



PERCEPTION OF ENUGU RESIDENTS TOWARD IGBO LANGUAGE PODCAST CONTENTS

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Abstract

This study examined the perception of Enugu residents toward Igbo language podcast contents, with particular attention to how exposure, cultural identity attachment, and demographic characteristics shape audience attitudes. The study adopted the survey research design and was anchored on Uses and Gratifications Theory and Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 376 respondents was drawn from Enugu metropolis through a multi-stage sampling procedure. A 25-item structured questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81, indicating strong internal reliability. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression with SPSS v25. Findings revealed that Enugu residents held a generally positive perception of Igbo language podcast contents, with an overall mean score of $M = 3.76$ ($SD = 0.95$). A significant positive correlation was established between exposure to Igbo language podcasts and overall perception ($r = 0.614$, $p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that exposure to Igbo podcasts ($\beta = .412$), cultural identity attachment ($\beta = .318$), age ($\beta = .179$), and education level ($\beta = .153$) were significant predictors of audience perception, jointly accounting for 50.7% of the variance in perception scores ($R^2 = 0.507$, $F(4, 371) = 47.84$, $p < .001$). The study concludes that Igbo language podcasting holds significant promise as an instrument for language revitalisation and cultural reinforcement among urban Igbo communities. Practitioners and policymakers are urged to invest in quality indigenous-language audio content and digital infrastructure to sustain growing audience engagement.

Keywords: Igbo language, podcast, audience perception, Enugu, cultural identity, indigenous media, digital audio

Introduction

The global podcast industry has undergone remarkable expansion over the past decade, transforming digital audio consumption into one of the fastest-growing segments of the media ecosystem. By 2023, the number of active podcast listeners worldwide surpassed 500 million, with projections indicating growth to over 650 million by 2027 (Statista, 2023). This expansion has been accompanied by an increasing diversity of content, encompassing educational, cultural, entertainment, and community-oriented programming across multiple languages and regions. Platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts have democratised audio content production and distribution, enabling creators in developing economies to reach audiences far beyond their immediate geographic communities. Podcasting's unique affordances, including on-demand consumption, multitasking compatibility, and intimate host-listener dynamics, have positioned it as a medium particularly suited to niche cultural communities whose needs are not adequately served by mainstream broadcast media (Perks, Turner, & Tollison, 2019; Tobin & Guadagno, 2022).

In Nigeria, the podcast industry is in an accelerated phase of growth, with recent data indicating 329 indexed podcast titles, of which 241 are actively publishing (Podnews, 2024). However, the industry remains largely dominated by English-language content, with indigenous languages accounting for only approximately eight to nine per cent of all podcasts despite Nigeria's linguistic diversity of over 500 languages (Podnews, 2024). The Igbo

language, one of Nigeria's three constitutionally recognised languages and the primary tongue of over 25 million people predominantly in Southeast Nigeria, is particularly underrepresented in the podcast landscape (Nwammuo & Salawu, 2019; Frontiers, 2024). Enugu, as a major commercial and cultural centre in Igboland, presents a compelling site for investigating audience attitudes, given that its residents inhabit the intersection of urban cosmopolitanism and strong Igbo cultural heritage. The city's expanding young, educated, and digitally connected demographic renders it especially pertinent for studies of digital indigenous media consumption (Enwonwu et al., 2023).

Despite the apparent growth of podcast consumption nationally, limited scholarly attention has been directed specifically at how Igbo-speaking urban audiences in Southeast Nigeria perceive podcast contents delivered in their indigenous language. Existing literature has tended to focus on radio broadcasting in Igbo (Ojiakor, 2023; Emeafor, 2023), digital revitalisation through platforms such as BBC News Igbo (Frontiers, 2024), and the general attitudes of Nigerian audiences toward indigenous language media (Kente, Agbele & Okocha, 2023; Onyenankeya, 2022). However, research that specifically interrogates audience perception of Igbo language podcast contents, particularly within a clearly defined urban Igbo community, remains sparse. This gap limits both theoretical understanding of how indigenous language podcasting functions as a gratification-seeking medium and practical knowledge about how to design content strategies that serve Igbo communities effectively.

This study therefore addressed four research objectives: to ascertain the extent to which Enugu residents are exposed to Igbo language podcast contents; to determine the perception of Enugu residents toward Igbo language podcast contents; to examine the relationship between exposure to Igbo language podcasts and audience perception; and to identify the predictors of positive perception of Igbo language podcast contents among Enugu residents. The study contributes to the growing body of indigenous language media scholarship in Nigeria and Africa and provides empirical evidence that can guide content producers, broadcasters, and cultural policymakers in promoting Igbo language digital media.

Literature Review

Indigenous Language Media and Audience Perception in the Nigerian Context

The relationship between indigenous language media and audience perception in Nigeria has attracted increasing scholarly interest, particularly as concerns about language endangerment and cultural preservation have intensified. Emeafor (2023) conducted a significant study on educational broadcasting and the Igbo language in Southeast Nigeria, using a survey of 379 respondents in Enugu metropolis. The study found that broadcast media programmes in Igbo contributed measurably to audience awareness of the language, though challenges of content quality and limited airtime persisted. Respondents who had sustained exposure to Igbo-language programming demonstrated significantly higher linguistic confidence and a more favourable disposition toward indigenous media. This finding underscores the connection between media exposure and perception formation, which constitutes a central concern of the present study.

Ojiakor (2023) examined the influence of radio Igbo programmes on the sustainment of Igbo language, using Ozisa FM in Owerri, Imo State, as a focal point. The study found that 61 per cent of respondents held a positive perception of Igbo language radio programmes and that the programme had built an average level of linguistic knowledge among listeners. Adopting the agenda-setting and language expectancy theories, the study demonstrated that when media consistently feature indigenous language content, audience members develop a stronger association between the language and relevance, modernity, and social utility. A related study by Udofe, Akpan, and Akarika (2024) in Akwa Ibom State reinforced these findings, establishing that indigenous language radio programming helped audiences develop vocabulary and pronunciation skills while encouraging transgenerational language transmission. These Nigerian studies collectively point to a pattern in which media use of indigenous languages shapes audience attitudes positively, a pattern that this study extends to the digital podcast domain.

Podcast Consumption: Patterns, Motivations, and Audience Behaviour

Podcasting as a scholarly subject has advanced considerably since its commercial emergence in the early 2000s. Perks, Turner, and Tollison (2019) conducted foundational work in developing a Podcast Uses and Gratifications Scale, identifying four core factors: Controlling Edutainment, Storytelling Transportation, Social Engagement, and Multitasking. This scale has since been widely applied in audience research, confirming that podcast listeners are driven by a combination of informational, entertainment, and social gratification needs. Tobin and Guadagno (2022) further established that openness to experience, a stable personality trait, predicted podcast listening behaviour, suggesting that podcast audiences are typically curious and information-seeking individuals. For indigenous language podcasts, this has implications because Igbo-speaking listeners who are culturally engaged may be particularly motivated to seek content that affirms their linguistic identity.

In the Arab world, studies by Hashim and Abdel Rahman (2023) and Bin Suwaidan (2024) found that cultural topics attracted the highest proportion of podcast listeners, with 54.4 per cent of respondents in one study favouring cultural content over other genres. Comparable findings were reported by a Jordanian study published in *Frontiers in Communication* (2024), which found that cultural podcasts using local languages contributed to shifts in audience attitudes toward traditional practices and values. In the African context, Nkoala (2024) specifically examined how indigenous language podcasts in South Africa emerge from radio traditions and serve communities whose cultural needs are poorly served by English-language content. These international comparisons affirm that the pattern of culturally motivated indigenous podcast consumption is not unique to Nigeria but forms part of a broader global phenomenon driven by audience desires for media that reflect their lived realities.

Language Revitalisation, Digital Media, and Cultural Identity

The intersection of digital media, language revitalisation, and cultural identity has emerged as an important area of inquiry in African media and communication studies. Nwammuo and Salawu (2019), in a study examining BBC News Igbo, found that digital platforms significantly enhanced the prestige of the Igbo language by affording it international visibility and restoring pride among speakers. A more recent study (*Frontiers*, 2024) confirmed these findings, reporting that BBC News Igbo contributed to attitudinal shifts, domain expansion, and social media engagement with Igbo content, with respondents expressing renewed confidence in the language's prospects. The concept of domain expansion, originally articulated by Fishman (1991) in his model of intergenerational transmission, refers to the process by which a language penetrates new social settings and use contexts. Podcasting, as a distinctly digital and on-demand medium, represents a novel domain whose incorporation of Igbo could significantly strengthen the language's social utility.

Kente, Agbele, and Okocha (2023) investigated the influence of new media on indigenous cultural identities in Nigeria, drawing on focus group discussions to reveal that social media platforms were exerting dual influences on Nigerian cultural values: expanding cultural reach while simultaneously subjecting indigenous content to commodification and hybridisation. The study employed Veblen's Technological Determinism Theory to argue that technology's influence on culture is largely deterministic but is mediated by how users consciously choose to engage with content. Chang (2023) noted that Nigeria's cultural diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for language preservation, calling for deliberate media policies that elevate indigenous languages in digital spaces. *Preservation of Indigenous Languages, Changes in Digital Media* (ResearchGate, 2024) similarly argued that artificial intelligence and digital platforms, if deliberately designed to incorporate indigenous languages, could serve as powerful tools for linguistic sustainability in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT). Uses and Gratifications Theory, originally formulated by Katz, Blumler,

and Gurevitch (1973), posits that media audiences are active agents who select and use media based on specific social and psychological needs. The theory holds that audience members consciously evaluate media content in terms of the gratifications it provides, including information, identity reinforcement, entertainment, and social interaction. In the context of podcasting, UGT has been demonstrated to be particularly productive for explaining listener motivations and preferences (Perks et al., 2019; Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022; Tobin & Guadagno, 2022). Applied to this study, UGT directs attention to the specific gratifications that Enugu residents seek from Igbo language podcasts, such as cultural affirmation, informational gain in an accessible language, and identity reinforcement. The theory further predicts that individuals whose gratification needs are met by indigenous language podcast content will develop more favourable perceptions of that content.

Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, developed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) and extended by Yagmur (2011), proposes that the perceived vitality of a language, defined as its demographic strength, institutional support, and social status, shapes speakers' attitudes toward that language and their behavioural choices regarding its use. The theory holds that speakers who perceive their language as vital and socially relevant are more likely to actively use and promote it. In the podcast context, EVT provides a framework for understanding why Enugu residents who perceive Igbo as a culturally significant and institutionally supported language would hold more favourable attitudes toward Igbo podcast content. Studies such as Nkoala (2024) and Ojiakor (2023) have implicitly drawn on EVT in explaining why indigenous language media audiences develop positive perceptions when content quality and cultural resonance are high. Together, UGT and EVT provide a comprehensive explanatory framework for the multidimensional nature of audience perception in this study.

Identified Research Gaps

A review of existing literature reveals several notable gaps that this study addresses. First, the majority of Nigerian studies on indigenous language media perception have focused on radio and television, with very limited empirical attention to podcast content as a distinct medium with unique affordances and audience dynamics. Second, existing research on Igbo language media perception has largely been conducted in Imo, Anambra, and Abia states, with Enugu, despite being the cultural capital of Igboland and the state capital, receiving comparatively little focused attention. Third, while international studies have developed robust theoretical and empirical frameworks for podcast audience research, these frameworks have rarely been applied in Nigerian or West African contexts, creating a methodological gap in the adaptation of Uses and Gratifications frameworks to indigenous language digital content. Fourth, the intersection of cultural identity, language vitality perception, and podcast use has not been empirically examined in Southeast Nigeria, leaving a theoretical deficit in understanding how Igbo identity mediates digital media behaviour. This study addressed all four gaps through a rigorously designed survey study anchored in established theories.

Methodology

Research Design and Population

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for studies that seek to measure perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours within a defined population without manipulating variables (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). The survey design enabled systematic data collection from a geographically dispersed urban population and facilitated the application of both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The target population comprised adult residents of Enugu metropolis aged 18 years and above who had access to and had listened to podcast content. Enugu metropolis, encompassing Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu East Local Government Areas, has a projected adult population of approximately 856,000 based on the National Population Commission (NPC) projections from the 2006 census and subsequent updates (NPC, 2023). The population was selected because Enugu is both the state capital and the cultural and commercial hub of Enugu State, with a high concentration of educated, digitally connected Igbo residents who represent the primary demographic for indigenous language podcast consumption.

Sampling Procedure

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations: $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, where N represents the population size and e represents the margin of error set at 0.05. Applying this formula to the estimated adult population of 856,000 yielded an initial sample of 400 respondents. Accounting for potential non-returns and incomplete responses, the adjusted target was 400 questionnaires distributed. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. At the first stage, the three Local Government Areas of Enugu metropolis were identified as primary sampling units. At the second stage, five communities or residential zones were purposively selected from each LGA based on residential density and digital access indicators, yielding 15 zones in total. At the third stage, systematic random sampling was used to select respondents from each zone proportionate to its population size. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 376 were returned fully completed, representing a response rate of 94.0 per cent, which is deemed sufficient for the purposes of this study.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire comprising four sections. Section A collected demographic data including gender, age range, and educational qualification. Section B assessed respondents' exposure to Igbo language podcast contents through six items measuring frequency of access, preferred platforms, and types of content consumed. Section C, consisting of ten items, measured respondents' overall perception of Igbo language podcast contents across dimensions of cultural relevance, educational value, content quality, language pride reinforcement, and entertainment value, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Section D contained nine items examining the influence of Igbo podcast content on cultural identity and listening continuity. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity assessment by two senior lecturers in Mass Communication from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A pilot test involving 30 respondents drawn from Enugu metropolis but outside the main sample yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81, confirming strong internal consistency reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted over a six-week period between October and November 2024. Research assistants, trained in questionnaire administration ethics and protocols, distributed instruments in person across the identified residential zones. Electronic versions of the questionnaire were also administered via Google Forms to respondents identified through social media networks, particularly WhatsApp groups with Enugu-based membership. This blended administration approach enhanced accessibility across different socioeconomic and age groups. Collected data were coded and entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to address the first and second research objectives. Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to examine the relationship between exposure and perception (Research Question 3), while multiple regression analysis was used to identify significant predictors of audience perception (Research Question 4). Results were presented using tables accompanied by detailed narrative interpretation.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 376 respondents. The sample was near-equally distributed by gender, with females accounting for 50.3 per cent ($n = 189$) and males for 49.7 per cent ($n = 187$). The dominant age group was 26 to 35 years (38.0%, $n = 143$), followed by 18 to 25 years (30.3%, $n = 114$), 36 to 45 years (21.8%, $n = 82$), and 46 years and above (9.8%, $n = 37$). In terms of educational attainment, HND/BSc holders constituted the largest group (40.2%, $n = 151$), followed by OND/NCE (21.0%, $n = 79$), postgraduate (20.7%, $n = 78$), and secondary school (18.1%, $n = 68$). These demographic characteristics indicate a predominantly young, educated sample, which is consistent with known patterns of podcast consumption among urban Nigerian audiences.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 376)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	187	49.7
	Female	189	50.3
Age (years)	18-25	114	30.3
	26-35	143	38.0
	36-45	82	21.8
	46 and above	37	9.8
Education	Secondary	68	18.1
	OND/NCE	79	21.0
	HND/BSc	151	40.2
	Postgraduate	78	20.7
Total		376	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Exposure to Igbo Language Podcast Contents

Findings on exposure indicated that 71.3 per cent of respondents had listened to an Igbo language podcast at least once in the preceding three months. Among regular listeners, 38.6 per cent reported listening at least once per week, while 24.7 per cent listened once or twice per month. Spotify was the most frequently cited platform (44.1%), followed by YouTube (29.0%) and WhatsApp audio sharing (18.4%). The most consumed content categories were cultural and traditional topics (58.4%), language learning content (41.2%), and news and current affairs in Igbo (34.6%). These findings suggest that despite the overall English dominance in Nigerian podcasting, a meaningful segment of Enugu residents actively engages with Igbo language digital audio content, particularly for cultural enrichment and language learning purposes.

Perception of Igbo Language Podcast Contents

Table 2 presents the responses to perception items measured on a five-point Likert scale. Overall, Enugu residents demonstrated a positive perception of Igbo language podcast contents, with a mean composite score of $M = 3.76$ ($SD = 0.95$). The item recording the highest mean was "Igbo language podcast content is culturally relevant" ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.87$), with 77.7 per cent of respondents indicating agreement or strong agreement. "Podcast content in Igbo promotes language preservation" followed with a mean of $M = 3.82$ ($SD = 0.94$), with 74.5 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing. The item on preference for Igbo podcast content over English-only podcasts for cultural matters yielded the lowest mean ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.05$) and the highest disagreement rate (18.4%), indicating that while perceptions are broadly positive, some respondents retain a preference for English in certain content categories.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Igbo Language Podcast Contents (N = 376)

Statement	SA+A (%)	UD (%)	D+SD (%)	Mean (SD)
Igbo language podcast content is culturally relevant	77.7	12.2	10.1	3.94 (0.87)
Podcast content in Igbo promotes language preservation	74.5	10.9	14.6	3.82 (0.94)
Igbo podcast content is informative and educative	71.3	15.7	13.0	3.76 (0.91)
I prefer Igbo podcast content over English-only podcasts for cultural matters	63.6	18.1	18.4	3.57 (1.05)
Igbo language podcast content strengthens my cultural identity	68.9	16.2	14.9	3.69 (0.98)
Overall Perception				3.76 (0.95)

Source: Field Survey, 2024. Note: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; UD = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD =

Relationship Between Exposure and Perception

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation matrix for the study's main variables. A significant positive correlation was found between exposure to Igbo language podcasts and overall perception score ($r = 0.614$, $p < .001$), confirming Research Hypothesis 1 that increased exposure is associated with more positive perception. The correlation between perception score and cultural identity was also significant and moderately strong ($r = 0.582$, $p < .001$), suggesting that respondents who perceived Igbo podcasts favourably also demonstrated stronger cultural identity attachment. Exposure correlated with cultural identity at $r = 0.537$ ($p < .001$) and with listening continuity at $r = 0.498$ ($p < .001$). All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level, confirming the interconnected nature of exposure, perception, identity, and behavioural intention in indigenous language podcast consumption.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix of Key Variables (N = 376)

Variable	Exposure Level	Perception Score	Cultural Identity	Listening Continuity
Exposure Level	1.000	0.614**	0.537**	0.498**
Perception Score	0.614**	1.000	0.582**	0.541**
Cultural Identity	0.537**	0.582**	1.000	0.473**
Listening Continuity	0.498**	0.541**	0.473**	1.000
** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); N = 376				

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Predictors of Positive Perception of Igbo Language Podcast Contents

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the significant predictors of audience perception of Igbo language podcast contents. As shown in Table 4, the model was statistically significant ($F(4, 371) = 47.84, p < .001$) and accounted for 50.7 per cent of the variance in perception scores ($R^2 = 0.507, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.501$). Exposure to Igbo podcasts emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .412, t = 6.145, p < .001$), confirming that frequency and depth of exposure to Igbo podcast content is the primary driver of positive audience perception. Cultural identity attachment was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = .318, t = 4.983, p < .001$), indicating that respondents with a stronger sense of Igbo cultural identity were more likely to perceive Igbo podcast content favourably. Age ($\beta = .179, t = 2.879, p = .004$) and education level ($\beta = .153, t = 2.328, p = .021$) also contributed significantly to the model, with older respondents and those with higher educational attainment holding more positive perceptions.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Perception of Igbo Language Podcast Contents

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p
(Constant)	0.423	0.198		2.136	.034
Exposure to Igbo Podcasts	0.381	0.062	.412	6.145	.000
Cultural Identity Attachment	0.294	0.059	.318	4.983	.000
Age	0.167	0.058	.179	2.879	.004
Education Level	0.142	0.061	.153	2.328	.021
R = 0.712, R ² = 0.507, Adjusted R ² = 0.501, F(4, 371) = 47.84, p < .001					

Source: Field Survey, 2024. Dependent Variable: Perception Score

Discussion

Exposure Patterns and Audience Reach

The finding that over 71 per cent of Enugu residents had listened to an Igbo language podcast in the preceding three months suggests that indigenous digital audio content is gaining meaningful traction among urban Igbo audiences, contrary to the assumption that podcasting in Nigeria is an exclusively English-language phenomenon. This is consistent with Podnews (2024), which documented a modest but significant eight per cent share of indigenous language content in Nigeria's active podcast index. However, the dominance of Spotify as the preferred platform, reported by 44.1 per cent of listeners in this study, raises questions about sustainability and accessibility given that Spotify's full feature set requires stable data connectivity, which remains inequitably distributed in Nigeria (Enwonwu et al., 2023). The popularity of WhatsApp for audio sharing (18.4%) reflects the pragmatic adaptation of Nigerian audiences who leverage low-cost messaging platforms as alternative podcast distribution channels, a pattern documented by Onyenankeya (2022) in the context of indigenous language newspaper readership.

Positive Perception and Cultural Relevance

The overall positive perception ($M = 3.76$) recorded in this study aligns closely with findings from Ojiakor (2023), who found that 61 per cent of Owerri residents held a positive perception of Igbo radio content, and extends those findings to the newer podcast medium. The particularly high mean for cultural relevance ($M = 3.94$) is consistent

with Uses and Gratifications Theory, which predicts that audiences will favourably evaluate media that serve their identity and cultural needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973; Perks et al., 2019). The relatively lower mean for preference of Igbo podcasts over English ($M = 3.57$) mirrors findings by Frontiers (2024) on BBC News Igbo, where respondents appreciated the language's digital presence but did not categorically reject English-language alternatives. This suggests that positive perception of Igbo podcasts does not necessarily translate into exclusive preference, which carries implications for content strategy: creators may benefit from bilingual or code-switching formats that affirm Igbo identity while remaining accessible to audiences with varying language proficiency.

Exposure-Perception Relationship and Ethnolinguistic Vitality

The significant positive correlation between exposure and perception ($r = 0.614$) provides strong empirical support for Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory's proposition that the more speakers encounter their language in prominent, high-quality media contexts, the more they tend to evaluate it positively (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977; Yagmur, 2011). This finding corroborates the argument made by Nwammuo and Salawu (2019) and the 2024 Frontiers study on BBC News Igbo that digital media platforms capable of conferring prestige and international visibility on the Igbo language catalyse attitudinal shifts among speakers. The correlation between perception and cultural identity ($r = 0.582$) further reinforces the theoretical linkage between media consumption and identity formation in indigenous media studies (Kente et al., 2023; Udofe et al., 2024). These interconnected relationships suggest that podcast producers seeking to build loyal Igbo-language audiences should understand their listeners not merely as information consumers but as cultural agents whose media choices are deeply entwined with their linguistic and ethnic identities.

Predictors of Perception: Implications for Content Design

The regression model's findings that exposure, cultural identity, age, and education are significant predictors of perception carry important practical implications. The dominant role of exposure ($\beta = .412$) implies that increasing audience contact with Igbo podcast content, through promotion, recommendation algorithms, and accessibility interventions, is the most impactful strategy for improving perceptions. This aligns with agenda-setting logic (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which posits that increased media presence elevates the perceived salience and value of a subject or object. The significance of age as a predictor ($\beta = .179$), with older respondents holding more favourable perceptions, suggests that middle-aged and older Igbo speakers, who may have a stronger attachment to the language formed in pre-globalisation contexts, respond particularly positively to Igbo digital content. This is consistent with findings by Emeafor (2023) in Enugu, who noted that older audience members were more likely to respond to Igbo-language broadcast content. The education predictor ($\beta = .153$) implies that educated audiences are more receptive to the value of indigenous language podcasting, possibly because they are better able to articulate the cultural and civic importance of language maintenance (Chang, 2023).

Conclusion

This study has made several contributions to the theoretical and empirical understanding of indigenous language podcast consumption in Nigeria. Theoretically, it has validated the applicability of Uses and Gratifications Theory and Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory to the specific context of Igbo language digital audio content, demonstrating that both frameworks complement each other in explaining the complexity of audience perception. The strong exposure-perception correlation and the predictive power of cultural identity attachment affirm that podcasting in Igbo is not merely a linguistic choice but a cultural and identity-laden media experience. Empirically, the study fills a documented gap in Nigerian media scholarship by generating systematic survey data on Enugu residents' engagement with and perception of Igbo language podcast content, providing a baseline against which future longitudinal or experimental studies can be compared.

Practically, the findings carry implications for content creators, broadcasting institutions, and digital platform operators. The predominantly positive perception found in this study suggests a genuine audience appetite

for Igbo language podcast content that exceeds current supply levels. Content producers should prioritise cultural and educational genres, given their high mean ratings, while also investing in production quality to sustain the positive perceptions of already-engaged listeners. Platform operators, particularly Spotify and indigenous alternatives, should explore partnerships that lower data costs and improve accessibility for listeners in low-income brackets. At the policy level, regulators such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should develop frameworks that incentivise the production and distribution of indigenous language digital audio content as part of Nigeria's broader digital media development agenda.

Future research should explore several directions. First, longitudinal studies tracking changes in Enugu residents' perceptions of Igbo podcasts over time would illuminate whether the positive attitudes found here are stable or contingent on content quality improvements. Second, comparative studies across different Igbo-speaking cities, such as Awka, Owerri, and Umuahia, would reveal whether the patterns found in Enugu are generalisable or reflect city-specific characteristics. Third, qualitative inquiry using in-depth interviews or focus group discussions would provide richer data on the nuanced motivations, barriers, and experiences of Igbo podcast listeners that survey data cannot fully capture.

Recommendations

Content producers and podcast creators operating in the Igbo language should invest in culturally grounded, high-quality audio productions that address the topics most valued by Enugu audiences, particularly cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and contemporary Igbo social issues. The finding that cultural relevance was the highest-rated perception dimension underscores that listeners are less interested in mere language use and more concerned with whether the content meaningfully engages with their lived cultural realities. Producers should collaborate with Igbo linguists, historians, and cultural custodians to ensure authenticity and depth, while also investing in professional audio equipment, scripting, and editing to match the production standards audiences increasingly expect from digital media content.

Digital advertising professionals and brand communicators targeting Enugu's urban market should recognise Igbo language podcasting as an emerging and relatively uncontested channel for audience engagement. Given the positive perception reported by respondents across age and educational groups, brands that sponsor or feature in Igbo language podcast content stand to benefit from the cultural goodwill and loyalty that such association generates. Marketing strategies that integrate indigenous language podcasts should be developed with sensitivity to the cultural values embedded in Igbo content, ensuring that commercial messages are framed in culturally appropriate ways that reinforce rather than undermine audience attachment to the Igbo language.

Policymakers at the federal and state levels, including the National Broadcasting Commission and the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, should develop and implement specific policies that support the production, distribution, and archiving of indigenous language digital audio content. This should include grant programmes for independent Igbo podcast producers, curriculum-linked podcast content for secondary and tertiary institutions in Enugu State, and partnerships with internet service providers to reduce data access costs for indigenous language media streaming. Nigeria's National Language Policy, while affirming the importance of indigenous languages in education and communication, has yet to adequately address the digital media domain; policy revisions are urgently needed to reflect the realities of the podcast era.

Educational institutions, particularly universities and polytechnics in Enugu State, should integrate Igbo language podcast production into their Mass Communication and Journalism curricula. This study found that education level was a significant predictor of positive perception ($\beta = .153$), and institutions can leverage this by training a new generation of culturally committed media professionals who see indigenous language podcasting as a legitimate and valuable media career. Departments of Mass Communication at ESUT, ESUT Business School, and the University of Nigeria should establish digital audio studios dedicated to indigenous content production and

expose students to the theoretical and practical dimensions of Igbo language podcasting as part of their professional training.

Future researchers interested in the intersection of indigenous language media and digital communication should build on this study by exploring audience engagement with Igbo podcasts through multi-method designs that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and content analysis. The present study's findings, while statistically robust, are limited by their cross-sectional design and single-city focus. Comparative research across Nigerian cities and other Igbo diaspora communities in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and international locations would provide richer insights into how geography, migration, and cultural displacement shape the demand for and perception of Igbo language digital audio content. Researchers should also explore the perspectives of podcast creators and platform operators to develop a supply-side understanding of the industry's development challenges and opportunities.

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