

# PODCASTING IN THE GERMAN NEWS INDUSTRY



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**ABSTRACT** This thesis explores how podcasting has emerged as a common practice among quality news organizations in Germany and how organizations manage the adoption of this new practice. The goal of this research project is to highlight the mechanisms that lead to adoption of a new practice in a highly institutionalized field, and to understand the intra-organizational mechanisms that influence, how organizations manage this new medium. The research takes the approach of case studies, by investigating the podcasting practices at three quality news organizations in Germany, ZEIT, SPIEGEL, and Süddeutsche Zeitung. The findings are largely based on semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with members of the organizations who have key insights into podcasting. To understand the mechanisms at play, the perspectives provided by new institutional theory and organizational identity theory are used. Whereas new institutional literature suggests homogeneity of structures, practices, and beliefs as an outcome of the pursuit of legitimacy, identity theories focus on the intra-organizational processes that create distinctiveness. The results of this study suggest that in adoption of podcasting, both the pursuit of legitimacy and identity influence the adoption of the practice. I argue that organizational identity is the mediating factor that influences the translation of the practice from organizational field to organization. The discussion of the findings show that podcasts present a unique opportunity for quality news organizations to highlight unique identity without compromising on legitimacy.

**KEYWORDS:** *podcast, news industry, quality news, new institutionalism, organizational identity, legitimacy*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Contextualization

Catching up on the news during the morning commute, following a discussion on politics whilst doing the dishes, understanding the latest corona-virus research at the grocery store, and getting hooked on a true-crime case while at the gym: in their increasingly busy lives, more and more people are using podcasts for information, education, and entertainment. The vast podcasting eco-system covers a wide range of topics, and the audio files can be listened to wherever and whenever. Even though podcasts have been around for more than 15 years, they have grown in popularity over the last seven years (Newman & Gallo, 2019). As the medium rapidly grows in popularity, many traditional media outlets have started publishing podcasts.

Especially print-born journalistic organizations have been surprisingly successful with the medium. The New York Times' daily news deep-dive "The Daily" is one of the most listened to podcasts in the world: since its launch almost five years ago, its listening numbers have climbed up to 4 million per episode (Flynn, 2020). The podcast has been called the 'new front page' and has become a flagship news platform, reaching more listeners than print readers. At the latest since this breakout success, podcasts have become common at newspapers and magazines: every big print-born newspaper has one, and the portfolios only continue to grow. Next to daily news formats, newspapers and magazines are also increasingly publishing more diverse formats, covering politics, science, tech and much more.

It is well-known and well-researched that digitalization has been one of the biggest challenges in the journalism industry in the last two decades (Broersma & Peters, 2016; Picard, 2014). The internet forced especially those news organizations that published traditionally in print to fundamentally re-think their business models. Just as the rest of the media environment, journalistic organizations have become more digital, more mobile and more platform-oriented (Hölig et al., 2021). Arguably, the digital website and news app of a news organization are nowadays more important than the print edition, as they reach more users,

and news organizations are increasingly experimenting with the possibilities of the digital realm, for example by making use of live news tickers and multi-media reporting (Belair-Gagnon & Steinke, 2020; Koivula et al., 2020). Rather than just offering a daily or weekly print edition, traditional journalistic organizations are becoming platforms with a diverse product offering that is updated hourly (Newman et al., 2021).

Even though it has become common for newspapers to publish podcasts, one should keep in mind that this move towards audio content represents a significant shift for organizations and their professionals that have traditionally worked with the written word, both in print and digital forms. Audio formats are a different type of media that requires different knowledge and skills (McHugh, 2016). Whereas podcasts can be interpreted as a natural medium choice for radio organizations, who already have audio production knowledge and experience (Berry, 2006, 2020), the addition of audio content to written word-based companies is an interesting development.

## 1.2 Research Goal

Scholarship on general podcast consumption, production, and distribution is relatively well-established (Berry, 2006; Lindgren, 2016, 2021; Llinares et al., 2018; Sullivan, 2018), however, few studies on the usage of podcasting within journalistic organizations have been conducted. Whilst Newman and Gallo's (2019) mapping of the news podcast landscape provides a first comprehensive overview of the industry, there is a lack of understanding how the practice of podcasting has become common within journalism in the first place, how the adoption of podcasting is organized internally, and what the strategic considerations behind the practice are.

This thesis contributes towards filling this gap by adding a multiple case study of podcasting within the quality journalism field in Germany. By focusing on a clearly defined organizational field in one country, I am able to guarantee a degree of validity in the thesis. As quality news organizations in Germany now actively publish podcasts, I set out to understand how podcasting has become a common practice in the German quality news industry and how the

organizations implement this new format. The case study includes three of the biggest quality news organizations in Germany and is based on the analysis of qualitative interviews with organizational experts working with podcasts within the organization. Using the theoretical lens of both neo-institutional theory and organizational identity, the analysis reveals that there are complex inter- and intra-organizational processes at play that influence the adoption of the practice podcasting and the subsequent translation and implementation. In this research project I show that whereas the pursuit of legitimacy motivates several aspects of podcasting, distinct organizational identity acts as a mediating factor that influences the final adoption of the practice.

### 1.3 Research questions

The research process is guided by an overall research question, as well as three sub-questions:

*How has podcasting emerged as a common practice among quality news organizations and how do organizations manage the adoption of podcasting?*

Sub-question 1 (RQ1): *How have the podcast portfolios of the three case companies developed over time and how can similarities and differences be explained?*

Sub-question 2 (RQ2): *How are the case companies organizing the creative podcast production process and how can similarities and differences be explained?*

Sub-question 3 (RQ3): *What are the dominant distribution models and strategic goals and how can similarities and differences be explained?*

#### 1.3.1 Defining the research questions:

The overarching research question is divided in two parts, which represent the overall levels of analysis. To understand how podcasting emerged as a common practice, I am looking at field-level dynamics, whereas the adoption of podcasting within the case companies requires analysis on the organizational level. By using the verb emerge, the aim to understand of a process taking place over time is implied. The verb manage implies the need to understand various mechanisms at play at an inter- and intra-organizational level.

By adding sub-questions, I can break up the research question in smaller components. The sub-questions describe the chain of reasoning of the analysis, focusing on different topic areas that the interviews covered. As I am analyzing and comparing the processes at three case companies, it is important to consistently focus on understanding the similarities and differences between these three units of analysis. The first sub-question focuses on the podcast portfolios (i.e., the range of podcasts the news companies publish) to understand the final podcasting output of the three companies. The second sub-question zooms in on the internal organizational processes that enable the production of podcasts. Finally, the third sub-question covers the different podcast distribution models (i.e., where podcasts are published) and the strategies that underpin the production of podcasts.

## 1.4 Delimitation

Now that the context, research goal and research questions of this thesis have been outlined, it is important to clearly delineate the scope and limitations of this research project. The research project originated in my overall interest in how podcasting has become common and is used in journalistic organizations. However, to make sure that the findings of the project are relevant and valid, and to account for the scope of this thesis the area of research needed to be further delimited. I decided to focus my research on one country. Even though many of the trends of digitalization in general and podcasting in particular can be observed on a global level, local media industries still have unique characteristics and market structures that need to be accounted for when comparing companies across borders (Noam, 2016). Being German myself and familiar with the German media, as well as podcasting industry led me to focus on the German news industry. However, due to the size of the German news industry and the diversity of organizations (Bösch et al., 2016), I decided to define a distinct set of organizations.

Firstly, I wanted to focus on news organizations that traditionally published in print, as I was interested in the logics behind the transition from written word to audio content. Thereby I excluded all the public broadcasters, as well as any digital-born news outlets. Furthermore, I wanted to make sure that it would be possible to compare different organizations. Therefore,

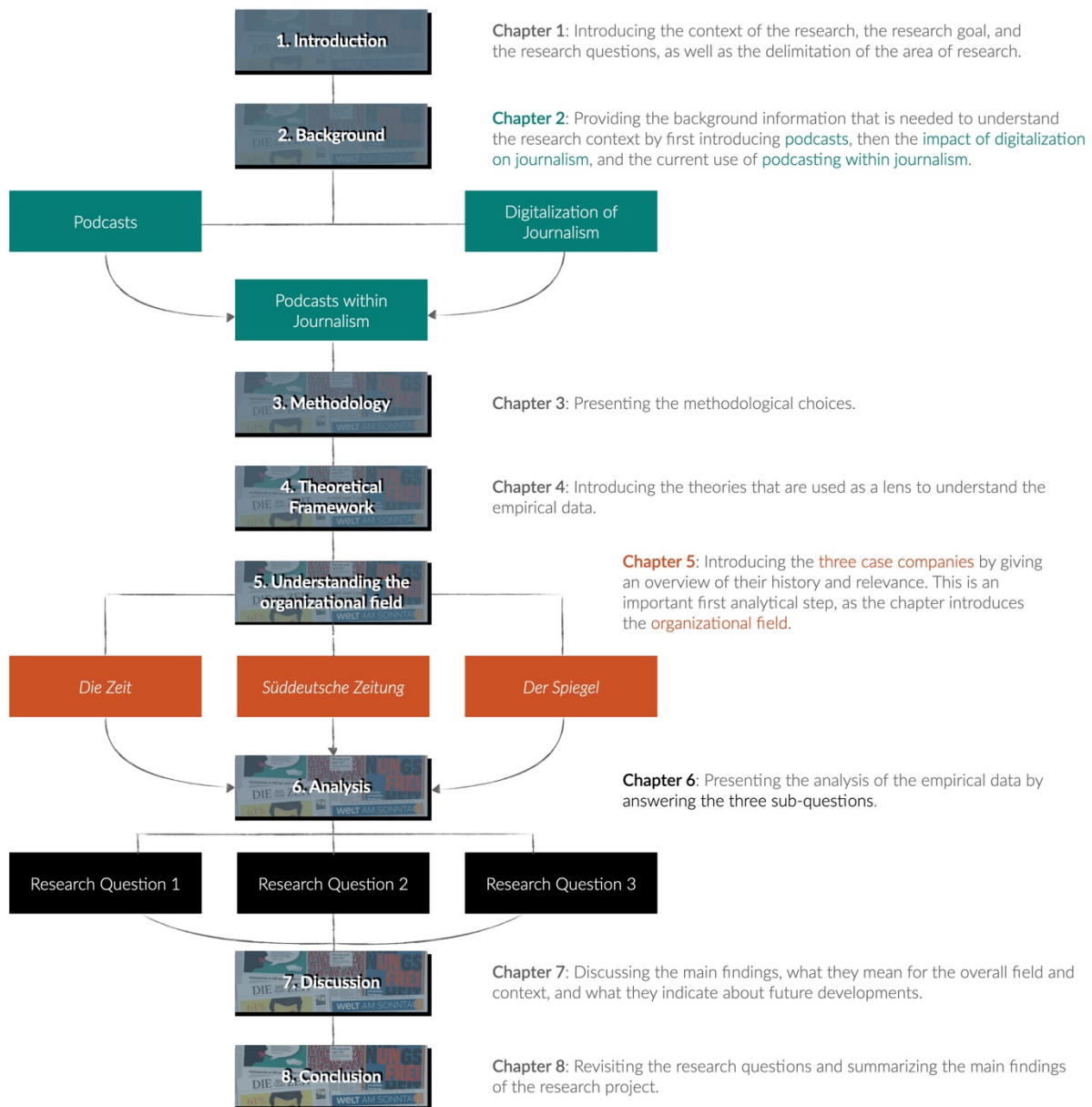
I decided to focus on those nationally relevant news organizations that can be categorized as 'quality news'. Within journalism studies, different terms are used to describe this set of organizations, for example 'legacy news' or 'newspaper of record' (Hendrickx, 2020; Riordan, 2014). In Germany, newspapers are often categorized according to their adherence of perceived 'Qualitätsjournalismus' (quality journalism). News organizations that practice quality journalism and are of national and international importance are categorized as 'Leitmedien' (leading medium) (Meyen, 2009). I chose to include these notions under the umbrella term 'quality news'. Specifically, I focus on those print-born quality news organizations that have a national reach. These characteristics apply to two daily newspapers, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung; one weekly newspaper, ZEIT; and one weekly news magazine, SPIEGEL. I was able to gather empirical data at three of the four organizations, which enables me to come to meaningful conclusions about the overall field.

Within this research project I understand podcasting as a practice that organizations adopt, thereby adding another medium to the way they communicate their journalistic work. This means that I study *why* this new practice is adopted and *how* it is adopted within the organizations. As it is very difficult to find reliable numbers on podcast listenership (Newman & Gallo, 2019), I am not able to make any statements about the success of podcasts. It was also not possible to get access to annual reports or any financial data that could give insights into the financial profitability of podcasting. This research therefore does not evaluate podcasts in terms of their commercial success. Further researchers with access to this data could also use quantitative approaches to measure and assess the success of podcasting.

Rather, this research project can be understood as a first exploration into the inter- and intraorganizational mechanisms that influence the production of podcasts in Germany in a clearly defined organizational field. Understanding the mechanisms underpinning the podcasting production decisions can be an important first step for future strategic recommendations. However, it is not the goal of this thesis to research to determine the best strategies



## 1.5 Structure of the thesis



### CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

The following chapter provides the background information that is needed to understand the research project and case study at hand. First, the history and development of podcasting as a medium in general is explained. This is followed by an introduction to the digitalization of journalism, which is needed to understand the context that the newspaper industry finds itself in nowadays. Finally, the usage of podcasts in journalism will be summarized, to create a strong foundation for the case study that is researched in this thesis.

## 2.1 Podcasts

Newman and Gallo (2019) define podcasts as “an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe to, or listen to” (p.9). The roots of podcasting can be traced back to 2005, when a newly created software enabled the direct download of online radio broadcasts to Apple’s revolutionary audio device, the iPod. The term ‘podcast’ thus emerged as a portmanteau of the words ‘iPod’ and ‘broadcast’. In the early years of the medium, podcasting was generally seen as “independent, mostly amateur productions originating outside the traditional media industries” (Bottomley, 2015).

Podcasting grew quietly throughout the following years but remained a niche medium that had not yet crossed into the mainstream. However, traditional radio broadcasting companies, such as *NPR* in the US and *Deutschlandfunk* in Germany, started to embrace the opportunities of podcasting, using the medium to give listeners more control of their listening experience (McClung & Johnson, 2010). Due to the concurrent, yet distinct movements within podcasting – its existence as an amateur niche medium in the internet’s long tail and its gradual adoption by traditional broadcasting organizations – scholars interpret the medium differently. On the one hand, podcasting is seen as unique phenomenon of the digital era, with the potential to eliminate traditional radio (Edmond, 2015). On the other hand, the adoption of podcasts by legacy broadcasters seems to indicate that podcasting would be the natural digital progression of traditional radio (Berry, 2015).

In 2014 podcasts experienced a sudden surge in mainstream attention due to the viral success of the “Serial” podcast, a weekly non-fiction podcast that investigated the 1999 case of a high-school student who was convicted of the murder of his ex-girlfriend – and may or may not be innocent. “Serial” was created by the *This American Life*, a Chicago public radio program. The podcast became an immediate success, drew many first-time podcast listeners to the genre (Bottomley, 2015), and was thus often credited for the arrival of podcasting in the mainstream. However, as Berry (2015) argues, several factors, “Serial” among them, drove this change. Firstly, most consumers now owned smartphones, which allowed for the

streaming of content at any place or time. Furthermore, Apple had introduced its own podcast app, further simplifying the consumption of podcasts for iPhone users, and other platforms such as Spotify followed suit, adding their own podcast services. All these developments enabled the success of “Serial”, which “forced many to reevaluate the medium, as it not only raised the production quality bar [...] but presented podcasting as a viable alternative platform for content creators and storytellers” (Berry, 2015, p. 177).

Since 2014, podcasting has grown exponentially and further manifested itself as a fixed part of the digital media landscape. It is now estimated that there are around 1 million active podcasts in 100 languages with around 30 million total episodes (Newman & Gallo, 2019). A diverse ecosystem has grown around podcasting. On the one hand, a considerable number of podcasts are still created by amateurs, as new paid services emerge that make it easier than ever to start one’s own podcasts. On the other hand, professional podcast production studios, such as Gimlet or Parcast have emerged, which specialize in the production and distribution of podcasts. These companies are often highly professionalized, employing audio engineers, journalists, marketers, and business developers.

On the platform side, the podcasting industry is heavily dominated by Apple and Spotify, whose apps the majority of listeners use to access podcasts. Nonetheless, there are many smaller apps and websites that offer access to podcasts. Many shows are available across several providers and apps. However, recent developments show a trend towards more platform exclusivity (Quah, 2019). In such models, podcasts are exclusive to one platform, for example Spotify or Audible. Spotify in particular has pursued this strategy by buying the exclusive rights to already popular podcasts. Spotify’s recent acquisition of the “Joe Rogan Experience” podcast (one of the most listened to podcasts worldwide) showed how invested the music streaming giant is in growing its podcasting business: the deal is rumored to be worth more than \$100 million (Cramer, 2020). Spotify also acquired the podcast production studio Gimlet for around \$230 million (Quah, 2019). Scholars argue that these recent influx of financial investment into the podcasting ecosystem leads to a formalization of the industry, which hinders the possibilities of cultural entrepreneurs in the industry, as more gatekeepers such as big tech platforms establish themselves (Sullivan, 2018).

### *Podcast business models*

As the medium moved from the amateur scene to the mainstream, new business models emerged, that enabled independent creators, as well as publishers, to make money with the medium. Podcast business models are often based on advertising or sponsorship revenue. Digital advertising is usually sold on a CPM model (cost per thousand listens), and podcast CPMs are usually higher than websites or other video formats (Newman & Gallo, 2019), as podcasts are usually deemed to be 'brand safe'. It is harder than in other media to skip ads and the ad density is usually relatively low. Often, advertisements are read by the podcast host, which further increases the attractiveness to advertisers. However, the recent developments in platform exclusivity also come with experiments for different business models. The Danish company Podimo, for example, created a platform for exclusive podcast content which is ad-free, but only accessible through subscription. Similarly, Audible has started to introduce podcasts which are accessible for a fixed price per season.

## 2.2 Journalism

Shapiro (2014) defines journalism as "the activities involved in an independent pursuit of accurate information about current or recent events and its original presentation for public edification" (p.561). Often, journalism is discussed in relation to its role in a democratic society. The *Washington Post* prominently states "Democracy Dies in Darkness" on its website header. The predominant understanding is that journalism creates an information environment that is essential to a functioning democratic society, providing the information and interpretation that people need to participate as citizens. Journalism monitors those in power, holds them accountable and creates, and supports public debate (Wolfgang et al., 2019). Some scholars argue that journalistic content should be seen as a public good, as it serves a societal purpose beyond the need of direct consumers and customers and a large social cost (negative externalities) is incurred if it would not exist (Allern & Pollack, 2019).

### *Print media economics*

Traditionally, print newspapers have two distinct revenue streams, one from paying readers and one from advertisers<sup>1</sup>. In this business model, newspapers act as a two-sided platform, which has to cater to the needs of both advertisers and readers (Argentesi & Filistrucchi, 2007). However, print media in the twentieth century relied heavily on advertisers, who produced between 60 to 80 percent of their revenue. Picard (2015) argues that “many of the content choices of the twentieth century newspaper were made to serve advertiser interests” (p.155), such as the emergence of real estate or automotive sections. Conversely, lifestyle, entertainment and sports sections were added to attract readers who are less interested in news. Increased circulation in turn attracted more advertisers. Picard therefore argues that in the traditional two-sided platform model of print media, “the most important demand function and price signals were those of the advertisers, with the price signals and quality demands of the reader playing secondary roles” (p.155). The digitalization of the newspaper industry in the twenty-first century fundamentally changed these dynamics.

### *Digitalization*

The novel possibilities presented by the internet were initially seen as carrying great potential for news media. The hope was that digital technologies would allow for a more inclusive and democratic news landscape (B. Scott, 2005). However, the fundamental shift that the digital information society brought was the transformative effect of low-cost replication (Shapiro & Varian, 1999). Whilst many newspapers started publishing their print editions in a free online format as early as the mid-1990's (Scott, 2005), this move to the digital sphere forced traditional publishers to reimagine their business model. Advertisers who previously brought significant income to publishers migrated to new digital platforms such as Google or Facebook. The new economic logic of surveillance capitalism, as defined by Zuboff (2019), that such companies created, presented new incentives and opportunities for advertisers. Moreover, big tech companies use surplus behavioral data gathered on their platforms to

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of public service media, such as public radio and TV, significant financial support comes from government subsidies. This thesis, however, only focuses on independent news media organizations that usually operate as independent companies.

create a new marketplace, in which advertisers can buy access to targeted advertising. As a result, newspapers have become a less desirable target medium for advertisers.

This shift in the advertising industry led to a significant decrease in advertising revenue in the news media industry (Picard, 2011). Furthermore, news publishers grew increasingly dependent on platforms such as Facebook to reach audiences, as the sharing of news articles on social media platforms became more common. Platforms financially benefit from targeted advertising if it can selectively predict the information that users will find most interesting based on their behavioral data. This creates a “form of online isolation from a diversity of opinions” (Seargeant & Tagg, 2019, p. 42), as the algorithms of digital platforms provide users with content that is similar to content they or their immediate connections have previously interacted with. Moreover, the underlying logic of digital platforms rewards quantity over quality. News media organizations are thus incentivized to “replace their ‘editorial logic’ by an ‘algorithmic logic’ [...] to stand out amidst the vast and constant stream of content” (Paulussen, Harder & Johnson, 2017, p. 433). This can lead to a temptation to include more sensationalistic headlines or exaggerated facts.

Therefore, scholars argue that the digital age also influenced the more fundamental functions of journalism, including challenges to the editorial responsibilities of journalism included in the definition of journalism provided above (Broersma & Peters, 2016; Riordan, 2014). While free access to a plethora of data can bring new ways to uphold accuracy standards, speed and virality can threaten accuracy. Some argue that in a world of limitless free information, journalists and newspapers become curators, verifiers, and interpreters, rather than just reporters of news (Kröll, 2015). There is an increased focus on emotions and entertainment within journalistic content (Hermans & Prins, 2020). In recent years, many journalists also started to use social media for impression management and self-branding (Molyneux et al., 2018), which has led to the phenomenon of the ‘celebrity journalist’ (Usher, 2020). Especially journalists employed at legacy news organizations seem to develop public personas that go beyond their employment as journalists. An example for this is Maggie Haberman of the New York Times, the White House correspondent who shares her take on politics with 1,7 million followers on Twitter).

As the public came to expect content in the digital sphere to be free and did not solely rely on printed newspapers for their daily information, readers became less willing to pay for a newspaper subscription. Publishers were forced to re-evaluate the worth of their own product (Grueskin, Seave & Graves, 2011). Would readers only be willing to pay for a tangible print product? Or would readers come to value journalistic information in the digital sphere enough to be willing to pay for online access?

### *Digital Business Models*

Over time, news outlets started to develop payment options for their digital products, usually in the form of a paywall. A paywall can be defined as “a digital mechanism to separate content that one has to pay for from the rest of the content on the net” (Arrese, 2016) There are several different paywall models, three of which are most commonly used by newspapers online (Myllylahti, 2014). Firstly, a news outlet can opt for a “hard” paywall, which does not offer any access to content without a subscription. Secondly, there are “freemium” models, where there is some unlimited free content and some premium content that requires a subscription. Thirdly, the 'metered' paywall model restricts the number of free articles per user. Once the user has consumed a certain number of articles, a subscription is required to access more content. In the US, the biggest news publishers, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post use the metered paywall option, which applies to all online content except for the start page, breaking news, and live updates on important news events.

In Germany, the big news organizations ZEIT, SPIEGEL, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung, have opted for the „freemium” model: all of the aforementioned news outlets use the same “plus”-system. By paying a monthly subscription fee, readers receive access to articles marked with a plus sign, which are usually opinion articles, articles that have been proven to be popular, or articles taken directly from the print edition. Within this system, the editors have the possibility to adapt the paywall to user demand and can, for example, use especially popular articles to attract new digital subscribers by putting up a paywall.

The introduction of digital business models has thus transformed the traditional two-sided model of print journalism into a multi-sided platform (Picard, 2015). Newspaper companies must make multiple pricing decisions within an increasingly complex network of stakeholders. The economic logics of digital publishing compete with the logics of print publishing. Whereas the demand of print advertisers was seen as more important in the print industry of the twentieth century, the demands of online consumers are now coming to the fore, as news organizations are increasingly building their business models around digital subscription revenue (Myllylahti, 2014).

Next to the paywall system, newspapers are starting to diversify their product offerings by providing new products and services that are distinct from their core journalistic products. The New York Times is generating additional revenue through its cooking and crossword apps, which require separate paid subscriptions (Myllylahti, 2014). The ZEIT, for example, started offering a series of events aimed at different target audiences, such as students or young professionals. These events provide them with networking opportunities or panel talks with journalists and public figures, like politicians, activists, authors, and celebrities. Such new products and services, which potentially create new revenue streams further expand the multi-sided platforms that newspaper companies are in a digital age. By adding podcasts to their product portfolio, newspapers are adding another product to their business model.

## 2.3 Podcasts within journalism

Following the success of Serial and the ensuing renewed interest in podcasts, newspaper companies started to see opportunities for using podcasts to highlight their own journalistic work. In 2017, the New York Times introduced its daily news podcast “The Daily”, which became a surprise hit. The podcast is published every weekday and takes a closer look at one particular news story. The Times journalist Michael Barbaro, who hosts the podcast, usually features conversations with other Times journalists. These dialogues are often conducted in an informal, conversational tone, which, according to one media critic, are “conversational and intimate, instead of inky and cumbersome. It’s a twenty-minute update murmured in your ear by a well-informed, sensitive, funny, modest friend” (Mead, 2017). The show is now



one of the most listened podcasts worldwide. Since the success of “The Daily”, legacy newspapers have been producing an increasing number of podcasts of different styles. Table 1 gives an overview of the most common podcast format styles newspapers publish, as well as examples from the US and Germany, adapted from Newman and Gallo (2019). The table shows a clear overlap in podcast formats across different newspapers.

Style		Description	Examples US	Examples Germany
Daily news/current affairs	Deep dive	Cover one or two stories for deeper analysis	The Daily (NYT)	SPIEGEL Daily
	News round-up	Aim to brief the listener on the most important news stories of the day	FT News Briefing (Financial Times)	Was jetzt? (ZEIT), Auf den Punkt (SZ), Podcast für Deutschland (FAZ)
	Microbulletin	Short news bulletins of just a few minutes to sum up the news	Minute Briefing (Wall Street Journal)	SPIEGEL Update, An diesem Tag (SZ)
Talk		A conversation or debate between the hosts and, in some cases, other journalists from the organization	The Argument (NYT), Can He Do That? (Washington Post)	Das Politikteil (ZEIT) Einspruch (FAZ), Verbrechen (Die Zeit)
Interview		The hosts interview a guest from outside the news organization	Sway (NYT)	Alles gesagt? (Die Zeit), SPIEGEL Live (SPIEGEL)
One-off narrative series		Podcast with seasonal frequency, focused on one story or investigation.	Canary (Washington Post), Nice White Parents (NYT), Letters from War (Washington Post)	Going to Ibiza (SZ), Made in Germany (SPIEGEL), 1,9 Milliarden Lügen (SZ)
Audio long read		An audio version of a newspaper article or magazine feature	Modern Love (NYT), The Sunday Read (NYT)	

Table 1: Different styles of podcasts used by news organizations, with examples from the US and Germany

Daily news podcasts and interview podcasts are most common among newspapers (Newman & Gallo, 2019), as they require the least production effort and can be based on resources the news organizations already possess. For daily news podcasts, newspaper organizations can draw on resources in their own newsroom. In the US, however, the daily news format has evolved to higher production value: “The Daily”, for example, now includes

more complex editing and storytelling, recently introducing investigations spanning several episodes. Apart from the news format, many more formats covering diverse topics and styles are emerging. These might focus on a specific topic area, such as politics, or might have a specific style, such as interview formats.

Many newspapers distribute their podcasts via the several platforms (Apple, Spotify, etc), as well as through their own websites and apps. Therefore, listeners do not require a subscription to a newspaper in order to listen to its content and do not even necessarily need to access its website to listen to its podcasts. Some industry experts have voiced concern about this dependency on external platforms, worrying that companies such as Spotify are financially benefitting off newspaper's journalism (Newman & Gallo, 2019). Many, though not all, newspaper podcasts include advertisements, which can, as described earlier, bring significant revenue depending on the popularity of the podcast. However, podcasts can also be used to support newspapers' core business, by becoming marketing and promotional vehicle for the newspapers' brand. As podcast audiences are usually younger than the average newspaper subscriber, publishers are increasingly using podcasts to attract new audiences as digital subscribers (Newman & Gallo, 2019). Most episodes of "The Daily" now include short advertisement spots in which a *Times* journalist urges fans of the podcast to become *NYT* subscribers, stating that subscription funds the kind of journalism that "The Daily" represents.

Not much information can be found on how newspapers develop and produce their podcasts on an organizational level, even though there are indications that American newspapers have more sophisticated production setups: both the New York Times and the Washington Post have audio teams, which include audio engineers, editors as well as executive level employees responsible for overall audio strategy. Especially the New York Times seems to be working on a long-term organizational investment into podcasting: in the beginning of 2020, the company acquired the production company behind the infamous Serial podcast for a rumored \$25 million (Quah, 2020).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research philosophy

The term research philosophy refers to a “system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge” (Saunders, 2019). It is important to comprehend these philosophical underpinnings to understand the type of knowledge that I am assembling, as “the choice of epistemological approach may affect all parts of a research process, from design, research questions and data, to data analysis” (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020, p. 9).

#### 3.1.1 Epistemology

Recognizing which epistemological view of knowledge one takes as a researcher influences what consequent theoretical perspectives and research methodologies can be considered legitimate. The three main epistemological positions are objectivism, constructivism, and subjectivism (Grey, 2017). Objectivist epistemology asserts that an external reality exists, waiting for the researcher to discover it. Subjectivism, on the other hand, claims that “social reality is made from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors” (Saunders, 2019, p. 136). Constructivism rejects the objectivist view of knowledge, and, in contrast to subjectivism, asserts that meaning is constructed intersubjectively. This indicates that truth and meaning are “created by the subject’s interaction with the world” (Grey, 2017, p. 17). Therefore, according to the constructivist epistemology, knowledge is socially constructed.

This thesis takes a social constructivist stance. As a researcher, I believe that the topic of this research, podcasting in the German legacy news industry, is a phenomenon that is socially constructed by the different social actors. There are many social factors, such as company data, company history or podcast formats that are included in this research and assumed to be the truth. At the same time, I accept that the experiences, insights, and opinions of the interviewees are socially constructed. By researching the phenomenon, I am not attempting to find one indisputable, objectivist truth, but I am rather trying to understand the phenomenon as a socially constructed reality.

I adopt the basic assumptions of the social constructivist epistemological view, it is also important to mention that in the context of this research I employ another crucial assumption, namely that individuals who are members of an organization can be seen as knowledgeable agents. As Gioia and colleagues (2012) argue, members of organizations know what they are trying to do and can explain their thoughts, intentions, and actions. This assumption justifies the choices in research method and analysis that will be outlined later in the chapter.

### *3.1.2 Theoretical perspective*

The theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that informs the methodological choices of a research project. Interpretivism is closely linked to a constructivist epistemological view. As this thesis is grounded in constructivism, I am adopting an interpretivist theoretical perspective. Through this perspective, I look for a deeper understanding of social contexts, accepting that the social world cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena because they are more complex.

There are multiple strands of interpretivism. In this thesis I am choosing a phenomenological interpretivist approach. According to Grey (2017), “phenomenology holds that any attempt to understand social reality has to be grounded in people’s experiences of that social reality” (p.21). This means that value is ascribed by the subjects that are studied, and not just by the researcher. The researcher focuses on generating meaning by gaining insights into the studies phenomena, usually by conducting qualitative research in the form of interviews (Given, 2012).

## **3.2 Research Design**

As aforementioned, I adopt a social constructivist epistemological stance, using a phenomenological theoretical perspective. To ensure coherency in the research process, these epistemological and philosophical assumptions guide the methodological choices in the research purpose and design, including the research approach, method, choices of data

collection, and data analysis (Mik-Meyer & Justesen, 2012). This section explains the framework for the collection and analysis of data that I am using to answer my research questions.

### *3.2.1 Research approach*

The research approach determines the general approach to theory development. The two commonly used approaches are inductive reasoning or deductive proof. A deductive process usually consists of hypothesis testing with the goal of confirming, refuting, or modifying existing theory (Grey, 2017). Inductive approaches, on the other hand, do not rely on existing theory, but “instead, through a process of gathering data, attempt to establish patterns, consistencies and meanings” (Grey, 2017, p.6). The research presented in this thesis is taking an empirical point of departure by studying a phenomenon. Even though existing theories are used to understand the data that is collected, the main goal of this research is to explore the phenomenon, not to corroborate or falsify a theory. The research approach of this thesis is therefore based on inductive reasoning.

### *3.2.2 Research purpose*

This research project is exploratory in nature. According to Grey (2017) “exploratory studies seek to explore what is happening and to ask questions about it” (p.32). Exploratory studies are especially useful when not enough is known about a certain phenomenon (Given, 2012). As described in Chapter 1, legacy newspapers in Germany have only started to publish podcasts in 2017, and the phenomenon has not been extensively studied yet. According to Jupp (2006), an exploratory research project requires the researcher to be “flexible and pragmatic yet [to] engage in a broad and thorough form of research” (p.111). This aspect of flexibility is an advantage of the exploratory research purpose, as it allows the researcher to be more adaptive and receptive to new insights as they emerge throughout the research process.

### *3.2.3. Research method*

Research methods can be quantitative or qualitative in nature. While quantitative research methods aim to collect data that can be recorded in numbers and analyzed quantitatively, qualitative methods lead to data that is non-numerical and usually consists of “data derived

from spoken, written, typed, or printed words” (Saunders, 2019, p.638). Qualitative data can therefore provide rich, contextual descriptions and explanations, which enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied (Grey, 2017).

#### 3.2.4 Case study method

As established above, this research is an exploratory, qualitative research project that aims at understanding a relatively new phenomenon, namely the podcast production of German legacy news organizations. This requires understanding and analyzing the actions of different actors within the organizational field, both on an inter- and intra-organizational level. Therefore, I am adopting a case study method. According to Eisenhardt (1989), a case study is an empirical investigation of a phenomenon in its real-life setting. Case studies allow researchers to gather “concrete, context-dependent knowledge” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224). This knowledge can then be used to build or test theory, as well as to contribute to the “cumulative development of knowledge” (p. 241).

One important aspect of case study research is the definition of the unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). For this research, the three organizations ZEIT, SPIEGEL, and Süddeutsche Zeitung are the units of analysis. Yin proposes four main types of case studies, depending on whether the case study is based on single or multiple case designs and on single (holistic) or multiple (embedded) units of analysis. This research is a multiple embedded case study. Thereby, I can conduct analysis *within* the case companies but also conduct *cross-case* analysis, thus coming to relevant conclusions on both an inter- and intra-organizational level. Each company can be considered as a single case. However, to answer the research questions, relevant knowledge is generated by detecting the similarities and differences between the case companies and thereby understanding the inter- and intra-organizational processes that influence the podcasting practices of the news organizations. In the analysis section the relevant themes resulting from the research are discussed in relation to each case company. These insights then help to understand the phenomenon of podcasting in the German legacy news industry.

### *3.2.6 Case company selection*

This research project studies why and how German legacy news organizations use podcasts. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the legacy news industry is a clearly defined organizational field. According to the definition offered in Chapter 1, there are in total four German news organizations that fall into that category: ZEIT, SPIEGEL, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Therefore, I contacted members of all four organizations and was able to arrange interviews with all organizations except for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. I consider covering three of four possible case companies sufficient for the research goal at hand. By including three organizations, the sample is considered big enough to construct generalizable knowledge. Given the scope of this thesis, conducting three case studies enabled me to gather detailed intra-organizational findings without compromising focus on inter-organizational insights.

### *4.2.5 Credibility and transferability*

According to Saunders (2019), semi-structured interviews can achieve a high degree of credibility if they are conducted carefully and make use of clarifying questions, as the flexible structure of the interview allows for an open conversation. Throughout the interview process, I made sure to leave the interviewees enough time to elaborate on their answers and tried to ask follow-up questions. To further guarantee that the data that was collected was credible I sent the transcripts to the interviewees, asking them to point out any statements that might be misunderstood or that they felt did not represent reality.

A common criticism of case studies is the claim that one cannot generalize from a single case or from only a handful of cases (Grey, 2017). As I describe in Chapter 1, I have clearly delineated the research field by choosing the category of quality news. Therefore, a research project consisting of three of the four potential case companies can generate meaningful data that guarantees likely transferability to other organizations in the organizational field that were not studied. Even though it can be difficult from just one study in one country, one should not underestimate the force of the example (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Through this case study, I can provide meaningful insights into one well delineated context that can inspire

future further explorations in other contexts. By clearly defining my methodological choices, the research process can be traced back and replicated in other contexts.

### 3.3 Data collection & Analysis

To answer the research questions through the case study research design, I use primary data, supplemented with secondary data sources. In the following section, I will outline the process of data collection.

#### 3.3.1 *Secondary data*

According to Saunders (2019), secondary data describes data that is not collected by the researcher him/herself but is gathered through already existing sources instead. These sources include written documents, newspaper articles, blog posts, newsletters, or books. Furthermore, such data involves audio or visual media, like video interviews, podcasts, or documentaries. Out of a strong personal interest, I have followed the developments in the German media industry for around two years: I subscribe to several industry newsletters, follow industry professionals on the professional networking site LinkedIn and regularly read articles of online publications that cover the German media industry. Therefore, I already gathered a lot of background knowledge before taking on the role as researcher.

Throughout the research process I used different sources to gather secondary data, which mainly served as background information in several instances. An overview of examples of secondary data can be found in Appendix II. I used secondary data sources to study the histories and identities of the three case companies, as the topic of organizational history was not covered in the conducted interviews. Texts written by the organizations about themselves were very helpful to gain an understanding of how the companies understand their own history and identity. For the occasion of their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, two of the organizations (ZEIT and SZ) recently published series of articles about their own organizational histories. SZ and SPIEGEL have also recently re-evaluated their own journalistic and organizational standards and published reports on these standards, which included mission and identity statements.



Secondary data was also used to supplement the primary data that I collected. Two interviewees referred me to public video recordings of colleagues discussing podcasting practices. Furthermore, I found several written interviews, as well as podcast interviews, with the online editor-in-chief of ZEIT, and with the manager of the audio team at the Süddeutsche Zeitung, which cover podcasting at the two organizations. Whereas I did not formally code these interviews, I used selected information to corroborate and supplement the primary data gathered in the interviews. Furthermore, publications about the German media industry, provided useful articles covering new developments in the podcast market.

### *3.3.2 Primary Data*

Primary data is directly collected by the researcher through sources such as questionnaires, surveys, or interviews (Saunders, 2019). As such, primary data is gathered for a clear and defined purpose. For this research project, I gathered primary data through semi-structured interviews. As this qualitative research project aims to understand podcasting in the German legacy news industry on both an inter-and intra-organizational level I was in need of directly accessing the organizations themselves instead of relying on solely secondary data in order to come to conclusions. Therefore, I interviewed members of the organizations that have relevant knowledge, experience, and insights into the production of podcasts. As aforementioned, I regard employees of the case organizations as knowledgeable agents (Gioia et al., 2012).

### *3.3.3 Selection of interview partners*

To gather primary data, my goal was to interview employees of the case organizations who are directly involved in the production of podcasts or take part in the strategic decision-making behind this process. The case companies have authors indexes featuring author's biographies and responsibilities. I contacted several podcast editors, audio team leaders and R&D employees at SPIEGEL, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung through their publicly accessible email addresses. The emails shortly outlined the goal of my research, as well as the research proposal. Through personal contacts, I was referred to two members of ZEIT. Ultimately, I conducted interviews with a business development team

member and a podcast editor from ZEIT, the Head of Audio at Süddeutsche Zeitung, and the Head of R&D at SPIEGEL. An overview of the interviewees and their roles can be found in table 2.

As head of R&D at SPIEGEL, interviewee 4 is closely involved in the strategic development of podcasts, and his team works closely with the audio team. Furthermore, the interviewee has been a long-time member of the organization in various roles and currently holds a leadership position. Therefore, the interview offered me enough valuable insights into podcasting at Spiegel, without needing to interview other employees. Similarly, Interviewee 3, the team leader of the audio team at SZ, is closely involved in both the day-to day production of podcasts as well as long-term strategic decisions. The insights of the two interviewees at ZEIT emerged to be complementary: interviewee 1 is more involved in strategic decision-making, whereas interviewee 2 works more directly on the production of podcasts.

<u>Interview Partner</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Duration</u>
Interviewee 1 (INT1)	Die ZEIT	Business Development Project Lead Podcasting	25/03/21	65 min
Interviewee 2 (INT2)	Die ZEIT	Responsible Editor Podcast	20/04/21	40 min
Interviewee 3 (INT3)	Süddeutsche Zeitung	Team Lead Audio	07/04/21	60 min
Interviewee 4 (INT4)	Der SPIEGEL	Head of Editorial R&D	22/04/21	60 min

*Table 2: Overview of interview partners*

### 3.3.4 Interview process

The interviews were semi-structured, open-ended one-on-one interviews. Semi-structured interviews offer the possibility “to obtain both retrospective and real-time accounts by those people experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest” (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 19). Furthermore, such interviews enable the interviewer to lead the discussion into those topics that emerge as significant throughout the conversation or to ask spontaneous questions to deepen the focus on relevant topics (Saunders, 2019).

After conducting initial literature research on podcasting journalism (which is summarized in Chapter 2), I identified several topics that were relevant to understanding the podcasting practices of news organizations. Based on these themes, an interview guide was compiled. The guide consisted of several open questions, loosely divided in three parts. The first part covered the history of podcast production in the organization. The second part consisted of questions about the present podcasting practices, including production, organization, marketing, and distribution models. The last set of questions concerned the future and included questions about future industry developments and future strategic considerations. The interview guide can be found in appendix III.

Due to the restrictions in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted through video call, using the video conferencing tool Microsoft Teams. Interviews conducted via video call are the closest possible replacement for real-life conversations (Gray et al., 2020), and the recent normalization of online meetings due to the current situation meant that all participants were comfortable with this interview format. The interviews lasted between 40 and 65 minutes, based on the interviewee's availability and the length of their answers. With the permission of the interview partners, I recorded the conversations. The recordings enabled the creation of transcripts. To guarantee credibility and the accuracy of the information gathered, each participant received the transcript of our conversation for review. All participants approved the transcript. Two interviewees made minor adjustments to the transcripts by adapting numbers and dates. The interviews were conducted in German, therefore I translated any direct quotes used in the analysis. An example of translated text can be found in appendix III.

### *3.3.5 Data Analysis*

As the first step of interaction with the data I performed an interpretative content analysis by going through the transcripts several times, using font coloring and text highlighting to classify portions of text by topic. After several reiterations of this process, I identified topic patterns. By copying portions of text corresponding to the topic into new documents, I was able to compare the interviewee's statements side by side. This procedure of analysis is more

of an interpretative act than precise science (Grey, 2017). Nevertheless, the method was suitable for the research purpose, which was to identify overarching themes and topics that the interviewees deem important. Using this analytic method of content analysis enabled me to approach the data openly, whilst still being able to make sense of it by reducing it into clear categories.

As a result of this analytical process, I determined five themes: *format development*, *creative processes*, *organization*, *distribution model* and *strategies*. The interview texts categorized into these themes cover the different actions and processes that the case companies conduct in the theme-specific area of podcasting. By categorizing passages of text into these themes, I was able to directly compare the approaches of the three case companies and to understand the different justifications the interviewees gave. The themes are incorporated into the three sub-questions that guide the analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.2. New institutional theory

The field of new (or neo-) institutional theory developed in the past decades as the interest of social science researchers in organizations grew. Whereas the “old” institutionalism presented the actions of organizations as individual responses to situational circumstances (Greenwood et al., 2008), the conceptual frameworks most notably established in the works of Meyer and Rowan (1977), Zucker (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) came to define the field of new institutional theory. These frameworks try to explain “why and with what consequences organizations exhibit particular organizational arrangements” (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 31), particularly with regards to organizational structures or choices that seem irrational or dysfunctional. As a response, these new institutionalist theories laid claim “to unique insights into the play of widely shared or taken-for-granted social values and ideas that complement calculative rationality and instrumental functionality” (p. 31). As opposed to the rational actor point of view, new institutionalism is therefore grounded in a sociological view of the organization, which understands organizations to be constructed by their wider

social environment. One of the strengths of contemporary institutional theory is its “versatility in moving across various levels of analysis, from individual behavior, through sub-units, to organizations [and to] organizational fields” (Scott, 2017, p. 866). To summarize, institutional approaches focus on the relationships and interactions between organizations and their environment and thus analyze the macro level forces that shape micro level actions.

### *3.2.1 Organizational fields*

A central organizing unit of new institutional theory has been the organizational field (Scott, 1991), sometimes also called institutional field or simply field. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the organizational field refers to “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life” (p. 148). This constellation of actors, according to Scott (1995), is a community of organization that partakes in a system of common meaning.

Wooten and Hoffman (2017) note the complexity of this theoretical construct, emphasizing that fields are relational spaces in which inter- and intraorganizational phenomena occur: “fields are richly contextualized spaces where disparate organizations involve themselves with one another in an effort to develop collective understandings regarding matters that are consequential for organizational and field-level activities” (p. 64). The authors argue that organizational fields are increasingly understood as dynamic spaces, and that researchers should also focus on field-level dynamics and the behavior of individual organizations when considering field-level dynamics.

### *3.2.2 Mechanisms of institutionalization*

Within fields, the behavior of organizations is said to be guided by institutions (Scott, 1995). Institutions are made up of taken-for-granted behaviors, actions, and structures that are “underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange” (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 4). Institutional theory is specifically concerned with questions of diffusion (i.e., the spread of things), asking how and why which practices are or are not adopted by organizations. A potential outcome of diffusion is isomorphism

(Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017). Isomorphic pressures are central to the process of institutionalization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Isomorphism refers to the relationship between an organization and its institutional environment, in which organizations adapt to the socially constructed environment, and therefore tend to look alike. Isomorphism is thus seen as a “constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (p. 149). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) propose three types of isomorphic mechanism, namely coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures.

Coercive pressures occur when external constituents, for example regulatory bodies or the state, exert power that forces an organization to adopt or adapt an organizational element. However, coercive pressures do not only occur by fiat but can also result from resource dependency or other power structures (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017). Normative isomorphic pressures are derived from the influence of professionalization and the transfer of knowledge within professional groups, which leads to organizations being motivated to respect social obligations and perceived ideal ways of being (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic isomorphism stems from situations of uncertainty: organizations that find themselves in conditions of uncertainty tend to copy the structures, processes, or actions of other organizations in the field that are perceived to be successful or influential (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017).

### *3.2.3 Legitimacy*

Within the neo-institutional framework, mechanisms of isomorphism relate to the pursuit of legitimacy (Deephouse, 1996; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Reviewing the literature of the past three decades, Deephouse et al. (2017) define organizational legitimacy as the “perceived appropriateness of an organization to a social system in terms of rules, values, norms, and definitions” (p. 32). Organizations pursue legitimacy because it has clear effect on social exchange, as stakeholders of any kind will usually not interact with organizations perceived as illegitimate. Therefore, legitimacy can have an impact on organizations’ survival, financial performance, stakeholder support, and strategic choice (Deephouse et al., 2017). Legitimacy can be conferred by many different sources, which highlights the importance of correctly identifying legitimizing authorities in any given

organizational field. Sources of legitimacy may be the general public, media, or other influential individuals (Deephouse et al., 2017).

Legitimacy is not a permanent state. Rather, “legitimacy changes over time as organizations, sources, and criteria change over time” (Deephouse et al., 2017, p. 41). The authors propose a framework consisting of five legitimation scenarios. When *gaining* legitimacy, organizations in a stable institutional environment must demonstrate their propriety, which they then *maintain* as they remain acceptable. Heterogeneous stakeholders might *challenge* legitimacy, to which organizations *respond*. Organizations might create new rules, norms, and meaning systems by *institutionally innovating*.

#### 3.2.4 Scandinavian institutionalism

As part of the overall institutionalist literature, several distinctions between different types of institutionalism have emerged over time. One of these variants is the Scandinavian approach to institutional theory, which is “best captured as a literature concerned with how organizations respond to institutional pressures” (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009, p. 187). Scandinavian institutionalism places a higher focus on how the complexity of individual organizations influences their interaction with institutional ideas and practices. The core lines of inquiry of Scandinavian institutionalism are loose coupling, and sense making and translation, however, for the purpose of this study the insights on sense-making and translation are most relevant.

A key perspective of the Scandinavian approach to institutional theory is the focus on change: ideas and practices “do not remain unchanged as they flow but are subject to translation. [...] To imitate, then, is not just to copy but also to change and to innovate” (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 103). Sense-making is the process of individual actors understanding, often retrospectively, ongoing events. Scandinavian institutionalists argue that individual interpretations of institutional pressures may differ, which shapes their consequent impact on the organization (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Translation refers to the process of modification that happens when an idea or practice that is circulating on the organizational field-, or macro-, level is implemented on the individual organizational-, or micro-, level (Boxenbaum &

Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009). Therefore, rather than just focusing on indications of isomorphism, the Scandinavian perspective highlights organizational variation and distinctiveness, therefore acknowledging the ambiguity of change (Czarniawska, 2008).

### *3.2.5 The role of organizational history*

The creation of institutions is fundamentally based on history, even though this notion is sometimes neglected in the prominent neo-institutionalist literature (Suddaby et al., 2013). The notion institution “connotes a social structure infused with the capacity to endure” (p. 117), which implies the need to be aware of organizational history. Scholars have focused on sensitive periods of organizational history, such as the time of founding, during which imprinting processes may happen. Imprinting is a process happening during a sensitive time period, during which an entity “develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics continue to persist” (Marquis et al., 2013, p. 199). Such enduring characteristics might be values, organizational beliefs, or identity. History can fundamentally shape the make-up of organizational fields (Wadhwani et al., 2018).

## **3.3 Organizational identity**

The concept of organizational identity was first defined by Albert and Whetten (1985, 2004) as the parts of an organizations character that are central, enduring, and distinctive. Only characteristics that have these three attributes can be part of an organization’s identity. Centrality means that the identity characteristic should be important and essential to the organization. The enduring character of identity claims implies a notion of organizational history: these identity claims remain stable over historical trajectories and are difficult to change. The distinctive character of organizational identity characteristics refers to the claim of uniqueness. Organizations use their identity to differentiate themselves from others. The notion of ‘claiming’ suggests the necessity of actively managing identities. Organizational members use their understanding of identity “as a guide for what they should do and how other institutions should relate to them” (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 267).



### *3.3.1 Identity in institutional theory*

Whereas some neo-institutionalists address the normative-cognitive dimensions of organizations or highlight the importance of social identities (Scott, 1995), there have been remarkably few attempts to integrate organizational identity concepts into an institutionalist perspective (Strandgaard Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006). Rather, the two theoretical fields have periodically been depicted as antithetical: new institutionalists are mainly concerned with macro-level institutional effects, whilst identity creation is perceived to happen on the micro-level of the organization (Glynn, 2008). Moreover, institutional theory tends to observe sameness and isomorphism, whereas identity theories focus on distinctiveness and isomorphism (Glynn & Abzug, 2002).

Notwithstanding this apparent theoretical distinction, there have been increasing efforts to understand the complex points of connection between organizational identity and institutional environment (e.g., Gioia et al., 2013; Glynn, 2008; Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Strandgaard Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006; Wedlin, 2006). Firstly, as organizations are embedded in their environment, the organizational field can be seen as the place in which identity creation happens. This means that “identity formation is seen as an inherently social and inter-organizational process” (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017, p. 68). As identity formation takes place in the organizational field, organizational identity can be understood as bricolage of characteristics that are deemed to be legitimate in the given organizational environment.

Strandgaard Pedersen and Dobbin (2006) argue that “formation of identity through uniqueness and construction of legitimacy through uniformity are two sides of the same coin” (p. 897). Within their organizational environment, organizations can face a uniqueness paradox: on the one hand, organizations need to claim uniqueness for competitive advantages, on the other hand they can only claim similar sorts of uniqueness as seen appropriate within their environment. By balancing demands of legitimacy and claims of uniqueness, organizations pursue optimal distinctiveness.

Identity is a relational concept, which is constantly renegotiated by contextualizing own organizational identity with that of others. Therefore, institutional scholars have argued that

understanding organizational identity in relation to the identity of other organizations perceived to be successful may also be an explanation for mimetic isomorphism. As organizations use their own perceived identity to identify with other organizations that they perceive to be successful. This might lead to a process of imitation, as organizations seek similarity to those organizations they identify with and thus want to be more alike with (Glynn, 2017).

### *3.3.2 The dynamics of organizational Culture, Identity, and Image*

Identity is, as such, an inherently relational phenomenon: it is usually defined in relation to someone or something else (Glynn, 2017). Hatch and Schultz's (2002) organizational identity dynamics model expands on this view by illustrating how identity mediates the relationship between stakeholder images and cultural understandings. Organizational culture refers to processes internal to the organization, whereas the image is the perception others have of the organization. Whereas organizational culture is expressed through answers to the question of 'How do we do things around here', organizational image is the perception that outside stakeholders have of the organization (Alvesson, 2002).

In their organizational identity dynamics model, Hatch and Schultz (2002) portray identity as the mediating factor of four processes linking identity and culture. The expression of identity leaves impressions on others, thereby influencing the organizational image. However, the perceived image of others is mirrored in identity. Through processes of reflection, organizational members incorporate identity claims in the organizational culture. Finally, the cultural understandings of the organization are expressed in organizational identity. This model reinforces the notion that organizational identity is a social process that is influenced both by internal organizational approaches and external processes of image creation within the organizational field.

### *Organizational culture in creative organizing practices*

According to Alvesson (2002): “culture is central in governing the understanding of behavior, social events, institutions and processes” (p. 4). Central to the concept of organizational culture is the notion of ‘How we do things around here’. Therefore, organizational culture incorporates certain organizational beliefs about how to do things and how to approach processes. Culture can thus explain, how organizations respond differently to challenges or how they make different choices than their peers.

An expression of organizational culture may be the approach to creative processes. Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) argue, that managers in the cultural and creative industries must “navigate tensions that arise from opposing imperatives that result from industry characteristics” (p. 263). As operating in the creative-cultural industries presents organizations with opposing imperatives of the demands of the market and the demands of artistic production. The response to these opposing imperatives and the resulting organizational processes that are needed to execute this response are understood as a result of organizational culture for the purpose of this thesis.

Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) suggest five polarities that shape the choices of managers in the cultural-creative industries. Firstly, artistic values must be balanced against the demands of mass entertainment. Furthermore, organizations can choose to focus on product differentiation by seeking novelty products, or they can push to pursue innovation from outside of existing limits by pursuing market innovation. Organizations also have to choose whether they produce products based on market and demand analysis, or if they choose to ignore market insights in the pursuit of constructing new markets. The organization also needs to choose the degree of control over the production process by either pursuing flexible specialization and outsourcing parts of production to others or integrating the production process vertically by controlling the entire production process. Lastly, organizations need to identify the sources of creative value within their production process, which is represented in the polarity between individual inspiration and creative systems. Organizational culture determines what is seen as the pivotal element of inspiration: organizations might focus on individuals’ roles in generating inspiration, or they might value creative systems that formalize the creative process.

## CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING THE ORGANIZATIONAL FIELD

The following section introduces the three case companies by describing their historical foundations, covering key moments in their history, and understanding their main similarities and differences. As this research explores both inter- and intra-organizational processes, it is important to have a deep understanding of the organizational histories, how they compare and how the companies relate to one another. Furthermore, this chapter presents an attempt at understanding the central, enduring and distinct identities of the case companies.

### 5.1 Die ZEIT

#### *History*

Die ZEIT is German national weekly newspaper. It is published in Hamburg by the Zeitverlag Gerd Bucerius publishing house, which is owned by the Holtzbrinck publishing group. The first issue of *Die ZEIT* was published on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946, with a press permission of the British allied forces, after the allied forces had dissolved all existing newspapers in Germany. The paper is considered to be one of Germany's newspapers of record (Revers, 2017) and has been known for featuring long and detailed articles, as well as dossiers, opinion features and essays. Since its founding, the paper quickly grew in national popularity and influence, first reaching a circulation of over 500,000 in 1988. The political relevance of the newspaper was also strongly influenced by important figures such as famous journalist and intellectual Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, who was publisher from 1946 until 2002, and former chancellor Helmut Schmitt, who joined Dönhoff as publisher in 1983. The newspapers political stance is considered liberal, leaning left liberal (Maurer & Reinemann, 2006). The current chief editor, Giovanni di Lorenzo, states that liberal is not necessarily meant in economic or party-political terms, but that his editorial team aims to create an open space in the political middle for discussion and differing opinions, based on tolerance and fairness (di Lorenzo, 2021).

#### *Circulation and product Range*

In the 1970s the paper experienced a slump in circulation, which it recovered from by the start of the new millennium. Since then, the number of sold print issues per week has

remained relatively stable at around 450,000 to 500,000 copies. In 2020, the newspaper experienced an unusually successful year with an 8% increase of sold copies and a record circulation of 580,000, the highest in the paper's history (IVW Q1, 2021). This makes *Die ZEIT* the only national newspaper in Germany that did not experience a significant slump in print revenue at the start of the new millennium (Pfanner, 2013). The print paper is published every Thursday, whereas the digital version is already released every Wednesday evening.

In 1998 the paper started a redesign effort, which led to a renewed focus on innovative page layout, infographics, and photojournalism. The cover page usually features a prominent design or picture and bold headline, usually centered on the theme of the issue, which may be an important current topic but may also center around another topic from the sciences, arts, or philosophy. Whereas the paper is still known for its longer, in depth analytical articles, the redesign led *Die ZEIT* to develop from a rather professional paper that was mainly appealing to a more academic audience to also appealing to younger target groups (Pfanner, 2013).

The *ZEITmagazin*, a magazine supplement, was first introduced in 1970, then discontinued in 1999 and then re-established in 2007. Since then, the *ZEITmagazin* has been included in the weekly publication as a separate magazine supplement. It features longer, more personal articles and covers topics such as design, fashion, and entertainment, as well as a weekly recipe column. In 2004 *ZEIT WISSEN*, the first independent magazine of the Zeitverlag was published. Several more magazines followed, among them *ZEIT Campus*, aimed at university students, *ZEIT Geschichte*, a history magazine featuring several articles on one historical period, and *Verbrechen*, a magazine about crimes and the justice system. In total, the Zeitverlag publishes eleven magazines under the *ZEIT* brand umbrella. Since 2017, *Die ZEIT* also has a loyalty program for subscribers called "Freunde der ZEIT" (Friends of the ZEIT) which invites subscribers to exclusive events such as readings, visits to the headquarters and the so-called "Leserparlament" (readers parliament) in which chief editor Giovanni Di Lorenzo asks readers for their opinion on certain topics relevant to the newspaper and enters a debate with them. The Zeitverlag also acquired Convent in 2014, an event and convent company, which is now part of Zeitverlag's subsidiary Tempus Corporate. Tempus Corporate offers

content marketing solutions and corporate communication concepts to companies that want to develop native advertising concepts in the ZEIT cosmos.

### *Digitalization*

The first online presence of the *ZEIT* was initiated in 1996. *ZEIT ONLINE* started with a small separate editorial team, based in Berlin. The site has now grown to be one of the most-read news sites in Germany, having 17.4 million unique visitors in January 2021 (Statista). In the early years, all content was freely accessible on the website and income was only generated through online advertising (Tarragona & Birkhahn, 2013). The online content was separate from the print articles. In 2017, however, *ZEIT ONLINE* introduced “Z+”, a paid content model. Many online articles and short news items remained freely accessible, but certain articles are locked behind a pay wall that requires a digital subscription. With this model, the print and online content were connected for the first time: articles from the weekly print issue are published online the evening before publication, but are only accessible with subscription (Schwegler, 2017). Unlike other “freemium” and metered models “Z+” does not limit the number of free articles per reader. The move led to an increased online revenue added purely digital subscribers to the print subscribers, who also receive digital access with their print subscription. The *ZEIT* has two apps, one which displays the contents of the news website and one that subscribers can use to display the e-paper (Tarragona & Birkhahn, 2013). Users can also pay for a “Pur” (“pure”) subscription, which reduces the advertisement on the page and deactivates ad tracking.

## 5.2 Süddeutsche Zeitung

### *History*

The Süddeutsche Zeitung (also called Süddeutsche or abbreviated as SZ) is one of Germany’s biggest daily newspapers, which is published in Munich Monday through Saturday. The first issue was first published on October 6, 1945, after the U.S. military issued a printing license. The same printing press that was used to print Hitler’s “Mein Kampf” was melted down and used for the printing press of the first page of the Süddeutsche Zeitung. The editorial stance of the paper is seen as progressive-liberal, leaning left-of-center (Maurer & Reinemann, 2006). It is regarded as one of Germany’s newspapers of record (Revers, 2017). The paper’s circulation grew steadily from its founding years until the 1980’s. In 1965, the SZ was one of

the first newspapers to build its own network of foreign correspondents, which further solidified the paper's role as newspaper of record with an international reputation (Maurer & Reinemann, 2006).

The newspaper is known for its investigative journalism (Zerofsky, 2017) and has, especially in recent years, been involved in uncovering several political scandals. In 2009, a separate investigative team was formed and since 2014 the SZ has been part of an investigative network with the public broadcasters NDR and WDR. In 2015, SZ journalists gained access to a large number of leaked documents about the offshore finance industry. With the help of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism and journalists from journalists from 76 countries, the SZ analyzed the documents and published the findings, now known as the "Panama Papers". The investigation was awarded with the prestigious Pulitzer price. In 2019, the SZ and SPIEGEL published a leaked video of an Austrian politician that led to a political scandal in Austria known as the "Ibiza affair".

#### *Circulation and product range*

The Süddeutsche Zeitung is published by the Süddeutsche Verlag, which also publishes several other local newspapers. From 2000 onward, the market for advertisements in general, and classified advertisements, started to diminish, which impacted daily newspapers like the SZ especially (Mast & Spachmann, 2005). The crisis led to a drop in revenue and required a change in ownership structure. The Südwestdeutsche Medien Holding, a media company that owns several other newspapers, became the new majority shareholder of the SZ, and invested heavily in the paper. Whilst the circulation of the newspaper increased or remained steady until 2007, it has been declining by 2.9% on average every year. As of 2021, the Süddeutsche Zeitung has a sales volume of 317,189.

The Süddeutsche also has a magazine supplement called Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin, which was first introduced in 1990. The magazine is enclosed with every Friday edition of the SZ. The Süddeutsche Verlag also publishes several other magazines under the SZ brand: SZ Magazin Stil.leben, a style magazine, SZ Langstrecke, a quarterly magazine that includes

the best long read articles from the print issue, G.eld, a magazine about money and investment and Plan W, about women in business.

### *Digitalization*

In 1995, the *Süddeutsche* created its first website, called “SZonNet”, which initially only published short news reports. Today, *sueddeutsche.de* is one of the most visited news websites in Germany, having 17.8 million unique visitors in January 2021. It publishes exclusively digital articles, the digital version of the daily print issue and articles from the magazine. In 2019, the newspaper introduced a new subscription program (von Fraunberg, 2019). Some content on the website is freely available, whereas other articles, especially those from the printed issue, are behind a paywall. The subscriber program “SZ+” offers various subscription options, with either full access to the daily digital version of the paper or access to only the digital version of the weekend paper on Friday and Saturday. The SZ has two apps, one which displays the contents of the news website and one that subscribers can use to read the e-paper.

## 5.3 SPIEGEL

### *History*

Der SPIEGEL is a German weekly news magazine which is published weekly in Hamburg by the SPIEGEL Gruppe. Its first issue was published on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1946 in Hannover, succeeding the magazine “Diese Woche”, that had been authorized by the British allied forces. The magazine was founded by Rudolf Augstein, who became publisher and editor-in-chief of the magazine and remained publisher until his death in 2002. The political orientation of the magazine is seen as

The *SPIEGEL* has been described as one of the most influential magazines in Europe (“His Country’s Mirror,” 2002) and is generally seen as an opinion leader and newspaper of record in Germany (Revers, 2017). The magazine has traditionally been known for its investigative journalism. In 1962, the so-called “SPIEGEL affair” occurred after the magazine published an article about the low degree of readiness of the German army. After a strong response of the government, which included the arrest of Augstein, the minister of defense had to step down



and SPIEGEL was able to establish itself as a defender of the freedom of the press (Birkner & Mallek, 2020). The SPIEGEL “worked hard at establishing its image as one of the most controversial and stimulating publications in the country” (Fraser & Hoffman, 2006) and it is known for its “aggressive, vigorous, and well-written exposés of government malpractice and scandals” (Schäffner, 2009). The SPIEGEL’s reputation was also built on the strength of its fact-checking: the magazine operated one of the industry’s biggest and best-known fact-checking departments (Silverman, 2010)

The magazine continues to be an important factor in the German political landscape but has lost some of its monopoly on exclusive political scoops and investigations in recent years, as other publications like the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as well as the public broadcasters, have increased their investigative efforts (Pfanner, 2013). In 2018, SPIEGEL experienced a public scandal and decline in reputation when it became known that Claas Relotius, a well-renowned journalist that had written for the magazine, had repeatedly falsified information (Conolly, 2018). The affair fundamentally challenged the SPIEGEL’s claim to rigorously fact-checked information (Joffe, 2018), and triggered a far-reaching organizational re-evaluation of the journalistic standards, which was concluded with an 80-page report of the revised SPIEGEL-standards in January 2020.

#### *Circulation and product range*

In its early years, magazine quickly gained popularity and its circulation grew to over 500,000 by the 1960’s. The circulation reached a peak of around 1,100,000 copies in the early 2000’s and has been declining since then. In 2021, the magazine has a circulation of 661.463 (Statista, 2021). In the 1990s, *SPIEGEL TV* was launched, a tv program that has since been broadcast on different private television channels. The SPIEGEL Gruppe publishes several other separate magazines under the SPIEGEL brand, which cover topics such as history, literature, and coaching.

#### *Digitalization*

With its launch of an online news portal in 1994, SPIEGEL was among the first news organizations globally to enter the digital sphere. Initially, the web presence, SPIEGEL Online

published selected articles from the print publication. As of 1996 original online articles were published. The website was run by a separate editorial until 2019, when the print and online editorial teams were merged. In 2013, the website was redesigned and included a subscription program called “SPIEGEL Plus” (S+), through which single articles could be bought, since 2018 “SPIEGEL Plus” is a subscription offer, which includes access to the digital version of the print issue and access to all online articles (Dörting et al., 2017). Since 2020, the site also offers cheaper a “PUR” (pure) subscription, which gives users the possibility to see the website without any advertising and blocks ad tracking.

	<b>ZEIT</b>	<b>SPIEGEL</b>	<b>Süddeutsche Zeitung</b>
<i>First issue</i>	February 21, 1946	January 4, 1947	October 6, 1945
<i>Headquarters</i>	Hamburg, Germany	Hamburg, Germany	Munich, Germany
<i>Number of Employees</i>	around 1000 total	1400 total	500
<i>Ownership structure</i>	Zeitverlag Gerd Bucerius, Holtzbrinck Publishing Group	Spiegel-Verlag Rudolf Augstein	Südwestdeutsche Medien Holding (SWMH)
<i>Print publication frequency</i>	weekly (Thursday)	weekly (Saturday)	daily (Monday-Saturday),
<i>Sales volume print (Q1 '21)</i>	578.253	661.463	317.189
<i>Reach (Readers per issue 2020)</i>	no data	5.2 Million	1.3 Million
<i>Number of Unique Web (Jan '21)</i>	17.4 Million	26.6 Million	17.8 Million

Table 3: Comparison of key company information. The data is collected from Statista (2021)

## 5.4 Comparison of case companies

### *Central and enduring founding values*

The first main similarity between the three case companies is already clear when looking at the founding days of the three news organizations: all three trace their roots to post-war Germany, and all three were dependent on a news license of the respective allied forces, the British in the case of ZEIT and SPIEGEL, and the American in the case of the Süddeutsche

Zeitung. After the war, when the three case organizations were founded, the allied forces occupying Western Germany were intent on building a democratic society and having an independent news media ecology played an important role in that undertaking (Bösch et al., 2016). Therefore, the three organizations have similar values that were imprinted on them from foundation onwards. As Marquis and colleagues (2013) explain, the founding phase of a company can be understood as a sensitive period during which environmental factors create characteristics that endure.

The values imprinted at founding are still apparent in the narratives the organizations project today. Giovanni di Lorenzo, current editor-in-chief of the ZEIT states that, after the years of “moral and intellectual devastation [...] peace and democracy were the defining values of the paper” (di Lorenzo, 2021). Similarly, the Süddeutsche sees its journalistic work firmly grounded in the “free democratic basis of the German constitution” (Auer et al., 2020). Der SPIEGEL defines its societal responsibility under the maxim “saying what is” and states that “as fourth estate it is our task to keep a close eye on the powerful and to report in a balanced matter, to believe nothing and to question everything” (*Verantwortung*, n.d.). We can therefore conclude that the fundamental values of the three organizations strongly overlap: their role in society is a fundamental part of their organizational identity.

### *Distinctive characteristics*

Due to their similar organizational histories, as well as similar political orientation and national importance, the distinctive identities of the three case companies are not apparent at first glance. However, the three companies have different characteristics that distinguish them, which mainly relate to their journalistic approaches and their content. Even though the three companies follow the journalistic standards that the institution ‘Qualitätsjournalism’ dictate, they have still carved out distinct characteristics. The Süddeutsche Zeitung has, especially in recent years, focuses on their investigative journalism capabilities, an area where the SPIEGEL has been traditionally dominant. The SPIEGEL is known for its bolder language and ability to uncover political wrongdoing (Fraser & Hoffman, 2006). The magazine has in the aftermath of the Relotius-scandal also attempted to re-focus on highlighting its fact-checking operation and trustworthiness. The ZEIT is more known for opinion and feuilleton pieces and

its focus on debate culture. Furthermore, the recent focus on innovative page design has become a part of the paper's identity.

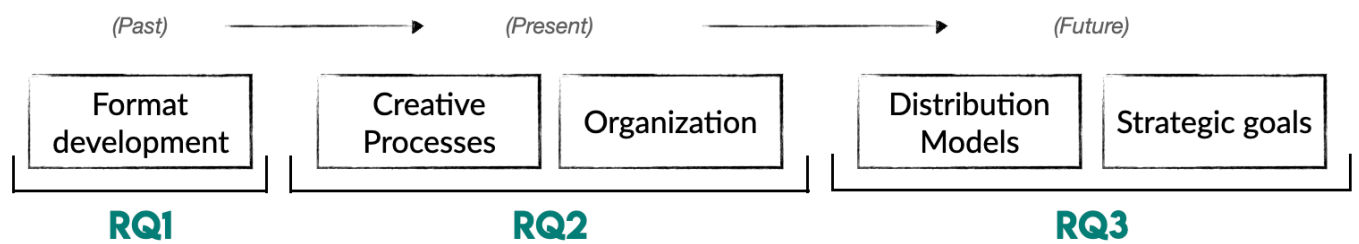
### *Field membership*

The purpose of quality journalism firmly places the three news organizations in a clearly defined organizational field. As quality journalism is a standard that must be maintained, the organizations within the field are continuously pursuing legitimacy in order to justify their continued membership in the field (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). In the qualitative interviews conducted for this research project the interviewees stated at several instances, that the other two are companies that they compare themselves with. Furthermore, the journalists working at the three companies usually study at the same journalism schools and it is commonplace for journalists to move from one company to the other (Bösch et al., 2016). This indicates that there are normative pressures at play that determine the actions and practices within the field and lead to homogeneity within the field (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017).

Furthermore, this brief historical overview of the three companies already gave some indication that mimetic isomorphism is at play. After several years of dealing with the challenge presented by digitalization, the three companies now have an almost identical digital paywall system. Even though further institutional research would be needed to understand the mechanisms that led to this paywall system, one can assume that the actions of the other organizations in the field influence the intra-organizational decision-making.

## **CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS**

The following chapter summarizes the findings from the empirical interviews and categorizes them according to themes. The findings are contrasted with theoretical literature to gain a better understanding of the processes and mechanisms that were revealed. Overall, this analysis chapter answers the three sub-questions. As shown below, each research question is answered using the analysis of one or two themes.



## 6.1 Research Question 1: Format Development

To understand podcasting practices at the three case companies, it is important to understand when and why the case companies started publishing podcasts and how their current podcast portfolios (i.e., the podcasts that the organization currently publishes) developed. I analyze and compare the first podcast launches at the three companies. Subsequently I analyze and compare the current podcast portfolios. To do so, I am using information from both primary and secondary data sources. All interviewees were asked about the beginnings of podcasting in their organization. To understand the current podcast portfolio, I created an overview and categorization of the podcasts of ZEIT, SPIEGEL, and SZ. A summarized version of this overview can be found below in table 3, whereas the full overview provides more in-depth information (Appendix IV)

**Table 4.** Comparison of podcast topics and styles

Category*	ZEIT				SPIEGEL				Süddeutsche Zeitung			
	N	Launch	Style**	Access	N	Launch	Style**	Access	N	Launch	Style**	Access
News	1	9/'17	News round-up	Free	1	3/'21	Deep-dive (news)	Audibl Audio+	1	7/'18	News round-up	Free
					2	9/'19	Micro-bulletin	Free	2	3/'21	Micro-bulletin	Spotify
Politics	1	3/'20	Talk	Free	1	3/'17	Talk	Free	1	11/'17	Talk	Free
	2	2/'18	Talk	Free	2	3/'20	Talk	Free	2	4/'18	Talk	Free
	3	3/'20	Talk	Free								
Entertainment & Sports	1	4/'18	Interview	Free	1	10/'20	Narrative series	Free	1	6/'18	Talk	Free
	2	3/'19	Interview	Free	2	6/'19	Interview	Free				
	3	3/'19	Talk	Free								
True Crime	1	4/'18	Talk	Free								
Documentary ***					1	3/'20	One-off narrative series	Audibl Audio+	1	9/'20	One-off narrative series	FYEO SZ+
									2	10/'20	One-off narrative series	FYEO SZ+
									3	4/'21	One-off narrative series	Spotify
									4	3/'21	One-off narrative series	FYEO SZ+
Career	1	9/'17	Interview	Free	1	1/'19	Interview	Free				
Art & History	1	5/'21	Talk	Free	1	6/'21	Talk/ audio version of article	Apple subs. Audio+				
Science	1	'09	News round-up	Free	1	6/'21	Talk	Free				
Digital	1	N/A	Interview	Free	1	7/'17	Interview	Free				
					2	7/'17	Talk	Free				
Society	1	7/'20	Talk	Free	1	12/'19	Interview	Free	1	1/'20	Talk	Free
	2	5/'19	Talk/ interview	Free	2	6/'21	Micro-bulletin	Apple subs. Audio+	2	8/'18	Talk	Free
	3	9/'17	Talk	Free	3	5/'21	Micro-bulletin	Apple subs. Audio+				
	4	12/'19	Talk	Free	4	2/'19	Talk	Free				
<b>Total</b>	13 active 3 inactive				12 active 4 inactive				11 active 0 inactive			

**Legend:** N = number of podcasts, N/A = not available, Free = freely available on all platforms and newspaper website, Apple subs. = paying Apple Podcast subscribers. Podcasts mentioned in light grey are no longer in production. Rows marked grey indicate that no podcasts are available in that category.

\* Based on own categorization

\*\* Based on styles defined by Newman & Gallo (2019, 2020)

\*\*\* 'Documentary' could also be understood as more of a podcast style, and documentaries naturally cover differing topics. However, for the sake of analysis, it is important to see documentary as a separate topic, rather than a style

The analysis of this theme answers the first research question (RQ1):

RQ1: How have the **podcast portfolios** of the three case companies developed **over time** and *how can similarities and differences be explained?*

### *Early audio experiments*

All three case companies conducted some early experiments with audio formats around the start of the millennium, but only the ZEIT produced a podcast that has remained active until today. In 2009, a ZEIT science editor got interested in the medium and started a bi-monthly podcast on his own initiative. According to INT1, no one else in the organization was seriously interested in podcasting, so the editor pursued the project on his own with minimal resources: *“according to company legend, his office was plastered in egg cartons [for sound control] and he just bought a cheap microphone and just went for it”* (INT1). The podcast has essentially remained the same since then, but, according to INT1 was more of an individual passion project than a coordinated organizational effort, and, in its early years, only had a niche listener base.

Both interviewees from SPIEGEL and SZ mention early experiments with audio content. In 2006 and 2007 the SPIEGEL conducted a *“one-time experiment that was quite soon discontinued”* (INT 4), where a couple of episodes of a travel podcast were published. The Süddeutsche Zeitung also experimented with short audio formats between 2007 and 2010, but, according to INT3, audio formats were not popular with audiences because smartphones and mobile internet data were not widespread.

The analysis shows that even though all companies experimented with podcasting between 2006 and 2010, podcasting was not yet a practice that was seen as legitimate in the organizational field. Podcasts as a medium were maturing, but mainly in the amateur and free web fields, and in its early stages the medium was not picked up by bigger media houses. There were no successful examples of bigger media companies in Germany or the US adopting podcasting, and mainstream audiences were not familiar with the medium.

### *The start of the current podcast 'wave'*

As described in Chapter 2, podcasts became mainstream in the US in 2014, with the success of “Serial” (Berry, 2015). With “The Daily”, the New York Times was the first newspaper to achieve break-out success with a podcast in early 2017 (Mead, 2017; Moloney, 2020). In Germany, the years 2016 and 2017 were the phase in which many individually launched podcast formats started to grow towards commercial success (Knobloch et al., 2020). ZEIT, SPIEGEL, and Süddeutsche Zeitung all started actively pursuing podcasting throughout the year 2017. At the three organizations, different factors ultimately influenced the decision to seriously pursue podcasting again.

At the ZEIT, the digital chief editorial office noticed the increasing interest in podcasting in the German media industry, as well as the success of formats like “The Daily” in the US (INT1). Therefore, through a coordinated effort, three podcast formats were simultaneously started in the autumn of 2017. The ZEIT cooperated with the audio production company Pool Artists, as they wanted to work with people who already had expertise in the topic (INT1). The first three formats were the daily news podcast, the interview podcast about careers and work, and the sexual education podcast. According to the interviewees, the main reason for starting podcasts was *“a feeling that podcasts could become something interesting”* (INT1). Jochen Wegner, online editor-in-chief said in an interview *“we waited quite a while to start with podcasts and were one of the last publishers to start and mainly experimented with it in the beginning”* (Wegner, 2020).

For the SPIEGEL, an important factor was the growing success of podcasts in the US, which started to spill over to Germany. Noticing the success of “The Daily”, two SPIEGEL-journalists from the politics desk returned from covering the election in the US and suggested starting a podcast format leading up to the 2017 German federal elections, which is how the first podcast “Stimmenfang” (“Vote Catch”) was launched with the two journalists as hosts (INT4). INT4 describes the decision to launch a podcast as *“a bit of a mix of opportunity and strategy [...], I think the opportunity was the determining factor at first”*. Podcasting seemed like an



opportunity because it was gaining momentum abroad, but the SPIEGEL also started thinking about the medium strategically quite early on.

At the Süddeutsche Zeitung it was also the use of an opportunity that led to the publishing of the first podcast. The paper had just published its findings from the investigations about the Paradise Papers and was looking for a way to showcase this investigative effort and give a behind-the-scenes look of the journalistic work (INT3). This led to the publication of the first podcast “Das Thema” (“The Topic”) in November 2017. INT3 describes, how he observed the success of “Serial” and “The Daily” during his journalism studies: *“suddenly the medium podcast is so present in the news business, [...] and you could notice quite fast what the strength of the format is, that you make it part of your routine”*. The interviewee remembers mentioning these insights at his job interview at the SZ, where he then became audio editor after finishing his journalism education.

To summarize, the three case companies started to seriously pursue podcasting in 2017: the SPIEGEL in March, ZEIT in September and SZ in November. Whilst the specific circumstances were slightly different for the three news organizations, a common factor is that all three were aware of the increasing success of podcasting, especially after the success of “The Daily” at the New York Times. When asked about how podcasting started in their organization, the overarching feeling of “there is something to podcasting” is a commonality and seeing that a lot of newspapers both nationally and internationally were launching podcasts clearly influenced the decision-making.

New institutional theory aims to understand how new practices become common within an organizational field by arguing that practices are not necessarily only adopted because they are a rational and utilitarian strategic reaction to market forces. Rather, the adoption of practices is also influenced by what other organizations that are perceived to be successful are doing (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Analyzing the initial decision to pursue podcasting shows that – simply said – the case companies started podcasting because everyone else was doing it. By 2017, podcasting had become a legitimate practice in the news industry. At the latest the success of the New York Times, arguably the most famous quality newspaper

in the world and therefore a source of legitimacy, ensured that the case companies gained a new understanding of audio content – even though they had already experimented with the medium without much success in the early 2000s.

The adoption of podcasting by German news organizations in 2017 can therefore be understood as a process of mimetic isomorphism, where “organizations often imitate peers that are perceived to be successful or influential” (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017, p. 80). Different circumstantial triggers ultimately led to the production of podcasts at the three companies, such as the individual motivation of key employees, the upcoming federal election, or the investigation about the Panama Papers. However, the case companies did not have a specific strategic problem that they were trying to solve by publishing podcasts. In this context, it should also be noted that by 2017, the audio advertising market was not as mature as it is today, and few other podcast business models had been developed (Newman & Gallo, 2019). Therefore, there was still a lot of uncertainty about how sustainable, both financially and strategically, podcasting would be. Rather, in the general uncertain environment that a digitalized journalism presents, they observed other organizations in their fields adopting this product innovation, and, in the pursuit of legitimacy, did the same. According to Deephouse and colleagues (2017), this is a process of gaining legitimacy by “extending the umbrella of the organization’s prior legitimacy to cover a new activity” (p. 41).

We can observe that the case companies all started to seriously pursue podcasting in 2017, and that they were motivated to do so by institutional influences in the organizational field: by 2017, podcasting had become a legitimate practice among quality news organizations. Therefore, we can observe mimetic isomorphism in the pursuit of gaining legitimacy.

### *Current podcast portfolio*

After the analysis of the initial podcast launches, I now turn to the current podcast portfolios of the three news organizations. Table 4 and appendix I give an overview of the podcasts of each organization. In the following, I give an overview of the range of topics and styles that

each organization covers, compare the portfolios of the three organizations and discuss, what the reasons for similarities and differences of the three portfolios are.

Since the first launches in 2017, the ZEIT's podcast portfolio has continuously grown, and, currently (June 2021) consists of 13 active, as well as three inactive formats. The podcasts span a wide range of topic fields, with the heaviest concentration on politics, entertainment, and society. As Table X shows, the ZEIT has podcast formats in all defined topic areas except for documentary. With 13 active formats, the ZEIT has the biggest podcast portfolio of the three studied organizations.

Even though it is difficult to measure the success of podcast formats due to the lack of reliable data and the diverging key performance indicators, the extraordinary success of the podcast "Verbrechen" ("Crime") should be noted. The podcast was initially launched as an add-on to a new crime-magazine. It features Sabine Rückert, a crime reporter and deputy editor-in-chief, and Andreas Sentker, head of the science desk, who discuss true crime cases (von Garmissen, 2020). The podcast has the largest listenership out of all ZEIT podcasts and has been called a breakout success (Kläs & Birkner, 2020). Both interviewees describe that no one in the organization planned or expected the level of success of "Verbrechen".

Like "Verbrechen", most ZEIT podcasts are produced in a talk style. This means that the podcast features two or more hosts who discuss one or more topics of choice in a semi-structured fashion. Whilst there might be some music or sounds added, there is limited editing or scripting required for this podcasting-style (Newman & Gallo, 2019). However, the preparation and research these formats require should not be underestimated (INT2). Furthermore, the ZEIT has several interview podcasts, such as "Alles gesagt?" ("Enough said?") and "Frisch an die Arbeit?" ("Fresh to work"), where ZEIT journalists interview guests. Overall, the talk and interview styles rely heavily on the personality of their hosts and thus express ZEIT journalism on a very personal level, where individual journalists like Sabine Rückert start to fall into the category of the "celebrified journalist" (Olausson, 2018; Usher, 2020).

The podcast portfolio of the SPIEGEL also covers a wide range of topics, and is especially focused on digital, politics, and society topics. With ten active formats and two finished one-off series, the portfolio is smaller than the one of the ZEIT. Compared to the ZEIT, more diverse podcast styles can be found within the portfolio of the SPIEGEL: next to several talk formats, the publisher also uses the shorter news and information roundup called micro-bulletin (Newman & Gallo, 2019). The “SPIEGEL Update” podcast releases three short news updates each weekday, each only lasting a couple of minutes. According to INT4, the format was initially conceptualized as a feature for smart speakers such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home in mind but did surprisingly well on regular platforms. Furthermore, the SPIEGEL has also produced a documentary series about the construction of the Berlin airport. Documentary podcast series require more editing, planning, research, and scripting efforts than any other format (Newman & Gallo, 2019; Ora, 2018). Overall, the SPIEGEL portfolio is diverse in terms of topics covered and styles used, however, especially compared to the ZEIT, the topics covered are more closely aligned with the topics the newspaper is known for: “we want to focus on our core brand topics, like politics, tech, digital, things like that” (INT4).

At the time of research, the Süddeutsche Zeitung has a smaller podcast portfolio than the other two studied companies, consisting of seven active formats and four finished documentary formats. The portfolio also spans less topic areas, mainly covering news, politics, and society. However, the SZ clearly prevails in the documentary topic area, having produced four separate documentary formats at the time of research, with two more documentary formats launched at the time of writing (July 2021), after the research phase of this project ended.

Furthermore, the SZ has also introduced a first micro bulletin podcast, the Spotify exclusive “An diesem Tag” (“On this day”), which covers the status and current relevance of a news story from ten years ago in around five minutes. The podcast is featured in Spotify’s personalizable Daily Drive playlist, which aims at building daily listening habits (Bartl, 2021)

One clear similarity between the podcast portfolios of the three organizations is that all three have one or two daily news podcasts in their portfolio. “Was jetzt?” by the ZEIT and “Auf den

Punkt” by SZ have a very similar production style. They cover several news stories that are relevant for the day but remain mainly talk based. “SPIEGEL Daily”, however, seems to be based on the format of the New York Times’s “The Daily” – both in name and production style. Like “The Daily”, “SPIEGEL Daily” takes a deep dive into one news story per day, which usually requires more editing and scripting efforts (Newman & Gallo, 2019). The format is hosted by two well-known journalists. On top of the regular news podcast, SPIEGEL and SZ both publish the two micro bulletin news formats.

### *Understanding the similarities and differences*

Having compared the podcast portfolios of the three case companies it becomes clear that there are significant differences. The ZEIT’s portfolio consists mainly of podcasts that have a talk or interview style and covers a wide range of topics. The SZ, on the other hand, has the strongest focus on the investigative documentary format. The portfolio of the SPIEGEL is most diverse in terms of topics and styles, as the organization is most actively experimenting with different formats. As table 3 shows, the area which all three companies cover in the most consistent fashion is news podcasting.

In the podcast portfolios we can observe different mechanisms at play: mechanisms of isomorphism on the one hand, and identity on the other hand. In answering the first part of the research question above, I have illustrated how the decision to launch podcasts was influenced by institutional mechanisms in the organizational field. Podcasting had become a legitimate practice, which influenced the case companies’ decision to pursue podcasting. This pursuit of legitimacy is again reflected in the fact that all three case companies have a daily news podcast. All interviewees expressed the sentiment that a daily news podcast is something that *“just goes with podcasting as a newspaper”* (INT1). In the case of SZ, having a news podcast was also thought to be important by the chief editorial office (INT3). Having a daily news podcast legitimates the overall pursuit of podcasting, as the news podcast is also the most natural format choice for a news organization: it aligns most closely to the classic information sharing qualities of newspapers (I. Shapiro, 2014). In their quest for legitimacy organizations act in a way that they perceive to be acceptable and respected in their organizational field (Deephouse et al., 2017; W. R. Scott, 1995).

Furthermore, the SPIEGEL's launch of "SPIEGEL Daily" can be understood as an outcome of mimetic isomorphism. By mimicking the successful practice of a recognized member of the organizational field, SPIEGEL is attempting to mitigate uncertainty. An interesting perspective to take here is that by imitating organizations perceived to be prestigious, the organization tries to gain prestige itself. This can also be understood as a process of identity: in asking 'who am I like', organizations identify with other organizations that they deem worthy of imitating (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017).

How can we understand the observed differences in podcast portfolios? If an institutional isomorphism perspective is taken, one would expect the three organizations to have very similar podcast portfolios, both in terms of topics covered and styles chosen. However, this is not the case. Rather, we observe that the three companies have built up a distinct podcasting identity. The ZEIT, with its portfolio of talk-style podcasts covering a wide range of topics is building up a podcasting identity that is dependent on the personalities of the hosts and the diversity of topics that are covered. The SZ, on the other hand, is highlighting its investigative work through its podcast portfolio by publishing documentaries in a narrative style. As the SPIEGEL is experimenting more with different styles and topics, there is a less clear tendency to observe here. However, we can see that the SPIEGEL is closely linking its formats to the topics the magazine is well known for, mainly politics and digital topics.

According to Hatch and Schultz's (2002) model of organizational identity dynamics, identity mediates the relationship between the organizations internal culture and the external image. By expressing their identity, organizations can leave impressions on the outside world and thereby influence their image. The differing podcasting identities can be understood as an attempt to do so. By creating a distinct podcasting identity, which also overlaps with their central, enduring, and distinct characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985), organizations can influence the image that outside stakeholders have.

By comparing the podcast portfolios of the three companies in terms of style and topics, we can observe that all three feel the need to publish a daily news podcast as this format enables them to claim legitimacy in the field. However, the other formats build a distinct podcasting identity for each company. This podcasting identity can be used to influence the external image of the companies.

## 6.2 Research Question 2: Creative Processes & Organization

### *Creative Processes*

The analysis of this theme answers one part of the second research question (RQ2), by describing and analyzing the creative processes of the case companies.

RQ2: How are the case companies organizing the **creative** podcast production **process** and *how can similarities and differences be explained?*

The theme deals with the creative processes that happen within the case companies as podcast formats are developed. As discussed in Chapter 2, a podcast is the product of a creative process. Therefore, it is important to understand the creative processes that each case company uses to produce podcasts. Rather than focusing on the creative choices that influence the day-to-day production of single podcast episodes, this theme deals with the ideation process of new podcast formats. In the interviews, I asked the participants to describe who comes up with ideas for new formats and from where inspiration is drawn. Furthermore, I asked them to elaborate on the decision-making processes that lead to the final publication of a new format. To categorize the different dynamics that influence the creative choices at the case companies, I am using the framework of Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000), thereby gaining a better understanding of the organizational culture.

### *Creative Processes ZEIT*

When asked where new ideas emerge, both interviewees talk about the diversity of ideas that are spread throughout the entire organization: *“there is no shortage of ideas [at the ZEIT]”* (INT1). They describe an open system, in which anyone in the organization can pitch an idea for a new format. If the idea finds enough resonance within the organization and editors are willing to invest time to regularly be the hosts of the podcast, then the approach is usually to *“just try it out, and if it goes wrong, we just drop it again. And if it works – great”* (INT2).

The interviewees stress the importance of freedom within the creative process. INT2 states: *“the nice thing is that ideas always come from where you least expect them”*. INT1 describes the

creative environment within the organization as follows: *“ideas develop with magical editorial creativity and passion, but also a lot of freedom”*. This is also reflected in the decision-making processes. Both interviewees do not describe fixed criteria that are used to determine if a format should be launched. Rather, the organization is open to experimenting with new formats. INT1 contrasts this with how, in her view, the competing media houses approach this: *“that's how I perceive it, at least in relation to other houses, that these editorial ideas are not immediately accompanied by business cases and studies of some kind and data and figures. Instead, you also have the opportunity to simply do things first and then see what happens”* (INT1). The only criterium that INT1 mentions is “innovativeness”: *“is this something we have heard 500 times before or is this something new? [...] Because we do stand for a certain type of editorial innovativeness. But apart from that I don't really know of any catalog of criteria [before launch]”*.

A good example for this open approach to creative ideation is the podcast “Alles gesagt?” (engl: “Enough said?”). The podcast is an unusual interview format, in which Jochen Wegner, online editor-in-chief, and Christoph Amend, editor-in-chief of ZEIT Magazin, interview well-known personalities. However, the interview only stops when the guest wants to finish, which leads to extraordinarily long podcast episodes (the longest to date lasted for almost nine hours). The idea for the format formed during a private informal meeting of the two hosts and was initially seen as a crazy idea that they just wanted to try out (INT1). Especially because most market analysis indicates that the ideal length for a podcast is around 20 to 30 minutes (Newman & Gallo, 2019), no one was expecting a big listenership, but because the hosts felt passionate about the project, the format was launched nonetheless. Wegner himself said in an interview: *“we didn't think that anyone would even listen”* (Wegner, 2020). The podcast format has become a break-out success (von Garmissen, 2020), which no one in the organization expected (INT1).

### *Creative Processes Süddeutsche Zeitung*

At the Süddeutsche Zeitung, the creative process of format development is more centered on the audio team (INT3). The ideas for most formats originate from the audio team, which is also responsible for the further production process. However, depending on the topic field of the podcast, the respective editorial team (e.g., the sports desk) is involved with the format



development. The documentary formats that SZ produces require special in-depth format development process, of which the audio team is in charge (INT3). Whereas ongoing formats require “only” an initial format concept, longer one-off documentary series need to be scripted and planned from start to finish. This is a process that the audio team has significant experience with now.

Furthermore, especially for the first formats that were launched, the editorial board had a significant say in which formats ultimately were launched. Such was the case for the daily news podcast “Auf den Punkt” (engl.: “To the Point”): *“the news podcast was also a big focus of the editorial board, who pushed to make this happen together with the audio team”* (INT3). In the cases of the longer documentary formats, the initial inspiration usually stems from a desire to showcase the investigative work of SZ journalists, as well as the idea to provide a behind-the-scenes look of the investigations (INT3).

The format development process at the SZ is also based on understanding the needs of the audiences. Laura Terberl, the team leader of the audio and video department stated in an interview: *“we ask ourselves, what problem are we solving for our customers?”* (Terberl, 2020). This involves developing an understanding of the target audiences, which, for the SZ, mainly consists of younger listenership. Furthermore, the audio team focuses on whether a format idea highlights a USP (unique selling point) of SZ: *“is this something we are good at, that we are known for, or is our competition already doing this?”* (INT3). Therefore, observing what other publishers are doing is clearly also influencing the format development process.

### *Creative Processes SPIEGEL*

The creative processes at the SPIEGEL show a lot of overlap with those of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, which is influenced by the fact that the news magazine also has a dedicated audio team. INT4 mentions that many ideas for podcasts emerge throughout the organization, similarly to how the ZEIT employees describe their process. However, the audio team has a leading role in filtering these ideas out and deciding which formats are launched. It is supported in this by the R&D team and in some cases by the editorial board.

INT4 describes several factors that influence the inspiration for new formats. On the one hand, the team considers, which topic fields are underrepresented in the podcast portfolio: *“We look at which topics we have perhaps underexposed so far. Sometimes we literally go through the departments and see, which topic is missing”* (26:40). Furthermore, it is important, that a podcast format covers topics that are *“markentreu”* – true to the SPIEGEL brand identity: *“so, as a real example, we would rather do a podcast about climate change than about sport. [...] I do think that we will continue to highlight our main brand strengths”* (INT4). The interviewee mentions politics, economics, investigation, and opinion as examples of these strong brands.

But user data also plays an important role in the format development process. The responsible teams closely monitor, which topics generate most interest on the website and take this data into account when developing new formats. An example for this process is the podcast *“Acht Milliarden”* (engl.: *“Eight Billion”*), which covers news and stories from abroad through interviews with SPIEGEL foreign correspondents. On the one hand, the SPIEGEL did not yet have a foreign politics podcast in its portfolio, even though it is a topic field commonly covered in the magazine. On the other hand, the R&D team observed high user interest in foreign politics articles in connection with the US elections. Therefore, the format was a match with the *“checklist of demands that we have for podcast formats”* (INT4).

### *Comparison*

The analysis of the creative format development processes at the three case companies reveals differing approaches to format development. The first parameter where differences become evident is the focus on individual inspiration versus collective creative systems. According to the interviewees, the ZEIT values the creative ideas of individuals throughout the entire organization. If an idea of one or two members of the organization (such as Jochen Wegner and Christoph Amend) gains enough traction, and these individuals are willing to invest the time to there are few barriers in place to launch the format to try and see if it works. Above, I outlined that the ZEIT tends to focus more on the personalities of their podcast hosts and that some podcast hosts have become *“celebrified journalists”* (Usher, 2020). Understanding the focus on individual inspiration within the format production process aligns with this earlier observation: if individuals already play a more dominant and

decisive role in the format development, we can assume that the final format also depends more on the hosts' individual personality.

Whereas the SPIEGEL and SZ also consider the ideas of individuals within the organization, these two publishers have a much more formalized system in place for launching new formats. This system is mainly influenced and controlled by the audio teams, who also consider more overarching strategic questions concerning the overall podcast portfolio. Both organizations have clear organizational guidelines for what constitutes a launchable podcast format.

Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) describe "the polarities that shape the choices available to organizations in [cultural] industries" (p. 265). The differences in organizing practices between the ZEIT on the one hand and SPIEGEL and SZ showcase some of the polarities of choice that the article highlights. Whereas approach within the ZEIT focuses more on the individual as the source of inspiration, the organizing practices at SZ and SPIEGEL indicate an emphasis on building creative systems, which have "structures, processes, and cultures that produce successful cultural products" (Lampel et al., 2000, p. 267). In the case of SZ and SPIEGEL, the audio teams are at the center of this creative system. The creative systems are especially apparent when it comes to the decision of whether a format is launched: SZ and SPIEGEL have established clear checklists and parameters that determine whether a format is seen as promising. I will elaborate on the functions of the audio teams in the next theme (organization).

Of course the ZEIT does not only focus on individual inspiration. However, the analysis of the interviews shows a bigger emphasis on the role of individuals in the value chain. The ZEIT also has creative systems; but they are less formalized than in the other two organizations. Individual inspiration also plays a role at the SZ and the SPIEGEL, though it is mediated more by the creative system around it. An example for this are the two SPIEGEL journalists described in that initiated the podcasting efforts at the SPIEGEL in the first place. As Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) state when discussing the polarity of individual inspiration versus creative systems: "often, however, organizations try to combine the best of both" (p. 268).

Another tension defined by Lampel and colleagues (2000) is the balancing act between demand analysis and market construction. Again, we can observe differences between SZ and SPIEGEL on the one hand and ZEIT on the other hand. The analysis of the interviews has shown that SZ and SPIEGEL are very aware of their audiences: they observe and analyze their market environment. The organization's perceptions and predictions of audience reaction also influence the podcast launch decision-making process. Thus, SZ and SPIEGEL are more likely to launch a format that is aligned with what they perceive to be their audience's likes and preferences.

The ZEIT, on the other hand, shows tendencies of leaning more towards market construction, where "what consumers want is almost entirely shaped by the imagination and creativity of the producers" (Lampel et al., 2000, p. 266). "Alles gesagt?" is an example for this: the format idea did not align with market research, but the organization was willing to be experimental and went ahead with the format, which became a success. The case of "Alles gesagt" also offers an interesting perspective on the pursuit of legitimacy, or rather lack thereof (Deephouse et al., 2017). Arguably, a podcast of several hours goes against any institutionalized beliefs of what format a podcast can take and what is appropriate for a news organization to publish. In the case of this format, the ZEIT did not feel obliged to act according to the standards

Taking another look at Hatch and Schultz's (2002) identity dynamics model can help to understand the different creative approaches we have defined above. If organizational culture is defined as 'the way we do things around here' (Alvesson, 2002), then the approach to the creative podcast production process is a part of organizational culture. According to the identity dynamics model, identity expresses cultural understandings. The analysis of the podcast portfolios shows that the case companies are constructing a distinct podcasting identity in terms of formats. The analysis of the creative processes demonstrates that the podcasting identities of the companies are not just expressed on a format level, but also in the creative processes. The ZEIT has a portfolio of formats that covers a wide range of topics and is based on individual personalities. This aligns with the creative processes, which are

creatively open and individually based. SPIEGEL and SZ, on the other hand, rely on creative systems and market analysis, which results in podcast portfolios that are created along organizational guidelines and are based on perceived customer demand.

Analyzing the creative processes of the case companies reveals that SPIEGEL and SZ have similar approaches to creativity, which are built on creative systems and market analysis, whereas the ZEIT leans towards market construction and relies more on individual inspiration. If we understand creative processes as a part of organizational culture, we can see that the organizational culture is expressed in the organizational identity.

### Organization

Now that we can understand the creative processes that the case companies use to create new podcast formats, we need to understand the organizational structures that enable these creative processes. The focus is on the audio team structures, as I show who is responsible for audio production and how formalized the team structures are. This theme is the second theme that contributes to the second research question (RQ2):

RQ2: How are the case companies **organizing** the creative podcast production process and *how can similarities and differences be explained?*

The ZEIT has a small audio team, which is anchored within the online news desk. The team is mainly responsible for the production of the daily news podcast “Was jetzt”. Furthermore, its members take on an advisory role for the other ZEIT podcasts. As INT2 describes it, they “communicate between the production company, the editorial [teams] and the publishing [business] side of things.” The audio team consists of three trained journalists who have specialized on podcasting, and who, together with three other journalists from the online editorial team, take turns in hosting the daily news podcast. The ZEIT Online office in Berlin has a makeshift sound studio, where the production of “Was jetzt?” takes place (INT2).

The news podcast “Was jetzt?” and the science podcast “ZEIT Wissen”, which has exists since 2009, are the only two podcast formats that are produced in-house. All other podcasts are produced by the podcast production company Pool Artists, whose CEO Maria Lorenz has been supervising the podcast portfolio of the ZEIT since the launch in 2017. INT1 describes

Lorenz, who has been involved with podcasting since 2013, as a *“trailblazer in the German podcasting industry”*. Lorenz and her company continue to be well-respected at ZEIT and both interviewees describe the cooperation with Pool Artists positively (INT1, INT2). Therefore, Pool Artists played (and continues to play) an important consultancy role for podcasts at the ZEIT. Online editor-in-chief Jochen Wegner even said in an interview: *“our secret success ingredient for podcasting is that we don’t produce in-house.”* (Wegner, 2020)

The production company takes care of all technical aspects, as well as editing, sound design and the final distribution to the platforms (INT1). However, the content is entirely provided by ZEIT, as the hosts and their respective editorial teams are responsible for the research and planning process (INT2). Furthermore, Pool Artists takes on an advisory role during the development of new formats and helps in educating ZEIT journalists on audio formats.

The SPIEGEL, on the other hand, produces all its podcasts in-house. There is a dedicated audio department, which has around ten members and employs journalists, as well as sound designers and editors. Structurally, the audio department is connected to the “Entwicklungsredaktion” (research and development – R&D) department, of which INT4 is the department head. The R&D team is the intersection between editorial, product management and IT, and supervises editorial incubator projects (INT4). Therefore, both the R&D and the audio team are responsible for format development and other strategic developments, in cooperation with members of product management on the publishing side. The SPIEGEL has two audio studios at its Hamburg and Berlin offices, where most podcasts are produced. A sound editor covers the technical aspects of podcast production. For the newly launched “SPIEGEL Daily” podcast, produced in the more labor-intensive deep-dive style, several extra team members were hired to create a permanent team that is responsible for daily research, scripting and editing of the format.

The team structure at the Süddeutsche Zeitung is similar to the one of the SPIEGEL. Podcasting used to be located within the “Entwicklungsredaktion” (R&T) team, together with video. Now, there is a separate audio team, of which INT3 is department head. Initially, in

2017, the SZ worked with an audio production company, but soon decided to take production in-house:

*“We felt that if we want to do more [podcasting] and want to grow more [...], we need to be in control and do things in-house. We want to develop our own understanding of the medium, our own language, decide what a typical SZ podcast should be like.” (INT3).*

The SZ has a sound studio at its Munich headquarters, where most podcasts are recorded. The audio team oversees daily podcasting operations, such as recording, editing and sound design. Furthermore, the audio team oversees the planning process of the more labor-intensive documentary formats, which can take several months of planning and execution. The audio team also plays a role in deciding on the overall audio strategy, including distribution models and strategy.

### *Comparison*

The analysis of the interview insights reveals significant similarities between SPIEGEL and SZ in terms of organizational structure, whereas the ZEIT uses a different team structure. The main difference is that at SPIEGEL and SZ, the entire podcast production process takes place in-house, whereas the ZEIT outsources key production activities to an external podcast production company.

Again, the framework of Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) proves helpful in understanding these different production setups. One of the dual demands that the framework suggests is the choice between vertical integration and flexible specialization. Vertically integrated organizations include all activities related to a creative product under one roof. SPIEGEL and SZ have vertically integrated their podcast production, and by doing so have more control over the entire process. As the statement by INT3 shows, control seems to be a decisive factor. This also means, however, that SPIEGEL and SZ had to bring new skillsets, such as audio editing and sound design, into their organizations, which have traditionally not been needed in text-based news organizations.

Flexible specialization, on the other hand, allows organizations to “concentrate on those activities that are most consistent with its particular role in the production and distribution of cultural goods.” (Lampel et al., p. 267). By outsourcing the technical aspects of podcast production to Pool Artists and focusing on content, the ZEIT can concentrate on the journalistic aspects of podcasting. This structure of flexible specialization also enables the creative processes that were analyzed above: because of the lack of a central audio team in control of most audio processes, there is more room for individual inspiration of members in different departments throughout the organization.

Overall, both systems have advantages and disadvantages: whereas the ZEIT’s flexible specialization allows for more open creativity, the organization has less control of the entire podcast process, not just in terms of production. By having centralized audio teams, SPIEGEL and SZ do not only have more control over the production process, but the audio teams also centralize strategic audio decisions. As previously discussed, these two companies focus on building creative systems rather than fostering individual inspiration. For these creative systems, having a centralized audio department which has full control over the entire process is crucial.

Looking through the lens of institutional theory, the traditional literature would suggest that, as podcasts were partly adopted in the pursuit of legitimacy, organizational structures would tend to look alike (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). However, as the analysis along the dimensions defined by Lampel and colleagues (2000) shows clear differences in organizational culture, which subsequently influences the organizational structure needed to support the creative processes. The difference in creative approach can be an attempt at explanation of the differing outsourcing decisions at the organizations. On the other hand, the interviewees repeatedly mentioned their satisfaction with the Pool Artists collaboration. Therefore it is also worth considering if this so well-functioning cooperation is an isolated occurrence of an exceptional publisher-producer relationship.

To construct creative systems that are vertically integrated, SPIEGEL and SZ have established audio teams that are responsible for the whole podcast production process. This provides a level of control over the entire process. ZEIT, on the other hand, outsources the technical production of their podcasts to a production company and thereby mainly focuses on the journalistic aspects of podcast production.



## 6.3 Research question 3: Distribution Models & Strategies

### *Distribution Models*

Having analyzed the podcast portfolio and the creative organization of the case companies, I now turn to business models and their connected strategies. Firstly, in the theme 'business models' I will compare the podcast distribution strategies of the ZEIT, SPIEGEL and Süddeutsche. The theme is the first of two themes that provide an answer to the third research question:

RQ3: What are the dominant **distribution models** and strategic considerations and *how can similarities and differences be explained?*

Distribution models of podcasts determine the direction the overall business model behind the podcast takes. In this analysis, I consider the podcasting business models of the case companies as mainly consisting of choices regarding distribution and exclusivity, which I will elaborate on in the following section. However, it is important to first mention the business model of advertising, even though it will not be a focus of this analysis. Advertising has always been an integral part of the newspaper business model, both for print and digital editions (Picard, 2015). As discussed in Chapter 2, advertising is also the dominant business model financing podcasts, and advertisers' interest in podcast spots has grown as the medium gained popularity (Llinares et al., 2018; Newman & Gallo, 2019). ZEIT, SPIEGEL, and Süddeutsche Zeitung all feature advertisements in podcasts, and all interviewees mention advertisement as an important pillar of the financing of podcasts. However, as these forms of financing can be directly translated from the traditional news business models, it is more relevant for of this research project to analyze new emerging podcast business models.

New business models for podcasts are usually based on exclusivity, which means that a podcast is not freely available on every platform, but is exclusive to one platform, which might only be accessible through a paid subscription (Newman & Gallo, 2019). Big platforms such as Audible or Spotify hope to gain or maintain members or paying subscribers by differentiating their podcast offerings through exclusive podcasts (Sullivan, 2019).

Of the three companies, the ZEIT is currently the only one that does not have any exclusive podcasts. As Table 3 shows, all formats are freely available on the predominant podcasting platforms, as well as the newspaper's website and app. The interviewees say that reaching as large an audience as possible is the reason for this: *"the broader we are set up [in terms of platforms] the more contacts we find with people who would not usually have found their way to us"* (INT1). When asked about the possibility of future exclusive deals with platforms, both interviewees preferred not to discuss the topic. However, INT1 mentions: *"obviously we have at least thought about it and discussed it"*.

SPIEGEL and SZ, on the other hand, have started creating exclusive podcasts, even though both companies also still publish podcasts that are freely available on all platforms. Both SPIEGEL and SZ also identify the need to have some podcasts freely available to reach the largest possible audience.

The Süddeutsche Zeitung has exclusive podcasting agreements with FYEO and Spotify. Within these agreements, the platforms take on the role of commissioner, whereas SZ is the producer. The platform pays for the complete production of the format, and in return receives exclusive distribution rights. In the case of the Spotify cooperation, the formats are only published on Spotify. The podcasts produced for FYEO are first available there and are at a later point accessible for subscribers of the SZ (in the subscription called SZ+). According to INT3, one of the main motivations for having exclusive podcasts with external platforms is financial. Almost all exclusive formats of the SZ have been produced in a documentary style, which takes several months to plan, research, script, record, and edit. These costs cannot be compensated through advertising only. Furthermore, INT3 states that, in the case of Spotify *"it is of course very positive for us that we are present on a large platform and are also present with the name of the SZ and can present the journalism of the SZ"*. By having the FYEO formats available for SZ+ subscribers at a later point in time, the SZ can add additional value to its subscription program (INT3).

Similarly, the SPIEGEL has also started to produce exclusive podcasts in partnership with external platforms, namely Audible and Apple. The "SPIEGEL Daily" format is produced in

exclusive partnership with the Amazon-subsiary Audible. The SPIEGEL produces the format on commission by Audible and receives financial remuneration from the platform for the expensive production of the deep-dive news format. Similarly, the SPIEGEL has recently contributed several formats to the new subscription model of Apple Podcasts (INT4).

However, all podcasts that are not freely available on all platforms are also available to SPIEGEL subscribers. The magazine recently started a new paid subscription model called Audio+, through which all SPIEGEL podcasts are available via the SPIEGEL app or website. Until mid-2022, Audio+ will included in all SPIEGEL+ subscriptions without any added costs, afterwards the program can be booked as an add-on to a regular subscription or separately. INT4 explains, that the SPIEGEL is actively experimenting with different business models, and that the Audio+ project is an experiment to find alternative subscription models to platform partnerships: *"I would like to see us finding out that we can monetize subscription audio on our own, so that we can say that even [...]without any other such partner, it's worthwhile for us to offer audio as a subscription model"*.

### Comparison

The main similarity between the distribution models of the three companies is the fact that they all still rely on 'free' podcasts to some extent. This is mainly due to the fact that they need to distribute at least some of their podcasts as widely as possible to be able to reach as many listeners as possible and attract attention to their podcasting efforts. Describing the main podcasting platforms, Sullivan (2019) argues that "content producers wishing to reach audiences will naturally gravitate to such services because of their large listener base and the promotional advantages they provide" (p. 10). Furthermore, users tend to prefer listening to all their podcasts through the same service, and platforms like Spotify and Apple are among the most widely used services in Germany (Hölig et al., 2021). Therefore, only publishing a podcast on their own website and app might cost potential listener reach. This digital imperative can be understood as a coercive mechanism, that leads to isomorphism in terms of where news organizations feel obliged to publish their podcast formats.

Platforms like Spotify, Audible, and Apple are traditionally not part of the organizational environment of newspapers: they have a different product, purpose, and business model, and in total operate on a global scale, where newspapers operate on a local or national level (Nieborg et al., 2019). Traditionally, print-born news outlets have been hesitant to cooperate with tech platforms like Google or Facebook, as their business models so fundamentally undermined their own (Seargeant & Tagg, 2019). Therefore, it is interesting to observe SPIEGEL and SZ cooperating with these large platforms. According to the framework of purposes of legitimation (Deephouse et al., 2017), this means that the two companies are institutionally innovating, as they “create new definitions of propriety” (p. 44) by collaborating with outside actors. If two big players in the field feel that it is appropriate to work with big tech companies, the practice becomes more legitimate. The process of legitimation, combined with the uncertainty of the audio market, indicates further processes of mimetic isomorphism: other organizations, like the ZEIT, will be watching the practices of SZ and SPIEGEL, which will influence their future distribution decisions.

From a field-level perspective it will be interesting to observe the impact of SPIEGEL’s Audio+ project. As the organization is the first newspaper to test an audio-only subscription, the project’s perceived success will influence the other organizations decision-making. In situations of uncertainty, organizations are more likely to copy practices of peers that are perceived to be successful (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). If the SPIEGEL’s Audio+ experiment is perceived to be successful, peers from the organizational field like ZEIT and SZ might be inclined to create similar subscription models.

The case companies are increasingly experimenting with new distribution models based on exclusivity, partially in cooperation with tech platforms. The practice of having an exclusive podcast with an external platform is being legitimated in the field. On the other hand, coercive mechanisms influence the decision, where to publish podcasts.

### *Strategic goals*

Having compared and analyzed the podcast distribution models of the three case companies, I now turn to the strategic goals that underpin these business models.

RQ3: What are the dominant distribution models and **strategic goals** and how can similarities and differences be explained?

When asked what goals the ZEIT wants to attain by publishing podcasts, the interviewees firstly mention the attraction of new audiences. With podcasts, the newspaper hopes to reach *“a new target group [...] that maybe does not know the ZEIT – cosmos yet, but then likes the Verbrechen podcast, for example, and thinks – why don’t I also buy the magazine?”* (INT1). More specifically, these audiences are assumed to be younger. Even though the organization does not have exact numbers on the average ages of their listenership, the assumption is based on the general knowledge that podcast listeners are *“younger than print readers for sure, but probably also younger than online readers”* (INT2). Both interviewees indicate that the goal of reaching new and younger audiences has been present since the start of podcasting. However, a new, somewhat unexpected, effect has also emerged. Through successful formats such as *“Alles gesagt”* the company has learned that it is also possible to build and nurture a loyal community centered around the podcast (INT1).

For the SZ, the attraction of new audiences is also an important goal. Through podcasts, they want to reach *“younger audiences, showing them, hey, here we have the well-investigated background information and news analysis”* (INT3), thus showcasing the investigative journalism of the SZ. This goal is also reflected in the choice to cooperate with Spotify, which is generally known to have a younger audience (INT3). On a higher level, the interviewee expresses the possibility to *“make the quality journalism of the SZ available through this new medium”* (INT3) and thus inspiring a target group that does not usually consume quality news content.

The SPIEGEL interviewee has a more differentiated view on the strategic goals that can be reached through podcasting. On the one hand, he acknowledges the possibility of attracting new audiences, but explains that this is not the only goal that the organization wants to achieve. He understands podcast as a *“supra-loyalty-building instrument”*, explaining that the time spent with the *“SPIEGEL brand”* by listening to a podcast is a lot longer, and a more

personal experience than reading an article (INT4). The SPIEGEL continuously monitors conversion rates of podcast listeners that become SPIEGEL+ subscribers, as well as the number of existing subscribers who regularly listen to podcasts. According to INT4, these analyses have shown that rather than turning listeners into subscribers, podcasts are a good means for subscription continuity. Because podcasts build loyalty, they help to keep subscribers. This aligns with the SPIEGEL's business model of including access to exclusive podcasts in the SPIEGEL+ subscription. With the new Audio+ subscription, the SPIEGEL wants to capitalize on this loyalty.

Overall, this shows that there is clear overlap concerning the goals of podcasting within the case companies. The goal of reaching out to a younger and new audience has been a consideration from the beginning in 2017. However, during the last four years the studied companies have recognized the additional values that podcasts can add to their organization. Rather than just increasing exposure to a younger audience, podcasts can create a personal relationship between listener and newspaper brand and therefore also increase loyalty of existing subscribers.

This is an example of a changing institutional belief: the organizations adopted the practice of podcasting in the pursuit of legitimacy with the underlying understanding that podcasting would reach a younger generation. However, the dynamics of institutional interaction with the practice over the span of four years have led to a differentiated view of this institutional belief. As the practice moves from its childhood into adolescence, the organizations are learning more about the possibilities by observing their own and others' interactions with the practice. Through this process, new field-level arguments are constructed (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). For example, the loyalty-building qualities of podcasts are emerging as a new field-level argument for pursuing podcasting.

Analyzing the goals that the case companies pursue by producing podcasts reveals overlapping institutional beliefs. This highlights the embeddedness of the case companies in their institutional environment. On an institutional level, these beliefs become more sophisticated due to ongoing inter- and intra-organizational processes.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis is to understand how podcasting has become a common practice among quality news organizations in Germany, as well as to explore how these organizations manage the adoption of the practice of podcasting. By comparing the podcast format portfolios (RQ1), the creative organizing processes (RQ2) and business models and strategies (RQ3) of the three case companies, the analysis has revealed both homogeneity and distinctiveness within the organizational field. I will first discuss the overall homogeneity that was observed within the field and show how new institutionalism can be used as a lens to understand this phenomenon. Consequently, the differences that the analysis revealed are discussed. In the analysis, the similarities and differences between the case companies within the different themes are exposed and organizational theories are used as a frame for understanding the different observations. By connecting the findings from the sub-questions, the aim of this discussion section is to understand the phenomenon of podcasting within German quality news organizations as a whole. To comprehend how homogeneity and distinctiveness coexist and even reinforce each other, I will use the perspective suggested in the Scandinavian institutionalist literature (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Consequently, discuss what the findings indicate about the future of podcasting within the case companies in particular, and within journalism in general.

### 7.1 Homogeneity

First, I am turning to the similarities that the analysis revealed in adoption of the practice of podcasting. From a neo-institutional perspective, organizational behavior is influenced by other organization and wider social forces (see Greenwood et al., 2008; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). The pursuit of legitimacy in the organizational field facilitates isomorphism, the growing similarity of organizations in a field (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017). The analysis has revealed that in adopting podcasts, newspapers are deeply embedded in their institutional environment, which influences their practices. The initial adoption of podcasts in 2017 shows the influence of perceived successful actors like the New York Times, who contributed to the legitimation of podcasting in the organizational field. During uncertain times, the organizations were quick to mimic a practice that seemed to be successful. This mechanism

of mimetic isomorphism led to an almost simultaneous 'podcast boom' among the German quality news organizations in 2017.

Furthermore, the analysis of the podcast portfolios reveals that having a daily news podcast appears mandatory to the case organizations, which can be seen as an effect of mimetic isomorphism. To appear legitimate in their podcasting efforts, all three organizations established news podcasts. The institutional environment dictates that as a podcasting legacy newspaper, a daily news podcast needs to be part of the portfolio.

The comparison of the strategic goals has also revealed considerable similarities between the case companies. All three companies started podcasting in the belief that it could attract a new and younger audience. This belief was created and perpetuated within the institutional environment and is now maturing as the practice of podcasting becomes more institutionalized. In the process of podcasting becoming more common in the organizational field, new institutional beliefs of what can be achieved with the medium are evolving and maturing. Reader identification with the newspaper, loyalty, and subscriber retention are now becoming an increasingly important factor for all three companies.

Finally, the companies are also moving in a similar direction as they experiment with new distribution strategies and revenue models. Both SPIEGEL and SZ have started to produce exclusive podcasts for external platforms, and the ZEIT interviewees indicate having considered this model as well. Therefore, new paid models are becoming legitimated in the field.

## 7.2 Heterogeneity

The adoption of podcasting seems to have run a similar course in all three companies, influenced by the pressures of the organizational field. From a classic neo-institutional perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), strong overlap in production practices, creative approaches and the resulting podcast portfolio would be expected. However, the analysis of podcasting practices at ZEIT, SZ and SPIEGEL has identified significant differences.



SZ and SPIEGEL constructed creative systems by establishing audio teams and thus controlling the entire production process. The ZEIT, on the other hand, outsourced the production process, and focuses more on individual creativity. The SPIEGEL, and to a certain extent also SZ, adopt data-driven decision making, whereas the ZEIT has a more flexible and open creative approach.

Comparing the topic diversity and variety of styles within the portfolios, there are surprisingly distinct portfolio characteristics for each newspaper. The ZEIT's portfolio is characterized by its use of the host-centered, talk-based styles, with many different formats covering a variety of topics. At the SPIEGEL, podcast formats correlate more directly with the magazine's core competence, which are political and digital topics. The Süddeutsche Zeitung has specialized on the narrative documentary style to showcase its investigative journalistic competences. This shows that all three companies use their podcast portfolio to present a distinct identity to the outside.

### 7.3 Understanding heterogeneity

I have shown which aspects of podcasting at the three organizations have developed homogeneously and where heterogeneity occurs. Homogeneity was to be expected from a new institutionalist point of view. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the three organizations have a similar history, status, mission, and target audience. Their historical development, also throughout the challenges of digitalization, took a similar course. The theories of neo-institutionalist literature account for the homogeneity that I have defined. But why does heterogeneity still occur?

Where classic new institutional theory focuses mainly on mechanisms taking place in the organizational field, the perspective of Scandinavian institutionalism emphasizes the intraorganizational factors that influence how an organization reacts to institutional pressures. Scandinavian institutionalists focus more on the study of intra-organizational dynamics in comparison to classic new institutionalists, who tend to only focus on the structuration of organizational fields (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009). By also taking

intra-organizational dynamics into account, one can better understand how the organization itself reacts to practices stemming from the institutional environment, and how that reaction might, in turn, influence the final adoption. This research project was not restricted to studying the structuration of the organizational field as it presents itself. By interviewing the actors who actively work on podcasting within their organization every day, I was able to gain insight into intraorganizational dynamics.

As the three organizations exist within the same environment, changes happen within the individual organization between the decision to add podcasts to their product range and the launch of an own podcast. As the analysis has shown, podcasts were adopted because of institutional pressures, but the final podcast portfolios are characteristic and distinct. Scandinavian institutionalist literature focuses on such processes, under the theoretical framework of translation (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017).

## 7.4 Translation

Translation is the “modification that a practice or an idea undergoes when it is implemented in a new organizational context” (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009, p. 191). The fact that the three organizations manage podcasting differently implies that they create individual translations of the practice: they take the medium podcast and adopt it as a practice, but then edit and adapt the practice as they interact with it. So what are the factors that influence the different translations? The three newspapers exist in the same organizational environment and are thus subject to the same institutional pressures. Therefore, the factors mediating translation must be specific to the individual organization, and therefore intra-organizational.

### 7.4.1 *Identity as mediating factor*

Organizational identity is the mediating factor that influences the translation of the practice from the inter- to the intra-organizational environment. The influence of identity already emerged at several points of the analysis. Firstly, I have observed that the three companies have a different organizational approach to the creative process behind podcast production: whereas SZ and SPIEGEL have a mainly data-driven culture, the ZEIT has a more open

creative system. As Hatch and Schultz (2002) show, organizational culture ('How we do things around here') influences and is influenced by overall organizational identity ('Who we are'). In the analysis I showed how these different organizational cultures lead to different podcast formats and production processes. Therefore, I come to the conclusion that the translation from the organizational field to the local adoption is mediated by organizational identity.

The result of the identity differences in organizational culture is the podcast portfolio, which reflects the internal identity processes of each company. For example, the SZ sees investigative journalism as a central, enduring, and distinct characteristic of its organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This feature is directly reflected in its podcasting portfolio with several documentary series. The ZEIT values its system of open creativity and willingness to experiment, and perceives its open, personality-based debate culture as central, enduring, and distinctive. This feature is mirrored in a portfolio consisting of creative formats covering a wide range of topics, based on the personality-dependent talk podcasting style.

This shows that identity mediates the translation of a practice from organizational field to organization and that identity thus leads to a different management style of podcasting and ultimately a podcast portfolio that reflects the unique identity. This raises the question, which role identity plays in an institutional environment. Quality news organizations are faced with the uniqueness paradox: they have very similar central and enduring characteristics, and distinctive identity characteristics that can only exist on a scale that is still legitimate. Quality newspapers are highly dependent on being perceived as legitimate by the social environment, as their claim to quality is connected to a set of generally accepted journalistic values (Ryfe, 2016; Vos & Russell, 2019). Even if the identity of the studied newspapers is based on distinctiveness, their need to remain legitimate means that the claim to uniqueness is constructed from generally accepted building blocks from the institution 'quality journalism' (Glynn & Abzug, 2002).

Strandgaard Pedersen and Dobbin (2006) understand these seemingly opposing mechanism of copying in pursuit of legitimacy and distinguishing in pursuit of optimal distinctiveness as

two sides of the same coin: News organizations must “must make claims to being a recognizable member of a genus, [but they] must also make claims to being a distinct member” (p. 904). I am showing that podcasts are in fact a great tool for navigating this struggle between legitimacy and distinctiveness. In comparison to the classic news product – the written article – podcasts offer new and exciting possibilities to showcase unique identity within a legitimate realm. Podcasts give news organizations the opportunity to introduce their content in a more personal manner, directly connecting to the audience. Journalists can showcase their personality. Good sound design and scripting can make a podcast even more engaging to the listener. In a documentary series, music can add more drama and emotion. And all of this does not negatively influence the legitimacy of the news organization because podcasting now is generally regarded as a legitimate practice.

This property of podcasts reinforces why identity is such an important mediating factor in the translation of podcasting practice. Organizations keep the elements of podcasting that are needed to retain legitimacy and at the same time adapt to the pressures they cannot avoid, such as providing a daily news podcast, publishing on a certain number of platforms, following certain distribution models. However, they add to the practice by interpreting the medium in a way that reflects their own perceived, unique identity. This leads to varying podcast portfolios, through which the news organizations achieve optimal distinctiveness.

## 7.5 Looking ahead: podcasting – onwards and upwards?

Considering the knowledge gathered in this research project and using the literature of new institutionalism and organizational identity as a theoretical lens, it is possible to hypothesize on future developments of podcasts within journalism. Podcasting is a relatively new phenomenon for newspapers, The case companies have only used the medium for around four years since 2017. Whilst this might seem like a long time in this fast-paced digital world, from an institutional perspective the medium is still brand new. Even though this research project has shown that podcasting has already become an institutionalized practice, this process of institutionalization is still ongoing. This implies that, as the organizations continue to interact with the medium, certain structures, practices, and as beliefs are highly dynamic,

they will evolve and thus be further institutionalized within the organizational field, leading to new isomorphic mechanisms and heterogeneous local translations.

An area that is expected to continue being influenced by the field-level mechanisms are the distribution models. As powerful multinational corporations like Apple and Spotify continue to invest in podcasting (Quah, 2021), the coercive isomorphism will influence the news organizations' decisions where to publish their podcasts, as well as who to work with for potential exclusive podcasts. It will be interesting to observe the effect of SPIEGEL's launch of the Audio+ subscription, the paywall system for only audio similar to the current paywall for written content. As shown in Chapter 5, the three newspapers have adopted an almost identical structure for their regular paywalls, which points towards institutional processes leading to homogeneity. Observing if other quality newspapers might mimic SPIEGEL and introduce similar audio-only subscriptions will thus be interesting.

Interestingly, this research project did not reveal significant normative isomorphic mechanisms, even though journalism in Germany is a highly professionalized field (Meyen, 2009). However, it can be expected these normative mechanisms to start appearing in the coming years, as podcasting becomes part of the curriculum of journalism schools. As graduates from these schools enter the industry, more normative pressures will affect the way podcasting is approached within German news organizations.

This research project shows, how organizational identity mediates the translation processes from field to organization. Organizations will continue to shield their organizational identities from isomorphic pressures to achieve optimal distinctiveness. Throughout the uptake of digital technologies, newspaper organizations are increasingly becoming a creative industry (Burns & Matthews, 2017), as audiences are starting to expect more engaging, entertaining content from news organizations (Galan et al., 2019; Hermans & Prins, 2020). The creative industries are characterized by their focus on unique experiential goods (Caves, 2000). The ability to project and communicate a distinct organizational identity makes organizations stand out. Traditional journalistic formats only present limited opportunities to project unique organizational identity within the legitimate frame of the institution journalism.

Through podcasts, however, news organizations can create and curate a distinct identity and therefore forge new connections with their audiences. Therefore, I predict that news organizations will continue to build their unique identities and that we will therefore continue seeing diverse podcast portfolios.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Answering the Research Questions

This thesis explores *why German quality newspapers have started podcasting and how they manage the adoption of this new practice*. The research is based on the collection of empirical data in the form of interviews with key members of the case companies. Using the analytical lens of neo-institutional theory and identity theory, the findings reveal that the phenomenon of podcasting is influenced by both inter- and intra-organizational processes: the pursuit of legitimacy on the one hand, and the need for unique identity on the other hand. In the following, I will revisit the three sub-questions that guide the analysis and answer the overall research question.

*RQ1: How have the podcast portfolios of the three case companies developed over time and how can similarities and differences be explained?*

The analysis of the development of podcasting at the case companies shows that there was a clear timeframe during which similar circumstances led to the launch of podcasts. In a pursuit of legitimacy, the companies adopted this new practice, motivated not necessarily by the rational desire to fix a certain problem, but to identify with those in the organizational field that are perceived to be successful. The fact that the three organizations all see having a daily news podcast as a necessity further highlights the pursuit of legitimacy and the ensuing mimetic isomorphism can also be identified. However, the comparison of the overall podcast portfolios of ZEIT, SPIEGEL and SZ display some significant differences, both in terms of podcasting style and topics covered. A closer look reveals a distinct podcasting identity for each news organization, which is aligned with the central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics that the companies choose to project as an image.

*RQ2: How are the case companies organizing the creative podcast production process and how can similarities and differences be explained?*

Comparing the creative processes that the case companies use to produce podcasts and the organizational structures that enable these processes exposes differing organizational cultures. Whereas SPIEGEL and SZ vertically integrated the whole production process by having dedicated audio teams, the ZEIT uses a more open creative system and outsources the technical production of podcasts. These differences in creative systems further explain the differences in final podcast portfolios. As organizational identity expresses understandings of organizational culture, the identity that is reflected in the podcast portfolio is influenced by internal processes of organizational culture. The differing organizational structures that enable distinct creative processes therefore lead to distinct podcast portfolios.

*RQ3: What are the dominant distribution models and strategic goals and how can similarities and differences be explained?*

In choosing how they distribute their podcasts the case organizations are again influenced by wider social forces. On the one hand, the digital environment that powerful podcast platforms like Apple and Spotify dominate can be understood as a coercive mechanism that creates the need to be present on certain distribution channels. On the other hand, the organizations within the field are starting to experiment with different paid models based on podcast exclusivity. It is becoming more common to pursue weak ties with external platforms, which legitimates these new partnerships within the field. The SPIEGEL is starting an interesting experiment with its audio-only subscription program. The perceived success of this program will surely influence the distribution and exclusivity models of the other organizations in the field. Furthermore, the strategic goals that the organizations pursue are based on institutionalized beliefs that are constantly re-negotiated as the organizations interact with the medium podcast. The original institutional belief that podcasts attract a younger audience still holds. However, new beliefs such as the ability of podcasts to increase

customer loyalty and the willingness of audiences to pay for audio content are emerging in the organizational field as organizations interact with the medium.

Considering these findings, I now answer the overall research question that guides this project:

### **How has podcasting emerged as a common practice among quality news organizations and how do organizations manage the adoption of podcasting?**

The adoption of podcasting is an interesting example of how practices are diffused in a highly institutionalized environment. This study shows that it is certainly important to understand the field-level dynamics that lead to homogeneity of adoption among organizations. However, looking at inter-organizational processes should not distract from understanding the intra-organizational processes that influence the adoption of a practice. As podcasting practices are instantiated in the local context, translation processes take place. The distinct identity that the newspaper creates through an interaction of external image and internal culture is the mediating factor influencing the translation. This means that even though podcasting is an institutionalized practice, the studied organizations approach the medium differently and create distinct podcast portfolios, thereby creating optimal distinctiveness. This study contributes to the notion that pressures of legitimacy and pressures of distinctiveness do not have to contradict. In the case of podcasts in journalism, this interplay enables news organizations to discover a new way of creating a unique identity, whilst maintaining the ever-so-important legitimacy that a quality newspaper is dependent on.



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# APPENDIX

## Appendix I: Full overview of podcast format comparison

Category*	DIE ZEIT							DER SPIEGEL							Süddeutsche Zeitung						
	Name	Launched	Description	Style**	Access & Platforms	Current chart position DE week 22/2021***	Publication schedule	Name	Launched	Description	Style**	Access & Platforms	Current chart position DE week 22/2021***	Publication Schedule	Name	Launched	Description	Style**	Access & Platforms	Current chart position DE week 22/2021***	Publication Schedule
News	Was jetzt?	September 2017	Daily news podcast. Two shows every weekday, one longer show in the morning and an update show in the evening.	News round-up	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	12	2x daily (weekdays)	Auf den Punkt	March 2021	Daily news podcast of 20 to 30 minutes. Focus on only one or two topics and their background stories, scripted and edited format.	Deep-dive (news)	Access to all episodes on Audible and SPIEGEL Audio +		Weekdays and summary episodes on weekends.	Auf den Punkt	July 2018	Daily news podcast.	News round-up	Free access on all platforms and on sz.de	102	Weekdays
								SPIEGEL Update	September 2019	Three daily short news updates.	Microbulletin	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de	53	3x weekdays and 2 summary episode on the weekend.	An diesem Tag	March 2021	Podcast about the news 10 years ago and what happened to those stories.	Microbulletin/News round-up	Spotify Exclusive		Daily
Politics	Das Politkaffee	March 2020	Weekly politics podcast, hosted by ZEIT politics editors. Each episode focuses on one topic and usually features another ZEIT editor responsible for the topic as a guest. Mainly conversation based, without much editing.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	122	Every Friday	Stimmenfang	March 2017	The major political issues of our time, described and analyzed from different perspectives, completed by contributions from the listeners.	Talk/deep-dive	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		Every Thursday	Das Thema	November 2017	SZ journalists discuss one important topic in-depth, granting a behind-the-scenes look at the journalistic and investigative work at the SZ. Mainly conversation based, not much editing.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on sz.de	219	Every 2nd week
	Servus Griechi! Hello	February 2018	The "translative" politics podcast, in which the moderators and occasionally guests talk about politics and society in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de		Every Wednesday	Acht Milliarden	March 2020	Podcast about foreign politics. Olaf Heuser talks weekly with SPIEGEL correspondents about news and stories from politics and society abroad.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de	152	Every Friday	Plan W	April 2018	Podcast about the role of women in politics and economics. Interviews with powerful women, discussing how women are changing the economy.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on sz.de		Every 2nd week
	OK, America?	March 2020	Rieke Hawertz, chief US-correspondent of the ZEIT and Journalist Klaus Brühlmann discuss US politics, relevant debates and controversies. In cooperation with ndr Aktuell (German public TV).	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	26	Every 2nd Thursday														
Entertainment & Sports	Also gesagt?	April 2018	Jochen Wegner (editor-in-chief ZEIT ONLINE) and Christoph Averend (editor-in-chief ZEITmagazin) interview guests from the politics, science, entertainment or art sector. The interview is "realtime", can thus only be edited by the guest saying a previously agreed code word, podcast usually lasts several hours.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	31	Monthly	Game Changer	October 2020	Interviews and background stories about people from the E-Sport community.	Narrative series	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		Limited series, 12 Episodes.	Und nun zum Sport	June 2018	SZ sports editors talk about different sports and provide news, observations and background stories.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on sz.de		Weekly
	ZEIT Bühne	March 2019	Editors regularly speak in front of an audience with top politicians and business decision-makers, personalities from culture, science, sports and society. The recordings are featured in the podcast.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de		Monthly	SPIEGEL Live	June 2019	Editors regularly speak in front of an audience with top politicians and business decision-makers, personalities from culture, science, sports and society. The recordings are featured in the podcast.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		[inactive]							
	Die Schenkstülpigen (inactive)	March 2019 - March 2020	Sophia Passmann, ZEIT contributor and author, and Matthias Kalle, former deputy editor-in-chief of ZEITmagazin talk about TV series and movies. Kalle left the ZEIT in March 2020, the podcast was inactivated then. Passmann and Kalle now have a new Audible Exclusive podcast.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de		[inactive]														
True Crime	Verbrechen	April 2018	Sabine Rieckert, deputy editor-in-chief and former court reporter, and Andreas Semler, head of the science desk, discuss true crimes and court cases.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	6	Every 2nd Tuesday														
Documentary****								Made in Germany	March 2020	Documentary series about the failed construction of the Berlin airport BER. The podcast investigates the mistakes made and those responsible.	One-off narrative series	Access to all episodes on Audible and Audio-.		Limited series, 6 Episodes.	Deutsche Abstände	September 2020	Documentary series about the history of the NSU rightwing extremist group, the groups crimes and the work of police and police to convict the suspects.	One-off narrative series	Exclusive access on FYEO and for subscribers of SZ+.		Limited series, 8 episodes.
															Going to Ibiza	October 2020	Documentary series about the "Ibiza Scandal" which rocked the Austrian government. The podcast features the investigative SZ journalists that uncovered the story and reconstructs the background story.	One-off narrative series	Exclusive access on FYEO and for subscribers of SZ+.		Limited series, 8 episodes.
															Wirecard - 1.9 Milliarden Lügen	April 2021	Documentary series about the Wirecard scandal.	One-off narrative series	Spotify Exclusive		Limited series, 8 episodes.
Career	Frisch an die Arbeit	September 2017	Interview podcast, in which personalities from culture, art, society and business discuss their personal relationship to their work.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de		Every 2nd Tuesday	Und was macht du so?	January 2019	Two editors interview young people about what matters to them in their work life.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		Every 2nd week							
	Augen zu	May 2021	Giovanni di Lorenzo, editor-in-chief of ZEIT and Florian Illies, art critic, discuss the work, biography and views of different artists and thus offer a glimpse into the art world.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	2	Every 2nd Wednesday	Geistesleben	June 2021	Podcast accompanying the history magazine, featuring interviews with magazine authors and, for paying subscribers, audio versions of articles.	Talk/audio version of articles	Free access to some episodes on Apple Podcasts, full access to Audio+ and payw.		Every 2nd week							
	Wahrheit da?	2009	Hosted by ZEIT science editor, the podcast features reports, research background and conversations about science, everyday life and society.	News round-ups	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	83	Monthly	Niklasbericht	June 2021	SPIEGEL journalists and experts discuss the most relevant developments and topics related to climate change.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de	54	weekly							
Digital	Wind da was? (inactive)		Editors of the digital desk talk to experts about the challenges and opportunities of digitalization and the success and failures of digital innovations.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de		[inactive]	Nurture	July 2017	Experts discuss the most relevant themes of a digital society and answer the "most googled" questions about the internet.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		[inactive]							
								Lobo - der Debattepodcast	July 2017 - December 2020	Tech blogger Sascha Lobo discusses topics such as social media, surveillance technologies, digitalisation and the internet in general.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		[inactive]							
Society	Die sogenannte Gegenwart	July 2020	Foucault editors talk about the phenomena that define our time.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	103	Every 2nd Monday	Smarter Leben	December 2019	Interviews with people, that have ideas that make life smarter.	Interview	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de	124	Weekly	SZ Magazin Ideen Podcast	January 2020	Each season focuses on a different topic. The current season showcases ideas for a smarter life.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on sz.de		Irregular
	Wie war das im Osten? (inactive)	May 2019 - September 2020	Interview series about life in the former German Democratic Republic.	Talk/interview	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de		[inactive]	Coaching	June 2021	Short episodes covering ideas for a better life, covering topics such as work-life balance, health, fitness and mindfulness.	Microbulletin	Exclusive Access on Audible and Apple Podcast Subscriptions.		2x weekly	Queerfragen	August 2018	Podcast about gender, sexuality and queer culture. One topic per week.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on sz.de		Weekly
	Ist das normal?	September 2017	ZEIT science editor and a sexual therapist discuss myths, fears and misconceptions about sex, based on scientific facts.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	173		Dein Spiegel	May 2021	Podcast for kids, covering relevant news stories in a child friendly format.	Microbulletin	Exclusive Access on Audible and Apple Podcast Subscriptions.		2x weekly							
	Unter Platanenblättern	December 2019	Sabine Rieckert, deputy editor-in-chief, and her sister and theology professor, Johanna Habermann, talk about the bible and their childhood as children of a pastor.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on zeit.de	81	Every 2nd Friday	Dein Vater	February - May 2019	Three SPIEGEL journalists discuss their experiences with fatherhood.	Talk	Free access on all platforms and on spiegel.de		[inactive]							

\* own categorization

\*\* based on formats defined by Newman & Gallo (2020), Newman & Gallo (2019)

\*\*\* according to Chartable "Germany Top Podcast". Chartable is acknowledged to be the most reliable cross-platform podcast analytics platform. Only lists the top 250 podcasts, does not include Spotify Exclusive and Audible Exclusive podcasts.

\*\*\*\* The "Documentary" topic area could also be understood as more of a podcast style, and documentaries naturally cover differing topics. However, for the sake of the analysis, it is important to see documentary as a separate topic, rather than style



## Appendix II: Overview of examples of secondary sources used

<u>Type of data</u>	<u>Examples</u>
National and international newspaper articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"How a German Newspaper Became the Go-To Place for Leaks like the Paradise Papers":</i> New York Times</li><li>- <i>"Auf die Ohren: Warum der Podcast-Markt wächst und wächst",</i> ZEIT Online</li></ul>
Blogposts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"Auf dem Weg zum Audio-Abo – wie wir Audio+ gebaut haben":</i> DEV Spiegel</li></ul>
Industry publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"Das ist das Paid-Content-Modell der Zeit":</i> W&amp;V</li><li>- <i>"Wie der Spiegel mit Audio Inhalten Geld verdienen will":</i> Meedia</li></ul>
Recorded interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"Podcasts bei Zeit Online",</i> published on YouTube, recording of interview at Sendezentrum conference</li></ul>
Podcast interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"Meinung Macht Medien #37 mit Laura Terberl",</i> published on Spotify by Hamburg Media School</li><li>- <i>"Jochen Wegner über Journalismus, Politik, und Podcasts",</i> published on Spotify by Gin and Talk</li></ul>
Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"Hot Pod News",</i> Nick Quah</li><li>- <i>"W&amp;V Podcast Newsletter",</i> W&amp;V</li></ul>
Company statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>"SZ Wertepapier: Unser Wert, unsere Werte",</i> Süddeutsche Zeitung</li><li>- <i>"Die Spiegel Standards",</i> Spiegel Gruppe</li></ul>

## Appendix III: Interview Guide

### Introduction Interview:

- Personal introduction
- Are you okay with me recording our conversation?
  - o I will share transcript by mail
- Semi-structured, meaning I have a few guiding questions, but we can look at what direction the conversation is going.
  - o There are no wrong and right answers, it is mainly about your personal assessments and experiences
- Rough structure: past, present, future

### Performance:

- Can you briefly introduce yourself and explain a bit about your career so far?



- What is your job at X?
- How long have you been working in this position?
- What are your daily tasks?
  - o How have the tasks changed?

## Past

### **Personal experience**

- What do you personally like about podcasts? What don't you like?

### **Company history**

- When did X start producing podcasts?
  - o How did concepts come into being?
  - o How was the decision made to produce podcasts? What discussions were held?
  - o Who was responsible for the initial conceptualization?
- Where did the inspiration for new formats come from?

## Present

### **Introduction**

- What makes a successful podcast for you?
- What does this podcast need to accomplish to be seen as successful?

### **Organization**

- Who in the organization/publisher is responsible for podcasts?
  - o How is the team structured that deals with podcast production?

### **Development of new formats / discontinuation of formats**

- When a new format is planned, who is responsible for it?
- What is the development of new formats based on? What information is included?
- To what extent is the development of new formats influenced by industry trends?
- Who has the authority to decide which formats are implemented?

### **Production**

- How are podcasts currently produced?
  - o Has that changed over time?
- Who is responsible for sound and editing?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current production setup?

### **Collaboration with external partners (Audible):**

- How did the current cooperation with Audible come about?
- How does the cooperation with external partners work?
- How are new formats developed in collaboration with Audible?
- What are the goals of the collaboration?
- There is always criticism that Spotify/Audible and co. are too dominant in the podcast market - what is your opinion on this?

## **Marketing**

- Are the podcasts being marketed?
- Who is responsible for this?

## **Revenue sources / Advertising**

- How do you make money with podcasts?
- Which podcasts contain advertising / sponsors and why?
- How is advertising or sponsorship handled in the podcasts?
  - o Who in the company takes care of advertising partners?

## **Future**

### **Digital strategy**

- What are the key points of X's (digital) strategy?
- Who is responsible for strategy development?

### **Podcast strategy**

- What role do podcasts play in X's digital strategy?
- Who is responsible for podcast strategy development?
- What do you want to achieve with your podcasts in the next few years?
- How will X's podcasts evolve over the next few years?

### **Industry Trends**

- What trends are you seeing in the podcast industry in general right now, especially journalism podcasts?
- Which trends do you think will play an important role in the future?
- Are there industry events where you interact with others in a similar role?
  - o Or industry organizations?

## **Conclusion**

- Is there anything you think we haven't discussed yet on the topic of podcasts? Is there anything you would like to explain in more detail?
- Do you have any questions for me?

#### Appendix IV: Example of translated text

<i>Direct Quote</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
<p>Das ist irgendwie so ein Mischmasch aus verschiedenen Faktoren. Wir gucken uns natürlich schon an, welche Themenfelder haben wir vielleicht unterbelichtet bisher. So, da sind Meinung, Kommentar oder Klimawandel schon Themen, auf denen wir rum denken. So manchmal geht man auch einfach die Ressorts durch und guckt was fehlt denn noch? So ein bisschen so ist der Podcast "Acht Milliarden" irgendwie geboren worden. Á la: warum wollen wir nicht noch eine Auslands Podcast starten? Da kommt ja das Wahljahr in den USA. Und wir sehen ein extremes NutzerInnen Interesse für diese Themen. Und ja, das ist so ein bisschen chaotisch. Oft kommen die Ideen von überall her. Leute haben ihre eigenen Ideen. Es gibt dann schon, naja, ein Formular. Es gibt schon eine Checkliste, welche Ansprüche wir an Podcasts haben und wo wir gucken. Ist das besonders markentreu? Sollten wir das machen oder sollten wir das nicht machen?"</p>	<p>It's kind of a mix of different factors. Of course, we take a look at which topics we have perhaps underexposed so far. So, opinion or climate change are topics that we think about. So sometimes you just go through the departments and look what is still missing? That's kind of how the "Eight billion" podcast was born. Á la: why don't we want to start another podcast abroad? Here comes the election year in the USA. And we see extreme user interest in these issues. And yes, that process can be a bit chaotic. Often the ideas come from all over the place. People have their own ideas. And then there is a checklist of what we expect from podcasts and where we check, is this particularly true to the brand? Should we do that, or shouldn't we do that?"</p>
<p>„Das war so ein bisschen so eine Mischung aus Opportunität und Strategie, würde ich mal sagen. Die Opportunität war glaube ich erstmal das Bestimmende. Aber der Fit war halt da. Also es hat gut zu dem, was wir strategisch vorhatten, gepasst. Die Opportunität war in dem Fall, dass irgendwie zwei Kolleginnen sich gemeldet haben, die das dringend machen wollten. Das hat, glaube ich, bei vielen Medienhäusern so angefangen und viele sind da auch so ein bisschen rein gestolpert.“</p>	<p>“It was a bit of a mixture of opportunity and strategy, I would say. I think the opportunity was the determining factor at first. But the fit was there. So it fit well with what we were planning strategically. In this case, the opportunity was that two colleagues came forward who wanted to do it urgently. I think that's how it started at many media companies, that many stumbled into it a bit.”</p>
<p>„Ich fände es sehr schön, wenn wir feststellen, dass wir Abo-Audio auch aus eigener Kraft monetarisieren können, sodass wir sagen könnten, auch ohne Audible, beispielsweise, oder Spotify, oder FYEO, oder irgendeinen anderen Partner dieser Art lohnt es sich für uns, Audio als Abo-Modell anzubieten. Das erproben wir ja gerade dieses Jahr demnächst. Mal sehen, ob das</p>	<p>“I would like to see us finding out that we can monetize subscription audio on our own, so that we can say that even without Audible, for example, or Spotify, or FYEO, or any other such partner, it's worthwhile for us to offer audio as a subscription model. That's what we're testing this year soon. We'll see if that works. That</p>

<p>funktioniert. Das wäre gut. Die Produktionskosten für Audio sind halt hoch im Vergleich zu dem, was man so für einen Text hat.“</p>	<p>would be good. The production costs for audio are high compared to what you have for a text.”</p>
<p>„Ja, einfach aus der Erfahrung heraus, dass wir die Conversionsraten von unserem Content in unseren Analytics Dashboards sehen. Und da funktioniert es schon noch besser, dass Leute wegen eines Artikels ein Abo abschließen, weil sie sich denken, das will ich jetzt dringend lesen. Diese Information brauche ich gerade in meinem Leben. Und das funktioniert bei Audio nicht in demselben Maße. Wenn ich aber angucke, wie "Spiegel Daily" jetzt gehört wird von den Abonnent:innen, die schon da sind, sind das die besten Werte für Paid Audio, die wir bisher je hatten. Sodass ich schon glaube, das wird, wird dazu beitragen, dass User, die da sind, einfach auch länger bleiben in ihrem Abo. So, wir sind an einem Punkt in unserer Geschäftsentwicklung, wo wir schon so viele Digital Abonnent:innen haben, dass die reinen Neu Akquise am Anfang sehr wichtig war. Aber jetzt das Thema Loyalität und Haltbarkeit der Abonnements mindestens gleichberechtigt ist. Und sicherlich eine wachsende Rolle spielen wird.“</p>	<p>“Yes, simply from the experience that we see the conversion rates from our content in our analytics dashboards. And it works even better that people sign up for a subscription because of an article, because they think to themselves, "I really want to read this now. I need that information in my life right now. And that doesn't work to the same extent with audio. So... But when I look at how "Spiegel Daily" is now being listened to by the subscribers who are already there, these are the best values for paid audio that we have ever had. So I think that will contribute to the fact that users who are there will simply stay longer in their subscription. So, we are at a point in our business development where we already have so many digital subscribers that the pure new acquisition was only very important at the beginning. But now the topic of loyalty and durability of subscriptions is at least equal. And that will certainly play a growing role.”</p>

