
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202303.00760

Publishing + Podcast: New Exploration of Content Presentation and Dissemination Methods in the Publishing Industry Post-Print

Authors: Yang Ruidan

Date: 2023-03-24T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the auditory renaissance, podcasting as a niche media form has encountered development opportunities, with “publishing + podcast” emerging as a new trend in the publishing industry. This article analyzes the advantages of podcasting as a “sound-as-medium” content form, the reasons for the publishing industry’s involvement in podcasting practices, and its future development strategies, with the aim of providing valuable insights and recommendations for podcast operations within the publishing industry.

Full Text

Preamble

Publishing + Podcast: A New Exploration of Content Presentation and Dissemination Methods in the Publishing Industry (Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing, 102627)

Abstract

Against the backdrop of an auditory renaissance, podcast—a niche medium—has encountered new development opportunities, making “publishing + podcast” an emerging trend in the publishing industry. This article analyzes the advantages of podcast as a “sound-based” content form, the reasons for the publishing industry’s involvement in podcast practice, and its future development strategies, aiming to provide valuable insights and recommendations for podcast operations within the publishing industry.

Keywords: Podcast; Publishing Industry; Content Presentation; Publishing Convergence

Introduction

Podcast, a portmanteau of Apple’s portable player “iPod” and “broadcasting,” refers to downloadable audio files distributed via mobile internet and aggregation technologies—a digital audio medium¹. As a sound-based medium, podcast possesses characteristics of intimacy, authenticity, and companionship, while offering greater breadth, depth, and warmth in content. Originating in the United States, podcast experienced continuous development and prosperity, forming a relatively mature model. However, as an imported concept to China, despite a brief moment in the spotlight, its niche expression kept development lukewarm. This situation changed in 2020: the value of “sound” was gradually recognized and explored, marking an audio revival and auditory return, with the pandemic providing additional opportunities for this medium to break into mainstream consciousness.

In 2020, major audio platforms aggressively expanded into podcasting. Kuaishou and “Lychee FM” incubated independent podcast apps “Piting” and “Lychee,” NetEase Cloud Music rebranded its radio station as podcast, and Ximalaya added a dedicated podcast section. Chinese-language podcast programs achieved a breakthrough from 2,000 shows in 2019 to nearly 50,000 as of July 2022.

The podcast wave has also swept through the publishing industry, generating a podcast boom. Numerous publishing institutions and new media outlets have entered the podcast track. Searching with the keyword “publishing” on platforms like Apple Podcasts and the Xiaoyuzhou app yields representative publishing industry podcasts shown in Table 1. Regarding this new content form, we cannot help but ask: What advantages does podcast offer? Why should the publishing industry invest in podcasting? What sparks can the combination of publishing and podcasting create?

Table 1: Representative Podcast Practices in the Publishing Industry

Podcast Name	Description
Jumping Island FM	Literary podcast—a listenable literary magazine that discusses literary issues by inviting writers, translators, scholars, and book reviewers
Naive Café	Cultural salon that discovers the present with a naive perspective and imagines alternative possibilities of life
Hardcore Reading Club FM	Content involves books related to performance and drama, as well as art-related topics

Podcast Name	Description
Duku Stereo	Cultural interview podcast that exchanges views on social hot topics
Screws Are Tightening	Sci-fi themed podcast discussing sci-fi content, letting imagination join the conversation and making thinking more colorful, with strong intellectual content
Other programs	Include inviting cultural scholars for casual talks on generalized cultural content; through dialogue and questioning, seeking practical wisdom and breakthrough possibilities, sharing journeys of mutual encouragement and common adventure among peers

1. Podcast Marketing Advantages

1.1 High-Quality User Base

According to the “2022 Chinese Podcast New Observations” report by Just-Pod, Chinese podcast audiences show a trend toward youthfulness, with an average age of 30.2 years, female listeners accounting for 53.1%, first-tier city residents comprising 48.4%, and those with master’s degrees or higher making up 40.0%. The average monthly income is ¥14,808, indicating that podcast users are mostly well-educated young people with affluent lifestyles, presenting an “elite” characteristic. This high-quality user group demonstrates greater rationality and restraint when using podcasts, lacking the hostility brought by diverse and chaotic subjects in typical online spaces. In podcast comment sections, we rarely see “keyboard warriors” or extreme personal attacks; instead, listener comments mostly share personal reflections or insights related to the program content, creating a friendly and harmonious exchange atmosphere. In terms of listening data, podcast users average 4.1 hours of weekly listening time, with podcast completion rates typically around 30%, demonstrating strong user listening habits.

1.2 Low Marketing Costs

When producing live streams or short videos, producers may face issues related to on-camera appearances, such as whether individuals are willing to appear and their on-camera presence, while also investing in location scouting, manpower, venue rental, and other production costs. However, producing a podcast episode requires far less consideration—no face, just voice, and a recording device suffice

for content production, greatly reducing and simplifying both investment costs and production workflows. Without the pressure of camera gaze, podcast hosts and invited guests can engage in more relaxed and comfortable heartfelt conversations, freely conveying deep-level perspectives and opinions. For advertisers seeking to place ads in podcasts, podcasts also represent an excellent choice. Since podcasting remains a “blue ocean,” corresponding advertising costs are relatively low. According to advertising agency AdvertiseCast, the average CPM (cost per thousand impressions) for a 30-second ad on a podcast with 2,500-5,000 listeners is \$23, while on podcasts with over 100,000 listeners, the average CPM is \$30. Compared to short video advertising that often costs tens of thousands or more, podcasting offers an extremely cost-effective strategic choice.

1.3 High Commercial Value Potential

Chris Anderson, former editor-in-chief of Wired magazine, proposed the Long Tail theory, suggesting that tail markets can also create high value, even forming a volume comparable to head markets. Podcast is a subtle content presentation method whose effects are not immediately apparent but can form a long-tail effect. When operating podcasts, the publishing industry typically does not directly use oral advertising to promote books but instead chooses to step beyond the books themselves, following a soft marketing path and adhering to a “long-line fishing” model. For example, the podcast program “Jumping Island FM” positions itself as “a literary magazine that can be listened to with ears,” inviting authors, experts, and scholars to discuss books or stories behind books. Through long-term program listening, audiences may develop trust and affection for podcast hosts, authors, and publishers, subsequently purchasing books and achieving conversion effects. Surveys show that 50.7% of podcast users acknowledge that podcast programs have influenced their consumption behavior, such as purchasing products mentioned in podcasts or visiting cafes or bars recommended by hosts². This demonstrates that podcast, as a sound-only content form, can also become a marketing channel with significant commercial value awaiting development.

2. Motivations for Publishing Industry to Operate Podcasts

2.1 Leveraging Traditional Media Advantages

The publishing industry, as traditional media, possesses natural advantages in podcast operation. Its industry attribute of interacting with intellectuals determines that publishing often has extensive networks and quality cultural scholar resources, providing a continuous source of interview guests for podcasts. Meanwhile, the medium’s characteristic of voice-only without face also aligns with cultural scholars’ need for “low-key conduct,” laying a solid talent foundation for podcast production. As a cultural industry with long-term development, publishing has established high authority and credibility, accu-

mulating a loyal user base. The high overlap between book users and podcast users also brings a more stable and highly sticky user group for publishing industry podcast operations. The underlying logic of producing podcasts mirrors that of publishing content—the professional knowledge reserves and experience accumulated through long-term book publishing can be replicated in podcast operations, guaranteeing stable content output.

2.2 Aligning with Publishing Industry’s Cultural Attributes

As a disseminator of in-depth content, the publishing industry does not fit well with today’s fast-paced era. Whether producing short videos or live streams, the rich connotations of books and the industry’s cultural tone are lost in superficial ten-second presentations and noisy promotional pitches, creating a visual and auditory spectacle that dissolves the seriousness of books and reduces the publishing industry’s original cultural character. This clearly contradicts the knowledge-based attributes of publishing. Podcast, however, is a content form with higher information density and superior quality, allowing cultural celebrities and experts to engage in content accumulation and knowledge output over sufficiently long periods. The “several dozen minutes” time unit greatly expands the publishing industry’s capacity for in-depth content expression, aligning with the characteristics of the publishing industry as a cultural sector. Simultaneously, podcast’s calmer, more rational narrative traits also coincide with publishing’s cultural attributes, providing new development opportunities for publishing seeking compatible cultural expression.

2.3 Shaping Publishing Industry Brand Image

Gerbner’s cultivation theory posits that mass media conveys specific values and ideological tendencies to audiences through “reporting facts” and “providing entertainment,” thereby subtly shaping people’s views of reality and society, achieving a “cultivation effect.” When publishing industries design podcast programs, select guests, and determine content topics, they inevitably output their own values and philosophies, conducting brand positioning and image shaping. For podcast listeners, the habit of listening for an hour or more over extended periods also subtly enhances brand recognition and trust. The “Screws Are Tightening” podcast program under the “One Way Street” brand “Single Read” chooses to dialogue with young intellectuals and experts, presenting high-quality in-depth content elevated to the spiritual level, further shaping the brand image as a “spiritual home” and deepening audience brand cognition.

3. Future Development Directions for Publishing + Podcast

3.1 From Traffic Chasing to Knowledge Services, Creating High-Quality Content Publishing

Maslow's hierarchy of needs identifies cognitive needs—knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, meaning, and predictability³. With material needs largely satisfied, increasingly more people crave knowledge, constantly seeking spiritual fulfillment and exploring spiritual “sanctuaries,” opening development paths for knowledge services. According to Zhang Shuyu, project leader of “Jumping Island FM,” “The core of publishing lies not in paper but in the flow of ideas, the dissemination of thoughts, and the connection between people.”⁴ Podcast uses sound to bridge listeners with podcast hosts or readers with writers, conducting knowledge accumulation and deep content provision at a slow pace. As a knowledge-producing industry, publishing should abandon the singular “traffic-first” evaluation system, using podcasts to provide users with valuable, culturally connotative content, running cultural attributes through the entire podcast content presentation process, achieving knowledge dissemination and cultural nourishment, and creating high-quality content publishing.

3.2 From Self-Sufficiency to Professional Support, Establishing Professional Production Teams

Currently, when operating podcasts, most publishing houses adopt a self-sufficient model handling overall program positioning, theme planning, audio editing, and channel distribution. Although publishing houses have certain advantages in operational processes, for the new field of podcasting, non-professional podcast teams still face challenges adapting, such as simple audio-ization and insufficient host professionalism. The publishing industry needs to organize professional podcast publishing teams for operations. On one hand, they can choose to cooperate with professional podcast teams—CITIC Press's “Jumping Island FM” and “New Weekly's” “Hardcore Reading Club” both jointly produce with professional podcast organization JustPod, and the listening experience feels more professional. In the long term, publishing should also build its own professional podcast publishing talent pool through training, selection, and construction, achieving internal “self-upgrade” for sustainable development.

3.3 From Generalized to Vertically Segmented, Meeting Diversified User Needs

When publishing houses produce podcast content, they mostly follow the model of inviting cultural scholars and celebrities to discuss social hot topics, with content being generalized and broad. This makes it difficult to differentiate from various generalized cultural programs and current affairs programs existing in the podcast market, with publishing's unique value not fully realized. Based on

this, publishing should actively consider how sound can better present content, constantly seeking content differentiation, enriching content forms through different presentation methods, conducting vertical segmentation, and providing users with information increments and greater value through quality content and rich expression to meet diversified user needs. Publishing audio narratives, publishing audio documentaries, publishing audio variety shows, and other audio content forms await development. Publishing still has significant imagination space and exploration potential in content richness.

Podcast, as a new medium form, possesses advantages including high-quality users, low marketing costs, and commercial development potential. Through podcasts, the publishing industry can achieve goals of leveraging industry expertise, aligning with cultural attributes, and shaping brand image. In the future, publishing should continuously integrate and grow with podcasts, relying on more professional teams, adhering to knowledge service direction, innovating richer content forms for publishing's involvement in podcast practice, creating high-quality content publishing, meeting diverse user needs, striving to create long-term value for publishing + podcast, and achieving sustainable development and long-term operation.

References

- [1] Liu Yanqing. Exploring the Development Path of Domestic News Podcasts in the Context of Omnimedia[J]. News Research Guide, 2020, 11(20): 209-212.
- [2] Can Podcasts Grow into Xiaohongshu? - Information, Yilan Business | Insight into the New Future of Consumer Brands
- [3] Maslow, A. H. Motivation and personality. New York: Harper & Row, 1970
- [4] Literary Podcast “Jumping Island FM”: Because of Sound, Literature Gains New Possibilities <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1662819130782027519&wfr=spider&for=pc>
- [5] Can Podcasts Grow into Xiaohongshu? - Information, Yilan Business | Insight into the New Future of Consumer Brands
- [6] Xu Weiyi. Chinese Podcast Market Expected to Enter Rapid Development Period[N]. International Publishing Weekly, 2020-10-19 (007).
- [7] Fan Lilin, Xin Yi. Exploring New Forms of Podcast Content Under the “Ear Economy” Background[J]. China Publishing, 2021(24):
- [8] Zhang Jinyu, Song Xueqing. On the Value, Advantages and Disadvantages, and Development Strategies of Podcast Marketing[J]. Publishing Wide Angle, 2022(15): 70-73. DOI:10.16491/j.cnki.cn45-1216/g2.2022.15.013.
- [9] Tang Leshui, Nian Aozhuo. The Commercial Power Behind Podcasts: Research on Brand Podcast Operations[J]. Radio & TV Journal, 2022(11): 23-26. DOI:10.19395/j.cnki.1674-246x.2022.11.012.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.