

Podcasts as instance of political legitimization in a polarized society

Through the past two or three decades, politics has been more present in quotidian debates: it spreads from the traditional media to internet social media, crossing the daily conversations and new communication means, such as podcasts. Mirroring an effect also felt in other countries (Novais & Christofoletti, 2025), such discussions in Brazil are marked by polarization, sometimes a violent dispute over the legitimacy of social position-taking, whether aligned on the left or right (Cesarino, 2020; Chaguri, Cavalcante & Nicolau Netto, 2021).

This set up of ideological conflict also configures the changing media ecosystem, being the podcasting market a relevant battlefield. Podcasters take advantage of the technical affordances of podcasting, such as continuous and immersive listening (Lopez, Gambaro & Freire, 2023), to produce supposedly deep analysis and interviews to ensure the 'truth' of something that is, at best, an opinion. Following this trend, radio stations and journalists has been moving towards far-right positions, while left-oriented independent media has strengthened their presence on digital channels (Fernandes & Vieira, 2019). On those figurations (Couldry & Hepp, 2017), podcasts have been sourced as instances of legitimization, accessory for spreading and strengthening biased visions of Brazil and, often, misinformation.

This paper considers this context to contribute to broader discussions about how sound media is being used to bolster attempts of sociopolitical refoundation of governments and nations. The investigation will show how Brazilian podcast market insulates conflicting, polarized visions of Brazil. This work will be divided in three parts. First, we will show a summary of the results of a technography (Bucher, 2018) of three streaming platforms – YouTube, Deezer and Spotify – to enlighten how these services address 'politics'. Although there is a tendency to show some equilibrium on their outputs, an economic inclination pushes the search results towards high audience, right-oriented podcast.

Second, we will provide an analysis of the general composition of the main lists of podcasts in each service, classified according to production models and political positioning. Many shows are derived from radio output, but the most listened to are generally interviews and commentaries performed by podcasters related to other fields.

Finally, to illustrate how position taking occurs in podcasts, we will depict how hosts of three shows respond to two important political moments: one domestic, regarding criticisms to the fiscal policy of the Brazilian government taken on December, 2024; and one international – the return of Donald Trump to the United States government. The three shows exemplify the Brazilian podcasting market. *Pingos nos Is* derives from a radio station output that is oriented to political right; *Foro de Teresina* is produced by a news magazine, and its hosts are inclined to the political left; and *Market Makers*, a podcast linked to the financial market arena.

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