

# The podcast revolution is here!

 By [Jason Acar](#)

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Finally, the podcast revolution has reached South African shores! It's been a slow start, and a long wait for downloads to pick up, but the tide is turning. It's been a conversation brewing amongst radio veterans, media agencies and podcast creators for the past few months, as 2017 is shaping into a breakthrough year for the audio platform.



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The platform faced brutal challenges in its early stages in the South African market, mainly because of data costs, but also because it has been done wrong by mainstream audio producers, or it's been hidden from sight.

That numerous radio stations are essentially using podcasts as "catch up" content and not tailoring content specifically to cater for podcast consumption has hindered, instead of helped the progress of the platform. Also hidden behind current major podcasting brands, are actually online radio stations. They focus on a live show and the podcast is the secondary thought, even though they rely so heavily on the podcasting numbers to attract advertising.

That's the bad news, however things are changing in this market and I'll use the story of *Soccer Laduma's* SL Radio – football podcasts – as an example of just how ready the South African market is to embrace this medium.

In fact, it was only after the start of SL Radio that my eyes opened to the incredible potential of this market. I had conceptualised this venture a few years ago, and after a large amount of time working to bring it to fruition, *Soccer Laduma* launched its very first podcast on 22 October 2016.

## The right portal to serve content directly to audience

There were a few key elements that made me supremely confident it would be successful. Firstly, we had the portal to serve this content directly to our audience. You see, for major radio stations to access their audience on air, they need to force them onto their digital platforms to consume podcasts. *Soccer Laduma's* audience, on the other hand, visit on our digital platform daily, and so podcasts were just another bite to eat in their favourite restaurant. Other podcasters/online radio platforms rely heavily on the reach of their social media platforms to access their audience, but a social following does not necessarily indicate actual reach and building up a platform from scratch can be extremely slow.

Data is definitely a topic in South Africa. But we now have the technology now to offer decent audio quality at minimal data costs – and those costs will continue to fall. Having worked with a few years shy of a decade, I know the audience is very conscious of their data, seeing as they don't all live in splendour and have the latest iPhone. This is where content makes the biggest difference. When you provide a digital offering to a data-conscious market, it better be worth it or you will certainly feel their wrath.

SL Radio currently offer player interviews that run as long as 30 minutes, but require less than 5mb to enjoy the entire show. The content on offer is something we already know the audience craves. They want to hear from their heroes – the people they watch week in and week out. Podcasting offers a real, intimate setting for them to connect with these players.

## Perfecting the art of audio content creation

I remember Saturday, 22 October 2016, fondly, because I took the very first show live at midday, and spent the rest of the day tracking it and adding the embed code to articles on the *Soccer Laduma* site. At the end of that day, we had already racked up 12,992 downloads. I was confident beforehand, but it exceeded even my wildest expectations. The next day, a Sunday, we did 24,205 downloads. I discussed this excitedly with management on Monday morning, and by the Thursday, curiosity was peaking as we did over 38,000 downloads on that day alone.

Curiosity quickly turned into consistency, and to date – while only running two weekly podcasts – *Soccer Laduma* is set to break 8 million download mark within our first year, averaging over 100,000 downloads per show.

As and when it becomes easier and more cost effective to create and host a podcast as an individual, I do believe that there will be tremendous growth for that part of the market too. Until then, perfecting the art of audio content creation and building an audience through other platforms is certainly not a bad idea.

For me, podcasting potential in South Africa is gearing for take-off. It is only a matter of time before others, in niche and broad markets, will understand that podcasting is not here to kill radio, but is rather an incredible new platform with unique benefits for consumers and advertisers. Now getting the industry regulated and getting advertisers on board, that's a whole new discussion...

## ABOUT JASON ACAR

Jason Acar is the head of SL Radio, having started the platform with *Soccer Laduma* in October 2016. Boasting over a decade of experience in sports journalism across various mediums, he is currently helping pioneer the sports podcasting business in South Africa. You can reach him on [jason@soccerladuma.co.za](mailto:jason@soccerladuma.co.za).  
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