Podcast for the Cause:
Nonprofit Uses of Podcasting to Raise Awareness of Prostate Cancer
Among African American Men


by
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Abstract

Providing access to health-related information can be a challenge for social entities such as nonprofit organizations whose missions are primarily based on increasing awareness and engagement of their stakeholders. An accessible communication platform is essential to maintain and effectively communicate relevant information, such as health awareness. In collaboration with the Memphis Empowerment Initiative nonprofit organization, this project involved creating a podcast as a communication platform to bring prostate cancer awareness to African American men in Memphis and surrounding areas. This creative research project examines previous studies involving podcasting and nonprofit organizations and incorporates previous research related to health disparities. This creative project examines podcasting as an adaptable, affordable, and accessible digital media platform for nonprofit organizations to disseminate health-related information to African American men. Based on the research and literature, podcasting provides a suitable and cost-effective digital platform for nonprofit organizations to disseminate health-related information to minority communities.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER I

Convergence: Podcasting, Nonprofits, and Health Awareness

Introduction

Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of death among African American men in the United States (American Cancer Society, 2022). Unfortunately, everyone does not have equal access to health-related information. As a result, health disparities exist among specific demographics. This creative thesis project includes a podcast series for the Memphis Empowerment Initiative (MEI) nonprofit organization to increase prostate cancer awareness in African American men. As an integral part of its mission to serve underrepresented families by decreasing health disparities among African American men, MEI promotes prostate cancer awareness in Memphis, Tennessee, and the surrounding areas.

After volunteering for the MEI for the last three years, I am acquainted with smaller nonprofits' challenges. For instance, many grassroots organizations have limited funding and cannot afford to advertise or promote events, let alone hire public relations staff. In many cases, these essential functions needed by small nonprofits are often nonexistent or curtailed to reduce costs, which impacts the organization's ability to effectively share information and resources with its stakeholders (Jungkyu, 2019, p. 24).

This project explores whether or not podcasting provides a cost-effective digital media platform for nonprofits by examining the time and expenses necessary to produce a quality podcast. According to a recent article, *The Power of Podcasting for Nonprofits*,

podcasts can be a budget-friendly option for nonprofit organizations (dotOrgStrategy, 2017).

Although raising awareness of health-related issues via podcasts is not new, there is limited research on nonprofit organizations using podcasts. Thus, this project also contributes to the body of research on nonprofit organizations' use of podcasts and examines podcasting's effectiveness in escalating health awareness more widely among African American men.

Literature Review

*Nonprofit Organizations*

Nonprofit organizations disseminate various causes and social issues that affect a specific demographic or community (Ciszek, 2013, p. 191). Nonprofits positively impact individuals and communities through education, art, culture, health, and other human services. Communication is a significant factor in nonprofits' and stakeholders' strategic relationships (Waters, 2011, p. 459). Effective communication is essential for nonprofit organizations to inform their stakeholders and garner support for specific causes, social issues, and fundraising events (Mato-Santiso et al., 2021, p. 1; McKeever et al., 2016).

Balls-Berry et al. (2018) suggest podcasts are an effective platform for informing the public. Using the term "participatory media" and applying it to multiple digital media platforms, namely podcasts, Ciszeck (2013) suggests that nonprofit organizations currently use such platforms for the benefit of sharing relevant information with their stakeholders (p. 191). For example, the Association for Clinical Oncology has created a podcast dedicated to educating and informing those impacted by cancer.

Previous studies have shown that podcasts can effectively raise awareness of health-related issues among a specific target audience (Turner-McGrievy et al., 2009; Stenger et al., 2013; & Semakula et al., 2017). Still, a recent study on nonprofit organizations and stakeholder engagement suggests that further research is needed regarding alternative digital platforms that benefit nonprofit organizations (Mato-Santiso et al., 2021).

*Podcasting*

In an early study on podcasting, Menduni (2007, p. 14) states that podcasts emerged in 2004 as a direct corollary to portable radio. Since then, podcasts have become more user-friendly (Berry, 2015, p. 172). Not only have podcasts evolved, but more people are also accessing them. Sullivan (2019, pp. 1-2) attributes the progressive use of podcasts to Apple Inc.'s technological innovations, such as Apple Podcasts and mobile devices, such as the iPod and the eventual iPhone.

The evolution of mobile devices has made podcasting an accessible platform and alternative digital medium for nonprofit organizations (Berry, 2015, 2016). *The Podcast Consumer Report 2023* reveals that over 60% of the U.S. twelve and older have listened to a podcast (Edison Research, 2023). Podcast users account for 183 million people (Edison Research, 2023). When measuring the overall reach of a podcast, the same study revealed that "Health & Fitness" ranked number 7 out of 19 genres, outranking "TV & Film" at ten and "Music" at 13 (Edison Research, 2023), making podcasts a favorable option for nonprofit organizations to inform their stakeholders of health-related information.

Furthermore, Markman and Sawyer (2014) suggest podcasts can be an effective platform for communicating with audiences that might otherwise be inaccessible. Besides hard-to-reach demographics, podcasts also span esoteric audiences. A recent study on Black podcasters reveals that "podcasting's commonalities with radio strengthen the medium's ability to reproduce the feeling of enclaved Black social spaces convincingly" (Florini, 2015, p. 215). According to the *Podcast Consumer Report 2023,* "podcasts reach a diverse audience" (Edison Research, 2023). The study reveals that Blacks account for 45% of monthly podcast listeners in the U.S. while revealing that most monthly podcast listeners are men (Edison Research, 2023).

*Health Disparities and Prostate Cancer*

The preceding research studies create an opportunity to explore the value of podcasting for a nonprofit organization working to raise health awareness within the African American community that targets listeners with information catered specifically to them. Healthcare inequities exist among African Americans, creating a barrier to accessing health-related information and resources, thus augmenting mortality and morbidity rates within the demographic (American Cancer Society, 2022, pp. 1-3).

Access to relevant information and resources is essential to thwart disparities that impact a person's overall well-being. This project is important because prostate cancer is the "second-leading cause of cancer death" among African American men in the United States (American Cancer Society, 2022, p. 19). In a recent study comparing the death rate by prostate cancer in Non-Hispanic Black men to that of Non-Hispanic White men, Black

men died at a rate two times higher than white men (American Cancer Society, 2022, p. 9).

Even though the mortality rate is higher among African American men, prostate cancer is treatable and does not have to result in death (American Cancer Society, 2022, pp. 19-20; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). If informed with accurate and timely information, an African American male predisposed to prostate cancer could increase his life expectancy. Studies show that men with a family history of prostate cancer who receive routine checks for early detection can decrease the mortality rate and reduce the need for aggressive treatment options (American Cancer Society, 2022, pp. 19-20; CDC, 2020).

Health disparities are a significant factor in the decline of African American men diagnosed with prostate cancer (McKay et al., 2022, p. 497). The podcast created for the current project serves as an audio-digital information hub for MEI to promote community awareness regarding the impact of prostate cancer on African American men. The project focuses on specific topics related to prostate cancer, including prevention, early detection, treatment, lifestyle changes, and support systems, while incorporating the knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of five experts in key areas of information regarding prostate cancer in African American men. According to McKay et al. (2022, p. 498), health-related gaps can be decreased through the collaborative efforts of healthcare practitioners, public health officials, social entities, and those impacted by health disparities. The five experts who contributed their time and knowledge to be interviewed for this podcast represent the following areas related to prostate cancer awareness: academic research, urology, survival, support, and nonprofit organizations.

CHAPTER II

Methodology: Phases of Creating a Podcast

Except for the introductory podcast, all six episodes have been formatted in an interview style. Berk et al. (2020, p. 1222) suggest no current data support using the interview style over other styles, such as monologue and investigative, when referring to the impression the information has on the listener. Although the analysis of Berk et al. (2020) that all formats have benefits may be true for most content, the podcast produced for this project aims to create a familiar and comfortable space to share a serious and sensitive conversation with African American men (Florini, 2015, p. 10).

Each episode focuses on a specific topic, combining academic research and personal knowledge to give the listener a more reliable and comprehensive message (McKay et al., 2022, p. 498). The topics coincide with the expertise of the interviewees, including an overview of prostate cancer, its prevention, early detection, treatment, lifestyle changes, and the necessary support systems associated with prostate cancer (American Cancer Society, 2022, pp. 33-37). For example, the episode *We Have Cancer*, which is focused on support systems, emphasizes the importance of having a caregiver and how families can fulfill that role.

The successful completion of this creative thesis project required further academic research on prostate cancer, prostate cancer awareness, and how to do podcasting. More in-depth research was undertaken to ensure the most relevant information was incorporated into the podcast content. Further support of the thesis involved listening to existing podcasts aimed explicitly at spreading health awareness to minority demographics, such as *The Clinical Problem Solvers Presents: Anti-Racism in Medicine*

and Cancer.Net podcast. Further research on podcasting was also performed, including the technical skills and components needed to produce a quality podcast.

According to Berk et al. (2020, p. 1221), there are multiple steps to producing a successful podcast. Some steps, such as scheduling and coordinating guest interviews, developing scripts, recording, editing, and uploading each episode, inevitably required more time than choosing a name for the podcast, creating episode titles, and selecting a podcast location and equipment. With this understanding, the project methodology included the timeframe necessary to produce a quality podcast. Creating a quality podcast requires many progressive steps (Berk et al., 2020; Gray, 2021). The steps for this podcast extended over three phases: preproduction, production, and postproduction. Completing the three phases took three months and an estimated 120 hours from start to finish.

Preproduction

The preproduction phase included planning and development and required the most steps. This phase included selecting and contacting interviewees, scheduling interviews, composing interview questions and scripts, and gathering guest bios. This phase also included researching and selecting software, purchasing and testing equipment, selecting audio, creating graphics, and designing a website.

The request for prospective guests was made well in advance through MEI to ensure a timely vetting process. Additional background information was gathered on each guest for bios. Alternate guests were also arranged in advance in case of any contingency.

The podcast series included five interviews about various aspects of the prostate cancer experience: urology, academic research, survival, support, and the nonprofit. Initially, oncology as an area of investigation had been included as a primary aspect of the prostate cancer journey. However, additional research confirmed urology as the primary disease specialist. Therefore, a urologist was included in the podcast instead of an oncologist.

Unfortunately, the first specialist in the area for the podcast's academic investigation could not be reached during the timeframe and therefore was replaced with an alternate guest from the same institution. A married couple who had experienced prostate cancer was selected to represent the survivor and caregiver roles. The president and CEO of MEI represented the nonprofit.

Interviews were scheduled based on the interviewees' availability within a specific timeframe to ensure all interviews would be complete by early August and allow time for editing. Interview requests were sent via email to prospective guests. After the guests confirmed their availability, a Zoom meeting was scheduled for that day and time and sent to the interviewee with the interview questions. A reminder email was also sent a couple of days in advance. The planning phase also included upgrading Zoom from a free plan to a paid subscription to allow for more extended interviews.

Interview outlines were created in advance to maintain congruency. Interview outlines were based on the episode's topic and shared with the guests before the interview (Berk et al., 2020). Outlines consisted of questions based on research and personal testimonials and were customized for each prospective interviewee. Except for the married couple, interviewees did not come in contact with each other or discuss the questions before their interviews.

The planning phase also consisted of selecting and testing equipment. The equipment recommended for starting a podcast includes a laptop or PC with Wi-Fi capability and a microphone (Buzzsprout, 2023a). In advance of the project, a laptop with Wi-Fi capability was purchased. For cost-effectiveness, a headset with a built-in microphone was also purchased. A test recording was performed using the laptop, microphone, and Audacity software.

Subsequently, the development portion consisted of choosing a name for the podcast. The name, The Cake Lady Podcast, was selected to appeal to the target audience (Buzzsprout, 2023a) through familiarity with the Cake Lady title and position in the African American community. "Cake Lady" is a title used among African Americans to describe a person (typically a woman) who makes and sells cakes. Moreover, the Cake Lady title represents a term of endearment for someone who loves and serves the community. For this creative research project, the name Cake Lady also combines a personal passion for baking and serving the community.

Another part of the development phase was designing a website. The Cake Lady website at https://joharihamilton1.wixsite.com/podcast was developed (see fig. 1) using Wix.com Ltd. This cloud-based development platform offers free website design or paid subscriptions for additional features and services. For this project, the basic website design was more than sufficient. It included a podcasting template which simplified the design process by providing access to stock images, various colors, fonts, and basic designs. The colors were kept soft and gender-neutral to provide a calming effect in contrast to the critical nature of the content. To further enhance the appearance, The Cake Lady Podcast brand images were designed in Canva and uploaded to the website. The

website's style was customized to complement the podcast's name and provide a more

personal experience for the viewer. A simple webpage design was incorporated by using

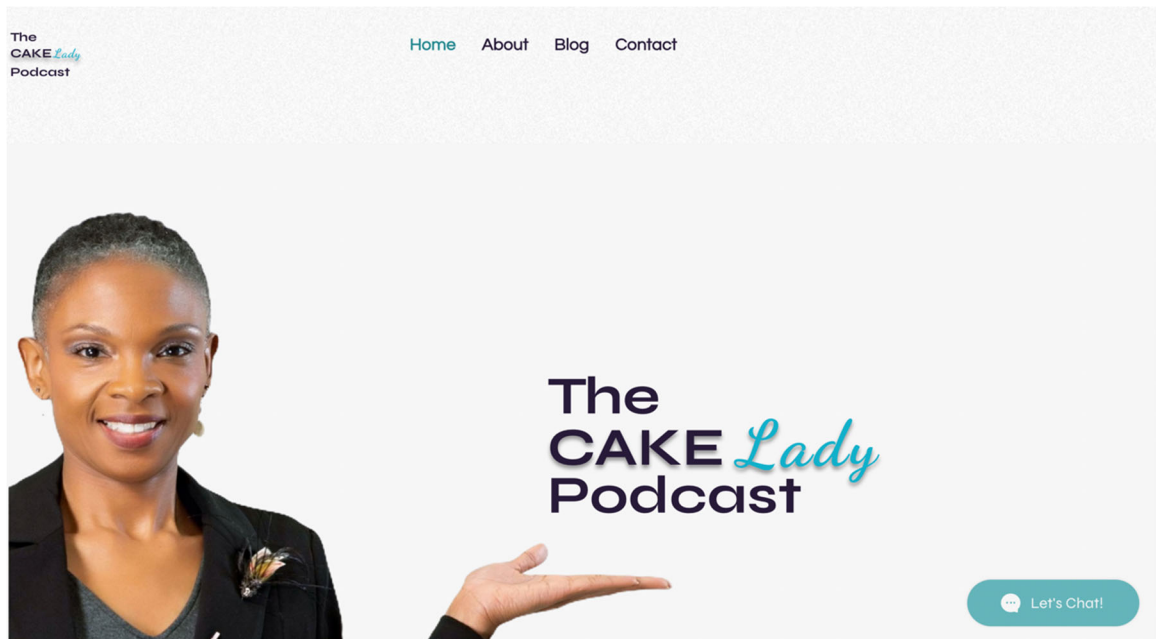fewer images and content to help the viewer navigate.



Figure 1. The Cake Lady Podcast website (From Wix.com, 2023,
https://joharihamilton1.wixsite.com/podcast).

The website layout includes a Home Page where viewers can listen to the podcast

directly from the website or click their preferred streaming platforms icon, such as Apple

Podcasts, iHeart, and Spotify (Götting, 2023). Next, the About Page was designed to give

viewers more background information about the podcast and its purpose. The basic

podcast website template also included a Blog Page. The Cake Lady Podcast aims to

increase prostate cancer awareness among African American men. Due to the timeframe

of fewer than 30 minutes per episode, a companion website was designed for those who

want to learn more about prostate cancer and how the disease impacted the demographic.

The Cake Lady Blog gives viewers access to resources related to the various aspects of prostate cancer. Online resources were integrated throughout each blog based on the episode's topic. To help viewers connect with the experts interviewed for the podcasts, a picture of each guest was added to the perspective blog. The blog consists of highlights and quotes from each episode that emphasize the most relevant points of the interview. Each post also includes a call to action to learn about the Memphis Empowerment Initiative and its annual Save Our Fathers event by visiting the website.

To complete the website design, a Contact Page was developed for viewers who want to ask questions, share their concerns, or provide feedback. There is also the option to use the chat tab on each page. Links to Instagram and LinkedIn were also included on each page to give viewers access to social media posts about the Save Our Fathers event.

The last component of the development phase was choosing music for the podcast. When selecting music or sounds, all audio must be retrieved from trusted sources (Buzzsprout, 2023a), giving users access and permission to use royalty-free materials protected under copyright. This project incorporated music from YouTube Studio, an audio library for royalty-free music and sound effects. Upon creating an account, all users must agree to the rules and conditions set forth by YouTube Studio. The platform offers a set number of downloads for free with access to more downloads with a paid subscription and includes almost every genre of music. The Cake Lady Podcast intro and outro incorporate an upbeat jazz instrumental with a positive and soothing tone to help lighten the mood and complement the host's voice.

Production

   The primary function of the production phase was recording each episode. Considerations were made in advance for suitable recording locations. The James E. Walker Library at MTSU has a podcasting room for students to reserve. The room is soundproof and equipped with microphones, earphones, and a soundboard with recording capability. Since most interviews were scheduled during the summer, access to the Walker Library podcasting room was limited, and availability conflicted with the predetermined recording schedule. Thus, only one of the five interviews was recorded using the podcasting room. However, other locations, such as a study room in the MTSU Student Athletic Center and a home office, were used for recording. The podcasts consist of an introductory episode and five informational episodes, forming a series of six episodes.

   Each interview lasted an hour, except for the married couple's interview, which took almost two hours. A "recording in progress" sign was placed outside the door of each room in which the recording took place. Each interview was recorded via Zoom as an MP4 file and converted to a Waveform Audio File, also known as WAV. The WAV format is similar to MP3 but without file compression, thus preserving the audio quality essential for podcasts. The introductory episode was recorded last during this process. The introduction provided information about the host and an overview of the content and purpose of the podcast and was recorded using the Audacity software.

Postproduction

      The final phase was postproduction, which included editing and publishing each episode. Episodes were edited using Audacity Software, a free digital audio application for editing and recording audio. Editing experience was optional to use the software. However, basic audio editing knowledge was beneficial and highly recommended.

      According to Berk et al. (2020, p. 1223), editing is the most time-consuming and challenging part of creating a podcast. The authors suggest online sources for additional technical support (Berk et al., 2020, p. 1224). Therefore during the planning phase, more time was allotted to complete the editing and postproduction phase due to the lengthy process as required. Preliminary editing was performed, which focused on listening to ensure the accuracy and overall quality of the content.

      Quotes were taken from the content and used for episode titles during this process. Using quotes from the content to create episode titles can enhance the podcast's appeal and help attract potential listeners (Corbett, 2023). For example, the episode focused on the survivor is entitled *I'm Still Alive,* a direct quote from the expert highlighting the outcome of his journey as a prostate cancer survivor.

      The second editing phase focused on volume, sounds, dialogue, and cutting the length of each audio file. The first interview produced the most significant discrepancies in volume due to the difference in tones and inflections of the married couple's voices. The volume was normalized and compressed to achieve balance and produce a more comfortable volume. Fade-in and out techniques were also applied for smoother transitions between speakers. Unwanted sounds such as feedback, breaths, and

background noises were also edited from the content during this sound-correction editing phase and throughout the editing process.

Each interview was cut to 30 minutes at maximum to avoid the burden of information and keep listeners engaged (Ahn et al., 2016). Cosimini et al. (2017, p. 388) suggest that listeners favor educational podcast episodes between 15 and 30 minutes. The married couple's interview was two hours long and therefore took longer to edit. Fortunately, the interview covered two aspects of the prostate cancer journey (survival and support), resulting in a two-part episode.

After undergoing a lengthy editing process of the first interview, further research was undertaken about software programs that could simplify the editing process, thus decreasing the time. Buzzsprout recommended the Descript program. Descript is an audio and video editing program that provides a transcript of the audio, allowing the user to read the errors and edit the document while listening to the content. Users can upload and edit two hours of content for free. Once the user reached two hours of content, the option to upgrade to a paid subscription with more editing features was available. The free plan recently changed only to offer a maximum of one hour of content. Although the free plan is limited, adding the Descript program to the editing process reduced the time for cutting and editing dialogue by half.

The third phase of editing included adding the intro and outro. The intro and outro audio was recorded and edited using the Audacity software. The intro gives listeners a brief overview of the podcast's host, guests, topic, and other relevant details. The outro culminates the episode, cueing the listeners that the episode has ended, and often includes takeaways or a summary of the podcast, announcements about the host and upcoming

episodes, topics or guests, and a call to action. For this podcast series, the intro and outro also included background music. The same music was used for each episode. The music file was timed, balanced, and trimmed before adding it to the audio file.

The final stage of postproduction was publishing the podcast. First, the podcast must be assigned an RSS feed (Really Simple Syndication) from a hosting platform. Each RSS feed is created exclusively for that podcast and embedded into a URL. Once a podcast is published on a streaming platform, the RSS feed tracks the audio file and keeps it up to date from the hosting platform.

The Cake Lady Podcast was uploaded to Buzzsprout. This cloud-based podcasting publishing service offers 90 days of hosting for podcasts up to two hours and paid subscriptions for podcasts two hours or longer, which includes an indefinite timeframe and additional features. Buzzsprout also offers a podcast website with minimal features, such as adding the podcast's logo or design, a preview and playlist of each episode, and a bio of the host.

The podcast was published on September 30, 2022, to align with MEI's annual Save Our Fathers event that focuses on prostate cancer awareness. Publishing the podcast consisted of uploading the podcast images, adding titles, creating descriptions for each episode, and uploading each audio file. Subsequently, careful attention was made before publishing the audio file to ensure the proper sequence of the episodes. For example, the introductory episode was published first. Therefore, it is the oldest episode in the cue on streaming sites. Next, episode one was published. Therefore it comes after the intro, and so on.

Each episode focuses on a specific aspect of prostate cancer and offers an à la carte-style podcast that creates a more succinct listening experience (Waters et al., 2012) by allowing listeners to choose episodes that suit their needs and schedules. Once all six episodes were uploaded to Buzzsprout, the most commonly used streaming platforms were selected, including iHeart, Spotify, and Apple Podcast (Götting, 2021); each streaming platform has rules and user agreements that affect how quickly the podcast is published. For instance, after completing the user agreement for Spotify, the podcast was published almost immediately, while other streaming platforms' verification process took 24 - 48 hours.

CHAPTER III

Results: Podcast Listenership

Quantitative Data

   The quantitative data for this project were collected and analyzed from

Buzzsprout, Wix, and Spotify Analytics. The data include the number of users,

geographic location, gender, and age, depending on the streaming platform. The data

indicate The Cake Lady Podcast's ability to raise prostate awareness by the overall

number of downloads. Moreover, the data reveal the success of the podcast based on the

number of downloads within seven days of publishing. Results also include the types of

devices and apps used to indicate the accessibility of the podcast. Since the current

podcasting analytics do not capture the listener's race or ethnicity, outcomes were based

mainly on the listener's location.

   *Downloads*

   Data retrieved and analyzed from Buzzsprout analytics revealed 95 downloads

(see fig. 2) between September 30, 2022, and February 28, 2023 (Buzzsprout, 2023d).

The term " downloads " is used when referring to the number of podcast listeners or

potential listeners the term "downloads" is used. According to the article *Podcast Metrics*

*Explained*, "'Downloads' is the essential metric for understanding the popularity of a

podcast. While a download isn't necessarily listened to, it is an indication of the listener's

intent to listen to the podcast" (Triton Digital, 2020).

The article goes on to explain how "Downloads" are used:

"Downloads" is a measure of unique file requests followed by file downloads, with invalid downloads omitted. It includes files downloaded for later use and files listened to as they download/stream. Nonunique file requests (multiple requests from the same apparent listener) and invalid downloads are filtered out, per the rule defined in the IAB Podcast Measurement Technical Guidelines. (Triton Digital, 2020)
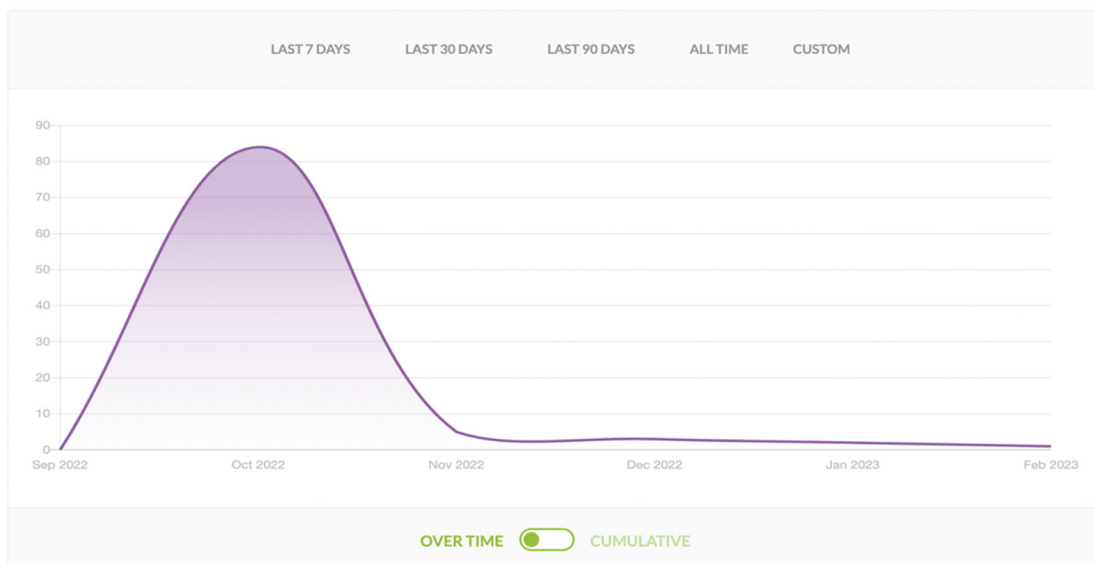


Figure 2. The total number of downloads of The Cake Lady Podcast from September 28, 2022, to February 28, 2023. (From Buzzsprout.com, The Cake Lady Podcast Stats, 2023, https://www.buzzsprout.com/2058228/stats/custom_date_range_chart? utf8=%E2%9C%93&from_date=Sep%2B28%2C%2B2022&to_date=Feb%2B28%2C% 2B2023&commit=Gathering%2BData).

However, the overall success of the podcast is represented in the number of downloads within the first seven days. According to Buzzsprout, a podcast that has a minimum of 30 downloads in the first seven days is in "The Top 50% (median post)" for Buzzsprout podcast (Buzzsprout, 2023b). The Cake Lady Podcast received 50 downloads

between September 30, 2022, and October 6, 2022, placing it in the top 50% (see fig. 3).

Although the acquired number of downloads does not guarantee the listener received the

content (Triton Digital, 2020), the downloads reflect the number of people exposed to

The Cake Lady Podcast and thus potentially informed about prostate cancer awareness.
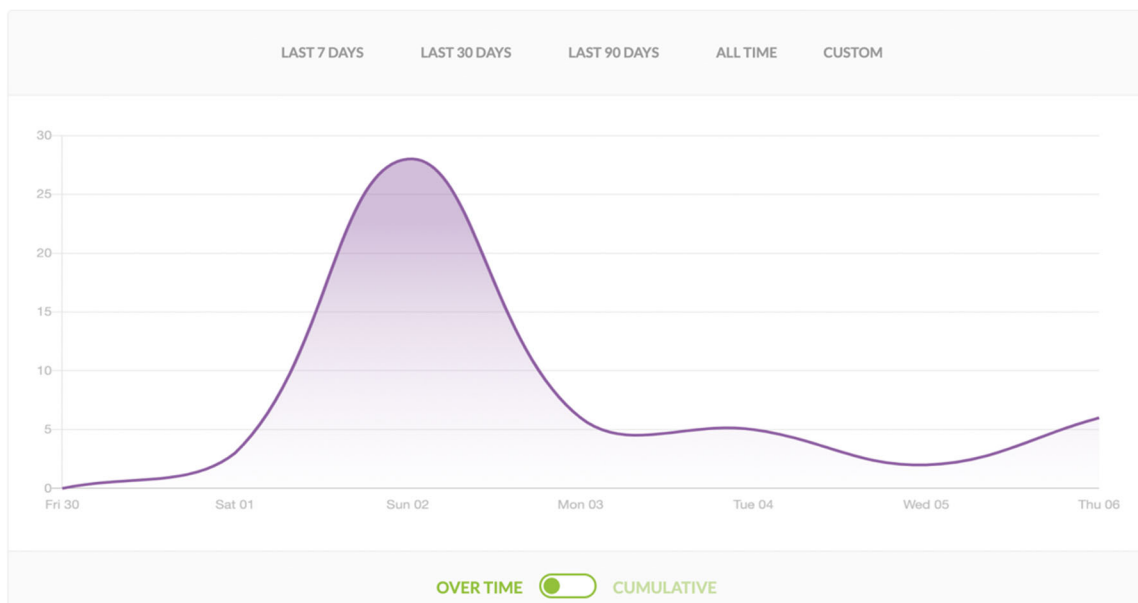


Figure 3. The number of downloads within the first seven days, September 30, 2022, to
October 6, 2022. (From Buzzsprout.com, The Cake Lady Podcast Stats, 2023,
https://www.buzzsprout.com/2058228/stats/custom_date_range_chart?utf8=%E2%9C%9
3&from_date=Sep+30%2C+2022&to_date=Oct+06%2C+2022&commit=Gathering+Dat
a).

*Accessibility of the Podcast*

In keeping with the literature, podcasts are accessible through various apps and

mobile devices, including mobile phones, laptops, and tablets (Sullivan, 2019, pp. 1-2).

According to the data, more than 60% of users accessed the podcast via the Wix app,

with 12% of users accessing via a web browser or Spotify (see fig. 4). The higher number of Wix users may reflect email marketing that was generated using the Wix platform and thereby connecting users to the app.

According to the data, the primary device used to access the podcast was the Apple iPhone at 48%, with more than two-thirds of overall users accessing the podcast via a mobile device (see fig. 4). These data correspond to research regarding the use of devices by podcasts users (Götting, 2021). Altogether the data reveal that accessibility of The Cake Lady Podcast was achieved through various apps and mobile devices. Moreover, the website increased accessibility by offering a blog and additional resources about prostate cancer.
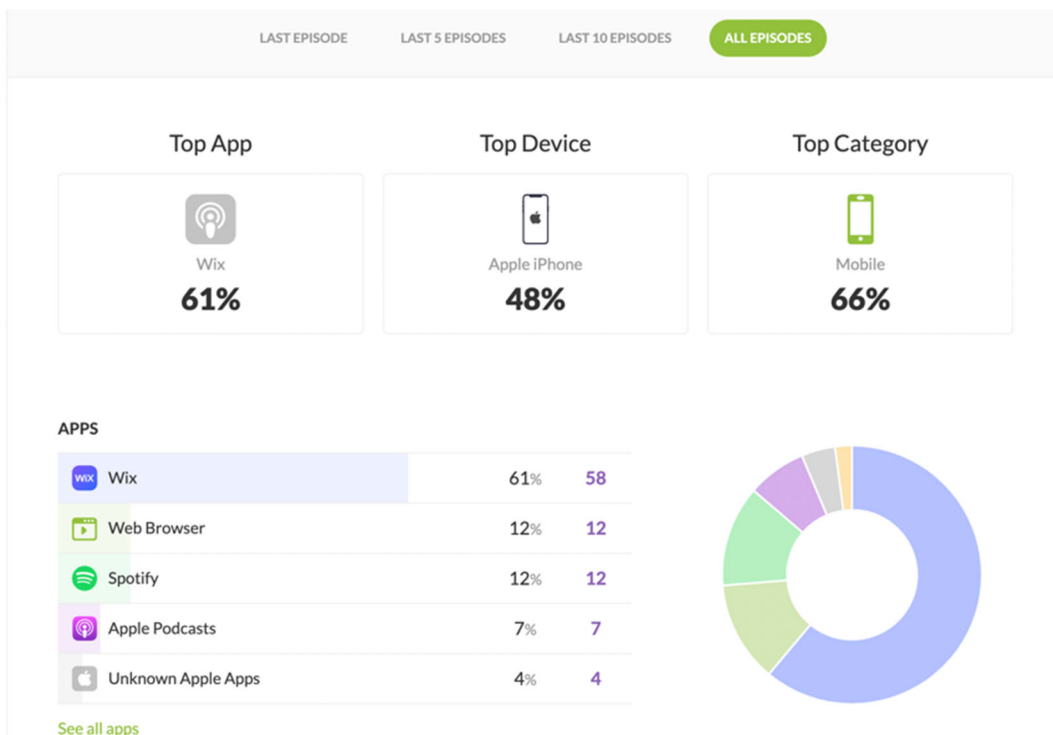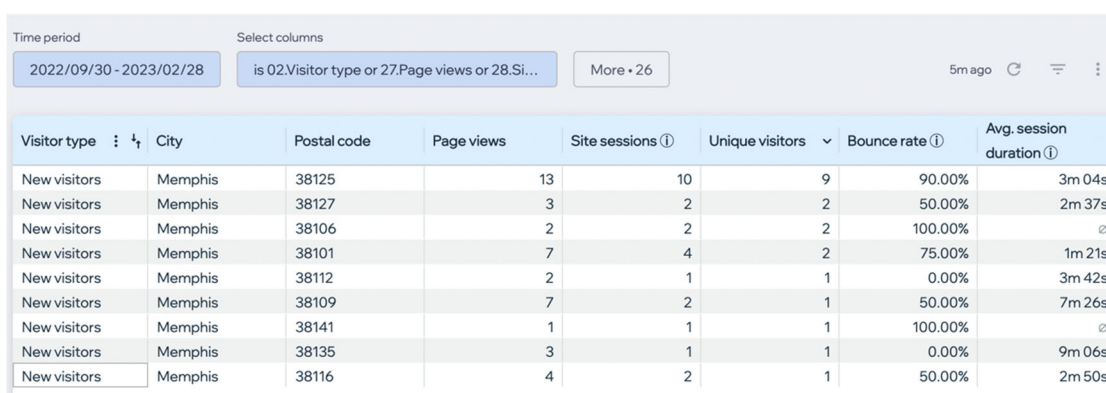


Figure 4. Top apps and devices used to access The Cake Lady Podcast. (From Buzzsprout.com, The Cake Lady Podcast Stats, 2023, https://www.buzzsprout.com/2058228/stats/technologies?count=all)

*User's Location*

Furthermore, user location data were analyzed using Wix Analytics via The Cake Lady Podcast website. The data included the number of "new visitors" to the website (see fig. 5) between September 28, 2022, and February 28, 2023. The corresponding geographical data were filtered by city and zip code. A total of nine zip codes were included from Memphis, Tennessee (Wix.com, 2023). According to Wix.com, a "unique visitor is the number of people that visited your site. A visitor is considered unique when they connect from a different browser or device (IP address)" (Wix.com, 2023). Although the nine zip codes may include various races, the information is helpful because it reveals that the podcast was accessed in Memphis. Even though cities surrounding Memphis were included in the overall data, the city of Memphis was filtered with the corresponding zip codes to ensure consistency.

| Time period | Select columns | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022/09/30 - 2023/02/28 | is 02.Visitor type or 27.Page views or 28.Si... | More • 26 | | | 5m ago | |

| Visitor type | City | Postal code | Page views | Site sessions ⓘ | Unique visitors ⌄ | Bounce rate ⓘ | Avg. session duration ⓘ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New visitors | Memphis | 38125 | 13 | 10 | 9 | 90.00% | 3m 04s |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38127 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 50.00% | 2m 37s |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38106 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 100.00% | ∅ |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38101 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 75.00% | 1m 21s |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38112 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0.00% | 3m 42s |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38109 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 50.00% | 7m 26s |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38141 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 100.00% | ∅ |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38135 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0.00% | 9m 06s |
| New visitors | Memphis | 38116 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 50.00% | 2m 50s |

Figure 5. Traffic by location to The Cake Lady Podcast website. (From Wix.com, Reports, 2023, © 2006-2023 https://manage.wix.com/dashboard/a90b82d6-f0ba-4db3-9ca8-9998cc546a81/analytics/reports/f880603f-f134-4374-aa6b-73719ec7fb43?city=Memphis&columns_to_show=17.City%2C27.Page%20views%2C28.Site%20sessions%2C29.Unique%20visitors%2C18.Postal%20code&date=2022%2F09%2F30%20to%202023%2F03%2F01&exclude_bots=Yes&postal_code=38101%2C38106%2C38109%2C38112%2C38141%2C38135%2C38127%2C38125%2C38116).

*Gender and Age*

Spotify Analytics was used to analyze users based on gender and age. The data reflect 12 users (see fig. 6) between September 28, 2022, and February 28, 2023. Eight of the 12 users identified as female, while the other four showed "not specified" for gender (Spotify, 2023b). Half of the users were between the ages of 60 to 150 (see fig. 7) (Spotify, 2023a). The number of female listeners correlates with women in the support and caregiver role. It indicates women's increased nature of information-sharing as they support men at risk.
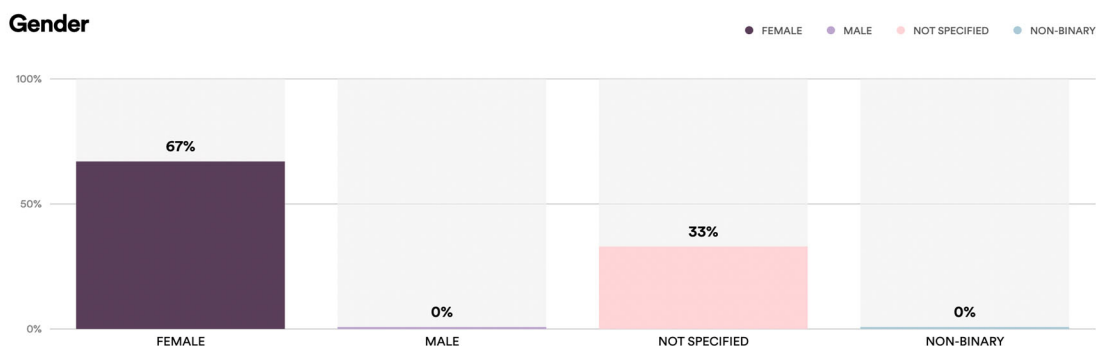


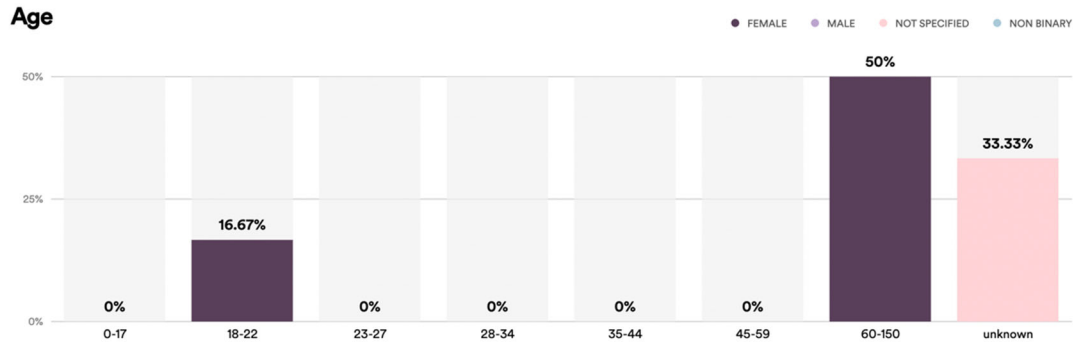Figure 6. The Cake Lady Podcast listeners' gender via Spotify Analytics © 2023 Spotify AB. (From Podcasters.Spotify.com https://podcasters.spotify.com/dash/podcast/2MeGSuiahEJLVbKpFqOjos/audience).

Figure 7. The Cake Lady Podcast listeners' age via Spotify Analytics © 2023 Spotify AB. (From Podcasters.Spotify.com https://podcasters.spotify.com/dash/podcast/2MeGSuiahEJLVbKpFqOjos/audience).

Qualitative Data

*Listener Feedback*

This creative research project aimed to explore podcasting as a feasible digital medium for nonprofit organizations to disseminate health-related information among minority communities. The qualitative results discussed in this section include listener feedback and the cost-effectiveness of creating and hosting a podcast.

Tatiyana Muhammad, a former MTSU student, and intern for Kudzukian, a Memphis-based Audio and Visual Content Producer specializing in podcasting, said the podcast sounded professionally produced (personal communication with Tatiyana Muhammad on October 4, 2022). Tatiyana's feedback was valuable and provided insight into the expectation of the quality of podcasts. Even though Tatiyana has limited experience in podcasting, her internship at Kudzukian provided greater knowledge and understanding of what it takes to produce a quality podcast and how a professionally produced podcast should sound.

Moreover, as a guest and expert in prostate cancer awareness, Timothy Harris, president, and CEO of MEI shared the following feedback via the Contact Page on The Cake Lady Podcast website:

This was OUTSTANDING work. Great job all around!!
Pros:
- Great intro/outro music
- Great articulation of questions
- Great cadence as you asked the questions
- Thanks for allowing the guest [to] speak, and for not interrupting when I was answering your questions.
- Great feel for the "dialogue." It felt like a natural/organic conversation.
- Great lineup of questions
- Great editing of the dialogue
- Great leading questions/segues/and transition statements.

Cons:
Volume (make sure your mic levels are up/ consistent throughout the interview)
Make sure the guest gives their contact information (website, email, phone).
I did, but it could have been a little more clear/ concise
Make sure the guest actually answers the question at hand. I tend to ramble, and eventually get to the answer.
Overall:
Fantastic piece!!---TH

Harris provided valuable feedback as a leader and representative of the nonprofit sector. His feedback speaks to the success of The Cake Lady Podcast and supports whether podcasting offers a viable digital media platform for nonprofit organizations. Moreover, because Harris also represents the targeted demographic, his feedback gives insight into the accessibility of the podcast in reaching African American men. Furthermore, his feedback is highly significant because it adds to the conceptual framework for nonprofit organizations considering podcasting as a digital media platform to share health-related information.

*Cost Effectiveness*

Podcasting is cost-effective in terms of money but involves significant time investment. Evidence to support podcasting as a cost-effective medium for nonprofit organizations to share information was found in the cost of creating The Cake Lady Podcast on a college student budget. A PC or laptop with Wi-Fi capabilities and a good-quality microphone were widely recommended (Buzzsprout, 2023a). The equipment cost for this project was only $30 for a headphone and microphone combo. The low cost of equipment is ideal for a nonprofit equipped with an extra PC or laptop with Wi-Fi capability.

As mentioned in the methodology, most programs used to develop and produce the podcast were free. Subscriptions were only used when necessary. For instance, Zoom was upgraded from free to the minimum paid plan to accommodate more extended interviews. On the other hand, Audacity was free to download with unlimited access to features and software upgrades.

Nevertheless, the actual cost can be more accurately reflected in the time it takes to plan, develop, publish, and promote the podcast. According to The Audacity to Podcast website, "Despite being easier, audio podcasting *does* still take time. The average goal is about a 4:1 ratio—four minutes of work for every one minute of content. For instance, a well-presented one-hour episode could take five hours in total (four hours of preparation or postproduction, one hour of presenting)" (Lewis, 2022). Considering The Cake Lady Podcast, each one-hour interview took more than ten hours to prepare for publishing, notwithstanding the two-hour interview that took more than 20 hours. Those

hours do not include the introductory episode or the intro and outro that took more than 10 hours.

As novice podcasters, learning and implementing skills essential for creating a podcast account for additional time, nonprofits often work with minimal staff to reduce overhead costs. Most nonprofit organizations do not have professional podcasters on staff, so the time it takes to produce a quality podcast might outweigh the benefits. Still, the option to podcast should be weighed with consideration of the cost-effectiveness regarding equipment and services if staff or volunteers are available.

Despite the inconclusive findings regarding the gender and age of Spotify users, the platform's ability to provide additional demographics benefits the study. It can be a resource for nonprofits who use podcasts and want to know more about their audience and reach.

CHAPTER IV

Concept Development for the Cause

Discussion

The feedback and data collected in the results suggest that The Cake Lady Podcast was successful in helping MEI raise awareness of prostate cancer in the city of Memphis. Three significant factors were examined to determine the success of the podcast: adaptability, affordability, and accessibility of the Podcast. These three factors confirmed the nonprofit's use of podcasting as a digital media platform for raising health awareness among African American men.

Producing The Cake Lady Podcast was done with little to no experience. Although the podcast initially required three phases (preproduction, production, and postproduction) to produce, some of the tasks in the preproduction phase will only sometimes be repeated after the initial production. For instance, if another series is added to The Cake Lady Podcast, the same graphics, audio, website, software, and equipment will be used, making the medium more adaptable.

Furthermore, the project succeeded in providing a conceptual framework for nonprofit organizations that want to adapt podcasting as a platform to raise health awareness. The framework was more clearly revealed through listener feedback, specifically comments shared by the CEO and president of MEI, Timothy Harris. Harris's feedback provided proof of concept and further confirmed the literature regarding podcasts as a more user-friendly medium (Berry, 2015, p. 172).

When examining cost-effectiveness, the project suggests that podcasting provides nonprofit organizations with an affordable option for sharing health-related information. The cost to produce The Cake Lady Podcast was minimal and further agreed with research (Buzzsprout, 2023a).

The overall cost included purchasing a $30 headset and microphone combo, a Zoom plan for $15/month, and subscribing to Buzzsprout for $12/month. However, the cost does not include a laptop and Wi-Fi, which are also necessary to produce a podcast. When nonprofits do not have these items, they can be purchased inexpensively.

Although the cost to produce the podcast was minimal, the time to produce the podcast was more significant. In keeping with the literature regarding editing, it still takes time to produce a quality podcast (Lewis, 2022). As mentioned in the methodology section, The Cake Lady Podcast took an estimated 120 hours to produce. However, the total estimated hours were accrued over three months. If the nonprofit's staffing permits, the tasks can be spread over time and shared amongst staff. Conversely, 120 hours can also be divided into 20- or 40-hour work weeks, shortening the overall timeframe.

Furthermore, as mentioned briefly in the results, marketing for The Cake Lady Podcast was performed through the Wix platform because it was free. Other than that, the podcast could have been more well-promoted, yet it still received favorable results. This information further confirms the affordability and adaptability of podcasting by nonprofit organizations.

As mentioned in the literature, the evolution of mobile devices has made podcasting an accessible platform and alternative digital medium for nonprofit organizations (Berry, 2015, 2016). Accessibility of the podcast was achieved through

commonly used streaming apps and mobile devices (Götting, 2021 & 2023). Although the current podcasting analytics does not include race, research shows that Blacks account for 45% of monthly podcast listeners (Edison Research, 2023).

Based on the literature, podcasts can reach "diverse audiences" (Edison Research, 2023). Although the data is limited regarding whether or not The Cake Lady Podcast succeeded in reaching African American men specifically, when examining the data for the location of podcast users, nine zip codes were included from the city of Memphis. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Blacks made up almost 65% of the population in Memphis, TN, in 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Moreover, Blacks comprised most of the population in seven of the nine zip codes included for Memphis (UnitedStatesZipCodes.org, 2023). In most cases, nonprofit organizations have built relationships with their stakeholders through various forms of media, such as emails, newsletters, and social media. Using owned and earned media to market the podcast would be cost-effective and streamline their marketing efforts, making them even more successful at reaching their target audience.

Conclusion

The overall results of this creative thesis research project provide evidence that podcasting should be considered a viable digital media platform for nonprofit organizations to use to share health awareness with minority communities. The Cake Lady Podcast series received positive and constructive feedback from respected sources regarding the quality of the overall product and its content.

The research further confirmed that the level of quality could be achieved at a minimum cost, making podcasting more affordable for nonprofit organizations with limited budgets. Some podcasting equipment and programs can be expensive and are optional to ensure a quality podcast. Nevertheless, allotting time and dedicated staff is necessary to produce a quality podcast and should be considered before committing to such an undertaking.

Furthermore, the data favors using podcasts as a digital medium to share health awareness. As mentioned in the results section, The Cake Lady Podcast received over 30 downloads within the first week, putting it in the top 50% of all Buzzsprout podcasts. Moreover, the data revealed that users in the target location (Memphis, TN) were reached. The data also suggest that email marketing may enhance listening and connection to a specific platform.

Limitations exist in collecting specific demographics such as race, gender, and age. Although the user's gender and age can be analyzed via Spotify analytics, this project's data for gender was inconclusive.

Podcasting is a cost-effective medium that can be professionally produced at minimum cost, given the availability of time and staff. Nonprofits should consider using podcasting to raise health awareness and decrease health disparities among minority communities.

CHAPTER V

Reflection: Contributions of the Cake Lady Podcast

As stated in the introduction, this creative research project began with a desire to understand how social entities such as nonprofit organizations could use podcasting as a digital media platform to raise health awareness in minority communities. Three factors converged: nonprofit organizations, podcasting, and health awareness, resulting in a practical solution for decreasing health disparities in African American communities. At the intersection of those three factors, three personal aspects also converged: my previous healthcare experience, my passion for serving my community, and my love for baking cakes.

After working in the healthcare industry for 20 years, I was aware of the many health disparities among minorities, specifically African Americans. Having this knowledge grieved me, and I wanted to do more. While creating The Cake Lady Podcast, I was constantly reminded of my desire to help African Americans overcome health disparities. This research project required me to use my knowledge of healthcare and health-related information, revealing the value and purpose of my previous experience and how it correlates to my academic and professional endeavors.

Working in healthcare was one way I fulfilled my passion for serving my community. After resigning, I sought volunteer opportunities aligned with my desire to help African Americans become more aware of health-related information. In 2019, a mutual friend shared about MEI and their work on increasing prostate cancer awareness among African American men in Memphis. I immediately signed up to volunteer. Since volunteering for MEI, I have learned how limited funding and budget restraints impact

smaller nonprofits' ability to promote their mission and causes, thus limiting their ability to reach their target audience. Once again, I found myself wanting to do more. During a research class that preceded this project, I recognized an opportunity to combine academic research and creativity with helping MEI raise prostate cancer awareness among African American men using a podcast.

Although I do not particularly appreciate hearing my voice, knowing how I want to use my voice is important to me. This creative research project refined my voice and communication style. It shifted my perspective on serving my community. It provided insight into the future trajectory of The Cake Lady Podcast as a platform to use my voice as a healthcare advocate.

Furthermore, the idea of including my love for baking came while thinking of how I currently connect and express love for my community. I wanted the podcast title to be appealing and resonate with African Americans. I began to see baking cakes as a conduit for impacting health awareness in my community.

I am amazed at how the three aspects came together. The undertaking of the creative and research components included in this project has given me a greater appreciation for academic research. Multiple factors surrounding this research topic required me to use critical thinking to establish my position and show how the factors correlated. I gained more experience using the skills and knowledge I have acquired as a journalism student. This project enhanced my understanding of digital media with over 120 hours of audio-digital media skills, including scripting, recording, and editing.

Moreover, successfully producing The Cake Lady Podcast without experience has boosted my confidence. Not only did The Cake Lady Podcast confirm podcasting as a

viable solution for nonprofit organizations to raise health awareness among minorities,

but it has also allowed me to establish my position as a health awareness advocate for the

African American community.

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