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The Rise of Video Podcasting in the GCC Region



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Executive Summary

Growth in the consumption and production of video podcasts is transforming the podcast industry. The sector is seeing rapid growth in the Gulf Corporation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), and Omdia has sized this market for the first time. Video podcast advertising revenue will total \$17.3m by end-2026, rising to \$37.1m in 2030. Success for market players lies in creating and distributing localized Arabic content, leveraging hybrid audio-video formats, and adopting monetization strategies to expand reach, engage audiences, and unlock global opportunities.

Overview

Market demand for podcasts, defined as a serialized piece of recorded audio or video that is distributed over the internet for on-demand consumption, has exploded in recent years across the world. Podcast content is episodic, often released on a regular schedule, and accessible via streaming platforms or download through feeds and apps. Growing consumer awareness and improved accessibility to high-quality podcast content have driven podcasts to become a mainstream media and entertainment format.

Audio content remains the leading segment within the podcast industry globally, but platforms and creators are increasingly prioritizing investment in the production and distribution of video podcasts as a way to attract and connect with new audiences and engage existing bases. Video podcast content can also be clipped into short-form content that can be distributed on social media, improving discoverability for creators and enhancing ad campaigns.

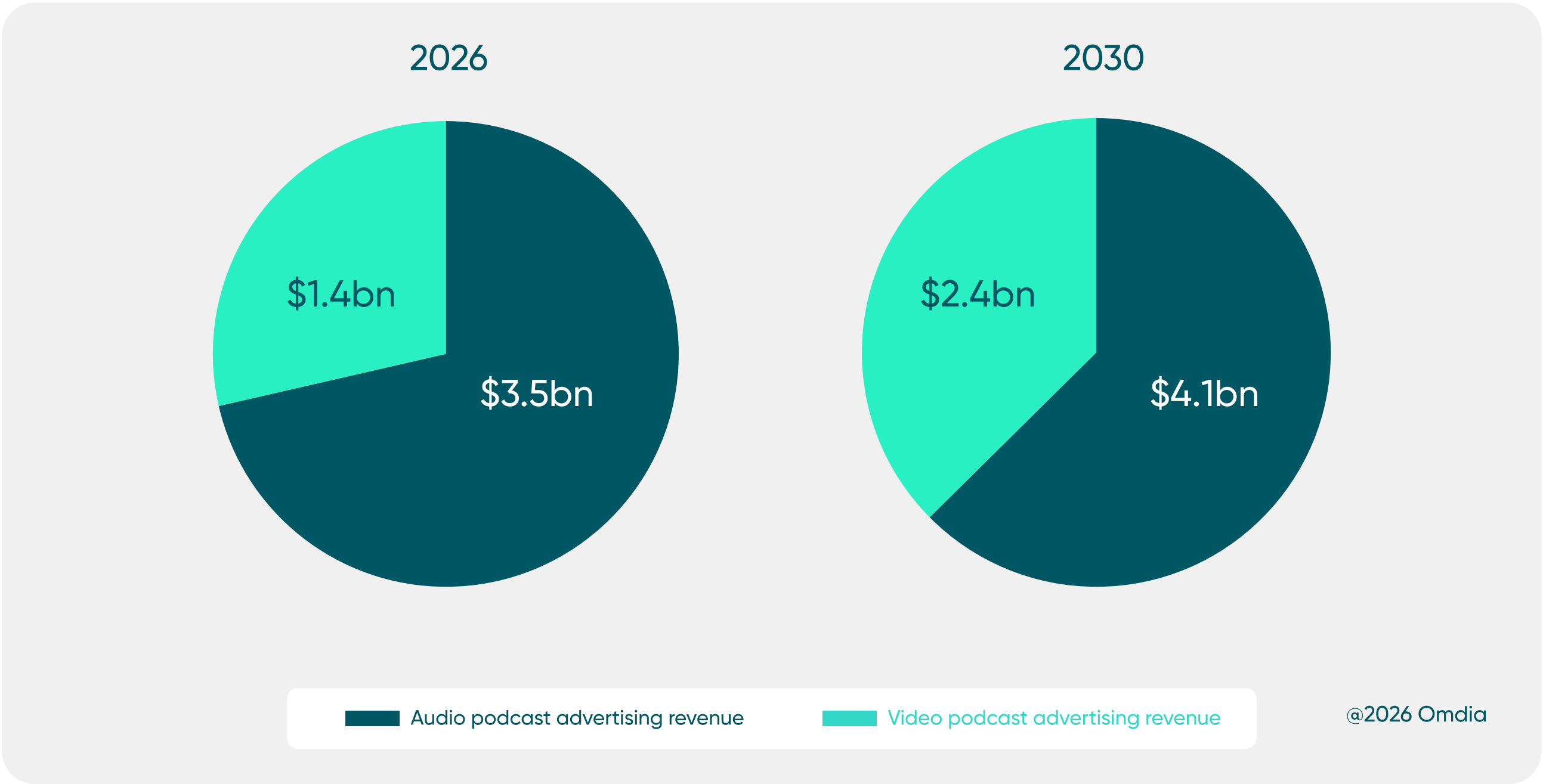




Advertising is the primary form of monetization for the sector. Video podcasts generate revenue from several advertising formats: preroll, midroll, or postroll ads (played before, during, or after the episode), display ads (visual banners or overlays), and sponsorship formats. Audio podcasts, meanwhile, utilize adverts contained within the content itself, such as host-read ads and dynamically inserted ads (automated ads placed into episodes based on the listener’s location, demographics, or listening time).

Omdia estimates that global revenue from audio and video podcast advertising will reach \$6.5bn in 2030, a healthy increase on the revenue of \$4.9bn in 2026. Audio is and will remain the largest contributor at a global level for the foreseeable future, but video revenue is growing rapidly and increasing its share of the market. By 2030, video will account for 37.4% of total revenue, up from 28.6% in 2026.

Figure 1: Global podcast advertising revenue split by type, 2026 & 2030



Source: Omdia

These gains will be supported by the increasing popularity of video among consumers. The rise of video podcast consumption on platforms such as YouTube is helping to scale the podcast audience, and many audio podcasts are now incorporating video formats into their offerings to capture audiences across as many touch points as possible.

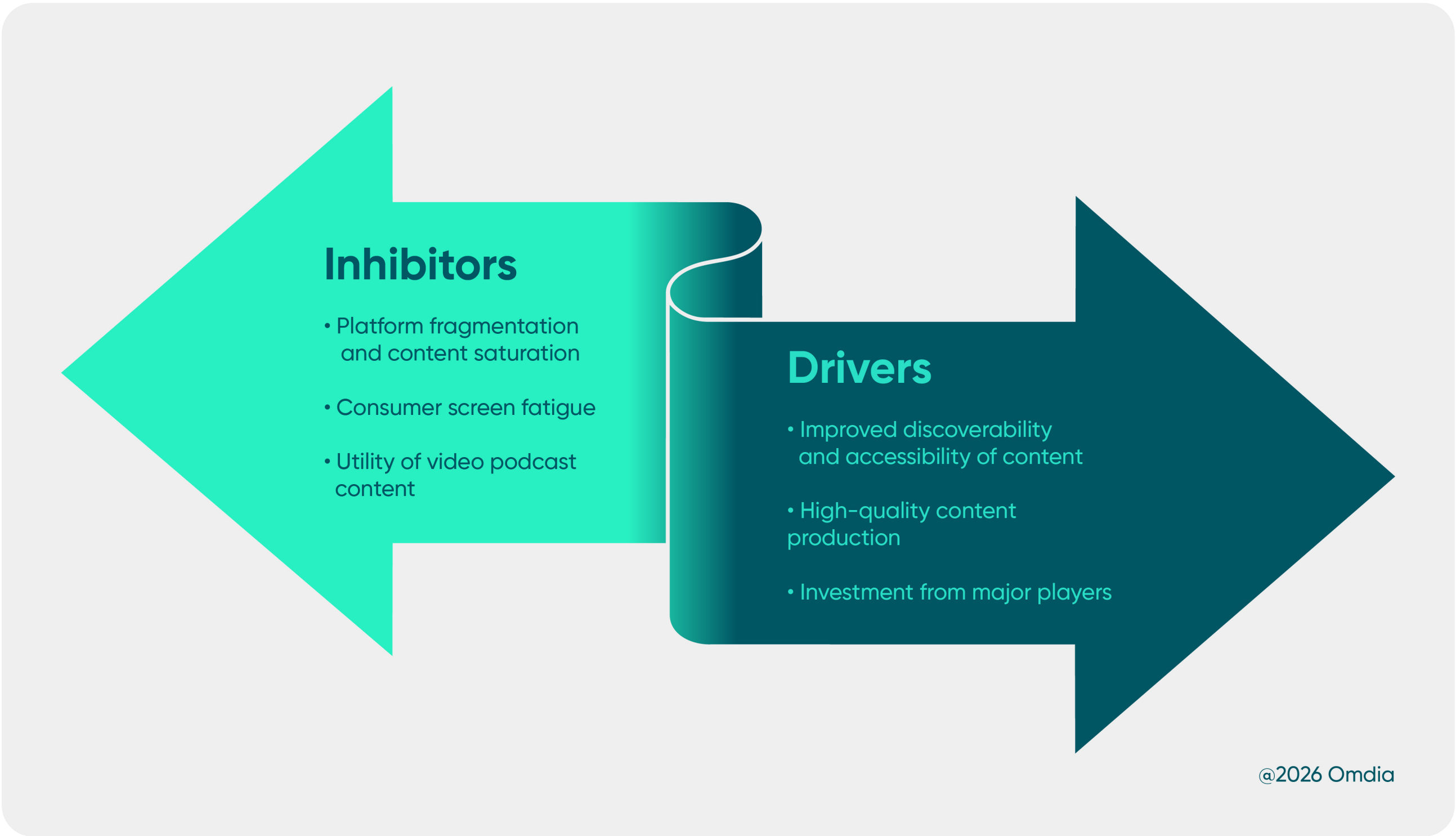
Video podcasts are also providing new monetization opportunities for advertisers, and platforms are rolling out initiatives to support improved audience targeting. Campaigns are growing in scale and impact, supported by larger budgets, enhanced ad-targeting capabilities, and broader content libraries across many platforms and services.

One factor that could impede the global growth of video podcasts is the consumer preference for audio-only content to reduce screen time. Many listeners are

drawn to podcasts because they offer respite from the constant visual engagement demanded by screens. This screen-free appeal is also particularly valuable for multitasking during activities such as commuting, exercising, or household chores. The fact that video podcasts require visual attention could limit uptake, because this challenges the core benefit of podcasts as a screen-free medium. In some podcast series, the necessity and value of the accompanying video content can also be questionable.

However, though the screen-free nature of traditional podcasts remains appealing, the growing demand for video content indicates that many consumers are keen to embrace video podcasts, particularly when the visual element adds value or enhances the storytelling experience. Consumer appetite for video content has risen rapidly over recent years, and the sector is poised for continued expansion.

Figure 2: Drivers and inhibitors of growth in the video podcast sector



Source: Omdia

Video Podcasting in the GCC

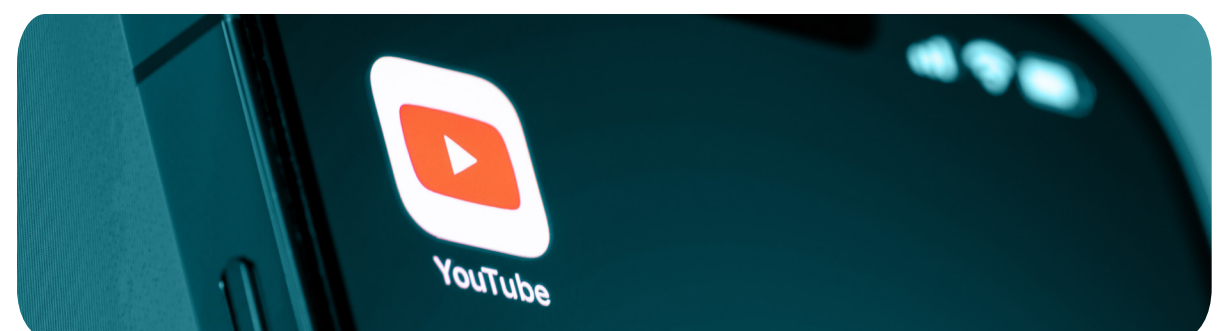
YouTube is by far the most popular video podcast platform in the GCC, and the region over-indexes on usage compared with Western markets. Saudi Arabia is reported to have the highest YouTube usage per capita globally. YouTube is a highly effective content discovery tool and is well used by varied audiences, particularly younger demographics, which is broadening the consumer base of podcasts. In early 2026, YouTube rolled out its dubbing tools to 27 languages, which will help to expand the market for Arabic-language content.

A key success story for Arabic video podcasting came in 2024, when an episode of Saudi podcast Fnjan, hosted by Arabic content platform Thmanyah, achieved more than 150 million views for one of its episodes. The episode “Secrets to Thriving Relationships,” which featured relationship coach Yasser Al-Hazimi, broke a Guinness World Record previously held by American podcast giant Joe Rogan and became the most-watched podcast episode on YouTube. Reports show that 74% of viewers of the episode were from outside Saudi Arabia, and 21% watched with English subtitles, highlighting that consumers are drawn to high-quality content irrespective of any differences in culture or language.

Subtitles play a crucial role in improving content accessibility and expanding reach by breaking down language barriers. Through its investment in and promotion of international content, Netflix has demonstrated that global audiences are increasingly open to consuming foreign-language content. The global reception of “Secrets to Thriving Relationships” should encourage further investment in Arabic content from players in the region.

Combine Al Hazimi’s credibility with a topic of mass interest, and you have an ideal recipe for podcast success.

Source: : Guinness World Records



YouTube is also a highly compelling channel for podcast monetization. YouTube has reported in recent years that 86% of viewers in Saudi Arabia and 87% in the UAE say that YouTube plays a key role in their purchase decisions. YouTube is also highly successful at introducing viewers to brands and products: 87% of UAE viewers and 79% of Gen Z viewers in Saudi Arabia and the UAE report that YouTube is more effective at this than other platforms.

Global players in the podcast space have also targeted investment into the GCC. Leading US-based audio company iHeartMedia and the Qatar Government Communications Office partnered for the Web Summit Qatar event in early 2026, bringing together leaders across the global tech community. A key announcement from the event was the unveiling of iHeartArabi, an Arabic-language audio network that will produce local content while leveraging iHeartMedia’s global partnerships. The platform operates from Media City Qatar, a media and innovation hub providing dedicated facilities and infrastructure for creators and media companies.

iHeartArabi will host content from across the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) region and aims to expand podcasting to new audiences. Though it will primarily take an audio-first approach, there will be some video offerings available, and the platform has a presence on services such as YouTube and TikTok.

The idea was to create a base in Doha and produce Arabic content, localizing a global brand for Arab audiences.

Source: iHeartArabi

Local players are gaining significant traction with audiences, albeit many are focused on an audio-first approach. Dubai-based platform Podeo signed the aforementioned Yasser Al-Hazimi in an exclusive podcast deal in late 2025. Yasser Al-Hazimi’s relatable content and engaging presenting style have established him as a leading figure in the regional podcast landscape, and he has appeared on Saudi TV programs such as Mashoura.

Podeo has emphasized how its strategy differs from that of other global players, because it intends to

scale Arab content from the ground up rather than invest in already established and successful titles.

Cross-sector partnerships are vital for podcast platforms to expand reach and strengthen brand visibility. Podeo has adopted this approach, integrating its podcast content into Binary Media’s in-taxi entertainment offering to reach millions of commuters in taxis across the UAE. The platform has also expanded into the in-flight sector, partnering with entertainment solutions provider Anuvu to offer its podcast content to air passengers.

Table 1: Analysis of selected strategic podcast partnerships

Partnership	Year	Region	Sector	Impact
Podeo partners with airline Anuvu to bring podcasts to the in-flight sector	2023	Global	In-flight entertainment	- Increases the visibility of Podeo’s podcasts globally - Diverse portfolio of content for Anuvu customers
Integration of Podeo’s podcasts into Binary Media’s in-taxi connected-TV offering	2024	UAE	In-taxi entertainment	- Amplifies creators’ reach - Immersive listening experiences - Real-time insights to support monetization
SRMG Media Solutions becomes Thmanyah’s exclusive media representative	2025	Middle East	Podcast advertising	- Connects advertisers with podcast creators - Enhances podcast monetization with personalized campaigns.
Huawei expands its integration of Anghami beyond smartphones and wearable devices to include its in-car dashboard systems	2025	Middle East & Africa	Devices	- Expands the reach of content across the broader Middle East & Africa region - Connects podcasters with Huawei’s extensive user base

Source: Omdia

Content Trends

Globally, Spotify's recent deal with Netflix is a leading example of the scale of the opportunity in the video podcast space and the depth of collaboration possible for industry players. Spotify has exclusively licensed several of its video podcasts from Spotify Studios and The Ringer to Netflix across the sports, culture, and true crime categories. The deal will leverage Spotify's podcasting expertise and Netflix's vast subscription base to drive engagement and grow audiences, and it is expected to pave the way for similar partnerships between podcast players and over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

The barriers to deeper integration between video podcasts and OTT are weaker than in some other regions: MBC's Shahid already hosts some video podcast content, and OSN Group owns the majority stake in Arab audio service Anghami. This existing synergy between traditional OTT platforms and audio services provides a strong foundation for further collaboration and innovation in the GCC region. This could include exclusive partnerships with popular creators, the development of original video podcast series, and the bundling of video podcast content with existing OTT subscriptions to enhance value propositions for consumers.

Spotify has been a key global driver of the shift to video podcasts, rolling out video podcast capabilities to its platform in Saudi Arabia in 2022. In early 2026, Apple also announced a new video podcast feature, allowing Apple Podcast users to switch between video and audio content, a move that will improve user experience and support the monetization of podcasts for creators. Investment in video podcasts from the industry's largest players indicates the market shift to video podcasting is widespread.

The GCC region has a young population with a significant proportion under the age of 35. This demographic is highly active on digital platforms and is driving demand for video podcasts. Podcast consumers have traditionally been well-educated and affluent, but platforms such as YouTube are democratizing podcast content. In line with global trends, popular podcast genres in the GCC region span categories including lifestyle and personal development, entertainment, true crime, business, and comedy.

Western-produced content such as Steven Bartlett's *The Diary of a CEO* and *On Purpose* with Jay Shetty is well established with audiences in the GCC region, but local offerings are also thriving.

Media production company Thmanyah, backed by the Saudi Research and Media Group, produces a variety of popular podcast titles including *Socrates*, which focuses on business and economics, and the aforementioned *Fnjan*. Hosted by Saudi entrepreneur Abdulrahman Abu Maleh, *Fnjan* is a leading podcast in the region, featuring conversations about culture and business with influential figures. The content is available in audio and video form, and the latter regularly generates more than 1 million views per episode on YouTube.

Despite the rise in popularity of short-form content, particularly among younger demographics, long-form podcasts encourage focused listening or viewing, which allows audiences to engage more deeply. Emirati Anas Bukhash is another influential voice in the video podcast sector. His long-form video content *#ABtalks* YouTube series features interviews with high-profile celebrities and entrepreneurs.



The prevalence of interview-based content indicates there is an opportunity for narrative-driven podcasts to expand their niche within the sector. Regional media production company Sowt has produced narrative series including Juha and World of Stories, which focus on storytelling for children. Meanwhile, podcast Roadside Tales, narrated by Abu Talal Al-Hamrani, explores true crime cases across the Arab world. The podcast provides a visual storytelling format on YouTube and can attract millions of views per episode.

Ahead of some global markets, the appetite for religious content is particularly pronounced in the GCC region. There are many titles that lecture on Islam and reflect on Islamic teachings. Traction is higher during Ramadan, and Spotify noted a higher demand for the Omam Podcast during this period in 2025. Some religious podcasts include AI-generated video content to accompany the audio on YouTube. This content can vary in quality, and there is an opportunity for players to produce more engaging, premium religious video content.

By investing in high-quality production and storytelling, content creators and platforms have a significant opportunity to capture a loyal and growing audience, particularly during key periods such as Ramadan when engagement is at its peak. This could open avenues for monetization tailored to Muslim audiences in the GCC and across the world.

Investment in content has significantly increased over recent years, but players must be mindful of oversaturation in the market, which can make it harder for new creators to stand out and attract audiences. The oversaturation of content and the abundance of apps and services can alienate new podcast consumers and hinder engagement with existing users, because they struggle to discover relevant shows in a fragmented market.

To mitigate this risk, platforms should prioritize improving content discovery through personalized user experiences, while creators should focus on high-quality production to differentiate themselves and build loyal audiences. Collaboration between platforms and creators, such as exclusive partnerships or cobranded content, can also help players stand out in an increasingly crowded space.

Audience Growth and Monetization

Globally, the number of monthly podcast listeners—people who have listened to or watched at least one podcast in the last month—has risen rapidly. The sector was originally led by the US, which has the most mature podcast industry globally, but rapid gains in emerging markets such as China and India will drive the global base to over 1.9 billion by the end of 2030, up from 1.7 billion in 2026 and 301 million in 2017.

Though markets within the GCC region represent a small percentage of this global audience, growth has historically been strong, and the time spent by consumers engaging with podcast content exceeds the global average. In Saudi Arabia, the number of monthly podcast listeners rose from just 1.8 million in 2017 to 13.5 million by end-2026. This has been supported by high levels of connectivity and growth in the number of platforms in the region investing in podcast content.

Historically, much of the podcast content available globally was in English, which limited its appeal to a significant portion of the GCC audience. The rise of localized and Arabic-language content has been a pivotal driver of podcast listenership growth in the region and will support further gains going forward. Saudi Arabia is expected to increase its monthly podcast listener base to 15.4 million in 2030.

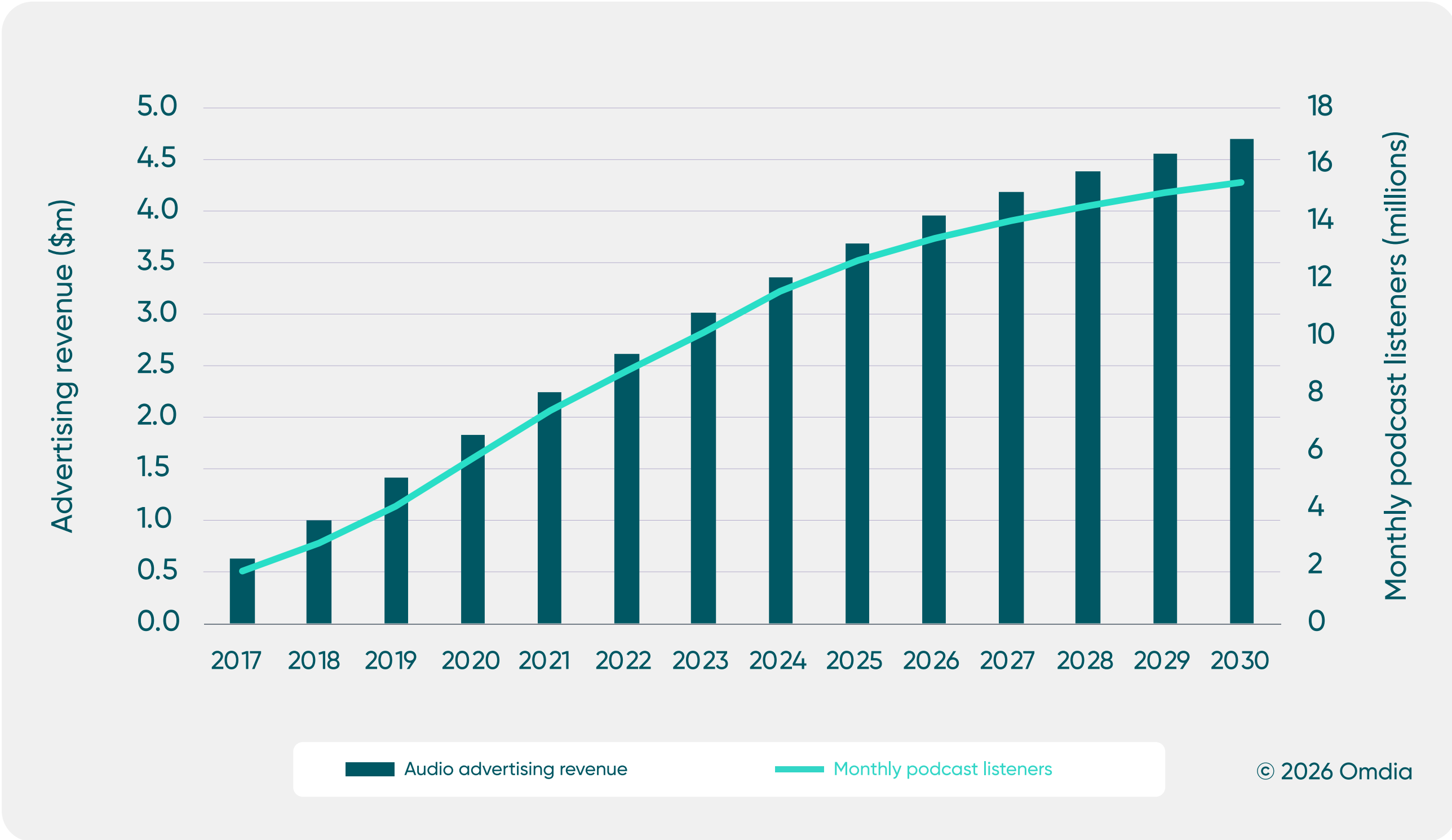
The global monthly podcast audience will exceed 1.9 billion by the end of 2030.

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This localized approach not only establishes a broader audience but also fosters a sense of connection and community among listeners. High levels of engagement and loyalty are a key characteristic of the podcast audience, and this supports the effectiveness of podcast advertising. The sector attracts investment from brands across many categories, including finance, automotive, and technology.

In 2025, Podeo and SMC Group announced an exclusive advertising partnership aimed at amplifying Podeo’s ad inventory in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, audio podcast advertising revenue will total \$4.0m by the end of 2026 and is expected to see steady gains over the coming years.

Figure 3: Saudi Arabia, audio podcast advertising revenue vs. monthly podcast listeners, 2017–30

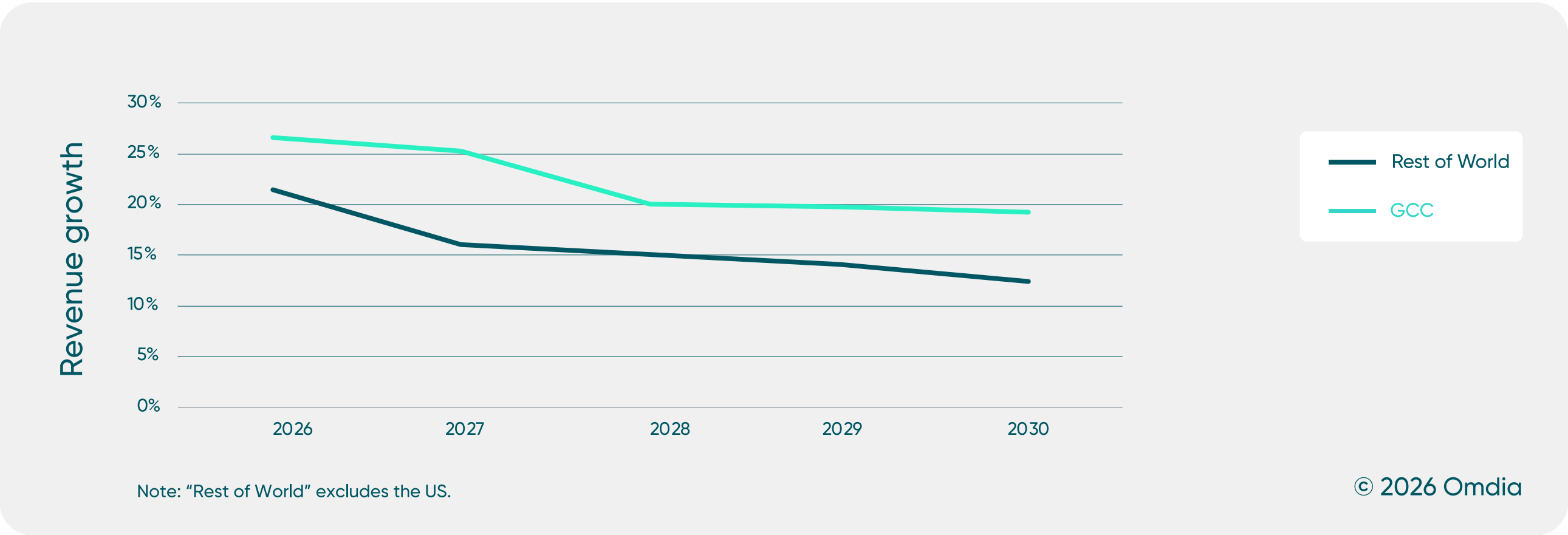


Source: Omdia

The GCC differs from the global picture in that video podcast advertising revenue already commands stronger investment than audio, which totaled just \$6.8m across the Middle East in 2026. Ad budgets have been migrating to video for several years, and the format holds significant marketing power for brands. Anghami predicts that video-native audio content is expected to become standard across podcasts and brand collaborations in 2026.

Investment is rising rapidly, and exclusive Omdia forecasts show that video podcast advertising revenue in the GCC region is set to increase by 26.6% year on year in 2026. Though Saudi Arabia is the largest video podcast market in the region, the UAE and Qatar offer strong opportunities for growth. The increasing demand for localized, diverse, and high-quality content among tech-savvy audiences further underscores their potential as hubs for video podcast growth in the region.

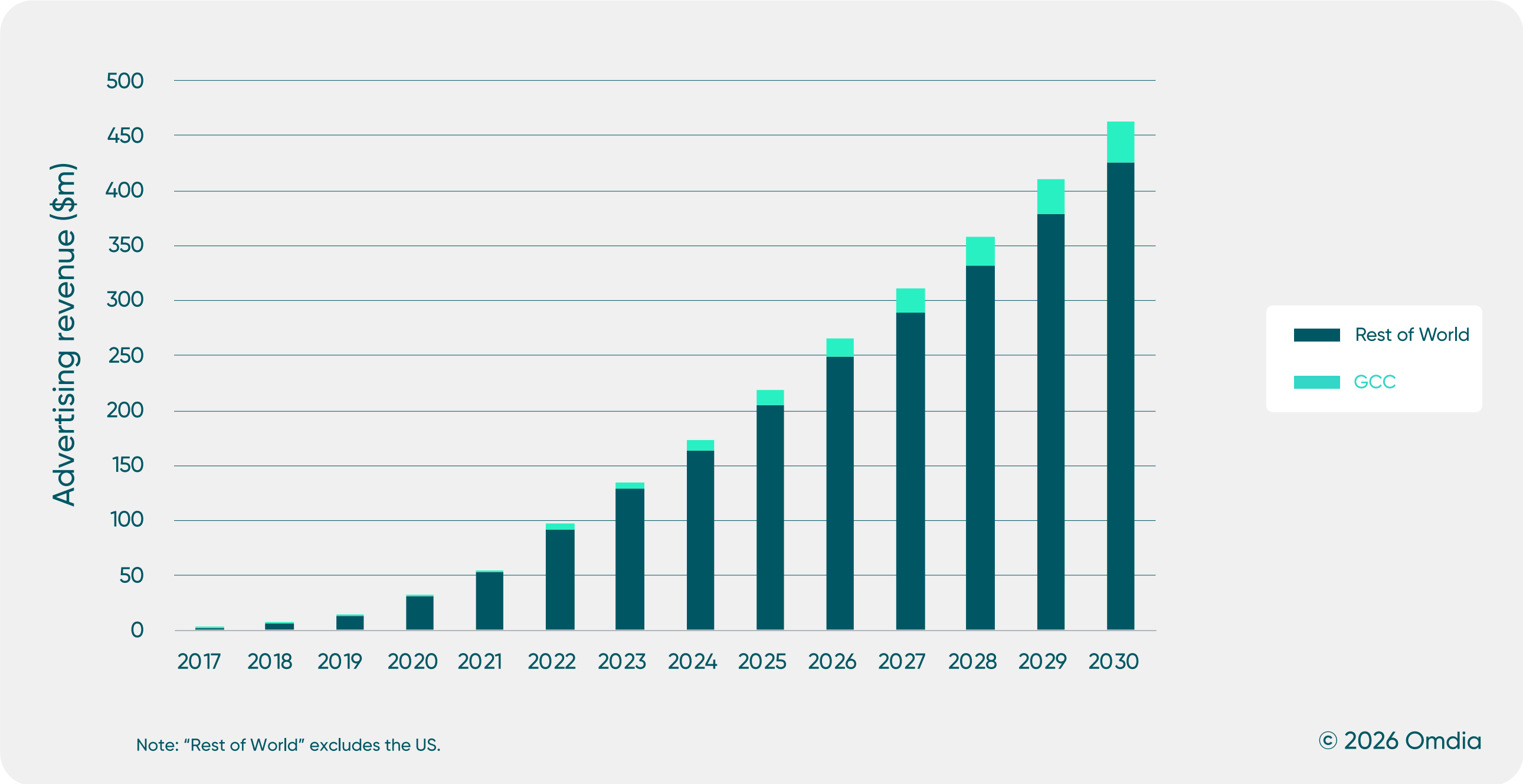
Figure 4: GCC vs. Rest of World, annual growth in video podcast advertising revenue, 2026–30



Source: Omdia

Video revenue will total \$17.3m at end-2026, compared with \$1.4bn globally. The region over-indexes because of its consumer preference for long-form content and high YouTube engagement, meaning it takes a larger share of video revenue globally than audio. There will be strong growth in the sector over the forecast period with revenue rising at a CAGR of 22.2% in the GCC to 2030, outpacing the global average of 16.5%. By 2030, video podcast advertising revenue in the GCC will total \$37.1m.

Figure 5: GCC vs. Rest of World, video podcast advertising revenue, 2017–30



Source: Omdia

Impact of AI

Rapid advances in AI technology have affected numerous sectors globally, and the video podcast market is no exception.

AI-powered tools have use cases across podcast content production, distribution, and consumption. For creators, tools can streamline and automate tasks such as editing, captioning, and sound mixing, significantly reducing both time and costs. AI is improving user experience and driving engagement by enabling personalized content recommendations. This allows platforms to deliver uniquely curated content tailored to individual preferences, enhancing engagement and driving higher cost per mille rates.

The accessibility of video podcasts is also growing as AI language translation and voice-cloning technologies enable content to be enjoyed across

global markets. In the GCC region, AI-powered voice-cloning and translation tools can be adopted by players to localize international content for Arabic-speakers, which is essential for engaging regional audiences. Beyond translation, AI voice-cloning technologies are also supporting content creation. Influential podcaster Steven Bartlett has utilized the technology, launching his 100 CEOs with Steven Bartlett podcast, hosted by an AI voice clone, on YouTube in 2025. The AI voice clone is used to recite the stories of high-profile CEOs, accompanied by video animation.

Leading platforms have integrated AI features into their offerings. YouTube launched AI-powered tools to support creators in late 2025, enabling video to be generated from audio-only podcasts. AI can also be used to produce clips from video podcasts to be repurposed as Shorts on the platform.



Table 2: SWOT analysis of video podcasting in the era of AI

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
AI can increase efficiency for creators by automating video editing, sound mixing, and captioning. This saves time and reduces production costs.	AI-generated content can feel inauthentic and generic to consumers.	AI-driven analytics can help identify monetization opportunities, such as targeted advertising or sponsorships based on audience data.	The reduced barrier to entry for video podcasting could lead to content saturation.
AI can repurpose video podcast content into blogs, social media posts, or short clips, maximizing reach and engagement across platforms.	AI tools can produce errors, damaging content quality and brand reputation.	AI tools can generate subtitles in several languages, improving the accessibility of video podcast content and helping to reach new audiences.	Reduced demand for professionals including video editors, sound engineers, and scriptwriters could lead to job losses.

Source: Omdia

Despite its many benefits, there are some concerns around the use of AI within creative spaces such as the video podcast market. Audiences may question the credibility of AI-generated videos or feel disconnected from content they perceive as generic or inauthentic.

Another consequence of adopting AI technology is the impact on employment opportunities. As key roles within the content creation process are supplemented with AI tools, there are concerns that human involvement could be reduced, sparking job losses and a reduction in the number of roles available.

Therefore, striking a balance between innovation and these challenges will be crucial in shaping the future of the industry.



Conclusions and Recommendations

The podcast industry is undergoing a transformative period of growth and innovation. Though audio remains the leading format globally, video podcast offerings are scaling and reshaping the landscape, offering new opportunities for creators, platforms, and advertisers.

This trend is pronounced in the GCC region, where video podcast advertising revenue has grown to \$17.3m. To succeed, market players should adopt the following best practices:

Video podcasts are reaching previously untapped demographics while strengthening engagement with existing audiences. Market players should invest in creating and distributing this content to support the expansion of the podcast consumer base and reinforce consumer loyalty.

There is demand for **localized, high-quality Arabic video podcast content**. But as demonstrated by the success of Fnjan, high-quality content has no borders and will connect with audiences within the GCC region and beyond, offering global opportunities for players.

Initiatives from policymakers such as grants, subsidies, or tax incentives for creators producing localized, high-quality Arabic content can help nurture the regional video podcast ecosystem. This, coupled with public and private investment in the development of production facilities, talent-training programs, and content distribution networks, can support sector growth.

Consumer preferences for audio or video content can vary by genre, and audiences do seek screen-free experiences. Hybrid formats combining the benefits of audio and video will maximize engagement.

AI technology is undeniably transforming the video podcast market by streamlining production processes, enhancing accessibility, and delivering highly personalized content experiences. But players should use these capabilities with care to ensure content authenticity is not compromised.

Implementation of effective video podcast monetization strategies will enable industry stakeholders to capitalize on this highly engaged and loyal audience. Market players should look to strike podcast advertising partnerships to make inventory more accessible to brands.



Appendix

Media City Qatar

Media City Qatar is a global hub that brings together media companies, entrepreneurs, and creative talent to drive the future of media and innovation in Qatar. With a modern regulatory framework, advanced infrastructure, and access to business setup support, Media City Qatar enables media production, digital publishing, and creative industries to thrive in Doha's growing economy.

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Further Reading

[Digital Audio Market Forecast: 2025–30
December 2025](#)

[Digital Audio Market Forecast Report: 2025–30
December 2025](#)

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