Appendix A	61
Appendix B	62
Appendix C	64
Appendix D	68

Preface

Somewhere at the beginning of this academic year, I was sitting on the train on my way to the Erasmus University campus listening to a podcast with a sponsored feature, when I realised that podcasting truly has become a booming platform for companies in recent years. I started thinking about all the companies that have released corporate podcasts in the last two years and why companies would choose to do so. Is this simply a case of 'everyone has one so we should have one too' or is there a real future for marketing in this? And besides, has any research ever been done into what this actually contributes to brand image?

With these questions in mind, I started to read up on corporate podcasting and think about what I could explore in this field. Both from the creators' and the listeners' sides. With this research, I hope to be able to contribute to the existing knowledge about corporate podcasting and provide whoever reads this with new information and inspiration.

First of all, I would like to express my special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Marlen Komorowski for the pleasant and helpful guidance during the writing of this thesis. Furthermore, this research could never have been completed without the kind experts who were willing to take the time to answer all my questions and to share with me their professional and personal views on podcasts and their industry. Thank you for the pleasant and interesting conversations I had the opportunity to have with you. And finally, my big thanks to my friends and family for their support and all the time they have put into reviewing my work, now and in all the previous years of my studies.

I hope you enjoy reading this study as much as I like this topic.

Pim Duteweert

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1. Introduction

It has become almost impossible to imagine our daily media consumption behaviour without them: podcasts. During household tasks, travelling or daily walks in times of the COVID-19 pandemic; podcasts have established themselves in the rich media landscape in recent years (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022). In the last decade, the number of podcast listeners has grown rapidly. In 2019, 28% of the Dutch population aged 16 and older occasionally listened to a podcast but by the end of 2020, this figure had already risen to 44%. Among students this percentage is even higher, as 73% regularly listen to a podcast (Markteffect, 2021). Podcasting is also shown to be one of the biggest growing media in the US, with the emergence of content formats that address consumers' all informational, emotional and behavioural needs (Vilceanu et al., 2021).

This has not gone unnoticed in the marketing industry either. In 2021, marketers spent around 1.33 billion dollars on podcast advertising and this is expected to continue to grow in the coming years, reaching an expected 2.74 billion in 2025 (Lin, 2021). Companies are noticing the marketing potential and growing audience around podcasting and how this is changing the competitive landscape in existing market structures (Chang & Cevher, 2007; Llinares et al., 2018). Not only as a medium to advertise in, but also to use as a Content Marketing tool within one's marketing strategy.

As such, Dutch airline KLM was one of the first major companies in the Netherlands to launch their podcast 'The Journey' in 2018, aiming to create more brand awareness in their foreign markets (Stil, 2018). The podcast, which tells true stories about people and the journey that changed their lives forever, received worldwide media attention and received several awards (BORN05, n.d). Other leading brands that have released their own podcasts in recent years include Nike and Red Bull, as well as the Dutch supermarket chain Albert Heijn (Bartelds, 2019). The medium has attracted attention, according to Marx et al. (2021), because it allows both individual creators as well as these larger companies to establish a direct line to stakeholders, is easy to distribute via social media and, with its rather personal and authentic nature, can create a sense of connectivity and intimacy between the podcaster and the recipient.

Research over the last years has shown that the tools of traditional outbound marketing, in the form of advertising mails, telemarketing and TV ads, have lost their power as the choice of exposure has shifted more towards the recipient (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). As Hunter (2021) argues, consumers want to be approached in an authentic and less intrusive way, which has created a new marketing strategy of inbound marketing. Content Marketing is a big part of this and has evolved as a form of marketing that includes valuable, relevant and consistent content, which is less driven by the explicit intention to sell and more by the aim to attract potential buyers (Lögberg & Wahlqvist, 2020).

Podcasting is one of the tools that have come to light as part of content marketing strategies, as it allows companies to communicate with their stakeholders in a fast and easy way (Chang & Cevher, 2007).

It embodies a clear example of 'pull' communication, as it is after all the listener who deliberately starts and pauses a podcast (Vilceanu et al., 2021). As such, companies create their own corporate podcasts, which focus on topics related to their service or product, in the form of conversations or expert interviews for example (Rowles & Rogers, 2019). In the 'noise' of content available today, from blog posts to YouTube and TikTok videos, podcasts, according to Rowles and Rogers (2019), can occupy a unique role because of their large difference in consumption compared to other forms of online content. We listen to them on the move, rather than looking at a screen, and engage with them for longer than, say, a video or blog post. In addition, podcasts generally run as a series over several episodes, so we tend to keep listening to them for a longer period. This different consumption pattern creates room for a potentially major impact on the effectiveness of podcasts in a marketing context, Rowles and Rogers argue (2019).

Nevertheless, very little is known about how to use this emerging technology in terms of its integration into established marketing efforts and what both strategic and content considerations companies face when using podcasting as a marketing tool (Chang & Cevher, 2007; Hunter, 2021). Is this use partly driven by the 'hype' that podcasting brings or can podcasting become a strongly established player in the marketing world?

Previous research has discussed podcasting in different contexts, such as education (Celaya et al., 2019; Evans, 2008), health (Bonixie, 2021; Turner-McGrievy et al., 2013) and internal communication (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Furthermore, an increasing amount of scientific and practical research is being done into the use of podcasts in relation to advertising, among others by means of a pre-roll advertisement or a processed host-read (Stoll et al., 2021). Hunter (2021) and Katz (2018) found, for example, that podcasting is characterised by its high level of attention and the possibility to reach a specific target group compared to other media, and thus potentially offers unique advertising opportunities.

However, little academic research has focused on the use of corporate podcasts as a Content Marketing tool by companies themselves. Therefore, this study attempts to address this lack of research on podcasts in a Content Marketing context, by examining the rationale for and implementation of corporate podcasting in a Content Marketing strategy. The objective is, through a qualitative exploratory research approach, not only to add to the academic literature on corporate podcasting, but to provide a practical guide that marketers can use when implementing a podcast in their Content Marketing strategy. Therefore, we pose the following research question: *How and why are podcasts used as a Content Marketing tool by companies?*

This study begins with an overview of the current academic literature on podcasting and Content Marketing in general. In addition, a theoretical framework with six elements for successful implementation of Content Marketing is presented, from where corporate podcasting will be explored in

this research. Next, the methodological approach will be described, elaborating on the qualitative mixed-methods approach in which both in-depth interviews with experts from the field and corporate podcast content will be analysed using a Thematic Content Analysis. The results section presents the findings on how corporate podcasting is currently used and the motivations and choices behind it, following the six elements of the framework mentioned earlier. A suggestion for a new practical framework for marketers to implement corporate podcasting in their Content Marketing strategy will also be presented here. Finally, the findings and the presented framework for the implementation of corporate podcasting will be summarised and discussed, from which suggestions for future research in this field will be given.

2. Theoretical framework

In the following sections, the concept of *podcasts* will be thoroughly explained to clarify the specific characteristics of this medium and the way it is used. To gain an insight into how podcasts can be part of a marketing strategy, the concept of *Content Marketing* is then discussed further, focusing specifically on the six-element model for Content Marketing by Du Plessis (2015).

2.1 Podcasting

The concept of "podcast" was first mentioned by Guardian columnist and BBC journalist Ben Hammersley, as a fusion of the term "broadcast" and Apple's "iPod", the gadget that enabled the growth of this type of audio media (Lögberg & Wahlqvist, 2020; Shim et al., 2006). The concept is defined by Waddingham et al. (2020) as "...a series of audio files available for download over the internet. Its format is similar to traditional long-form content like talk shows and documentaries, but listeners can tune in when it is convenient instead of a set show time" (p. 276). The podcast format has many different types of content: from political stories to psychological advice and travel reports.

Since podcasts can be streamed online and accessed by download at any time from various devices and are often (almost) free of charge because of the dependence on advertising and sponsorship, Samuel-Azran et al. (2019) argue that they can be seen as a form of radio on demand. As a development from radio, according to Vilceanu et al. (2021), podcasting still shares similarities with this medium in terms of low production costs, portability and the lack of visual stimulus compared to other modern media. This is one of the reasons why it is a potentially interesting medium to invest in. It requires less complete attention from the recipient than reading other forms of media (Lögberg & Wahlqvist, 2020), which makes podcasts not very directly compete with other forms of media, Etmüller (2021) states. In this way, Perks et al. (2019) argue that the platform of a podcast offers a constellation of possibilities that build on past and present (traditional) media, while also bringing in some unique and emergent features of its own.

In addition, podcasts can cause listeners to engage on a higher emotional level and build a higher level of trust, as Lögberg and Wahlqvist (2020) state that listening to a person creates a more intimate connection than reading a blog post or text from them. Therefore, more companies are starting their own podcasts for branding purposes, as part of their content marketing strategy. In these corporate podcasts, of which the senders are thus companies or brands, companies often address topics related to their product or service (Etmüller, 2021). This audio content is delivered to consumers in a series of interlinked episodes, which can be played together as part of a podcast show. A podcast, therefore, refers to the full number of episodes under a particular name, over a longer period (Etmüller, 2021).

Because of the wide variety of different shows, according to Etmüller (2021), podcasts have established themselves as a hyper-personalised, popular niche medium. Earlier research argued that they provide an opportunity to connect with others in the world, hear their personal stories and learn new insights at a time of one's choosing, conveyed in a setting that feels intimate (Llinares et al. 2018). Samuel-Azran et al. (2019) state that another characteristic of podcasts is that they allow for two-way interaction, creating the possibility for the audience to be part of the content creation process (Chang & Cevher, 2007; Etmüller, 2021). Listeners can, for example, contribute through questions submitted or comments made on other social media, which are highlighted and answered by the host. According to Etmüller (2021), this creates certain proximity between the listener and the host.

In order to establish this proximity and make effective connections with a target audience, Chang and Cevher (2007) argue that one of the key points of podcasting is to categorise content. According to Samuel-Azran et al. (2019), listeners seek media input in which they can be absorbed by more serious and substantive content that serves their specific needs and interests, which are often not met by other media.

Several studies of podcast listeners have shown that this group, the majority of which are men, consists largely of young, well-educated people with a high socio-economic status (*De Podcastluisteraar in Cijfers*, 2021; Perks et al., 2019; Samuel-Azran et al., 2019). With the strong increase in listeners in recent years (Markteffect, 2021) and the specific segment of the population that comprises podcast listeners, this has become an attractive target group for marketers and advertisers to capitalise on and learn more about (Perks et al., 2019).

2.1.1. Why, where & when do people listen to podcasts?

But what makes people listen to podcasts? According to Vilceanu et al. (2021), this is largely due to the flexibility of the medium in terms of where and when it is consumed. It effortlessly overlaps our daily activities and integrates well into our media consumption patterns and needs, Perks et al. (2019) argue. Additionally, this form of content provides an opportunity to combine and curate purposes such as learning, entertainment and work companionship into one, while performing other activities such as driving, sports, etcetera. Because of the option to play and pause a podcast at any time, thus giving the listener control over whether or not to listen to an episode in its entirety, Vilceanu et al. (2021) state that the medium can be seen as 'snack-like' content.

As Koob (2021) argues, based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, consumers look for media that fulfil their needs, such as being entertained or educated. Because of the more in-depth, explanatory and useful nature of podcasts compared to traditional media, according to Vilceanu et al. (2021), podcasts have the potential to meet these needs well. Samuel-Azran et al. (2019) found in their research among Israeli podcast listeners that the cognitive need to gain knowledge; the social need to spread this

knowledge and recommendations for podcasts among friends and thereby act as an opinion leader; and the need to be entertained are the greatest uses and gratifications of people for listening to podcasts. This largely overlaps with the scale for uses and gratifications for podcast listening developed by Perks et al. (2019) in their research. Their scale items convincingly showed that listeners are primarily looking for something unique and new in the form of new knowledge, intriguing entertainment and novel stories from people other than themselves. Moreover, they similarly found that, although listening to podcasts is an individual experience, it is associated with a social gratification to tell others about a listening experience and listen to what has been shared by others (Perks et al., 2019). According to Vilceanu et al. (2021), this is also the most important way in which listeners come to a podcast, as 80% of their respondents said that they choose new podcasts based on recommendations from friends or family.

However, Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) also found in their survey research that the consumption of podcasts is dynamic and that users listen in different settings for different reasons and needs to be fulfilled. For example, listeners who listen at home more often have a more individualized, cognitive need to listen to something informative than listeners who listen to podcasts 'on the go' and are more often looking for escapism and entertainment. The latter refers more to the advantages of the medium in terms of content, mobility and the control to escape and socialise. They argue that marketers should take this into account when developing marketing strategies around podcasting, as it affects consumer targeting and content development. In meeting these different needs, the setting and formatting of the podcast therefore play an essential role and thus so does the choice of the story's 'narrator': the host.

2.1.2. Hosts and brand relationships

Hosts play an essential role in the generation of a high level of emotional engagement amongst listeners, as the research by Marx et al. (2021) showed. They found that listening to podcasts feels like an "illusion of companionship" to listeners, whereby a higher degree of sharing of personal information by hosts created a greater Parasocial Interaction (PSI) among listeners, resulting in more backchannel responses such as subscribing. Furthermore, Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) also found that the degree of identification with the host has behavioural consequences for the listener, thus making the connection between listeners and their programmes important for marketing communications within the medium.

According to Swiatek (2018), it is not only the content discussed but also the personal setting of a conversation and the 'sonically generated relationality' of podcasting that gives listeners an impression of immediacy and closeness. This makes podcasting a communication tool that generates a sense of intimacy with the listener, despite the physical distance between them and the podcaster(s). This intimate nature of podcasts also makes it an interesting medium for brands, as it allows them to build up a loyal brand relationship with recipients through direct means (Chang & Cevher, 2007; Swiatek, 2018).

In previous research, Labrecque (2014) already argued that openness in corporate communication, through sharing seemingly personal details and creating the sense of a one-to-one relationship, should be pursued to positively foster the PSI experience of consumers. They argue that this ultimately strengthens the relationship between the consumer and the brand and thus also the loyalty intentions. Furthermore, podcasting gives the creator complete control over the type of content that is shared (Hunter, 2021), is low-cost and, according to Vilceanu et al. (2021), provides the opportunity for call-for-action that invites listeners to contribute to the growth of a brand. Previous research has shown that podcasts also have the ability to make listeners engage over a longer period, as the standard format often runs over a period of several episodes (Rowles & Rogers, 2019) and offers listeners the opportunity to subscribe to their show (Chang & Cevher, 2007). These characteristics make it an interesting medium for advertisers, Vilceanu et al. (2021) state.

2.1.3. Advertisement

Despite recent research showing that podcast listeners show high levels of engagement and supportiveness (Katz, 2018), with 80 to 90% of content typically getting across to the recipient, there has been little scientific research into its effectiveness for brands. Chang and Cevher (2007) note that this is partly because it is a relatively new phenomenon and it is a difficult task to measure the actual numbers and demographics of listeners.

Existing research on podcasts focuses mainly on advertisements integrated into an existing podcast concept or how to market podcasts, rather than using podcasts as a marketing tool itself (Hunter, 2021).

For example, Chang and Cevher (2007) state in their research that podcasts are especially interesting to collaborate with for marketing purposes because of the highly segmented and specific audience it attracts. This makes it easy for companies to reach a specific target group and apply different highly personalised advertisements to different audiences, which offers marketers the opportunity to respond to the different needs of their segmented target group. They argue that this applies in particular to promoting products or services to young people, as the majority of podcast users are relatively young and more likely to be influencers in their social environment. Furthermore, Etmüller (2021) found in her research on advertisements in podcasts that a high degree of both thematic and image congruence between the promoted brand and the podcast has a significant positive influence on attitudes towards the brand, which thus positively influences advertising effectiveness.

Other studies also looked at the added value that podcasts could have for the internal communication strategy within a company. According to Cangialosi (2008, cited in Etmüller, 2021), this medium can be used successfully to inform the employees about developments and corporate vision, and thus integrate them more successfully into the company. In addition, podcasts, together with a corporate

website, for example, are a good complement of pull media to other forms of (often used) internal push media such as newsletters. In this way, Welch and Jackson (2007) suggest, each employee can be provided with the type of corporate media that he or she prefers, thereby reaching a larger group of employees.

However, when we look at the role of podcasts in an external communication strategy, the medium is primarily used in a marketing context. Besides the opportunity to advertise in other productions, companies are creating their own corporate podcasts as a tool within their Content Marketing strategy. The next section looks at this in more detail.

2.2 Content Marketing

With growing skepticism towards traditional ways of advertising, social media has paved the way for Content Marketing (CM) as its counterpart, Koob (2021) states. According to Koob (2021), CM can be seen as “a set of specific activities, consisting of content marketing strategy, content production, content distribution, content promotion, performance measurement and content marketing organization” (p. 2). CM is referred to as digital media with a focus shift from selling and 'push' communication in traditional advertising, to helping and providing valuable content, so-called 'pull' communication (Ho et al., 2020; Koob, 2021; Lögdberg & Wahlqvist, 2020). According to Koob (2021), the idea behind CM is that, through the social exchange of valuable content to a target group from a company, this will be rewarded with positive attitudes, the strengthening of brand trust and related behaviour. As Baltes (2015) states, CM is about what a company creates and shares to tell its story to the audience, giving an impression of what it stands for and what its brand values are. Therefore, she argues, brand values should always form the core of CM content.

According to Lögdberg and Wahlqvist (2020), in CM, marketers are constantly looking for new opportunities and platforms to reach customers and provide them with valuable content that the consumer chooses to be a part of rather than be "disturbed" by. As Koob (2021) points out, CM can only be effective if companies are alert to the platform preferences and media usage of their target audience, so that they can adapt their channels accordingly. The content shown on it can include livestreaming, news, informative guides and therefore also podcasting (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Moreover, Koob (2021) states that content marketing practitioners should systematically evaluate and optimise the content value for the consumer, putting the needs of the audience first without losing sight of the company's communication objectives. He argues that companies should not compromise on the journalistic quality of content but should instead strive for content that excels in terms of journalistic elements such as narratives, originality, variety of standpoints, accuracy, understandability or conformity with ethical principles. The content that is consumed can thus be seen in itself as the product or service

that is offered, whereby the value that this content brings can lead to deeper relational engagement, according to Ho et al. (2020).

This ties in well with the concept of experiential marketing, which is described by Muthiah and Suja (2013) as a form of marketing in which companies have moved away from traditional "features-and-benefits" marketing to creating memorable experiences for their customers. They argued that companies today should try to make a long-lasting impression on their audience by providing a pleasurable and memorable experience. This can include an entertainment experience, an educational experience, a communication experience or, for example, a product appearance. Earlier research showed that his personal and memorable experience ensures that the consumer remembers it more often and in a positive way, which in turn leads them to share it with relatives through word of mouth (Muthiah & Suja, 2013). Perks et al. (2019) argue that podcasts can be seen as a valuable tool for leaving an enjoyable and memorable experience with the customer, because, due to the more meaningful content, they can respond well to the uses and gratifications of podcast listeners and thus lead to a positive entertainment or educational experience. Furthermore, Ettmüller (2021) argues that the fundamentally different characteristics of podcasts can contribute to the challenge for marketers to circumvent the aversion and irritation that audiences have developed to (the overload of) advertising today (Kirmani, 1997).

2.2.1. Six elements of Content Marketing

For successful CM implementation, Koob (2021) argues that companies need to keep moving with the platforms their audience prefers, thereby activating the higher levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement of customers. According to Du Plessis (2015), brand content is best communicated when brand messages are linked to the persona and tone of voice of the brand. In her research, Du Plessis (2015) proposed a model with six elements she identified as essential elements for the interpretation of CM. This model (Table 1), based on existing literature that defines CM, shows a clear understanding of how CM can be effectively implemented in companies' general marketing strategies.

The first element that she identified is the *medium element*, which refers to the nature of the platform. This element mainly revolves around the careful considerations that are made when using different platforms to publish content on, taking into account functionality, interactivity, credibility and suitability, among other things. Because most companies work with different social networking sites, the activity of the intended target group on certain platforms and the usually visually appealing approach of most platforms today should be considered here.

The second element defined in the six-element model is the *strategic element*, which mainly revolves around the strategic approach to be taken when creating content. Du Plessis (2015) argued that

companies need to think about the purpose of the content, how to integrate it into the existing brand strategy in a consistent way and how to attract customers without being intrusive.

The third element, the *formation element*, focuses on the construction of content. This element concerns all the considerations surrounding the creation of the content, the chosen narrative elements and the level of engagement. It focuses on establishing the story around a brand, both through the content itself and its co-creation by consumers.

The fourth element defined by Du Plessis (2015) is the *intrinsic element*, which mainly refers to the natural aspect of the content in the broader 'picture' of the brand. The brand content should fit logically into the daily (online) conversations of consumers about the brand. This ensures that the brand is perceived as part of the consumer's daily life, which should create a familiar brand 'voice' and familiarity, making recipients more receptive to subtle brand messages. In other words, the content must fit into the usual message and communication style of the CM strategy being used and the recipient must initiate themselves to engage in an online conversation around the brand.

The fifth element of the model is the *communication element*, which concerns which techniques are used to get the message across to the receiver. This involves choices about the presence of elements such as entertainment, education, information, usefulness and quality, and how these should be scaled to the level of the recipient's needs. According to Koob (2021), an important element of CM is that brands must provide content that is of value to the recipient, but this can be done in different ways: valuable in providing entertainment or, for example, in providing new insights.

Finally, Du Plessis's (2015) model has a sixth element, the *corollary element*, which focuses on the desired outcome of the content. This element is about what the audience should ideally do with the received content after consuming it, for example by sharing and co-creating content, and thus by changing behaviour towards the brand or generating online traffic to a webshop. Section 3.3 will further discuss how these six elements relate to corporate podcasts as a tool within a Content Marketing strategy (Table 4).

Table 1: Schematic overview of the six elements for Content Marketing by Du Plessis (2015, p. 125)

Main elements	Subject	Description
Medium element	Nature of the platform for the content	Consideration of the most suitable platform.
Strategic element	The strategic approach to developing content	The content's purpose, consistency, integration, etcetera.
Formation element	The construction of the content	Decisions about the form,

		engagement and narrative elements.
Intrinsic element	Nature occurrence of the content	Content as part of consumers' usual conversations about the brand.
Communication element	The technique(s) used to convey the content	Approach of communicating the content to the target audience, fulfilling their needs.
Corollary element	The anticipated outcome of the content	Ideal responses from the audience to the content.

3. Methodology

This study attempts to answer the following research question: *How and why are corporate podcasts used as a Content Marketing tool by companies?* Since corporate podcasting as a CM tool has not yet been researched before, this study aims to get the most insight into why podcasts are used in a marketing context and how this is done by drawing on a qualitative mixed-method approach using two different types of data. The first stream of data that is taken for this study is obtained through in-depth interviews with (Content) Marketing managers or other marketing-focused employees of Dutch companies that broadcast a podcast. Secondly, the content of the existing corporate podcasts those marketing professionals have worked on was taken for this study. This data was analysed utilizing a qualitative thematic content analysis, which will be further described in the coming section.

3.1 Research method

To obtain more insight into the 'why' and 'how' of the strategic CM decisions that companies make, research by means of a qualitative mixed-methods approach using two forms of data collection, namely in-depth interviews and content analysis, is considered a fitting methodological approach. In addition, as the use of podcasts as a CM tool has not been researched before, this research will have an exploratory character. This is because an explorative approach uncovers new grounds and provides the first insights into this research topic (Babbie, 2015). Exploratory mixed-method designs are useful for deepening and further exploring studied phenomena that are relatively unknown (Harrison & Reilly, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative research methods are well suited to uncover the meaning-making process and explore the underlying meaning behind a particular topic or phenomenon in its natural setting (Babbie, 2015).

Earlier similar qualitative research into advertising in podcasts by Chang and Cevher (2007) was carried out by means of literature surveys and interviews with experts to paint the best possible picture of the innovation of podcast technology in a marketing context. Furthermore, Lögberg and Wahlqvist (2020) conducted a qualitative case study by means of in-depth interviews among five Swedish B2B companies that are applying corporate podcasting. Both studies, as in line with this research, opted for this approach because of the relatively new phenomenon they studied.

However, as Chang and Cevher (2007) mentioned in their study, the interview data from their research mainly allowed them to describe thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon and not direct observations. This research, therefore, takes this a step further by carrying out a content analysis on the actual podcasts of the interviewees in addition to the interview data, to be able to look beyond the emotions and experiences of the experts. In the light of this paper, a qualitative approach can give us an

insight into the intentions, motivations and opinions of marketing professionals to implement a podcast in a content marketing strategy, as well as a look at a more practical implementation of this in practice.

According to Boeije (2010), there are three important principles behind qualitative research. Firstly, it is based on the principle of constant comparison, with the aim of being able to describe the variation found within a certain phenomenon (p. 83). Secondly, it is about analytical induction, whereby you as a researcher always strive for the most appropriate theoretical structuring of the research material in order to constitute a narrative in your data. The third principle is theoretical sensitivity, which is about the researcher's ability to look at the data through a certain analytical lens and extract themes from it.

3.1.1 In-depth interviews

The first method of data collection for this qualitative study involved in-depth interviews with experts in the field of (content) marketing who had been involved in a corporate or sponsored podcast. In-depth interviews were chosen as it is a convenient way to gain a deeper understanding of an individual in certain specific scenarios (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). This includes a participant's view of certain everyday events, activities or understandings, including views on work-related actions and choices (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Hunter, 2021). Moreover, interviews are characterised by an interactive structure that allows for eliciting questions, finding out what is really at stake and gathering information about what is not directly observable (Babbie, 2015). In addition, in-depth interviews are one of the most common ways in qualitative research to answer 'why' and 'how' questions (Babbie, 2015). *Why* do companies choose to start a podcast? *Why* is the content discussed in them chosen? *How* does the content contribute to the overall 'brand' voice of a company?

Particularly, semi-structured interviews are considered a suitable format for conducting interviews because it leaves enough room for participants to elaborate on related topics that are interesting in the light of the research question but keep the interview within the framework of the research (Collis & Hussey, 2013). Interviews with experts in the field can provide a unique and reflective insight into the topic of this paper (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001), thus showing their professional understanding of why companies adopt corporate podcasting within their marketing strategy and how they do this.

In light of the research question, the 'why' will mainly be answered by the data collected through in-depth interviews. Furthermore, the interviews will also provide a good informative basis on 'how' this is done specifically and what drives the content choices of podcasts. This information is not only interesting in itself, but also in the light of the analysis of corporate podcasts, which allowed a further examination of how these statements from interviews emerge in practice and whether broader patterns can be discovered in them.

3.1.2. Corporate podcast content

The second method of data collection concerned the audio content of the corporate or sponsored podcasts belonging to the Dutch companies whose marketing professionals were interviewed. This form of data was chosen because content analysis lends itself not only to verbal content, but also to non-verbal and more complex content such as audio design elements (Wheeler, 1988). Furthermore, by adding a second form of data the research creates more possibilities to study the issues and practical elaboration of a phenomenon in the field more thoroughly (Schram, 2014). By adding the content of corporate podcasts to the content analysis, the insights and comments of marketing professionals obtained through in-depth interviews can be substantiated in practice and additional observations can be identified.

In combination with the in-depth interviews, which mainly dealt with the strategic considerations surrounding the use of podcasts as a CM tool, the content analysis of the podcasts will give a more in-depth overview of 'how' the content is implemented. This mainly relates to the formation, intrinsic and communication elements of Du Plessis's (2015) six-element model.

3.2 Data collection and sampling

3.2.1. Sampling criteria

To provide an answer to the research question, in this study 5 in-depth interviews were held with (Content) Marketing managers of Dutch companies with a podcast. By means of a purposive sampling method, a list of possible companies to approach was drawn up based on Spotify lists of Dutch podcasts and portfolios on websites of podcast agencies. Suitable companies should first of all be private companies that sell goods or services. This is because these companies operate with a profit motive, to which a marketing strategy should ideally contribute. These companies and marketing strategies are likely to be driven by different goals than public organisations.

To get the best overall picture of the process and drivers behind podcasting as part of a CM strategy for companies at any level, it was aimed to conduct interviews among a diverse selection of companies in terms of industry and size. They must all have broadcast or co-created a corporate podcast series with at least three episodes in the last three years that can be listened to by external audiences via streaming platforms Spotify, Apple Podcast and Google Podcast. Via e-mail, LinkedIn and personal connections with the companies in question, a request was then made for an opportunity to interview a (Content) Marketing manager or employee who is or was involved in the production of the podcast. Sampling criteria for these interviewees were as follows: they have been actively involved in the design and creative development of the podcast, they are aware of the production and content decisions that have been made regarding the podcast and they are actively involved in the company's broader (content) marketing strategy.

In addition, the 5 podcasts of those companies were selected for the content analysis. For all podcasts, several episodes spread over multiple seasons were listened to, in order to explore whether there were any major format changes over time. Because the differences for each podcast turned out to be minimal, it was decided to select one episode per series as a unit of analysis. This will give a good picture of the overall content choices made by the companies when creating the podcast and will identify the different approaches used. An overview of the companies and their podcasts that were used can be found in Table 3.

3.2.2. Data collection

For this study, 5 semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with experts from the field (Table 2). The interviews were conducted in the period from April to May 2022 via Zoom and lasted between 45 and 65 minutes. Zoom's recording function made it possible to record the audio for later transcription. As the participants of the interviews all had Dutch as their mother tongue, as well as the researcher, all interviews were conducted in Dutch. This was because it was assumed that participants could express themselves more freely and provide more in-depth and detailed information. After the interview, the conversations were thus transcribed into Dutch after which they were translated into English.

Interviewees were sent the informed consent form prior to the interview so that they had the opportunity to read it before starting the interview. In addition, the key points of the informed consent were repeated by the researcher at the beginning of each interview, along with a brief introduction about the researcher and the study itself. All participants hereby also verbally agreed to allow the making of audio recordings and the use of their data. After this, the interview started with an icebreaker, in which the interviewee was asked to briefly introduce themselves (Marvasti, 2012).

Table 2: *Specifications of interviewees*

Interviewee	Job position	Gender
Interviewee 1	Former, in-house, senior marketer	Female
Interviewee 2	In-house, senior project manager	Female
Interviewee 3	In-house, employer branding communications- and event coordinator	Female
Interviewee 4	External, content manager	Male
Interviewee 5	Entrepreneur (sports psychologist)	Male

The second form of data, namely the corporate podcasts that the interviewees are (or have been) involved with (Table 3), was collected via Spotify. In all cases, the podcast episode analysed for each company was the first episode of the first season. This was because in most cases the first episode presented a clear introduction to both the format and the host, which provided the most information for the analysis. The language of the selected podcasts was Dutch, thus all podcasts were transcribed verbatim in Dutch after which they were translated into English. Audio design elements such as music and sound effects were included in the transcripts. A more extensive overview of the podcasts and their synopsis can be found in appendix A.

Table 3: *Specifications of analysed podcasts*

Company	Branche	Average length of episodes	Topic
Company 1	Telecommunications- and ICT services	45 minutes	A podcast series for entrepreneurs, in which the host talks to entrepreneurs about everything to do with entrepreneurship, about success and failure.
Company 2	Lottery	15 minutes	In this podcast, the host asks experts from museums about their personal top piece from the collection.
Company 3	Public transport carrier	25 minutes	In this podcast series, the host delves into the world of IT at Company 3. In a five-episode train journey she talks to IT people at the company about their jobs.
Company 4	Insurance sector	35 minutes	In this podcast series, the host talks to entrepreneurs and experts about personal motives and ambitions as well as important themes in the field of entrepreneurship.
Company 5	Sports psychology	65 minutes	In this podcast, three sports psychologists talk to athletes and their coaches about the stories behind their medals and discuss the downside.

3.3 Operationalization

This study is built on the framework of Du Plessis's (2015) six-element model, which is used to understand the how and why of the use of podcasting as a CM tool by Dutch companies. It is useful because it is expected that companies will be concerned with all six elements when making strategic decisions about creating and using podcasts as a CM tool. Although the model focuses on the deployment of CM in general, it can also be used to set up a single format, podcasts, within a larger CM strategy. Therefore, before working out an interview guide and coding frame, it was first considered what the six elements mean in relation to podcasts.

As described, the medium element involves all decisions around the best fitting platform for the content, considering the characteristics of the content and the target group. In this context, podcasts are a rather unique form of content, as they contain hardly any visual features. This element is therefore expected to play a lesser role in the strategic process of using podcasts as a CM tool, as the choice of the major streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music is a fairly obvious one (Statista, 2022). However, the promotion of the podcasts on other social media networks is an interesting factor to be considered.

For the strategic element, Du Plessis (2015) found, amongst others, that the content must be of value to the brand, which is an important factor in its translation into podcasts. This element is therefore an essential part of examining why podcasts are being integrated into and expectedly add value to a CM strategy according to its creators.

The third element, the formation element, elaborates on more on the 'how' of the research question by focusing on decisions around the construction of content - in this case, podcasts. When setting up a podcast, this concerns the story and the values to be conveyed, by whom and in what form it will be presented (as a monologue, interview, storytelling, etc.) and in a certain sense what the listener can or should do with it (element six will deal with this in more detail).

As described earlier, the intrinsic element entails all decisions around the fit of the content in the rest of the brands' voice. Translated to podcasts, it seems important that the content discussed in a podcast is somewhat familiar to the receiver in relation to the existing 'brand voice' and is of value for the receiver to listen to. Because of the unique character of podcasts compared to other forms of (mainly) visual content within a CM strategy, it is particularly interesting to investigate how this is applied in current corporate podcasts and what factors play a role in the choices regarding the intrinsic element.

For the fifth element, the communication element, it has to be considered what techniques should be used to get the message across to the recipient and what value the content provides to the audience. It is therefore important for companies to know what the needs of the receiving audience are, taking into account the uses and gratifications described earlier by Perks et al. (2019), and how a podcast can satisfy

them. For this study, this element can therefore give an insight into both the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of using podcasts as a CM tool. Why do companies think that by using podcasts they are meeting the needs of their audience, and how is this manifested in the content itself?

Lastly, the corollary element considers the desired outcome of the content and what the anticipation of the audience should be. In this way, this element also relates to the purpose of the content, which in the case of podcasts, as described by Chang and Cevher (2007), mainly lies in strengthening the brand image, generating brand awareness and creating brand advocates among the recipients. For this study, therefore, this element provides a look at the ‘why’ of corporate podcasting as a CM tool, as it says something about the intended purpose that companies want to achieve with it among recipients.

While CM strategies can encompass many different platforms, it is a basic premise that the message communicated by companies must be coherent (Taylor, 2010). Given the large differences in the nature of podcasts compared to other media, it is therefore both interesting and important to gain more insight into how this tool is incorporated into a CM strategy (Lögberg & Wahlqvist, 2020). Furthermore, it is interesting to investigate how this translates into the content choices, the strategic and formation element of Du Plessis (2015), of podcasts in terms of message, format, hosting, etcetera. Yet also in the intrinsic element, concerning the ‘fit’ in the intended brand voice of a CM strategy.

3.3.1 Coding framework

The six-element model by Du Plessis (2015) yielded the interview guide and coding framework that was used for the thematic content analysis of the data. The data from the interviews is obtained by means of an interview guide that discussed topics related to the six elements of content marketing as described above. An example of the questions asked per element of the model is given in Table 4. It was then determined for each element which aspects and choices would be examined in the analysis of the corporate podcasts, based on the identification of the six elements by Du Plessis (2015) in combination with some categories that had been drawn up for content analysis of podcasts by Celaya et al. (2019, p. 4). Some examples of components defined by Celaya et al. (2019) are:

- Topic approach
- Podcast format (interviews, monologue, chat, etc.)
- Communication style
- Level of content specialization
- Relationship with the listeners

Examples of the element choices that have been looked at in the analysis of the podcasts can be found in Table 4.

Table 4: *Coding framework for the six elements of CM by Du Plessis (2015)*

Element	Subject	Examples of associated questions	Examples of element choices looked at in podcasts
Medium element	Platform decisions	“Why did you decide to include podcasting on Spotify or other streaming platforms in your Content Marketing strategy?”	Metadata of the platforms on which the podcasts are available
Strategic element	Visions about the content’s purpose, consistency, integration etc.	“What was the purpose of the podcast?”	Statements on the purpose of the episodes & addressing the target group
Formation element	Considerations surrounding the creation of the content	“Why did you choose this format with [interviews/monologue/group discussion/etc.]?”	Podcast format (interviews, monologue, chat, etc.), mention of brand values, choices in audio design and level of editing, level of content specialisation, information on the host
Intrinsic element	Decisions about the fit of the content in the rest of the brands’ voice	“To what extent does the topic of your podcast complement the rest of your (online) content?”	Degree and manner of brand exposure, addition of ‘real life’ stories, mistakes and opinions
Communication element	Approach of communicating the content to the target audience and the fulfilment of their needs	“What do you think is the added value for people to listen to the podcast?”	Statements about what the podcast gives to the audience, communication style (informal, teaching, etc.), content choices to retain attention
Corollary element	Expectations regarding the desired outcome of the content’s consumption	“What do you want to achieve from the audience with the podcast?”	Cues about what the listener can do further with or after the content

3.4 Data analysis

The data obtained through the in-depth interviews and the corporate podcasts was transcribed, after which it was analysed by means of a thematic content analysis (TCA). Thematic content analysis is a valid method for detecting, analysing and reporting patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In ideal terms, this analytical process follows a sequence from a general description of themes, where the data is simply collated to show and summarise patterns, to an interpretation of these themes, attempting to theorise the meaning of these patterns and their wider significance in light of previous research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Before the start of coding, all transcripts were read through by the researcher, which enabled initial findings and patterns to be identified. Afterwards, data was broken down into small parts and reassembled with the aim of converting the data into findings (Boeije, 2010).

This was done by following three steps of coding described by Boeije (2010). Firstly, open coding has been applied, in which the data was divided into small pieces, studied, compared, conceptualised and categorised (Boeije, 2010, p. 96). The data was read, from which meaningful fragments were then identified and given a name. In this way, all meaningful fragments were assigned a name - a code - which then were compared with each other. The coding process was carried out using the software programme Atlas.ti, in which both single codes and overlapping categories could be assigned.

The second step was axial coding, in which "the main purpose was to determine which elements in the research are the dominant ones and which are the less important ones" (Boeije, 2010, p. 109). In this section, the researcher has focused on the main themes of the study for each element of content marketing as drawn up by Du Plessis (2015), by aggregating the codes into broader categories, comparing them and forming sub-themes. This involved looking at which themes recur, how they relate to each other and what the most prominent message is from the data (Boeije, 2010).

Lastly, selective coding was carried out, whereby the most important themes were defined in the light of the research question. In this step, the researcher looked at which themes often recur, how they relate to each other and what the most important message is from the data for every element of the six-element model by Du Plessis (2015). This was done by creating a sub-folder for each element in Atlas.ti, in which the code groups that made up a theme were subdivided and further elaborated on. Ultimately, the coding process led to the creation of 13 parameters - key decision points - found in the data, divided over the six elements for CM. A framework with these key decision points was formed, from which the research question could be answered.

3.5 Limitations and credibility

Given the lack of scientific research on corporate podcasting, this study has an exploratory character. For this reason, a selection of marketers from different industries and companies of various scales was chosen. Although a few large markets such as the telecommunications and insurance sectors are represented in the sample for this study, other large sectors such as the fashion industry and the financial sector are not. Therefore, with a sample of 5 companies, it is not possible to draw a complete generalizable picture for all markets in which Content Marketing is used. In addition, the sample of this study includes in-house marketers, externally hired marketing consultants and non-marketers who perform marketing tasks in addition to their original job. This may result in a higher degree of variability in data and a more complicated evaluation of collected data than if interviewees from the same group, e.g. in-house marketers, were taken into account.

However, due to the wide variety of sectors and marketing professionals that are covered in this research, it will provide a good explorative, general overview of how corporate podcasting is currently being used as a tool within a CM strategy. In addition, the aim of the research is to study the phenomena of corporate podcasting in-depth, to get more understanding of it. Therefore, the main aim of the study is not to generalize the findings to other settings, but to get a greater understanding of this concept.

To further ensure the quality of the research, it is important to look at the credibility of the research by assessing validity and reliability. According to Kirk and Miller (1986, in Silverman, 2015), the reliability of the study refers to “the extent to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production” (p. 83). This can be achieved by making the research process transparent, by giving a detailed description of the method and data collection as given above and by providing theoretical transparency. Because of the potential for subjectification, it is therefore important that there is a clear description given of how Du Plessis's (2015) theory plays a role in the theoretical perspective from which the researcher analysed the data. Particularly due to the lack of previous research on corporate podcasts, it is therefore important that there is a clear operationalisation given of how each element is interpreted in the light of podcasts as in section 3.3, to ensure that the research is more reliable and replicable. The validity of this operationalisation has been ensured as much as possible by interpreting the elements in line with the interpretation of the six elements of Du Plessis (2015) in previous research by Ho et al. (2020). In addition, the steps of the analysis have been described as explicitly as possible and different tools as described by Silverman (2015) have been used to increase methodological reliability. This includes keeping a research diary, recording the interviews and using the software Atlas.ti for the analysis.

The validity of the study, according to Hammersley (1990, in Silverman, 2015), refers to "the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (p. 90). This was

done in the first place by reducing the threat of respondent bias by informing the interviewees in advance that the research would be anonymized as much as possible for both the company and the individual (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The aim of this was to make marketers feel that they could speak freely about their company's marketing strategies and so the interviewer and interviewee could together build up the most valuable rapport on the phenomenon of corporate podcasting.

Furthermore, to achieve validity, Silverman (2015) described five tools that validate qualitative studies, of which constant comparison, comprehensive data treatment and the use of appropriate tabulation were applied in this study. Firstly, the data from new interview transcripts was constantly compared to previous codes so that it could be checked whether the data measured what it was supposed to measure. The purpose of this is to describe all the variations found within a given phenomenon (Silverman, 2015), so in the case of this research, all the variations within each element of Du Plessis's (2015) six-element model. Furthermore, this study involved comprehensive data treatment, which means that the analysis of the interview and podcast data did not end until all relevant data had been recorded and assessed in the light of the research question. This was important because the purpose of this study, due to its exploratory nature, is to map out as much and as well as possible what is currently known about corporate podcasting within CM. Lastly, the tool of appropriate tabulations was applied in this research, which allowed the identification of the prominence of certain codes and phenomena within corporate podcasting and a sense of variation in the data.

4. Results

The purpose of this research was to investigate how and why companies use corporate podcasting as a content marketing tool and to establish a theoretical qualitative model which will help future marketers with Corporate Podcasting in practice. Based on the analysis of the interviews and corporate podcasts, applying the six-element model for Content Marketing of Du Plessis (2015), it was found that there are 13 parameters for podcast makers that were incorporated into a framework that helps us to understand why and how corporate podcasts are being used by content marketers. All parameters are constructed based on these six elements, as visible in Table 5. In this section, the findings found per element of Du Plessis's (2015) six-element model will be discussed in more detail through the structure of this framework.

Table 5: Framework for the adaption of corporate podcasting as CM tool

ELEMENT	PARAMETER	KEY QUESTION	KEY DECISION POINTS
MEDIUM ELEMENT	Platform decisions	<i>On what platform should the podcast content be distributed?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reaching the mass ▪ Audio-only or video
	Promotion of the podcast	<i>How and where should the podcast be promoted?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inside used medium ▪ Outside used medium
STRATEGIC ELEMENT	Motivations	<i>Why should corporate podcasting be incorporated into the content marketing strategy?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to changed media behaviour ▪ Address a specific target group ▪ Experiment with unique characteristics of medium
	Purpose	<i>What does the podcast content give to the audience?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Giving an insight into the company ▪ Valuable information
FORMATION ELEMENT	Format	<i>Which format is adapted?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conversational ▪ Storytelling
	Content	<i>What is the content based on?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brand values ▪ Listener insights ▪ Niche vs. mass focus
	Production	<i>Which elements are important in the production process?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement with content & production ▪ External agency ▪ Hosts

INTRINSIC ELEMENT	Natural messaging	<i>How to make the content fit within the usual brand voice?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping content genuine ▪ Integration with other content ▪ Brand exposure
	Starting the conversation	<i>How to start the (brand) conversation?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeking EWOM
COMMUNICA TION ELEMENT	Being helpful	<i>How does the content help the audience?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fulfilling needs
	Touching the public	<i>How does the content stick with the public?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeking emotion ▪ Arouse curiosity & attention
CORALLARY ELEMENT	Goals	<i>What is the goal of the content?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contributing to brand (image/experience/position) ▪ Inspire to act
	Responses	<i>What are the responses from the audience?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ideal responses ▪ Measuring effects

4.1 Medium element

As mentioned earlier, the first element of Du Plessis's (2015) model focuses on the careful consideration of deciding on the right platform for the content, based on the nature of the platform and the content concerned. The analysis of the data showed that there are two key questions marketers need to take into consideration when deciding on the medium element for their podcast. The first key question marketers must answer here is: *On what platform should the podcast content be distributed?* The results show that marketers have two important considerations when making this choice, namely, how to reach the masses and whether to release the podcast as audio-only or also in video format.

A) Reaching the mass

In general, the participants indicated that it was quite clear to them that their podcast had to reach the general public, and so they wanted to make it available on all major and smaller podcast streaming platforms. Several of them indicated that they were working with an intermediate podcast hosting platform, which automatically ensures that the uploaded podcast content is available on all streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Podcast.

Due to the relatively new nature of the platform and the fact that this was the first podcast for most companies, there was some internal debate about whether to make the podcast 'exclusively' available on the company's own channels or to use external platforms.

However, all marketers indicated that they ultimately wanted the podcast to reach their audience on a large scale and to be found only in the places where they are already actively listening. Interviewee 1 stated: “So we very deliberately chose to use large media, because at first it was 'we only want it on [brand].com'. No, I'm not going to reach people there. I'm going to reach people where they are already listening.” Metadata of the five podcasts shows that they can all be found on the three most used platforms for streaming podcasts: Spotify, Apple Podcast and Google Podcast.

B) Audio-only or video

A second factor that weighed into the platform choices was the possible filming of the podcast conversation or audio takes, in order to offer a video version in addition to the audio-only one on streaming platforms. Almost all interviewees considered this idea, but mostly opted for an audio-only strategy for practical reasons. The many edits in the story or the reluctance of the guests to use a camera, for example, made it difficult to produce a video version of the podcast. However, most of them filmed or photographed shorter fragments of the conversation, to be used on other media in the promotional campaign around the podcast.

This promotional campaign formed the base for the second key question for the main element, namely: *How and where should the podcast be promoted?* Given the rather simple and logical choice of major streaming platforms for the distribution of podcasts, for the medium element this research also looked at how and in what places podcast content is promoted by companies. Because CM expressions are a form of 'pull' communication, which is characterised by its more passive nature (Koob, 2021), it is of greater importance to make the audience familiar with the content and to have them actively seek it out. The results, therefore, showed that choices are made around two elements, namely promotion within the medium used and outside the medium used.

A) Within the medium used

One way of trying to reach the podcast's target audience is by approaching them through the medium in which the podcasts are offered: on streaming platforms and in other podcasts. One of the ways in which this has been done by the marketers is by advertising in other podcasts within the segment of the target group, as was mentioned by interviewee 2:

... and we advertised in other podcasts where IT people, well you can't be that clear, but we suspected that many of them have the same target group and we advertised in them with a post-and preroll, so that there was said beforehand: 'Hey have you listened to this podcast?' (I2)

Furthermore, some participants mentioned using targeted ads on Spotify among listeners who listen to podcasts within the same category.

B) Outside the medium used

However, this targeted advertising within the same segment as the intended target group was mostly carried out through other media. For example, several companies experimented with banners in news sections that are interesting for the target group or with affiliate advertising on websites that are related to the theme of the podcast. Interviewee 3 further mentioned that it was a 'conscious decision' to go for a display campaign in places that are 'as close as possible' to the target group, and not so much on social media in general like Facebook or Instagram because their target group is not mainly located there. However, all companies did use their own (social) media channels to promote the podcast and used the networks of their guests and hosts to spread the word even further.

4.2 Strategic element

The second element of Du Plessis's (2015) model that was analysed is the strategic element, which concerns the strategic choices surrounding the development of content within the current brand strategy. This includes the goals of the content, how the content is valuable for the brand and how it will attract customers without being intrusive. Within this element, two key questions were identified from the data. The first key question for marketers analysed here is: *Why should corporate podcasting be incorporated into their content marketing strategy?* The results show that there are two main drivers for this choice: firstly, they want to address a specific target group with the podcast and secondly, they want to respond to changed media behaviour.

A) Reaching a specific target group

For all interviewees, the podcast is primarily aimed at a specific group of people, whom they want to provide substantive and valuable information on a particular subject, such as entrepreneurs, IT specialists or athletes and their coaches. Although in most cases the intended target group depended on the purpose of the podcast, it is often a more specific group than the masses. In most cases, the core values and interests of this target group correspond to the core values of the company, so an attempt was made to make a connection on this front. As interviewee 5 describes, the podcast functions here as a means of reaching this specific target group well and very directly:

Yes, the target group we want to reach are indeed sportsmen and women, but also the trainer and coach of sportsmen and women and the people who make policy in sport. So these are the people in the federations and associations and on the boards and in the technical staff and so on. ... So that's quite a niche, if you look at the big area. (I5)

In the podcast content of various podcasts, this is shown by the target group being addressed directly or mentioned, as the entrepreneurial target group in podcast 1 for example:

“Welcome to [podcast title], a new podcast series by [company] and [podcast agency]. For entrepreneurs and by entrepreneurs. My name is [host name], in this podcast I talk to entrepreneurs, founders and CEO's about doing business, being successful and failing. Winning and losing, falling and getting up again.” (Podcast 1)

Besides the fact that these companies want to provide a specific target group with information or interesting content that corresponds to their values, podcasting is also important in reaching a specific group of people who have become difficult to reach by other means, according to interviewee 4:

...and we also know that those heavy podcast users, as they are called, are more likely to have online streaming services ... and that means that for a lot of advertisers, they can no longer reach that group with traditional media. ... Podcasts are a kind of solution to still be able to reach them, especially with advertising and sponsoring and so on. (I4)

Although Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) only studied the shift in audio media consumption in their study, it reflects their observation that the medium has evolved into a more sophisticated, unique medium with diverse user segments. This development forms the basis for the second driver.

B) Respond to changed media behaviour

The second main driver for (content) marketers to use a corporate podcast as a tool within their marketing strategy is because they wanted to respond to the changing media consumption of their audience. With the rise of podcasting in recent years and the growing trends in marketing in the US and elsewhere to make use of this, podcasting came into the picture for most marketers as a new and progressive possibility (Lin, 2021; Vilceanu et al., 2021). This shift in media consumption seemed only reinforced by the advent of COVID-19, whereby listening to podcasts became part of new media consumption moments such as when going for a walk or when trapped inside (Robson, 2021). The

medium has thereby also created a momentum in daily media consumption that was previously taken up by other media, such as radio and television (Chan-Olsted & Wang, 2020), which marketers felt was interesting to capitalise on. Interviewee 4 further explains: “Well, why it's super important for brands to deploy it is that there's been a shift in media behaviour for a while now. More and more people listen podcasts as a supplement to or replacement for books and radio.”

Besides the moment of consumption, the relatively 'new' medium also brings unique elements with it, as Ettmüller (2021) described, such as a relatively low production threshold, the long-lasting relevance and a particularly high attention value among receivers compared to other content. Almost all marketers said that these factors caused them to roll out the format initially as a kind of experiment or pilot to see how it should be produced and if it could work for their company. In doing so, most creators had no expectations of what this form of content could do for them, as some described:

Yes, no, for me it was really a stand-alone operation, it was also a bit of a pilot, so I just looked at it and said: OK, how does it work? I knew we had never made a podcast before, so we had no idea what we were doing. But even more fun that it became a bit of a playful project in which we ourselves also realised that it was okay to make mistakes. (I2)

So these were all considerations, like: we start with an idea, as an experiment and with one season of five episodes and then we see how it goes and who knows what it will bring us, so to speak. (I3)

One of the factors that contributed to their decision to experiment with a corporate podcast that repeatedly came up amongst the interviewees was the fact that they had a personal interest in or fondness for the medium. One marketer (I2) mentioned that her interest was aroused because ‘she and her colleagues listened a lot to podcasts themselves’, and interviewee 5 described: “at least if I speak for myself personally, part of it was that I thought it would be really cool to produce a podcast.”

However, the interview data showed that for many, this experimental nature also led to the podcast, as interviewee 2 mentioned earlier, being a 'stand-alone' element within their Content Marketing strategy, which often translated into a lack of strategy behind the podcast itself. This insight will be further addressed in the discussion section.

The second key question within the strategic element that was identified from the data is: *What does the podcast content give to the audience?* The results of both interviews and podcasts show that there are roughly two ideas about what the content should do: provide a unique insight into the company and provide and advance the audience with valuable information.

A) Giving an insight into the company

Depending on the ultimate purpose of the podcast, which will be discussed in the corollary element, some marketers found a corporate podcast a good way to give their target group a unique insight into their company, and thus to ‘get in the picture’ with them in a different way (P3). For the smaller companies, this was mainly to ‘find a gap in the market’ and thus create brand awareness and a platform for their company and services among the target group. For one of the other companies, the podcast was to serve as a unique means of emphasising the side of the company that is less well known to the public, in addition to the general first impression of the company.

And [company name] is actually a very big IT company, but that's not the first thing that comes to mind, people think of conductors ... in an old-fashioned way. So we actually wanted to show in an original way what a great IT company [company name] is, and that actually everything that you do for your train journey has an IT product behind it. (I3)

B) Advance the audience with valuable information

However, for several marketers, the podcast was not necessarily a means of highlighting their own company, but rather, as a company, to do something sympathetic and to provide their listeners with valuable information from which they can learn or be inspired. This corresponds to the core purpose of Content Marketing in the broad sense, as described by Koob (2021) and Lögberg and Wahlqvist (2020), that delivered content should primarily be 'pull content' that truly provides the audience with valuable and helpful information that the audience itself chooses to be a part of. Within this view, it differed from company to company what their main motive was for wanting to give the podcast to the public. For example, one interviewee (I2) said that because of COVID-19 they wanted to ‘offer a substitute product as a 'gift' to their customers’, while interviewee 1 wanted to help her target audience with the content of the podcast to advance in their entrepreneurship. In the end, all companies had a certain goal about which uses and gratifications they wanted to provide to the audience with their podcast, which are further discussed in the communication element.

Some podcasts also made it explicitly clear at the beginning or end of their episode what the goal of the series is, by having the host introduce the content or the goal of the upcoming episode(s):

“Hi, I'm [host name] and in this podcast I dive into the world of IT at [company], by making a journey from my hometown of Lelystad to Eindhoven Central Station. This is [podcast title].” (Podcast 3)

“Thank you for listening to the [company] podcast. The podcast in which we look for the latest insights to develop our Dutch sports talent in a sustainable and responsible way.” (Podcast 5)

4.3 Formation element

The third element of Du Plessis (2015) that has been analysed is the formation element, which concerns the practical choices in the creation of content. For this element, the decisions in format, content and production were considered. Three key questions that marketers have to answer when creating a corporate podcast were identified from the data. The first key question is: *Which format is adapted?* The data showed that there are currently roughly two formats in corporate podcasting that are widely used by companies, conversational podcasts and storytelling podcasts.

A) Conversational

... those are the conversationals so the chat podcasts, an interview, one-on-one, a solo commentary, panel discussion or a conversation. ... And conversationals are often fleeting, they are less timeless ... and you often see that they have a piece of music in the introduction, then the microphone is switched on, they talk a lot with each other and at the end there's an outro music and then they throw it online. (I4)

As mentioned here by one of the interviewees, one of the most well-known and used set-ups for a podcast is that of a conversational one. This format is often characterised by an interview conversation between the host(s) and guest(s) on a specific topic or within a specific theme. This form of podcast often contains a relatively 'free' conversation which is sometimes guided by several fixed questions but is mainly filled in by the contributors themselves. Interviewee 4 continues: “... the conversationals cover 80 percent of the market, ... and I think most brands, when they start experimenting, that they see those conversationals for themselves, because it comes from a certain marketing need.”

The interview and podcast data indeed showed that most of the interviewed companies chose a conversational format for their podcast. In the analysis of the podcasts, it became clear that these podcasts

are characterised by few edits, more (informal) chatter in between and ambient cues, errors or productional comments still present. One fragment from podcast 5 contained for example: “We are given a symbol of a ball by Maarten, that we have to finish.”

All these podcasts had an opening and ending music but were otherwise fairly limited in terms of audio design. A few podcasts used more frequent recurring music to build up tension, indicate cuts between questions or to introduce a storyline. In the case of podcast 1, this music was also used to cut off long answers from the interviewee, with voice overs from the host giving a summary and adding a certain storyline to the interview.

Most of the marketers interviewed said they chose this format because they wanted to keep the content ‘simple’, ‘sincere’ and ‘intimate’. This echoes the hyper-personalised and intimate characteristics that Llinares et al. (2018) and Etmüller (2021) previously ascribed to the medium. The interviewees argued that they wanted to use the intimacy of the medium, which usually comes in very 'directly' to one's ears with high attention value, to create a 'real' conversation that the listener feels part of. Interviewee 2 stated that they took this into account when considering editing:

And it's very private, very personal, it's very close so we wanted to respect that. We didn't want it too loud, too full, too much, we wanted to keep it timid and small the episode. Because it's about the story. And sure, we had possibilities to add extra tracks or things, and those things have been discussed, but we wanted to keep the intimacy of it. (I2)

B) Storytelling

With storytelling podcast, there is a storyline in it, that's why it also contains sound design, that really makes the audio experience. Sound design is not just music, it's a constant presence of certain atmospheric audio. Sometimes it's not even, say decisive or audible, but it just gives the atmosphere. A dramaturgical line. It's very important that there's a certain tension in the stories because that makes for a better audio experience. (I4)

Although fewer companies seem to be using it, a second common format is a storytelling podcast, where an elaborate storyline and audio design are used to create a story that runs throughout the episode or the entire podcast series. This format is characterised by a more present and extensive audio design, where sounds support and enliven the story being told. Naturally, the production level of this format is higher, which, according to interviewee 4, often makes it a more expensive concept. One of the podcasts analysed concerns a storyline format, in which the story of the host's 'train journey' runs like a thread through the

five episodes. A sample excerpt from one of these episodes contains some supporting sound fragments, for example:

“[alarm clock sound] Ooooh good morning, well um, today I'm going to make my journey through IT at [company] and there's only one way to do that really well and that's by taking the train. So I'm going to, ehm, I'm going to get dressed first and then I'm gonna go downstairs, get a cup of coffee and see which train I need to take. [sound of coffee machine]” (Podcast 3)

Beyond deciding on a format, the data showed that a second key question in the formation element is: *What is the content based on?* Three main pillars emerged from the interviews and podcasts, namely brand values and promises, niche vs. mass focus and listening insights.

A) Brand values and promises

According to the creators, the core value or brand promise that the company stands for and has integrated in all content was at the basis of each podcast. This was often based on a single statement about what the company in question does or aims for, which was either directly or indirectly filled in or conveyed through the podcast. In the case of interviewee 1's podcast, the podcast indirectly propagated the brand claim by providing the audience with inspiring and instructive stories:

So on the one hand, [company]'s claim: We help entrepreneurs move forward. On the other hand, the insight from the target group that they simply like networking and why do they network? Because they want to learn from other entrepreneurs. That is how you can help people get ahead. [company] also has connecting as one of its core values, so you connect people with each other and that is literally what we do. (I1)

This resonates with Baltes' (2015) statement that Content Marketing should, as a principle, always be based on a company's values in order to communicate an authentic image to the audience.

B) Niche specialization vs. mass focus

A second factor that was decisive in the content was the focus of the podcast on a niche or the masses. Although it was mentioned earlier that almost all podcasts are used to appeal to a fairly specific target group, how specifically the information is tailored to this group or not plays a role in the content. Interviewee 3, for example, stated that they wanted to make their content about IT as ‘understandable as possible for the broader public’, but that they did give priority to their specific IT target group. In terms of

content, this balance between niche and mass content was mainly seen in the use or non-use of subject-specific knowledge and terms. An example from podcast 5 shows an attempt to make subject-specific terms more widely understandable: “So Carol Dweck's growth mindset is common sense to us, but what is the essence of the growth mindset?” The marketers showed that it depends primarily on the goal that marketers want to achieve with their podcast with the intended audience to what extent they tailor their information specifically to their level.

C) Adapted to listener insights

Especially the marketers of podcasts that have been running for several seasons indicated that the insights about listeners (over time) are a decisive factor in the creation of their new content. For example, interviewees 2 and 5 said they had changed certain topics or fixed elements in their format because they could see from the listening data that listeners appreciated them less or skipped them. In addition, insights about the behaviour and preferences of the intended target group played a role in what the content of the podcast should be, as interviewee 1 mentioned above about networking preferences amongst entrepreneurs.

The third and last key question extracted from the data that needs to be answered for the formation element is: *Which elements are important in the production process?* Two factors proved to be most important: the degree of personal involvement in the content creation and the decisions regarding the host and guests.

A) The degree of own involvement in the creation of the content

In general, there was a fairly large difference between the various interviewees as to whether they did the entire production of the podcast themselves or in cooperation with an agency. Whereas one interviewee (I5) did most of the production including editing himself, another argued (I1) that as a marketer she should deliberately stay away from the content and leave this to the experts as she has learned earlier that ‘marketers are good at ruining brand content by going overboard with it’. Most of the companies opted to cooperate with an agency and to agree on the content together, but largely outsource the production to them. According to interviewee 4, it is a strategic choice for companies to engage the help of a company: “... or do I go to a podcast agency, a company that is specialised in making podcasts. And the great thing about that is that you often deal with good producers.” However, the choice of whether to produce the entire content in-house or to outsource it ultimately depends on various factors, such as the budget, the choice of format (conversational or storytelling), desired level of brand exposure and the ultimate goal of the podcast, which will be discussed in more detail later.

B) Hosts

Marx et al. (2021) argued that hosts play an important role in the emotional engagement of listeners, as listeners are more likely to feel a sense of friendship and trust with the narrator. Because the medium lacks visual stimuli and therefore weighs more heavily on the leader of the conversation, the interview data also showed that marketers made very conscious choices and considerations when choosing their hosts. Voice tone and prior experience played a role in this, but a frequently mentioned argument was above all that there was a clear and logical connection between the host and the company or the subject of the podcast. Interviewee 3, for example, talked about the selection criteria of their host:

We wanted a woman because there are already enough men in IT and because we also wanted to present a slightly different voice, but it should be someone who really knows their stuff. So not a woman because it would be a woman, but someone with an affinity for IT and technology. (I3)

In most podcasts, this relationship also emerged in the introduction or the conclusion of the podcast, in which the host introduces himself and explains the link to the topic. For example:

“You were listening to [podcast], offered by [company], the culture lottery of the Netherlands. My name is [host], ambassador of [company]. I am proud that we support culture throughout the Netherlands thanks to our participants.” (Podcast 3)

“Welcome to [podcast], ... For entrepreneurs and by entrepreneurs. My name is [host], in this podcast I talk to entrepreneurs, founders and CEO's about doing business, being successful and failing. ... I myself became entrepreneur of the year at the Dutch start up awards in 2012”
(Podcast 1)

4.4 Intrinsic element

Du Plessis's (2015) fourth element is the intrinsic element, which mainly concerns the fit of the content into daily, natural conversations about the brand. The message and the way of communicating must seem familiar to the recipient, so that he or she wants to actively participate in an (online) conversation about the brand. Two key questions marketers must answer for this element were identified from the data, the first of which is: *How to make the content fit within the usual brand voice?* Based on the interviews with the marketers and the podcast data, three important factors in this respect emerged: keeping the content genuine, the degree of brand exposure and the integration with other content.

A) Keeping the content genuine

An argument often mentioned by the podcast creators was that they found it important that the content of the podcast remained 'sincere'. This implied that, although the podcast is ultimately a marketing expression, it was important to them that it not become an advertising story for their brand. Interviewee 1 explains:

... what was very important to me as a marketer was that we did not tamper with the story and that is of course the pitfall that often happens, that is in any case with content marketing often a pitfall, that brands try to forge the story into something that fits the brand values. (II)

This aim translated into multiple facets of the production, from the choices in guests to the story being told. For example, interviewee 3 said that she would like 'real people' from her company to speak so that listeners could get the most natural impression of their experiences of the company. Interviewee 1 further stated that when selecting guests, they found it important that he or she is an actual customer of their services in real life, even though it would not be mentioned in the podcast itself. In the podcasts themselves, several elements emerged to give the entire story a natural feel, rather than one manufactured by the company. For example, many podcasts contain personal information about the hosts and guests, which gives the listener the feeling of listening to a 'real' conversation and builds up a relationship with these people, as was also found by Marx et al. (2021).

In addition, some podcasts had personal, often off-topic and informal chatter between the guest and the host in the interview. For example, an excerpt from podcast 1 included:

G [guest]: Seriously, I had all these meetings and all the time I was thinking just a few more hours and then I'm going to catch up with [host].

H [host]: How nice. The first thing you said when I invited you was 'eh champagne?'

G: Yes! [laughs]

...

H: Please open it. Ehm, and we also meet each other sometimes at a somewhat stiffer drink and then we look at each other: yes, you're here, we're going to-

G: This will be a fun evening.

H: This is going to be fun. So I actually have that feeling now too."

However, as mentioned by interviewee 4, the idea of keeping content 'genuine' is mainly linked to the format of a conversational podcast and appears to be less important for storytelling podcasts that often have a bit of a different goal than making people feel part of a 'real conversation'. He explains:

I think people who say that just mean conversational podcasts. ... And I think, if you make a conversational podcast that's full of jingles and sounds yes, then you're probably distracting from the conversation and a conversation is, I think, what it's about. ... Of course, that depends very much on what kind of podcast it is and what purpose it has (I4)

In addition, this finding is largely related to the degree of brand exposure, the next factor that was found and will be discussed within this key question.

B) The degree of brand exposure

One of the most important characteristics of Content Marketing is that it pulls people towards the brand by delivering valuable content instead of pushing intrusive advertising messages to the audience (Koob, 2021). A key difference in this is the extent to which the brand is exposed to the recipient. This was therefore also an important factor in the creation of the podcast content for the marketers. While the extent to which their company was part of the story being told varied widely, largely due to differences in the ultimate purpose of the content, most of them said it was important that 'their name' was not overemphasised. This is reflected first in the fact that most of them only mention their brand name in the opening and/or closing of the podcast. One of the main reasons for this, according to the marketers, was the fact that the attention value of podcasts is so high that mentioning the brand is almost unnecessary, and too much naming will quickly lead to irritation on the part of the listener. With an average of 80% to 90% of the content getting through to the recipient, according to Katz (2018), the level of brand connection for podcasts is already 'exceptionally high' interviewee 4 commented. In line with this, some others said they felt that a podcast as a medium is 'not meant to expose your brand on too much' (I1). Depending on the purpose of the podcast, it therefore seems to be mainly a matter of finding a balance between the degree of brand exposure and the degree of brand connection for producers of corporate podcasts. Interviewee 4 explains:

The more often your brand is mentioned, the quicker you will drop out. ... Only in the case of podcasts, minimal brand cues already result in a very high brand connection, so especially as a brand, you should really leave it up to the producers and say: 'hey, one or two mentions is

enough'. That's always the playing field in content marketing: Yes, it has to be in there, but I shouldn't lay it on too thick, and that differs per medium. (I4)

Interviewee 2 also stated that the podcast was deliberately pulled apart for them as a counterpoint to the rest of their marketing statements because her company often has a negative reputation for its many advertising statements. Hence, for her company, the podcast was about delivering 'cool content' rather than 'chest-beating' for themselves. This was a sentiment shared by several marketers - that just delivering a good experience through unique and beautiful content created already enough sympathy for their brand. Interviewee 1 and 5 commented for example:

And because it's such an intimate medium, we really hammered on ... not let it be too thick [company]. And the interview is just the interview. And [company] has nothing to do with it. And because you tell the story, people find you sympathetic enough, actually. (I1)

Yes, we try to make a difference by the way we talk to people, so we involve ourselves in that and create valuable stories and content that already make a good brand connection. (I5)

One of the podcasts differed from this because, unlike most of the others, it had a recruitment purpose and therefore wanted to give a unique insight into the company itself. This content was therefore more focused on brand exposure because the purpose of this storytelling podcast required this, unlike most other conversational podcasts. An interesting fact here is that the format of the podcast may therefore be a more decisive factor in choosing the level of brand exposure. This will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion.

C) Integration with other content

The last important factor that emerged within the key question is the integration of all content based on the core values. As mentioned earlier, because of its experimental nature, for most marketers the podcast was a relatively separate project within their content marketing plan, with relatively little strategy and coordination with other content or websites behind it. However, the brand message from which the podcast was created, as mentioned in the formation element, was for most marketers in line with the other content they created. In order for the podcast to be a logical fit with the company and thus contribute to the 'daily conversations' about the brand, most marketers did say it was important that the core message be consistent. Interviewee 4 commented, for example:

... implicitly, the message has to be the same, so for example, everything has to radiate the same. The message can be very different internally, so the stories in the podcast are very different from the YouTube format that they have, for example. Implicitly, it all has to convey that you do indeed want to help entrepreneurs move forward (I4)

An example of this was given by interviewee 5, explaining the central factor in his daily work and his content:

Yes, so it's very much about that pleasure in performing and at the moment that manifests itself, for example, in stories from people in sport, ... so we then share things in which we proclaim our vision once again or in which we show: 'look how important it is that there is a separate focus on pleasure', so that really is a central theme in actually everything we share. (I5)

In his podcasts, this theme was then indirectly and directly incorporated by talking to relevant guests about their sports achievements, but also, for example, by incorporating the statement: 'top sport without pleasure is nothing' (Podcast 5).

The second key question that was found in the interview data is: *How to start the (brand) conversation?* The results show that there is one primary aim that manifests itself in multiple ways: boosting Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM)

A) *Boosting EWOM*

As also described by Vilceanu et al. (2021), listeners discover new podcasts largely through others. Several marketers also mentioned this as an important element for the promotion of their podcast and something they actively pursued by, for example, having their interview guests and host share their contribution on their social media. But some of the marketers said that other factors had also influenced the degree of EWOM about their podcast in retrospect, if somewhat less directly. Interviewees 1 and 2, for example, said that their podcast had received a lot of 'free' attention from other media, such as newspapers, magazines, websites and even talkshows, because of the praised content. The absence of their brand name in the podcast had an influence here, as this made third parties more likely to write about the podcast content. Interviewee 1 commented:

... there were also a lot of magazines and other media who just tipped the podcast as a fantastic podcast from the lists, because they didn't run the risk of losing advertising costs for [brand] or

something. ... But with this format, we did get a lot of free publicity, because the content was so good and it was not just about [company]. [company] was the advertisement around it... (I1)

In addition, one marketer mentioned emotion as an important driver for EWOM, because people share things that leave them with a memorable or personal experience (Muthiah & Suja, 2013). In their podcast stories they tried to respond to this by looking for the 'lows and highs' or other emotional moments in the story with their guest, with the idea that the audience will share this with their environment. In the analysis of the podcasts this appeared to be a recurring element, which will be discussed further under the communication element.

4.5 Communication element

The fifth element of Du Plessis's (2015) model is the communication element, which concerns the approach to how the content is communicated to the target audience and how it serves them. Within this element, two key questions were extracted from the interview and podcast data. The first question described is: *How does the content help the audience?* There was essentially only one overlapping answer to this question among the marketers: by meeting their needs. There were variations in what needs the podcasts should fulfil according to the creators. These are highlighted below.

A) Fulfilling needs

As described in the purposes of the podcasts under the strategic element, many of the marketers wanted to provide their target group with valuable information and thus help them move forward. However, the way in which this content is 'valuable' for the recipient differs for each podcast. Perks et al. (2019) found with their Uses and Gratifications scale for podcasts that listeners are primarily looking for something 'unique and new', which was also one of the most frequently mentioned aims for marketers. Most of them liked to 'give something to their audience' by *inspiring* them and giving them content they could *learn from*. Interviewee 5 stated for example:

But you often don't hear that and you can learn from those stories, that's actually what it was, the need we had to show that side of the story to young athletes for example: today's talents are not superhumans, they are just people who face things that you and I also face. (I5)

With their podcasts, these marketers wanted their audience to learn new lessons or be inspired to apply certain elements of the stories to their own sports or entrepreneurial lives. Interviewee 3 talked

about the "*Klokhuis feeling*" (a well-known Dutch educational youth program) that they wanted to give to their audience, by giving them information they did not have before.

However, in the end, the goal of every marketer is not only to provide these uses and gratifications, but also to make them stick with the recipient. Therefore, the second key question that emerged for the communication element is: *How does the content stick with the public?* From the data, two main approaches emerged: seeking emotion and arousing attention and curiosity.

A) Seeking emotion

You want to get into the heart ... I mean there was one episode where everyone was crying ... And then everyone was on social media, you know: 'man, I'm going to cry about this', it triggered such a reaction, people started emailing us with 'oh, so inspired, I'm going to take up entrepreneurship, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that'. (I1)

The way to 'touch people's hearts' was to tell stories with emotion in which a 'problem or a pain point' was explored, according to interviewee 1. The search for these stories was done in several podcasts, by deliberately naming a low point or a stumbling block on the way to it, in addition to highlights or beautiful and interesting moments. In other words, a storyline with highs and lows was presented, in which the listener could sympathize with the narrator. The downside of the top sporting medal, the difficulties and responsibilities of entrepreneurship and the failed excavation of a T-Rex all alternated with the success stories of the guests. A fragment from podcast 1, showing one of the fixed questions from the host to the series guests was for example: "What have been moments in your career when you really felt you were missing out? That you were really in the depths of despair?" Searching for this emotion can therefore not only ensure that the content sticks with the listener, but is also a driver for spreading EWOM to relatives, as mentioned earlier by Muthiah and Suja, (2013).

B) Arousing attention and curiosity

In order to achieve the "*Klokhuis feeling*" mentioned earlier by interviewee 3, some marketers wanted their content to contain funny or interesting 'trivia' that would not only teach the listener something but also give them something to 'share at the coffee table' (I2). They capitalised on this by having fun facts quoted or questioned in their interviews. Interviewee 2 explained:

Every episode has to be listenable and you have to be able to remember things from it, anecdotes, tips, facts, nice quotes or a know-it-all or it must have inspired you to actually visit that museum, for example. So our aim was that it would leave something in everyone's mind. (I2)

Besides the fact that more podcasts contained such trivia to stick with the audience after listening, many also started with an attention-grabbing excerpt from the upcoming interview to keep people listening. As a kind of trailer, these podcasts opened with a quote from the guest, drawing the listener's attention and making them curious about the rest of the podcast. Illustrative fragments from podcasts 1 and 4 are for example:

“I always say: I can recommend everyone to become a millionaire, even if you do it once. I became poor again afterwards, so I have experienced that.” (Podcast 1)

“G: remember that when building a large company, it is important to have impact. If you only have beautiful ambitions and want to do things that are only good, but that do not change anything, yes, that is not relevant. If you build a big company with it and really make a big impact, then yes, you can really change things.

H: So your goal is to make an impact. Your goal is to improve the world a little, right?

G: Yes, and preferably not just a little.” (Podcast 4)

4.6 Corollary element

The last element of Du Plessis's (2015) six-element model is the Corollary element. This element concerns the anticipated response of the audience to the content, and thus the ultimate goal of the podcast. Within this element, two key questions marketers need to answer when using podcasts as a content marketing tool were found from the data, the first of which is: *What is the goal of the content?* The data revealed two motives: contributing to brand image and inspiring to act.

A) Contributing to brand image

The main goal of all marketers ultimately was to contribute to a positive image change with valuable content. Although for one this mainly manifested itself in increased brand awareness and for another in improved brand perception, it ultimately came down to the fact that they all hope to contribute to a positive brand association with the podcast, the general goal of CM as interviewee 4 states:

And you want to use good content marketing to bring great stories to that group ... in the hope that they will then consider your brand as soon as they actively enter the market. They may do so because, for example, the week before they watched a very good series of your brand, they may think: 'well, that's a brand that suits me,'. They have the same values so I would rather buy that one than the other one. Well, that's what we're trying to do with content marketing, to create positive brand associations. (I4)

Marketers hoped their podcast would give listeners a positive experience, which they would then link to the brand, making them more likely to consider it in the future. In the case of the podcasts analysed, this concerned the future purchase of products or services, but in the case of the recruitment podcast (podcast 3), for example, it also concerned a positive association with an employer that might lead to a consideration of applying for a job in the future.

B) Inspiring to act

The psychological effect of podcasts on positive brand association is therefore primarily a long-term effect, which does not involve any immediate action or consequences on the part of the recipient. However, most podcasts also had a more direct aim with the audience: to inspire them to take a particular action, from visiting the museum that they just heard about to applying sports psychology practices to their own exercises. Although in most podcasts it was not directly proclaimed as a call-to-action and it should have mainly indirectly inspired the listener to take further steps, podcast 3 was an exception with its message that the listener could make an appointment on the website to have a cup of coffee with the employees they heard talking. Interviewee 3 explained that the company was using this to bridge the gap between the process of listening and actively applying for a job: "... applying for a job is very far, there are many steps in between. ... Yes, that would be the best thing, but preferably already, just to have a look at the website or to make an appointment."

In addition, the analysis of the podcast showed that each podcast ended with a direct call-to-action to the audience as to what they should do with the content, such as leaving a review or subscribing to the rest of the show. Some fragments show for example:

"This was episode 1 of [podcast] the podcast for and by entrepreneurs from [company] and [podcast agency]. Please subscribe to this show via iTunes, Spotify or your favourite podcast app. And feel free to leave a review." (Podcast 1)

“Are you curious about the IT systems behind the timetable and how such a transition from complex obsolete software to new web software works? Go to [website]” (Podcast 3)

In addition to these longer-term goals concerning a positive brand association and the short-term goals concerning the call-to-action to act based on listening to the podcasts, it is ultimately important to evaluate the effects of the corporate podcast. The second question that arose for the corollary element was therefore: *What are the responses from the audience?* Within this question, two elements were found in the data: the ideal responses and the measured effects.

A) Ideal responses

Because the podcast was experimental and being used for the first time by almost all marketers, most of them did not have precise expectations beforehand about what the content would deliver and how the audience would react. For many, the ideal response from the audience was therefore primarily to continue listening to the podcast and thus become part of a 'fan base'. Furthermore, one marketer said that she hoped people would spread it further (I1) and another mentioned that one of the ideal responses was to visit the website mentioned in the call-to-action (I3).

B) Measured effects

The goal of the podcasts was, of course, for many marketers to test the extent to which a corporate podcast "works" for them and what it could bring them. Although this was not feasible for everyone, several, therefore, worked with a media agency to study the effect of the podcast. None of the marketers saw the podcast as a failed experiment, given that they were all quite positively surprised by the figures they saw. For example, most saw the number of listeners grow rapidly during the first season and then substantially further during the following seasons. In addition, and in line with figures from previous research by Katz (2018) on engagement and supportiveness, the listenership rate and thus the attention value of the podcasts was generally very high. Interviewee 4 commented for example:

So on average something like 20 minutes are spent listening to the episode, which is of course super long. ... as [company] we sometimes see that four or five episodes of a season are listened to, well that means that people consume something like three, four hours of content of your brand. That's really unique, you hardly see that anywhere. (I4)

For the companies that had it researched, this high attention value resulted for almost all of them in positive effects on the brand perception of listeners. For example, according to interviewee 4, there

were significant differences in the extent to which one of his brands was seen as a company that does or does not help entrepreneurs, as its core message states. Another interviewee (I2) told us that their marketing research had shown that the podcast had made a big difference in the perception of their brand, which had previously been associated with mostly negative things. She states:

... and it has really had a very very very big increase in a more positive brand perception of [company name] at the time and we could only have dreamt that. ... But the fact that at a certain moment we were in the top 10 most listened to cultural podcasts in the Netherlands, yes, we hadn't dared to dream that, no. (I2)

Some marketers also saw this effect in the number of clicks and website visitors, although for some others this was difficult to trace back to the podcast because there was not always a specific 'customer journey' set up specifically for podcast listeners only. In addition, one of the interviewees said that the media campaign for the podcast itself, which was supposed to generate listeners, had performed a little below expectations and that there was room for optimisation in the future on how to make this most effective.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify how and why marketers are using corporate podcasts as a tool within their Content Marketing strategy. Based on the six elements for effective implementation of CM identified by Du Plessis (2015), an overview can be given that will answer the 'how' and 'why' of the research question (Figure 6). This final chapter summarizes the previously found results in light of the research question and discusses what this means in the everyday implementation of corporate podcasting and adds to theoretical insight.

5.1 Why podcasts are used as a Content Marketing tool

The data found for the *strategic* element and the *corollary* element mainly shows that corporate podcasts are used as a tool to provide valuable content to a specific audience, with the aim of contributing to positive brand associations. In doing so, they want to provide the audience with their specific needs and interests, which, as previously described by Samuel-Azran et al. (2019), other media cannot do. Corporate podcasting is therefore mainly used to reach a specific target group at a more in-depth level than is possible for companies via other platforms or content.

For most marketers, the unique characteristics of the medium played a role in the decision to make a corporate podcast. Especially the uniquely high attention value of the medium and the fact that it is a rather flexible and easy-to-produce product made podcasting an attractive medium to work with. However, the most defining motivation for creating a corporate podcast was for marketers to experiment with this new and emerging medium within their CM product mix. With the first successful examples from other companies and the growing use of podcasts by marketers in the US (Lin, 2021), they saw a podcast as offering new, unique opportunities that could become part of their marketing strategy. For most people, the podcast was therefore initially a nice "side project" that marketers mainly wanted to make themselves out of personal interest in the medium, without having great expectations for it.

A notable result of this experimental set-up for several marketers was that there was little or no strategy behind the podcast at first. This was particularly evident in the minimal integration of the content into the broader content strategy, which manifested itself, for example, in no inclusion in the content calendar and the lack of a customer journey for the listener on the companies' other platforms. Although all marketers had built their podcast content from the same core values of the company as the rest of their content, the first season of this was mainly seen as a try-out to explore the medium. Only after successful initial results was the medium incorporated more professionally into the overall CM strategy over the course of time and seasons, for example through more promotion and production budget and more conscious choices for content and guests. According to Du Plessis (2015), the strategic element normally includes the strategic choices that companies make around their content and the overall consistency and

integration with the rest of the content. However, in the case of Corporate Podcasting it appears that in this area things are still mainly being tried out. Based on the newly developed framework for the production of a Corporate Podcast as a CM tool, this can be done more strategically in the future.

5.2 How are podcasts used as a Content Marketing tool?

The data that was found for the *medium* element, the *formation* element, the *intrinsic* element and the *communication* element mainly shows that corporate podcasts are currently made primarily as conversational formats for the largest possible audience within their target group on the streaming services that offer podcasts. The marketers for whom this is a possibility, mainly use specialised podcast makers for the creation of the content. The content of the podcasts focuses mainly on interesting, educational and inspirational stories for the target group, but always bridges with or expresses the brand values and promises. With this content, they mainly wanted to fulfil the listener's need for something new and unique, as found by Perks et al. (2019), whereby the content attracts or touches them in such a way that they become inspired and spread word-of-mouth about it. This is done, for example, by including personal stories of guests and hosts, with both highs and lows, and by providing interesting facts or insights.

As for the intrinsic element, and thus the natural fit of content into everyday conversations about the brand, most marketers deliberately chose to limit their brand exposure to a few mentions before, between or after the actual conversation. By only providing content that their audience likes to listen to and minimal brand mentions, most supported the view that this is already sufficient for positive effects on brand association and that excessive branding has a negative effect, as Kirmani (1997) previously mentioned for marketing in general.

Thus, the general unwritten rule used by marketers was to keep the brand away from the content unless the specific purpose called for it, as in the example of the storytelling recruitment podcast (podcast 3). This means that the purpose of the podcast is ultimately quite decisive for several choices in the production of the corporate podcast, including the degree of brand exposure. The goal and the target group determine whether the podcast is aimed at the niche or the masses and to what extent the content is specified at the level of the intended listeners. This then also determines the format that is used, which in turn brings with it specific considerations about, for example, the host and his or her relation to the topic. It could be suggested, for example, that for a storytelling podcast this connection is perhaps less important than for a conversational podcast, because the listener is more absorbed in a story rather than wanting to feel part of an intimate conversation as mentioned by Swiatek (2018).

The medium, therefore, seems to lend itself extremely well to success with both the masses and a specific niche, given its unique character to meet deeper, more serious and more specific needs that other media often do not offer (Samuel-Azran et al., 2019). Creators and CM managers must therefore have a

clear idea of the target group they want to reach and the needs they want to satisfy and make further choices based on that idea. The strategic element of the model is therefore one of the most important first steps for marketers to work out when they want to use a corporate podcast as a tool within their CM strategy and a reference point to work with when further developing the other elements.

Figure 6: *Main findings per element of Du Plessis's (2015) six-element model*

Medium element	Strategic element	Formation element	Intrinsic element	Communication element	Corollary element
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching the audience where they are • Little video use • Promotion of the podcast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-roll within medium • In topic segment outside of medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing lesser known side and brand values • Experimenting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of strategy • Personal interest marketers • Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Gifting' valuable content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversational format most used • Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand values at the base • Formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsourcing to professionals • True connection brand and host 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural messaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the conversation 'real' and intimate • Finding balance between brand exposure and brand recognition • Boosting EWOM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of brand exposure creates free publicity • Seeking emotion and sharable content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting needs audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on target group and format • Touching the public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories with 'highs and lows' • Attention and curiosity through fun-facts and preview fragments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact brand image • Getting in the picture of the target group • Responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects measured on brand image in own research

5.3 Implications for the future

Another element that may have an influence in the very near future is the very recent introduction into the Dutch market of paid podcast streaming service Podimo in April 2022 (Showredactie, 2022). With Podimo entering the Dutch podcast market and the takeover of the largest podcast publishing company in the Netherlands, of which podcast 1 from this study is a part, many popular corporate and non-corporate podcasts are becoming available exclusively to the public with a paid subscription (NOS, 2022). Since large streaming platforms such as Apple and Spotify are still the most used platforms in the Netherlands for podcasts, it is expected that this introduction will cause a major shift within the Dutch podcast market. Several marketers mentioned that this change in the market would also affect them and the use of corporate podcasts in general, as the mass of podcast listeners would no longer all be on the same major platforms. This will therefore not only affect the importance of the medium element of the model for corporate podcasting, but also the determination of the intended target group and the further strategy for the podcast.

It can be concluded that with corporate podcasting, companies have found a unique slot in the recipient's full media and advertising schedule, whether on the road or during other activities, but do not necessarily have a single strategy or technique for exploiting it to the full. It thus seems to be only a matter of time, especially in view of the increasing 'saturation' of the market in corporate (conversational) podcasts and paid podcast services that are penetrating and changing the market. In that respect, corporate podcasts do not seem to be a trend but they are here to stay, although companies need to be inventive and creative with unique podcast concepts to stand out from the crowd. In this respect, as interviewee 4 already suggested, the storytelling format might offer the most opportunities for corporate podcasting in the future. This will affect the considerations for several key factors from the framework. The demand for meeting the needs of the public may shift from mainly inspiring, educating and informing, to a more entertaining role. In addition, there is perhaps also a difference in the degree of brand exposure that this format can 'bear', given the recruitment example given by podcast 3. Future research could therefore look into this further to investigate the best strategy for corporate podcasting.

As stated earlier in the methodological section, given the fact that this is an exploratory, qualitative study, it is not possible to identify the most effective or common ways of using corporate podcasting based on the data collected. This study therefore attempts to provide a general overview of corporate podcasting at the moment and thereby offer a practical guide for future marketers who wish to include corporate podcasting in their CM strategy. In addition, this study is a first step in the expansion of scientific knowledge on the use of Corporate Podcasts as a tool within CM and a basis from which further research can be carried out.

This includes the requirement for future quantitative research on corporate podcasting to determine the actual effects on recipients' brand perception. Since some marketers found positive effects on brand perception in their own research, it will be interesting in the future to investigate whether this also yields significant results on a larger scale and to what extent the degree of brand exposure plays a moderating role in this. In addition, as mentioned earlier, it is interesting for marketers and researchers to further map out the different effects of the various formats. Research can show, for example, whether storytelling podcasts indeed meet a different need among the audience and to what extent the degree of message transfer and brand linking is measured differently among the recipients than for conversational podcasts. This is important for marketers to be able to determine the most optimal corporate podcasting strategy for each format and target audience in the future.

Because this study wanted to give as broad a picture as possible of the use of corporate podcasts by Dutch marketers at the moment, podcasts and marketers from five different branches of companies of various scales were used. Considering the big differences between target groups and topics, it would be

interesting in the future to compare different podcast strategies within one industry to get an insight into the most effective format or strategy.

Finally, given that this study was unable to capture the use of corporate podcasting over a longer period, but focused on the 'early days' of this new content marketing tool, longitudinal research into its development over time could be of great value. Because of the experimental nature of corporate podcasting for most marketers and its ongoing professionalisation over the course of several seasons, the use of the medium can be expected to change through time. The effects of the current changes in the podcast market, with disruptions caused by the arrival of major podcast streaming platforms such as Podimo, can be analysed in this context.

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Appendix A: Specifications of podcasts

Company	Branche	Date start of podcast	End date of the podcast	Average length of episodes	Schedule	Synopsis
Company 1	Telecommunications- and ICT services	2-4-2019	Still running	45 minutes	Weekly	A podcast series for entrepreneurs and by entrepreneurs, in which the host - himself an entrepreneur - talks to entrepreneurs of well-known and lesser-known companies every week. Together they talk about everything that has to do with entrepreneurship, success and failure and peaks and troughs.
Company 2	Lottery	23-4-2020	Still running	15 minutes	Once every one to two weeks	In this podcast, the host asks experts from museums about their personal top piece from the collection. Each episode offers surprising stories that lie behind these objects.
Company 3	Public transport carrier	15-11-2021	15-11-2021	25 minutes	All at once	In this podcast series, the host delves into the world of IT at Company 3. Over the course of the five episode series, she makes a train journey from her home to Eindhoven central station, stopping off at various IT topics along the way. Here she talks to IT people at the company about their jobs.
Company 4	Insurance sector	12-1-2021	19-1-2021	35 minutes	All in one month	In this podcast series, the host talks to entrepreneurs and experts about personal motives and ambitions as well as important themes in the field of entrepreneurship.
Company 5	Sports psychology	23-11-2020	Still running	65 minutes	Weekly-monthly	In this series, three sports psychologists talk to top athletes and their coaches about the stories behind their medals and successes and discuss the downside. The goal: to get top athletes out of the corner of superhumans' so that everyone can learn from them.

Appendix B: Interview guide

<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master student Media & Creative Industries Erasmus University - Goal of the interview: Learn more about the marketing strategy behind corporate podcasting and the decisions made around a corporate podcast as content marketing tool. - Purpose: Master thesis. Will not be widely distributed - Recording: Are you okay with this interview being recorded? - Fully anonymous: don't say your name during the recording, the company name will be anonymized afterwards - Informed consent: do you agree with this interview being used for academic purposes and the information on the Informed Consent 	
<p>Opening questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you tell me something about yourself and what you do? 	
<p>Topic 1: general introduction Describing the podcast & reasoning</p> <p>Initial question: Can you tell me a little bit about the Podcast you worked on?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you and your colleagues decide on producing a podcast? • What was your role or involvement in the production of the podcast?
<p>Topic 2: strategic element</p> <p>Initial question: What was the purpose of the podcast?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the podcast fit into the current content (strategy)? • How have you ensured that this integrates well with the rest of the content you create? • What does the podcast add for [brand name] itself?
<p>Topic 3: Formation element</p> <p>Initial question: Why did you choose this topic/theme for the podcast?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did this theme emerge? • What story and what values did you want to convey? • How did you decide what the format of the content should be? • Why did you choose this format with [interviews/monologue/group discussion/etc.]? • How did you decide on the host?
<p>Topic 4: Medium element</p> <p>Initial question: How did you decide which platform to put the podcast on?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did you use the other media channels of [brand name] to promote the podcast? • Why these channels?

<p>Topic 5: Intrinsic element</p> <p>Initial question: To what extent does the topic of your podcast complement the rest of your (online) content?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the average follower of [Brand name's] social media channels, is the podcast really an outing in terms of brand voice or does it largely overlap? • What is the added value for the audience to listen to the podcast?
<p>Topic 6: Communication element</p> <p>Initial question: What is the target group you wanted to reach with the podcast?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What need did you want to provide them with? (ex. to be entertained, to be taught, etc.) • How does this show in the podcast?
<p>Topic 7: Corollary element</p> <p>Initial question: What did you want to achieve from the audience with the podcast?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do you have an idea about whether this has been achieved/successful? • How do you measure the success/impact of the podcast?
<p>Topic 8: rounding up</p> <p>Initial question: Why do you think podcasts work well?</p> <p>Rounding up: You feel → Do you like to add something here?</p> <p>Then I would like to thank you for your time and answers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think podcasts are the future of CM or a temporary trend? • Do you have any advice for other corporate podcast creators?

Appendix C: Coding tree interview data

Element	Parameter	Key decision element	Example quote
<i>Medium element</i>	Platform decisions (On what platform should the podcast content be distributed?)	Reaching the mass	<i>"I'm going to reach people where they're already listening. So I really just want: you can just push it, not only on spotify but also in iTunes and you have some great apps where you can listen to podcasts and then it just automatically gets there."</i>
		Video or audio only considerations	<i>"Yes, we thought about that filming, because then you would have even more content and you would be able to do more with it in a campaign, so from a marketing perspective that was great."</i>
	Promotion of the podcast (How and where should the podcast be promoted?)	Within used platform & medium	<i>"And [podcast agency] also has a segment with business podcasts and in that segment, you can advertise. And we advertised in that segment prior to that first season that the podcast was coming"</i>
		Outside used platform & medium	<i>"But of course we did run a campaign that was entirely set up for the podcast, so that was mainly a display campaign, for instance at NU.NL, when you were scrolling you would get a bar in which our podcast was promoted."</i>
<i>Strategic element</i>	Motivations (Why was podcasting incorporated into the CM strategy?)	Address a specific target group	<i>"So it's more like getting IT people in the picture: we are [company name] and we are an IT company and you can work for us. Just very er, high over actually, I don't immediately go like: "and we have 36 vacancies because we know what they will do next."</i>
		Responding to changed media behaviour	<i>"More and more people are listening to podcasts as a supplement to or replacement for books and radio so you just see that there is a, yes behaviour, I have it myself, I always listen to podcast in the car and I used to always turn on the radio, but now I actually always listen to podcast because I like it."</i>
		Experiment with new unique medium	<i>"Well, at that time it was still pretty much, you didn't have a branded podcast yet, not in the Netherlands anyway. And um, well my manager said: "well go and find out". And then we started to find out. And a lot of people found it exciting."</i>

	Purpose (What does the podcast content give to the audience?)	Giving an insight into the company	<i>“So when I talk about it now, that's also really a goal of the podcast, that people have a clear understanding and that it's not just: that's where I go when I'm sick. But that's just something you can use to perform even better or to keep it sustainable or to help develop my sports climate into something I would like to be. So I think it's also still quite unknown and quite new and interesting for people to hear what we do exactly.”</i>
		Advancing the public with valuable information	<i>“That there is actually a lot to it and we don't think about it that much now, and then you have someone who asks questions and then goes on to ask them and you think: oh, a whole world has opened up for me that I hadn't thought about at all.”</i>
Formation element	Production (Which elements are important in the production process??)	Degree of contribution to/involvement in content production	<i>“Yes, we outsourced it to a party that is specialized in making podcasts for companies. But I have been involved from A to Z”</i>
		Host	<i>“In the end, [podcast agency] proposed [host] because he simply has experience with radio, he has a pleasant voice to listen to, he is very calm, he knows how to interview and he is an entrepreneur in everything he does, and that makes it interesting.”</i>
	Content (What is the content based on?)	Brand values & promises	<i>“Yes, so fun, the role that fun plays in talent development and sport and performance, that is actually the central theme around which we build things.”</i>
		Niche vs. mass focus	<i>“So we wanted to vary that a lot, but we also wanted to make it understandable and interesting so that every episode can be understood and enjoyed by everyone.”</i>
		Adapted to listener insights	<i>“Well, we know what works, so we know where we get a lot of click rates, a lot of CTRs, we know when we are appealing to the right audience, because we can see this in the listening figures, the number of subscribers for example, or via CPL or impressions, so we can measure a lot, we know which ways we can best deploy and where we can best reach our audience. So we are still trying to do that, now, more.”</i>
	Format	Conversational	<i>“In the beginning, we very much approached it as a kind of interview: OK,</i>

	(Which format is adapted?)		<i>we ask questions and we want you to get the story out in this way, and we want to be able to continue asking questions about certain things, and we started thinking more and more about this. So no, it had to be a conversation right from the start.”</i>
		Storytelling	<i>“With storytelling podcast, there is a storyline in it, that's why it also contains sound design, that really makes say the audio experience. Sound design sense is not just music, but that are just a constant presence of certain atmosphere audio. Sometimes it's not even, say decisive or audible, but it just gives the atmosphere. A dramaturgical line.”</i>
Intrinsic element	Starting the conversation (How to start the (brand) conversation?)	Boosting eWOM	<i>“Yes, yes, so every time there is a new one, we make sure that it is also promoted or at least shared on the other channels and that the podcast guests also share it, that it is shared on all those channels, yes, that's how we extend our reach.”</i>
	Natural message (How to make the content fit in usual brand voice?)	Keeping content genuine	<i>“But that's my personal opinion is that I think, with this kind of thing, content marketing at this level has to be sincere. The moment it's sincere, and it really eh that touches the emotion, then it goes automatically.”</i>
		Integration of brand promises/values in all content	<i>“Implicitly, that message has to be the same, so, for example, um, you know, everything has to radiate the same. The message can be very different internally, so the stories in the podcast are very different from the YouTube format they have, for example.”</i>
		Brand exposure	<i>“And we achieve this with minimal brand cues, so in [podcast] [company] is mentioned once or twice, at the very beginning and at the very end, and nowhere else. But because people listen so intensively and for so long, at a certain moment they all get the message: hey, [podcast] is from [company], and especially after two or three seasons, you only see it growing.”</i>
Communication element	Being helpful (How does the content help the	Fulfilling needs (inspire/educate/inform/help/entertain)	<i>“So why not jump into the new medium, telling stories of entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs, which you can then listen to as an entrepreneur, be</i>

	audience?)		<i>inspired by, and thus help you as [company] move forward."</i>
	Touching the public (How does the content stick with the audience?)	Seeking emotion	<i>"You want to get into the heart, because if you get into the heart, if you get there, I mean there was one episode where everyone was crying. There was a woman from Morocco who started off as a cleaner and eventually took over the contracting company and was allowed to go to the King of Morocco, that kind of acclaimed form of entrepreneurship, and she then told a very emotional story."</i>
		Arouse curiosity & attention	<i>"So we actually fired off all our own cultural curiosity and our own questions, um, in the script beforehand and discussed them with [host] and also brainstormed a bit: where are the fun questions or the fun coffee-table trivia, um, that make the episode stick or make you feel like you've learned something from it."</i>
<i>Corollary element</i>	Goals (What is the goal of the content?)	Contributing to brand (image/experience/position)	<i>"We want to create a positive brand experience, and maybe it's more veiled advertising by only mentioning it a little bit at the end, but that's it. It's not, it's not meant to be, it's not meant to be a chest-beater for ourselves, or to put ourselves in the limelight, it's really not meant to be."</i>
		Inspire to act	<i>"Yes, inspire, educational, and we actually want to do that even more, by sharing more from our own experience now in working with athletes, which is also a really important part and thus also to touch or create a certain need or pain in the people in the sport of: oh shit I need to do something with this too."</i>
	Responses (What are the responses from the audience?)	Ideal responses	<i>"So we want them to keep listening, we want them to start recommending it to others, and we want them to like [company] more with that, and ultimately, of course, to buy it."</i>
		Measured effects	<i>"Um and it has had a really big increase in a more positive brand perception of [company name] at the time so um and we could only have dreamt of that"</i>

Appendix D: Coding tree podcast data

Element	Parameters	Key elements	Example fragment
<i>Medium element</i>	Reaching the broad public	Podcasts available on streaming devices	Meta data
<i>Strategic element</i>	Address specific group	Mentioning the specific target group/listener (directly)	<i>“Welcome to [podcast name], a new podcast series by [brand] and Dag & Nacht media. For entrepreneurs and by entrepreneurs.”</i>
	Goal of podcast	Mentioning theme or subject of the podcast	<i>“The podcast in which we look for the latest insights to develop Dutch sports talent in a sustainable and responsible way. Because we win a lot of medals, but we also lose a lot of sports talent.”</i>
<i>Formation element</i>	Conversational	(Informal) chatting	<i>“H: Haven't I taken a bath with you very often? G: Did you take a bath with us, yes? H: Well I seem to remember that I always watched you take a bath.”</i>
		Productional cues	<i>“We are given a symbol of a ball by Maarten, that we have to finish.”</i>
		Intro description	<i>“Together with experts, I discuss their experiences and their insights into their personal motives and ambitions. And about the important themes in the field of entrepreneurship.”</i>
	Storytelling	Audio effects	<i>“[intercom rings] G: Hello, Willem. H: Hey Willem, with Vivianne here, I've arrived for my little chat with you. G: Yes that's right, um, where are you now?”</i>

		Voice overs and music to create storyline	<p><i>“[music begins to play]</i></p> <p><i>H: Thank you Boris for being here.</i></p> <p><i>G: You're welcome.</i></p> <p><i>[music stops abruptly]</i></p> <p><i>H: Well now we're about completely done with the edit of episode 1, we look at the news, I say, 'yeah what the hell. I have to bring Boris back to the studio, because something has happened'. We couldn't do anything more with that episode Boris.”</i></p>
	Content	Naming brand values	<i>"And that is also why you were able to work at home in Corona time and still do so a lot.”</i>
		Degree of specialization terms and questions	<i>“Right, that's what you meant by those bones 'eroded out' that's actually still moving, so this is exactly when the T. rexes, not like the tulips come up, but the T. rexes actually come up in this period.”</i>
	Hosts	Personal information host	<i>“That is not the future. I like that, and then I think of my two cars, my diesel and my petrol-guzzler, and I notice that during the course of this conversation I have become a little ashamed of that [laughs]. I take that with me.”</i>
		Relation host and topic/brand	<i>“You were listening to [podcast name] offered by [company], the culture lottery of the Netherlands. My name is [host], ambassador of the [company]. I am proud that we support culture throughout the Netherlands thanks to our participants.”</i>
Intrinsic element	Brand mentioning	Introduction and outro mentioning	<i>“This is a podcast series from [company].”</i>
		Incorporated into storyline	<p><i>“H: So basically, if you have a penchant for very complex brainteasers, [brand] might be a good place for you?</i></p> <p><i>G: Yes, if you like that and I do. It's a really</i></p>

			<i>nice employer to be around."</i>
	Personal information	Personal information guest	<i>"I am a movement scientist, I work at the Hogeschool van Arnhem Nijmegen, but above all I am a daddy of two little boys of whom I am learning a lot, also in sports development, school development. I live in Utrecht, which is lovely in the middle of the country."</i>
		Addressing relationship guest and host	<i>"H: Please open it. Ehm, and we also sometimes meet at a somewhat stiffer drink and then we look at each other: yes, you're here, we're going to... G: This will be a fun evening."</i>
Communication element	Educating	Giving educational or branche specific information	<i>"At the HAN, we have developed a test, the block test, with which we can test motor skills very well in movement education. Various studies have already shown that this skill is an important one in order to be good in the future."</i>
	Touching the public	Lows and highs	<i>"(...) So that money was gone and then it turned out that the money I had received, which I thought was a kind of tip, was used to buy a car, some suits and some investment and a house, um, and then I lived for ten years, yeah. That was actually, well, still very cool of course, but not the wealth I had expected."</i>
		Attention grabbing intro fragment	<i>"[audio preview starts] G: I always say: I can recommend everyone to become a millionaire, even if you do it once. Afterwards, I became poor again, so I have experienced that."</i>
Corollary element	Call to action	Website	<i>"Are you curious about the IT systems behind the timetable and how such a transition from complex obsolete software to new web software works? Go to [website]"</i>

		Subscribe	<i>“Curious about more great stories? Then subscribe to [podcast] for free in your favourite podcast app, or go to [website].”</i>
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